

C. R. STAM



2 CORINTHIANS



COMMENTARY

on

**THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL
TO THE CORINTHIANS**

by

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All our critics and defenders should also receive our thanks; the former for sending us back to the divine Lab and the latter for the encouragement they afford us.

Most of all we owe heartfelt thanks to God who upheld us and aided us again in times of sickness and pain. Actually, we have been amazed as we finish a chapter or a passage in this book. Surely, for this, all glory must go to God for His grace and faithfulness.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Before studying II Corinthians, one striking contrast between I Corinthians and II Corinthians should be clearly noted.

Romans
II Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
I Thessalonians
II Thessalonians
I Timothy
II Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews

Above are *all but one* of Paul's epistles. In NONE of them does he even mention the gift of tongues. In NONE of them does he discuss the alleged value of tongues. In NONE of them does he urge his readers to seek the gift of tongues. Repeat: In NONE of them does he even *mention* the gift of tongues.

Question No. 1: If it is so urgent that we today possess the gift of tongues, why does Paul not say so in writing to these believers?

Question No. 2: The ONLY epistle in which Paul discusses tongues is *I Corinthians*, in which he writes to *those who made so much of tongues*. However, in this letter he calls the Corinthian believers, "*babes*," "*carnal*" and "*not spiritual*."

Should not our Pentecostal friends think these things through soberly, not in the light of emotional experience, but in the light of THE WORD OF GOD?

(From C. R. Stam's Commentary on
I Corinthians, page 200)

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OPEN MY EYES

Open my eyes, that I may see
Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key,
That shall unclasp and set me free.

Open my ears, that I may hear
Voices of truth Thou sendest clear;
And while the wave-notes fall on my ear,
Everything false will disappear.

Open my mouth, and let me bear
Gladly the warm truth everywhere.
Open my heart, and let me prepare
Love with Thy children thus to share.

REFRAIN:

Silently now I wait for Thee
Ready, my God, Thy will to see:
Open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine.

*By Clara Haywood Scott, mother of Betty Scott
Stam, who, with her husband, John Stam, was
slain by the sword as a missionary in China.*

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

There is special cause for thanksgiving over the completion of this *Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. From beginning to end it was written in sickness, weariness and pain.

Not once did we work on its contents for more than two hours at a time. Mostly an hour and a half of study left us utterly exhausted so that it was necessary to lie down for an hour or so before continuing the work. Indeed, sometimes life itself seemed precarious so that we often wondered whether God would permit us to complete the book. But now, after about three years, the commentary is finished and the author's heart rejoices.

We cannot thank God enough for the sensitive support of our beloved brother, Paul Sadler, all this time.

With all his responsibilities as President of *Berean Bible Society*, he still seemed always to have time to discuss the concerns of the present volume.

The substance of the author's ministry now is also precarious because life itself is so uncertain for us but we have often said that when we go Home we will feel comfortable leaving the work wholly with our beloved Brother Paul.

Many a time did we enjoy pleasant discussions about *II Corinthians*, and many a valuable suggestion did we receive from Brother Paul.

Now, thank God, the book is finished, and we have already begun writing a commentary on *Galatians*.

Great was our joy and enthusiasm in studying and writing on *I Corinthians*, but the research, study and writing on *II Corinthians*--and the constant prayer involved--proved an even greater blessing.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians they were rent asunder by all sorts of divisions mainly involving, not heresy but *carnality*. Thus while the letter contains much doctrine, even this is made to bear upon their *unchristian behavior*, especially their *permissiveness*.

Corinthian carnality also manifested itself in their infatuation with Greek *wisdom* and *eloquence*, with which the apostle dealt wholly from *God's* perspective.

But Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, written so soon after the great uproar at Ephesus, finds the apostle still suffering the effects of that great crisis in his life when he was "*pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that [he] despaired even of life*" (1:8).

Still reeling from this ordeal, he also had to bear, and daily, "*the care of all the churches*" which, by God's grace, he had founded (II Cor. 11:28). This especially now that the Jewish legalists were attacking him and his ministry so aggressively on every hand. How concerned he was that these assemblies should stand fast in grace! - and some were beginning to waver.

But another of Paul's concerns was the lack of confidence many of the Jewish Christians had in Paul himself and in his ministry. Some of them claimed that if he were truly a qualified Christian leader he would have brought them "letters of commendation" from the apostles and elders at Jerusalem--whom they considered the overseers of *the Church*.

This was easy for Paul to answer, but the attitude was not easy to overcome, even in a church founded by Paul himself.

There was overwhelming evidence that Paul was "*not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles*" (11:5), though *he* humbly adds: "*though I be nothing*" (12:11). The Jewish legalists, by contrast, showed a bold, self-confident attitude.

Little wonder that the apostle's *feelings* are so often manifested in this letter. Little wonder this letter contains so many emotional words and phrases, one following the other so abruptly. Ah, but how touching to observe how a Pauline rebuke is typically followed by forgiveness, disappointment by an earnest appeal, and anger by loving concern.

The result of all this is that II Corinthians contains some of the most *precious* doctrines, the *most* precious of all doubtless being the two-fold doctrine of "*the Word of Reconciliation*" and "*the Ministry of Reconciliation,*" so graciously committed to Paul, and now to us, (5:18,19).

What a spiritual feast is in store for us as we study this great epistle together! May its truths have their God-appointed effect on our lives.

INTRODUCTION

PROFOUND DOCTRINES

It is interesting indeed to note how many profound doctrines are discussed in II Corinthians, in contrast to all the rebukes, corrections, instructions, etc., found in I Corinthians.

Two of the greatest of these are, perhaps, the New Covenant and the doctrine of Reconciliation.

PETER, PAUL, AND THE NEW COVENANT

How often the New Covenant has been associated with Peter, but Peter, at least, did not explain the New Covenant. For an orderly and detailed outline of the New Covenant we must go to Paul, not Peter. In [II Cor. 3:6-11](#) Paul, by divine inspiration, says that he and his co-workers are "able ministers of the New Testament" (Covenant).

Whatever association Peter may or may not have had with the New Covenant let us put it down in our minds that the Word of God says that, not Peter, but Paul and his co-workers were the able ministers of the New Covenant.

It is Paul, not Peter, who goes into the details of the New Covenant. It is he who, under divine inspiration, emphasizes its power to justify vs. the law's power to condemn; its ability to reconcile vs. the law's tendency to make enmity; its emphasis on the Spirit vs. the law's emphasis on the letter. Its eternal glory vs. the law's fading glory, etc.

One thing is certain, if you want an outline of the New Covenant, an explanation of the New Covenant and many glorious truths about the New Covenant, you will have to go to Paul not to Peter. Indeed, it is amazing *how much* Paul has to say about the New Covenant, and it is a thrilling study indeed.

RECONCILIATION

Paul also is the apostle who goes at length into *the doctrine of Reconciliation*.

It is he who declares that...

"... God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all," adding:

"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:32,33).

Indeed, our Lord shed His blood for the sins of the whole world, "that He might reconcile both [Jews and Gentiles] unto God in One Body by the Cross" (Eph. 2:16).

There are three main sections to the great doctrine of Reconciliation:

1. God reconciling the world to Himself by the death of Christ, no longer imputing their trespasses to *them* (II Cor. 5:19).
2. The ambassadors of Reconciliation (II Cor. 5:20). The study of ambassadorship itself is rich in blessing.¹
3. The message of Reconciliation (II Cor. 5:20).

¹ See the author's booklet, *Ambassadors for Christ*.

AN OVER-ALL VIEW

A HARD-PRESSED APOSTLE

Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written during the darkest period of his ministry.

His three years at **Ephesus**, though eminently fruitful, had been anything but smooth sailing--especially the latter part. In his first epistle he says that "after the manner of men," he had fought with "beasts" at Ephesus (**I Cor. 15:32**).² Acts 19 relates more of the story.

There had been an exciting victory when the converted practitioners of the occult had joined in a spontaneous, voluntary burning of their occult books, the value of which was estimated to be 50,000 pieces of silver (Ver. 19). The inspired Record gives us the *reason* for this great victory:

"So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed" (Ver. 20).³

This mighty victory in itself must have been physically exhausting, but his strength was to be further taxed, for there was an almost immediate⁴ reaction against "that way" among the silversmiths and manufacturers of shrines for the pagan goddess *Diana*.

This uprising was led by Demetrius, who called the craftsmen together and, with pious talk about "the great goddess Diana," gave his hearers to understand clearly that their *financial income* was being jeopardized:

Ver. 24: "Demetrius ... brought no small gain to the craftsmen."

Ver. 25: "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth."

Ver. 27: "... this... our craft is in danger to be set at nought."

Thus it was not devotion to Diana, but *greed* and *self-interest* that aroused the craftsmen. "*No small gain*" (Ver. 24) had caused "no small stir" when placed in jeopardy.

² The phrase "after the manner of men" indicates that he did *not* refer to literal beasts, but to evil men. The word "beast," Gr., *theorion* occurs 44 times in the Book of the Revelation, each time indicating the *character* of the individual referred to. The coming world ruler of prophecy, e.g., will be considered a great statesman by the masses, and Antichrist a great religious leader, but God calls them both "*beasts*" (Rev. 13).

³ During his first two years in Ephesus, teaching the Word mostly at the School of Tyrannus, he had organized the evangelization of all Asia (the province), with significant result (ver. 10).

⁴ Note: At "*the same time*" (Ver. 23).

All this put a great strain upon the already hard-pressed apostle. In II Cor. 1:8 he says, with regard to "our trouble which came to us in Asia":

"... we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life."

In this fierce "uproar" Paul did indeed nearly lose his life, but see where *his* interests lay:

AFTER THE UPROAR

"And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

"And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece" (Acts 20:1,2).

And this journey, made partly on foot (20:13), was to bring the harassed apostle still more grief and still greater concern.

Titus had been sent to **Corinth** to minister to the Corinthian church, and had promised to meet Paul later at **Troas** to inform him as to the spiritual condition of the Corinthian believers and how they had received Paul's letter to them. Through some misunderstanding or mishap, however, Titus was not there when Paul arrived. In his already-exhausted condition this discouraged Paul greatly and it was not long before he took leave of the saints there, and of the already-prospering ministry God had given him. Hear him relate the facts:

"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me of the Lord,"⁵

"I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia" (II Cor. 2:12, 13).

Paul *needed* Titus, and he had indeed been the man for Corinth under the circumstances. It is clear that he had had a strong influence on the Corinthian saints, for in II Cor. 7:15 the apostle relates how,

"... His inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the OBEDIENCE of you all, how WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING ye received him."

⁵ The phrase, "A door was opened to me of the Lord," implies that his testimony was blessed at the outset. Indeed, the apostle may well have established another church in this brief time, for of his *next* visit we read that "upon the first day of the week...the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). This speaks of an already-established Christian assembly.

Compare this with I Cor. 16:10, where Paul had had to commend Timothy to the Corinthians with the words:

"Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do."

From this we can see that Timothy and Titus were different personalities, yet both faithful co-workers with Paul. Timothy could be greatly used in doctrinal and spiritual matters, but Titus was the man to deal with them about their conduct and their failure to do their part, or even keep their promises, where the relief for the Judaeans was concerned.

PAUL IN MACEDONIA -- WITHOUT TITUS

Were it not for one single phrase in [Acts 20:3](#), we would not have known that Paul spent three months in [Greece](#) at this time, and probably an even longer period in [Macedonia](#), for he speaks of going over "those parts" of Macedonia, while referring only to "coming into" Greece as we might speak of traveling all over Canada and then crossing the border into the States.

In any case it is clear that the apostle did not immediately find Titus upon entering Macedonia. Rather, trouble continued to badger him wherever he went. He says concerning these earlier days:

"...when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears" (II Cor. 7:5).

Only a few years previous he had labored among the Corinthians themselves *"in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"* (I Cor. 2:3). At that time already the Jewish persecution had mounted⁶ ([Acts 18:6-13](#)). Would this never stop? Not quite.

"Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (II Cor 7:6).

PAUL IN MACEDONIA -- WITH TITUS

Finally there was good news for the weary soldier! Titus had arrived, that buoyant, outgoing person who had been such a help to him in times past!

For the following reasons it seems probable that Paul found Titus in [Philippi](#): (1) Philippi was a Macedonian seaport, where Titus might be apt to come looking for Paul. (2) Philippi was a great center of Christianity, where one might hope to find the other. (3) Paul had a deep affection for the Philippian believers, and they for

⁶ To learn how close the connection was between Paul and Jewish persecution, see Acts 12:13, 19:13, 14; 19:33, 34; 21:11; 23:12-21; 24:1-9, 18-20; 25:10 and II Cor. 11:24.

him. Indeed, they had been his most faithful supporters in the work. He writes to them in Phil. 4:15,16:

"... in the beginning of the gospel ...no church communicated with me concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

"For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity"

And in [II Cor. 8:1-6](#) he informs the Corinthian believers of what the Macedonians (mainly the Philippians) had done to further the cause of Christ and how they had first given *themselves* to the Lord and to him. Indeed, he had sent Titus to Corinth "to finish in [them] this same grace also" (II Cor. 8:6).

Philippi, then was the place where Paul and Titus might be most apt to find each other.

The apostle was cheered, however, not only to see his beloved Titus again, but even more so to hear the good news Titus brought from Corinth. The Corinthian believers still had great affection for Paul. The incestuous brother had been excommunicated from the assembly, and this discipline had done its appointed work. The guilty man had mourned deeply⁷ and was now partly back in fellowship with the other believers - who likewise had mourned their former permissive attitude toward his behavior (See [II Cor. 7:7](#)). This, and more good news encouraged Paul to write a second letter to the Corinthian church: the letter we will now be studying. As Paul traveled among the cities of Macedonia, giving the believers "much exhortation," he could do so more vigorously now with this good news in his heart and Titus at his side.

It must not be too hastily assumed, however, that II Corinthians was written, or wholly written, at Philippi. There is too much evidence that Titus, wishing to spare the beleaguered apostle, broke the more disheartening aspects of his report to him gradually, one sad item at a time. Thus it is quite possible that the second letter to the Corinthians was written largely as the two journeyed through Macedonia, and/or in Greece.

This would account for the fact that as I Corinthians is probably the most systematic of Paul's epistles and the easiest to analyze, II Corinthians is the *least* systematic and the most difficult to analyze. This would be the natural result as the apostle learned more and more of what was really going on at Corinth.

Paul's change in plans about visiting Corinth had given rise to charges of irresponsibility and even of cowardice. He wouldn't dare to come to Corinth and face those who questioned his apostleship, they said, and many remarks most injurious to his character and reputation were persistently disseminated especially, it seems, by certain Jewish emissaries. They hinted fraud, or at least self-interest

⁷ So deeply that Paul feared that he might be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (II Cor. 2:7).

where the Judaeen collection was concerned. They questioned his sincerity, where his refusal to accept remuneration from them was involved. And in a particularly "low blow" they made slurring notice of his humble appearance and his simplicity of speech (II Cor. 10:10). Indeed, they even questioned his complete sanity (II Cor. 5:13).

Rather than overwhelm the harassed apostle with grief and concern over these things, Titus evidently broke all this news to him *gradually*.

Does not this account for the abrupt and rapid changes in his letter, from sadness, to concern, to encouragement, to warning, to assurance, etc.? One fact stands out above all others, however. Nowhere else do we find the apostle pouring out his great heart of love and care to a church so unworthy of it. Nowhere else do we find as many *touching* passages as we do here in II Corinthians.

Distasteful as it was to him, it became his *responsibility* to defend himself for the work's sake, for these slanders, if not checked, might well hinder his testimony at Corinth and elsewhere. It was utterly contrary to his nature to boast (Gal. 6:14), yet he does so in II Corinthians⁸ and *lets them know* that their conduct has *forced* such self-defense upon him (II Cor. 12:11).

But while Titus' companionship must have meant much to him in all this, it must be noted that as to persecution, the "trouble" he had already borne, along with the outward "fightings" and the inward "fears," all continued apace as they had before.

He says in II Cor. 1:5: "*the sufferings of Christ abound in us.*"

In II Cor. 4:8-11 he says:

"We are troubled on every side . . . perplexed . . . persecuted . . . cast down. . . Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake "

Even in Greece, where he seems to have lived in comparative seclusion, we know that "the *Jews laid wait for him*" and that in departing he had to change his plans accordingly (Acts 20:3).

We have not even mentioned the apostle's illness all this time. Besides the eye trouble that caused him to write to the Galatians in "large letters . . . with mine own hand" (Gal. 6:11), and which had at first detained him among them (Gal. 4:14,15) as it had hindered his ministry elsewhere - in addition to this he was now physically exhausted, and seems even to have been bedridden at Philippi. And as persecution and more-than-faithful toil had continued to wear him down, as it were,

⁸ J. Sidlow Baxter says that the word "boasting" occurs "no less than twenty-nine times" in this epistle (*Explore the Book*, p. 123), and he repeatedly apologizes for it.

he still writes as one who is by no means physically well. Note the following from his pen:

"For which cause we faint not... though our outward man perish..." (II Cor. 4:16).

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building . . . in the heavens.

"For in this [earthly house] we groan..." (II Cor. 5:1,2).

After all the tension of events all the way from Ephesus to Troas, all the way through Macedonia, his betrayal by "false brethren" in Corinth and now the danger to his life from his Jewish enemies--after all this it is not strange to read his words:

"Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" (II Cor. 11:29).

Ah, but we shall see what a precious epistle resulted from all this!

Evidently the apostle did not visit Corinth while he and Titus were in Greece. The time for this was not yet ripe. Also, there were Judaistic believers there who might have, even unwittingly, betrayed him to those Jews who sought to destroy him. So for now he would send them this letter, probably by Titus again.

PRECIOUS FRUIT

How much we owe to Paul, and to Paul's God, for all the sufferings he had by now endured! The abundant labors, the "stripes above measure,"⁹ the frequent imprisonments and brushes with death, his beatings with rods, stonings, shipwrecks---"three times," "a night and a day . . . in the deep," all kinds of "perils," from robbers, from his own countrymen -- and in different places: the city, the wilderness, among false brethren. Then add the "weariness and painfulness," the "watchings often," the "hunger and thirst," the "fastings often," the "cold and nakedness," and beside all this the care that he never escaped: "*the care of all the churches*" (See [II Cor. 12](#)).

Ah, but now look at the fruit, the precious fruit of all this toil and suffering!

It is in this *Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* that we learn of the blessed relationship of suffering to comfort. Here we learn of "*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God*" that can penetrate the darkness of a lost world. Here we learn of the secret of spiritual victory and the value of a sensitive conscience. Here we have outlined for us the glorious "ministry of reconciliation"

⁹ Roman law said, "Don't give a man more than 40 stripes; it may kill him." But "of the Jews five times" he received "forty stripes save one" (II Cor. 11:24). They would go as near to killing him as they dared.

and of our Lord's oneness with us when "made sin for us," and our oneness together in the glory to come. Here we learn of the responsibility and joy of *giving* under grace, and God's will about *asking*, or soliciting funds, under grace. Here we learn of God's strength in our weakness – and how to glory in weakness!

All this and so much more is to be learned from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. May our eyes and hearts be opened by His grace to receive it all and to apply it gladly to our daily lives.

CHAPTER I

II Corinthians 1:1-24

SALUTATION: Vers. 1: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

AN APOSTLE BY THE WILL OF GOD: Again and again, in his epistles, Paul stresses his divine apostleship, and there is abundant proof that his claim is valid.

He had never been formally trained for such a ministry as this; it was entirely God's doing. God chose him, called him, prepared and equipped him for it.

He *had* been trained for leadership in Judaism, partly under the great Gamaliel ([Acts 22:3](#)). He, like his father before him, had been a Pharisee ([Acts 23:6](#)), with all the riches, prestige and power of a position on the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of his nation. But as such he was a bitter enemy of Christ and His lowly followers, having them scourged and imprisoned, and even put to death for professing faith in Christ.

But he had *not* been educated or trained to be an *apostle of Jesus Christ*, with all the poverty, peril and persecution that this entailed. This took place through a divine miracle when, on the road to Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," he was suddenly converted to Christ as he saw the Jesus whom he had so bitterly persecuted and *heard* Him speak those tender words: "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*" Right then and there the Lord not only forgave Paul of all his sins, but appointed him an apostle, to proclaim the most blessed message ever sent from God to man: "*the gospel of the grace of God*" ([Acts 26:16](#); [20:24](#)).

This teaches us an important lesson, for while Paul's actual experience on the Damascus Road was unique, yet it was one of many examples of the fact that *God calls certain men* into the ministry.

In John 1:6 we read: "*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*" John had not been appointed by any committee or board. He had not been formally trained for the work. He was a man "sent from God," which accounts for the great power with which he proclaimed his God-given message (See [Luke 7:26-28](#)).

Not one of the twelve apostles decided to go to college or seminary to train for the apostleship. No, the Lord called each one of them. It was the same with Paul, and it is the same today.

The graduates of seminaries are not necessarily *men of God*. In fact we have too many professional clergymen today who never were called of God at all. Some

of them preach damning heresies; others a mixture of liberal thought and technique, along with some Bible truth. Some even have a fair knowledge of the Bible, but were never called of God to the pastorate. But whether graduates of colleges or seminaries, or lacking a formal ministerial education, it is only those who have been called of God who can preach His Word "rightly divided" and in the power of the Spirit.

This is not to deny, of course, that it is God's way to call men into the ministry who have shown deep and consistent interest in the Word and have given themselves to the study of "the Book." It is also true that *all* believers are responsible to make the God-given message known however they may be able to do this, and in this sense are "called," but it must not be forgotten that our exalted Lord gave "*some* pastors and teachers," not all.

AND TIMOTHY OUR BROTHER: // Cor. 1:1: Here, at the very outset of our studies, we can almost hear a reader exclaim: "Now where did *Timothy* come from? Up until now it has been only Paul and Titus together." Once more Luke provides the answer in his carefully-written record in the *Book of Acts*. And again, except for his one brief statement in Acts we would not have known that at this time Paul was evidently accompanied by a considerable number of co-workers.

In Acts 20:4 Luke testifies that after three months' stay in Greece,

"... there accompanied him into Asia¹⁰ Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gains of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus."

One more person could be named: self-effacing Luke himself, the "beloved physician" who was so often found with Paul. Just before his execution Paul, in his last written words, said, "*Only Luke is with me*" (II Tim. 4:11). What a comfort Luke must have been to Paul in the weakness and illness of the months just spent in Macedonia and Greece!

But how do we know that Luke was with Paul at this time? By the pronouns "us" and "we," now found again in the Acts record: "*These ... tarried for us ... we sailed away*" (Acts 20:5,6). Thus no less than *eight persons* accompanied Paul at this time, including Timothy.

PAUL'S INCLUSION OF TIMOTHY in his salutation (Ver. I) does not, of course, imply that Timothy was in any sense or to any degree a co-author of this epistle, any more than Sosthenes was a co-author of I Corinthians (See I Cor. 1:1). *Paul* is the writer, but he includes Timothy in his salutation because *they* knew him so well and could not but respect him. Also, Timothy might well have supplied Paul with important information about the situation at Corinth.

¹⁰ Troas would be the first stop.

WHY SO LARGE A COMPANY? When we carefully consider Paul's rich ministry it is not strange that we sometimes find him traveling with a considerable entourage.

It is said that when Martin Luther was summoned to the Diet of Worms, to appear before the Pope and his council, he took with him eight assistants, mostly secretaries. They lodged in a dormitory adjoining Luther's apartment. This is how the very words of his anguished prayer the night before, heard *through a door*, came to be so meticulously recorded.

Paul doubtless needed all eight of his associates at this time: Luke to attend to the apostle's health needs, Timothy to keep him abreast of more urgent church matters, another to see to food and lodging for *nine* people (including Paul), a treasurer, *et al*, and Paul was always sending this one here and that one there on various errands.

A SPECIAL CONSIDERATION NOW: But on this occasion there was a special need for the presence of his numerous co-workers.

As we know, the unbelieving Jews were lying wait for Paul at this time ([Acts 20:3](#)). They sought to kill him. Thus Paul decided to return to Asia *through Macedonia* with Luke, and to sail to Troas from Philippi, or **Neapolis**, its nearby port.

Perhaps the two hastened to Philippi on foot, though it is very possible, if not probable, that as the seven boarded a ship bound for Troas (as though there had been no change in plans) Paul and Luke simply boarded *another* ship, bound for Philippi, from whence they would then sail to Troas to meet the others.

Thus, in either case, the plot to murder Paul was effectively foiled, the Jews naturally supposing that Paul was one of the seven who had boarded the ship bound for Troas!

How graciously God had again spared the apostle's life, and how opportune had been the presence of his eight co-workers at this time!

THE CHURCHES AND THE SAINTS: // Cor. 1:1: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia."

Apart from Corinth, we read of no established church in **Achaia**, except that at **Cenchrea**, Corinth's eastern port ([Rom. 16:11](#)), but this church is not specifically addressed here, evidently because it did not have the same problems as those which caused Paul to write to the church at Corinth. For one thing, we know that the beloved Phebe was a "servant"¹¹ of this church, and Paul commends her most highly to the saints at Rome, even exhorting them to assist her in "whatsoever

¹¹ Lit., a "deaconess" (Gr., *diakonon*). Phebe is the only female deacon mentioned in Paul's epistles!

business she hath need of" (Rom. 16:1,2) - evidently "business" that did not violate Paul's precepts as to women's ministry. This surely says something about the church at Cenchrea itself. Study the passage and see.

But evidently the conditions at Corinth had adversely affected *individual* saints throughout Achaia. Thus the salutation to the church at Corinth "*with all the saints which are in all Achaia.*"

What a dreadful thought: that a permissive, undisciplined church can adversely influence individual believers far and wide, causing them to be *personally* permissive and undisciplined in their attitude and conduct. Yet this is exactly what is happening in this day of multiplied Corinthian churches.

SAD OMISSION, LOVING BENEDICTION, GLAD DOXOLOGY: *II Cor. 1:2-7:* In the apostle's very opening words we already have an example of the abrupt and frequent changes that we will encounter through the epistle as a whole.

SAD OMISSION: How it must have gladdened the heart of the Apostle Paul to be able to write, with thanks to God, about what the Spirit had accomplished at the various churches which, by God's grace, he had established!

To the Romans: "*Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*" (Rom. 1:8).

To the Philippians: "*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy*" (Phil. 1:3,4).

To the Colossians: "*We give thanks to God . . . since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints*" (Col. 1:3,4).

To the Thessalonians: "*We give thanks to God . . . remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope.. .*" (I Thes. 1:2,3).

And by the time the apostle wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians, he could say: "*...your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity [love] of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth [along with] your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure*" (II Thes. 1:3,4).

Thus Paul was able to open *most* of his epistles to the churches with words of glowing commendation. His opening words in the Corinthian epistles, however, contain no such words of praise, for on the whole their conduct had not been exemplary. This is unspeakably sad. Yet Paul loved and cared for them, as is evident from the benediction which immediately follows:

LOVING BENEDICTION: *II Cor. 1:2: "Grace be to you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Paul's signature, along with this loving benediction, written *in his own hand*, is found at the beginning of all his epistles, save that to the Hebrews.¹² In II Thes. 3:17 he states, as a reminder to the Thessalonians:

"The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle; so I write."

The supposed gift of prophecy, all kinds of rumors, and even forgeries had combined to discredit his apostleship (II Thes. 2:1-3). Therefore it was *necessary* that every one of his epistles bear his *signature*, along with a *word of greeting in his own handwriting*. Thus any epistle that did not bear *his signature* and *his own handwritten salutation* could immediately be recognized as a *forgery*. He had not written it.

We have written in other commentaries about the significance of his words, "*Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Ver. 2), so here we will touch upon them only briefly.

According to [Psa. 2:4,5](#); [Psa. 110:1](#) and many other Old Testament Scriptures, *judgment and war* were to be - and they *will* be - visited upon man for his rebellion against God and his rejection of Christ (Cf. [Rev. 19:11](#)).

But just when, prophetically speaking, God was ready to pour out the vials of His judgment in the Great Tribulation. He did a most wonderful thing. He *interrupted the prophetic program*, saving Saul of Tarsus, the leader of the rebellion, and sending him forth as *Paul the Apostle*, to proclaim "grace and peace" to all men. Thus was ushered in the present "*dispensation of the grace of God*" ([Eph. 3:1-3](#)).

The "*grace and peace*" of Paul's "mystery," has been God's message to this guilty world now for nearly 2,000 years, while "*judgment and war*" continue to await fulfillment. God has been more "longsuffering" by far under the dispensation of grace than He was under the dispensation of the Law, which held sway for 1500 years, for with "evil men and seducers" waxing "worse and worse" ([II Tim. 3:13](#)), He still responds with His offer of "grace and peace."

But let us not *presume*, as will the scoffers of II Pet. 3:3,4, for "the day of vengeance" *will* come at God's appointed time (Isa. 61:2), and who knows how soon before "grace and peace" will give place to "judgment and war"? Let us therefore heed the apostle's exhortation in [Eph. 5:15-17](#), "*redeeming the time because the days are evil.*"

¹² *Hebrews* is naturally an exception. God would have Paul known as "the apostle of the *Gentiles*," and Paul rightly "magnifies" this position (Rom. 11:13). Yet the epistle is by no means wholly anonymous, for it is evident that his readers understood clearly that he was the writer (Heb. 10:34; 13:23; et al).

And to those who still reject the love of Christ, and refuse to recognize Him as their Lord and Savior, we join Paul in the exhortation of II Cor. 6:1,2:

"We then as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

"... behold, NOW is the accepted time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation."

But why does Paul here proclaim "grace and peace" from the Father and the Son, but not from the Holy Spirit? Why not the full Trinity?

Ah, this is because this proclamation of love emanates from the rejected Father and His rejected Son (See again [Psa. 2:4,5](#) and [Psa. 110:1](#)). The Holy Spirit is not included because it is He who, all unseen, now *applies* this message to human hearts. The Spirit implements the program of grace.

GLAD DOXOLOGY: // Cor. 1:3-7: "Blessed be God, over the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

"And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted it is for your consolation and salvation.

"And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."

A GRATEFUL SONG OF PRAISE: // Cor. 1:3: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."

The apostle had barely finished greeting the Corinthian believers when he burst out into a doxology to God, a grateful song of praise. "*Blessed¹³ be God ...*"

"Blessed be God.": the language of a heart overflowing with gratitude and joy! A doxology in which the apostle calls God "*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.*" Such gratitude is typical of Paul's writings and expressive of his general attitude.

¹³ Gr. *Eulagetos*, from which our *eulogy*.

Oh, that we might be followers of Paul in this! God would have His children grateful and happy - and grateful people *are* happy people.

Do we see such joy among the unsaved about us - the joy of hearts overflowing with gratitude to God? We do not. Virtually all we see and hear about the world is sad, bad, frightening; and then, perhaps, they engage a comedian for an hour or so to make people laugh, or provide games to divert their attention away from themselves. But this is not the joy a grateful Christian knows.

And if unbelievers do not see this joy in us, Christian friend, where will they see it? Among the angels? No, we must gratefully rejoice in our spiritual blessings in Christ if we would help the world to see what we have and cause them to seek salvation through Christ.

Note the order of the terms by which the apostle designates the God in whom he rejoices: First he calls Him "*the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Think! Our heavenly Father is none other than "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that blessed One who left heaven's glory, and went to the cross to die our death and pay our debt of sin. What a price for the Father, as well as the Son, to pay for our redemption! And this is why God can now be called, "*the Father of mercies,*" and "*the God of all comfort.*"

Many, or most, of the Corinthian believers, though saved by grace, specially needed God's *mercy* at this time. Some do not see that fallen saints *need* divine mercy or the forgiveness of sins. They see believers only as *in Christ, already seated in the heavenlies*, having been justified from all their sins. But these overlook the fact that the *same passage* in Ephesians which states that we have been raised from the dead, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ ([Eph. 2:6](#)), *also* says that we have "*access by one Spirit unto the Father*" ([Eph. 2:18](#)). The former, of course, has to do with our present *position* in Christ, while the latter refers to our present *condition* and our need to take advantage of the free "access" God has given us into His presence by the blood of Christ. This access is given to us that we may "*obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*" (See [Heb. 4:16](#); [10:19,20](#)).

There is also the distinction between *judicial* forgiveness and *parental* forgiveness. I may know my father well enough to be assured that he will forgive my worst offenses and, of course, I am his son anyway; this cannot be changed. But this is no excuse for the presumption that says: "I need not apologize or ask His forgiveness if I grieve or disgrace Him. I am His son. He has already forgiven me all my sins from the cradle to the grave."

Ah, if I *do* grieve my heavenly Father by some thought, word or deed, I should *desire* to go to Him and ask His forgiveness. If I feel no such desire there must be something dreadfully wrong with my attitude. Thus God must sometimes discipline His children to bring them to a right frame of mind, for while sin against our

heavenly Father does not change our *relationship* to Him, it surely does hinder our *fellowship* with Him. This distinction is clearly set forth in I John 1:9:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Mark well, he does not say "merciful and kind,"¹⁴ but "*faithful and just.*" Why "faithful and just"? Does God owe His people forgiveness? In a way, yes; not because we *deserve* it, but because He Himself settled the account, and our sins *have already been paid for*. And thus He emphasizes the distinction between judicial and parental forgiveness. We need to learn this lesson as surely, and sometimes as *sorely*, as the Corinthian believers needed to learn it.

Next, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is called "*The God of all comfort.*" Actually the English word "comfort" had a somewhat different meaning to the KJV translators 380 years ago than it does to us today. We generally think of comfort as consolation or solace: an effort to assuage another's grief. But to them it had more of the meaning of *encouragement*. Indeed, the Greek *paraklesis* means to be "called alongside," i.e., to help. The classic example in KJV of the Holy Spirit's usage of the words rendered "comfort" and "Comforter" is found in Heb. 6:18,19, and John 14:16 respectively:

Heb. 6:18,19: "That . . . we might have *strong* consolation [Gr., *paraklesis*] . . . to lay hold on the hope set before us:

"Which hope we have as an *anchor* of the soul, *both sure and steadfast* ... "

Our words "comfort" and "consolation" today have little in common with such words as "*strong... anchor...sure and steadfast.*" These rather compare to our word *encourage*.

John 14:16: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you *another Comforter* "

Here again, the "Comforter" is not one who would assuage their grief; but one who would always be "alongside to help" (Gr., *parakletos*), as our Lord had been.

In the "comfort" we read of in II Cor. 1:3, God does not say, "Just lie down here and get a good sleep, and you'll feel better." Rather He comes alongside to *arouse us from sleep and to en-courage* us (i.e., to inspire us with courage). The Corinthians did not need rest at this time; they needed to be awakened to the deplorable situation into which they had allowed themselves to drift through their indifference and irresponsibility.

¹⁴ Though this would also be true.

This kind of comfort, this *en-courage-ment*, is as sorely needed in the Church today as it was in the Corinthian church. May God, "*the God of all en-courage-ment*," inspire us with spiritual courage to withstand the world, the flesh and the devil in these "perilous times."

WHY GOD PERMITS HIS CHILDREN TO SUFFER: Before leaving Verses 4-7 we must note carefully why God permits His children to suffer.

First, let us observe that the sufferings to which the apostle specifically refers are "*the sufferings of Christ*" (Ver. 5). As we suffer *for* Christ (Phil. 1:29), it will mean much to us to realize that we are actually bearing *His* sufferings: the sufferings He would be bearing were He still on earth in the flesh. Rather than judge the world when Jew and Gentile joined in rejecting Christ, God ushered in the dispensation of grace, leaving His ambassadors here on enemy territory, to proclaim reconciliation to His enemies everywhere through Christ.

Remaining an Exile from a rebellious world our Lord, however, did not suffer the consequences of their hatred. He is forever blessed, and exalted "far above all." It is we redeemed sinners, who suffer their rebellion against Him. Indeed, the greatest evidence that the present dispensation is "the dispensation of the grace of God" is found in Acts 28, where Paul, the great apostle of love and grace is left a prisoner, condemned to death. Shortly before this he wrote to the Colossians that he was "*filling up that which was behind* [Lit., *which still remained*] *of the afflictions of Christ*" (Col. 1:24).

The world does not hate us because we have the same failures as they; they hate us *because we represent Christ*. Even when our Lord was yet on earth He forewarned His disciples: "*If ye have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you*" (John 15:20).

All other suffering is common to all mankind, the results of the fall. It is "the sufferings of Christ" in particular that God permits us, His children, to bear as training in sympathy, "*that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble*" (Ver. 4).

It does not follow, however, that all who are called upon to bear the sufferings of Christ are qualified to comfort, or en-courage, others. Indeed, we gather from this passage that while *Paul* was thus qualified, *they* were *not* all thus qualified. Note the language the apostle employs:

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

"And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation"¹⁵ (Vers. 5,6).

¹⁵ Not from sin, but from their situation. He has already addressed them as God's called-out people (Ver. 1).

The apostle makes no such statement about them. Rather he expresses the *hope* that "as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the *consolation*" (Ver. 7).

How much better if he had been able to say, "I know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, God will also use you to comfort (or *en-courage*) others"!

God help us to learn the lesson. As His children and representatives of Christ, "the world," i.e., this world system, hates us, but may our attitude be such that any sufferings borne as a consequence, may qualify us to "*comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*" (Ver. 4).

PAUL'S TROUBLE IN ASIA: // Cor. 1:8-11: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.

"Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us;

"Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf."

Paul here demonstrates to the Corinthian believers that he did not merely preach to them about bearing "the sufferings of Christ"; he himself had borne an abundant share of these sufferings.

It appears evident that in the above passage the apostle refers to the uproar at Ephesus, but it seems equally evident that Acts 19 does not relate the whole story of this ugly riot, for here in II Cor. 1:8,9 it is referred to as a most exhausting experience.

In Acts 19 Luke reveals the cause of the uproar. The Word of God had prevailed so mightily that many followers of the occult had spontaneously, voluntarily, brought their occult books to be burned - books valued at 50,000 pieces of silver. This enraged not only Satan, but also the self-seeking silversmiths, so that one of their leaders, Demetrius, who brought "no small gain" to the craftsmen, harangued them about the glory of their goddess, Diana, while carefully linking his remarks to the financial loss they would all sustain if Paul's teachings prevailed. So their opposition to Paul by no means stemmed from religious conviction, but from *greed*.

In I Cor. 15:32 the apostle states that "humanly speaking" he had "*fought with beasts at Ephesus,*" and his meaning is clear enough. In the *Revelation* this word "beast," Gr., *theerion*, is used 44 times, each time indicating the character of the individual referred to. For example, *men* will call the coming world ruler of prophecy a great statesman, and the antichrist a great religious leader, but God calls them both "*beasts*" (Rev. 13).

All this fierce opposition of the silversmiths at Ephesus must already have brought heavy pressure upon Paul, and this was intensified as "no small stir"¹⁶ developed, and two of the apostle's valued co-workers, (Gaius and Aristarchus, were "caught" and "rushed" with the mob into the public theater. This so distressed Paul that he would have entered the theater himself, but "*the disciples suffered him not*" (Ver. 30). Indeed, some of the *Asiarchs* (public officials), who were his friends, sent to him urging him not to venture into the theater. Thus by the grace of God, the apostle was spared what might have been serious consequences as, for two solid hours, the frenzied mob shouted, "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*" (Ver. 34).

But here in II Corinthians we are given a better understanding of how all this affected Paul. "*We were pressed out measure,*" he says, "*above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life*" (1:8). But he continues:

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which *raiseth the dead*" (Ver. 9).

We take this to mean that he felt like one already condemned to death; and this had a savory effect upon him, for it caused him not to trust in self, but in God, who raises the dead. What a testimony to the security of the believer regardless of outward circumstances!

Verse 10 may be *applied* to the believer's salvation from sin, but we believe that the apostle here refers to the horrible death he might have suffered in Ephesus, from which he had so graciously been delivered, and from which he was *being* delivered, even though his enemies had hounded him wherever he went--and from which he trusted the Lord to *finally* deliver him. The whole passage reads more naturally this way.

Verse 11 deserves our most thoughtful attention. In it we have God's Word as to *intercessory prayer* – a subject all too little discussed and all too little practiced among believers today. Here Paul *requests* the prayers of the Corinthian believers that for God's blessing bestowed upon him through the help of many, thanks may be given by many on his behalf, thus bringing the ultimate glory to God.

Note the phrase, "*helping together by prayer.*" True, "[God] worketh all things after the counsel of *His own will*" (Eph. 1:11), but this speaks of His *sovereignty*:

¹⁶ Note the connection between "*no small stir*" (Ver. 23) and "*no small gain*" (Ver. 24). The silversmiths were concerned only about financial profit, not about Diana's glory.

the fact that He is never *overruled* by man. But here in [II Cor. 1:11](#) it is clearly stated that one believer can *help* another by praying for him. Not only does prayer bring us closer to God; He *hears and answers* our prayers in the way He knows is best.

When a friend is in trouble and you pray for him, and God undertakes for him, is it not a blessing to know that you *helped*? Not that you *helped God*, but that you helped your friend by going to God in his behalf.

Some question that seeming answers to prayer are really answers at all. They ask: "Did God do this because you asked Him to, or was He going to do it anyway? How do you know?" To this we reply with another question: If the infinite, omniscient God has all the hairs of your head not merely counted, but "*numbered*," if not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without His *permission* ([Matt. 10:29,30](#)), is it possible that He has *nothing whatever* to do with the things I pray about?

II Cor. 1:11, then, is a beautiful passage on intercessory prayer, and the fact that we may *help other saints* by bringing them and their needs to God in prayer. Let us rejoice in this fact with thanksgiving and give it a larger place in our lives.

PAUL AND HIS CONSCIENCE: [II Cor. 1:12-14](#): "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and Godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

"For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

"As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus."

As we reach Verse 12 of II Corinthians I, our hearts exclaim, "*What a declaration! What a testimony!*"

Paul has much to say about conscience, and how earnestly he strove always to have a *clear* conscience. What power this lent to his ministry for Christ! He could look the unscrupulous members of the Sanhedrin sternly in the eye, and say to them:

"Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" ([Acts 23:1](#)).

Little wonder this so offended the high priest, whose conscience had already been "seared with a hot iron," that he commanded those who stood by to smite Paul on the mouth ([Acts 23:2](#)).

It will likewise lend convicting power to our witness for Christ if we can speak with a conscience "void of offence toward God and toward men." Let us then be followers of Paul in this too, always able to say with him:

"For we are not as many, who corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (II Cor. 2:17).

"[We] have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (II Cor. 4:2).

Long ago Paul had made this his policy; indeed, this is how he wished to be known. In his first epistle to them he had written:

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

"Moreover it is *required* in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:1,2).

And thus he could say further: *"It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you."* (I Cor. 4:1-3).

Thus also, he could ask the Galatians:

"Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

The apostle had summed it all up beautifully in his first letter to the Thessalonians:

"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts" (I Thes. 2:4).

The marks of Paul's good conscience and thus of his spiritual integrity, were his *"simplicity and Godly sincerity."* Though he was endowed with a keen intellect, yet his preaching was *"not with fleshly wisdom"* but *"by the grace of God."* This was how he conducted himself, not only "in the world," but "more abundantly" toward them (Ver. 12). Thus simply by *"manifestation of the truth"* he *"commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God"* (4:2).

JUDGED BY THE SUNLIGHT: The Greek word for "sincerity" in II Cor. 1:12 is a long one: *eilikrineis*, meaning literally, *to judge of in the sunlight*¹⁷, and it is

¹⁷ *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia.*

interesting to learn how this phrase-in-a-word became one of the four Greek terms used for *sincerity*.

The Greeks produced many beautiful urns, vases, bowls and pitchers with colored designs, glistening from the coats of lacquer that covered them. Many of these are still in existence today.

Sometimes, however, the lacquer, or even the vessel itself, would develop a crack, which some dealers in these items would fill with colored wax to match the surrounding color. The defect would thus become virtually *invisible--unless the vessel was held up to the sunlight!*

Thus *eilikrinei* became one of the Greek words for *sincerity*, for knowledgeable buyers would hold any vessel up to the sunlight to be sure it was as perfect as it appeared to be.

But there is more to this passage. Paul solemnly declares here that he had lived in the world and among the Corinthian believers "*not in fleshly wisdom,*" but in "*Godly sincerity.*"

Ah, *this* phrase must mean, "to be judged in the sunlight of *God's* scrutiny." There is a tendency among us pastors and teachers to use the "wax" of "fleshly wisdom," to make it appear that we are truly intellectual, but the sunlight of *God's* scrutiny soon reveals our imperfections and shortcomings. And we shall all be judged in the white light of *His* close examination at the *bema*, or *Judgment Seat of Christ* ([Rom. 14:10](#); [II Cor. 5:10](#); [I Cor. 4:5](#)).

How appropriate - and wise - then, for the man of God to live in this world, and especially among believers, "*in simplicity and Godly sincerity,*" or "*without wax,*" if you please, "*until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart...*" ([I Cor. 4:5](#)).

HE MEANT WHAT HE SAID: In Ver. 13 the apostle refers, evidently, to his first letter to them, declaring: "*We write none other things unto you than what ye read or acknowledge.*" They had read what he had written and that was exactly what he had meant. There was no "craftiness" in his writings, no hidden meanings. The letter had indeed been one of rebuke and warning, but it had been written "out of much affliction and anguish of heart" and "with many tears" and an abundance of love ([II Cor. 2:4](#)). Some of its truths, he says, they had already acknowledged and, he hoped, would continue to acknowledge "to the end."

Some of the members of the assembly had accepted his letter as written and had repented deeply, but others were offended at his reproof and perverted its meaning. Some even charged him with loose talk, declaring that his expressed desire to visit them was all a bluff and a deceit, that he had no intention of coming, but had merely threatened them to gain their obedience. How wrong they were!

Certainly a serious study of *First Corinthians* reveals Paul as writing with the calm confidence of one who lived and labored in the presence of God.

How sad are the words "*in part*," in Ver. 14: It is clear from both the Corinthian epistles that not all the believers there acknowledged Paul as God's specially-appointed apostle of grace. In this they were distressingly typical of the Church today, which also only "in part" acknowledges Paul's distinctive ministry as God's apostle for the present dispensation of grace.

But even though acknowledged only "in part," he says of that "part":

"... we are your rejoicing, even as ye are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus" (Ver. 14).

This reminds us of what he had previously written to his beloved Thessalonian friends, those faithful partners in persecution:

"What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (I Thes. 2:19).

If he was *their* "rejoicing," *they* were certainly *his*. It was his deep and constant joy that when finally called to be with Christ at the Rapture, they would be there too as demonstrations of the riches of God's grace.

"DID I USE LIGHTNESS?" // Cor. 1:15-20: "And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

"And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

"When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?"

"But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

"For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea.

"For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

The apostle frankly acknowledges that previously he had been "minded" to "come unto you [the Corinthians] *before*" (Ver. 15), i.e., before going to Macedonia, so that they might have "a *second* blessing." In detail, his purpose had been to

"pass by [Lit., *via*] you into Macedonia," and then "to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea" (Ver. 16).

Did he "use lightness," was he fickle, in changing his mind about this, as some charged? Or, did he make his plans "according to the flesh," merely that *his* yea might be yea and his nay, nay?

No, neither. Important circumstances, including their sad state, had prevented him from coming to them sooner. But on the other hand, he insists that he did not make his plans "according to the flesh," and then stand by them just to prove his own integrity. He sought leading from God, who knows the end from the beginning and leads His children *one step at a time*. He never needs to change His mind, but they may.

The apostle names Silas and Timothy, who had faithfully labored in their midst, and declares that he and they had not preached to them a "yes" and "no" gospel, but a very positive one, centered in Christ, who is the "yea" and "amen" (*yes and so be it*) of all God's promises (Ver. 20).

TO SPARE YOU: // Cor. 1:21-24: "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

"who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

"Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

"Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand."

The One who establishes us--all of us--in Christ, says the apostle, *is God*, and it is He who "anoints," or consecrates us to His service.

Furthermore, God has "*sealed us*." Our failures notwithstanding, He has placed *His* stamp of approval, *His* seal of acceptance upon us, so that we may say with Paul: "*It is God that justifieth, who is He that condemneth?*" (Rom. 8:33,34).

But there is more: God has also "*given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*" (Ver. 22), the "down payment" on greater blessings purchased for us, for ere long we shall be wholly under His control. Blessed prospect!

In two other passages the apostle uses this terminology: once with regard to the immortality of believers, and once concerning our present security in Christ:

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

"Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (II Cor. 5:4,5).

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed [lit., "having believed"], ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,

"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:13,14).

It is against this background that the apostle says, *"I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet to Corinth"* (Ver. 23).

He does not mean; indeed, against the background of Vers. 21,22, he *could not* mean, "I call upon God to take vengeance on my soul if I lie." Rather he calls upon God in a prayer to confirm to these Corinthians the validity of his defense.

Clearly, the course the apostle had followed in this matter was not chosen that he might exercise lordship over them, but to promote their greatest welfare. Had the former been the case, he doubtless would have appeared among them, exercising the severest apostolic discipline. But it was by faith alone that they must stand, not by apostolic decree. And standing for God and His truth by *faith* does indeed bring with it the greatest spiritual blessing.

CHAPTER II

II Corinthians 2:1-17

THE PROPOSED VISIT DISCUSSED: II Cor. 2:1-8: "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

"For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

"And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

"But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all,

"Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

"So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

"Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him."

In studying the above passage we must not overlook the fact that this second epistle was written *rather than* paying the church a visit at this time, when so many were still defiant.¹⁸ Indeed, in his closing words the apostle says:

"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction" (II Cor. 13:10).

Paul was still deeply concerned about these Corinthian believers, and feared that if he visited them now the attitude of some might call for stern rebuke which might, in turn, bring discouragement and gloom to the whole assembly and especially to those who had sincerely repented and now longed to see the former disorders left behind them.

But now, in view of the *proposed visit*, what preparations should be made? First, he says:

¹⁸ As a matter of fact, his *first* epistle to them had also been written *instead* of paying them a visit (Vers. 3,4) when the situation was so critical.

"I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness" (Ver. 1).

The word "again," here does not relate to the word "heaviness" but to the word "come." When he came to them again he would not come in heaviness.

When Paul had first come to Corinth there was much bitter opposition from the outside. He says, *"I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"* (1 Cor. 2:3). How exciting, then, to read in the very next verse about his preaching *"in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"*! His body, under such pressure, was indeed weak, but his message was not! Thus this visit resulted in great spiritual victories and much joy.

Since then, however, the Corinthian church had suffered serious declension and the apostle had had to send them a letter of stern rebuke.

As we know, that letter, though effective in many ways, had not brought about full restoration. Thus, rather than visiting them now and risking negative results, he was led to write them a second letter, doubtless praying that the further delay in visiting them might provide an occasion for intervening grace to do its work.

The argument in Ver. 2 is that he ought to be rejoicing in their spiritual restoration and progress, but if the obstinate continuance of some in their permissive ways should call for his rebuke, and cause them sorrow, who then would bring *him* joy? If his rebuke should discourage *them*, who would encourage *him*? Obviously such encouragement could only *come* from those who had been "made sorry" by him! But it did not follow that if he made them "sorry" they would sincerely repent and make him glad.

If he came to Corinth again and still saw there the blighting effects of party strife, fleshly lusts, and indulgence in worldly pleasures, he would again suffer sorrow from those over whom he "ought to rejoice," and nothing would satisfy him but *their joy in Christ*. Thus he writes in the confidence that, *"my joy is the joy of you all"* (Ver. 3), that they understood that his aim was the removal of that which had not only grieved him, but had brought sorrow to them all.

In Ver. 4 he shows by example *how* church leaders and Christian assemblies should exercise discipline. His first letter and especially his instructions about the man living brazenly in incest had not revealed harsh pride but sorrow and loving concern, and when sincere repentance had resulted his appeal was: *"Forgive him heartily, and restore him to full fellowship"* (Vers. 6,7).¹⁹

¹⁹ The Gr. *Epitimia*, is used only in II Cor. 2:6. Its root verb, *epitimaō*, however, is rendered "rebuke" 25 times in A.V., and "charge" 5 times. The excommunication of the man in question was not a penal matter, but one of *discipline* (See Heb. 12:6,7,11).

Note again the apostle's sensitivity and good taste in Ver. 5. He must have been deeply shocked and alarmed that "that wicked person" could so brazenly bring reproach upon the name of Christ, and that the assembly could wink at his immorality. But now that the offender had repented so heartily, and most of the members of the assembly had also repented, he says:

"But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part." *They* had all had to bear the disgrace *in their midst*, in the church itself, while Paul was at a distance. Thus he takes this conciliatory attitude "*that I may not overcharge you all.*"

One thing certainly taught in Vers. 5-8 is the fact that *over-severity* is as contrary to Christ and grace as are laxity and permissiveness.

OBEDIENCE IN EVERYTHING: // Cor. 2:9-11: "For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

"To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I if in the person of Christ;

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of His devices,"

Paul longed to know assuredly, from Titus' own testimony, whether the Corinthian believers were now "obedient in *all* things." To discipline the immoral brother was an important responsibility, but now that he had so heartily repented, did they *forgive* him? This was no less important - and no less a responsibility. Also, they had accepted Paul's rebuke of their own permissiveness - his case against them was so unanswerable - but was their attitude toward him *now* what it should be toward a God-appointed apostle?

He assures them that *he* has forgiven the repentant backsliders among them for *their* sakes "in the person of Christ," i.e., representing Christ. But he did this expecting *them* to join him,

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (Ver. 11).

Satan accomplishes his aims through "wiles" and "devices." If he cannot defeat us through inducing us to *condone* evil, he will do so by instilling a self-righteousness that looks down upon the fallen brother and refuses to forgive him when restored.

PAUL'S DEPARTURE FROM TROAS: // Cor. 2:12,13:

"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

"I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother, but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia."

Paul doubtless wrote the above verses to show how strong was his feeling of concern and responsibility toward his Corinthian friends, yet they do raise a serious question. Did he fail, or disobey God by leaving Troas (where the Lord had opened a door to him) simply because of his own personal feelings toward the Corinthians?

He had visited Troas once before, only to have God call him away by the "Macedonian vision," in which he saw a man from Macedonia pleading, "*Come over into Macedonia and help us*" ([Acts 16:9](#)).

Could it be that he now chose Troas as a field in which to "preach Christ's gospel," *because* he had had to leave them the first time? Indeed, we must not forget, in connection with the "Macedonian vision," that at this juncture he had been "*forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia*" ([Acts 16:6](#)), and when "*they assayed to go into Bithynia . . . the Spirit suffered them not*" (Ver. 7). And then, at Troas, the "Macedonian Vision" had called him away. Evidently, for God's own reasons, that whole area was not to have the gospel preached to them at that time. Rather Paul was called into Europe - and so the gospel got to us.

But the situation was not entirely the same now, for Paul assures us that when he reached Troas, "*a door was opened unto me of the Lord*" to "preach Christ's gospel" ([II Cor. 2:12](#)). This must mean that the Lord opened hearts to give him an interested hearing, but he explains that he had had no rest in his spirit, because of his failure to find Titus, with news from Corinth. Thus, he had left Troas to go into Macedonia in search of Titus.

Was Paul disobedient to God in not remaining at Troas when God Himself had opened a door to him to preach the gospel there?

If this is the reader's conclusion, let us ask what would have been his conclusion if some *physical* infirmity had prevented his continued ministry there? Would this have been so different? Man's spirit, soul and body are all closely intertwined. Here we have Paul, so troubled in spirit that it had hindered his preaching of the good news he had come to bring. He could not find Titus, whom he had expected to meet there on his return from Corinth, and he could not rest until he knew how the Corinthian brethren were doing. His responsibility toward them weighed heavily on his heart. Thus every day he grew more deeply concerned that Titus did not appear and, "taking leave" of the brethren at Troas, he went into Macedonia where, evidently, he hoped to find Titus - and did. If only the Corinthians had known how heavily *their welfare* weighed upon his heart!

Let us not assume, however, that nothing was accomplished during Paul's brief stay at Troas, much less entertain the notion that he spent virtually no time there. He does not say, "*I did not stop at Troas.*" Indeed, from [Acts 20:6](#) we learn that he

"abode there seven days," and that "on the first day of the week," (his last day there) "Paul preached unto them... and continued his speech until midnight" (Ver. 7). This was when the young man fell out of the third story window, was killed, and then raised from the dead by Paul (Vers. 8-10). And *then* they all talked together "a long while, even till the break of day" (Ver. 11),²⁰ when he had to hurry to Macedonia to seek Titus.

So it is a mistake to suppose that Paul completely failed to enter the door that the Lord had opened to him. Indeed, the whole story is a lesson to us all. How often we fail completely to enter doors which the Lord has opened to us! God would have the gospel of His grace proclaimed to all men everywhere, yet we so often fail to witness to those with whom we associate daily. Most of us are surrounded by teeming millions of lost souls, yet often fail to tell the people next door about Christ.

Clearly, Paul had regretted that it had become necessary to leave the people at Troas for the second time, but in the week that God did give him there, he surely made good use of the opportunity, toiling tirelessly to bring them to Christ and to establish them in the faith.

One further glimpse we receive of the results of Paul's ministry at Troas is found in [II Tim. 4:13](#), where he asks Timothy to bring to his prison in Rome the cloak, the books, and "*especially the parchments*" he had left with Carpus at Troas. At least one of the brethren at Troas had become a *trusted friend*, one with whom he could even entrust his precious "parchments," evidently copies of the Scriptures.

TITUS AND THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS: It is remarkable that Titus, who occupied so large a place in Paul's ministry, is not even mentioned in the book of Acts while, conversely, the notice given him in just this one epistle is altogether unique in Paul's writings. Could this be because Luke wrote to record and explain the fall of Israel - Titus was a Gentile - while Paul was God's apostle of grace to the Gentiles? In any case, Titus is mentioned no less than *nine* times in *II Corinthians*, and always with affection and esteem.

Titus was a very different personality from Timothy,²¹ and this is evident from the apostle's letter to *him*, in which he addresses Titus as an army general might address his lieutenant; *directing* him to "*set in order*" the things that were "wanting" in the assemblies throughout the Island of Crete, to deal with the "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" who were causing such confusion in the island and "*whose mouths must be stopped,*" and to "*rebuke sharply*" those who were being influenced by the irresponsibility of the Cretian populace (See [Titus 1:5,11,13](#)).

²⁰ This narrative has great *dispensational* significance. (See *Acts Dispensationally Considered*, by CRS, Vol. IV, Pp, 217-227).

²¹ Who was refined, a student from youth, and delicate in health.

Timothy and Titus were probably closer to Paul than any of his other co-workers, and in this fact we learn how wonderfully God provided the spiritual and moral support which the apostle so often needed in his strenuous ministry. But Titus was undoubtedly the more *robust* of the two and often helped Paul in such *practical* ways. Rather than discuss the matter here at length, let us simply quote what Paul says of him to show the Corinthian Christians that beneath his rough exterior there was a heart of loving concern which sincere saints could not help but observe. Let the reader take the time to consider these passages from Paul's pen thoughtfully and prayerfully and he will learn much about Titus, the Corinthians, and Paul himself.

"Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

"And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (II Cor. 7:6,7).

"Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all" (II Cor. 7:13).

"Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace [generosity in giving] also" (II Cor. 8:6).

"But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

"For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you" (II Cor. 8:16,17).

"Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper *concerning you*: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ" (II Cor. 8:23).²²

THE SWEET SAVOR OF CHRIST: II Cor. 2:14-17: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.

"For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish:

"To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

²² See I Cor. 16:3.

"For we are not as many which corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

In the Majority Text, *Textus Receptus*, the Greek in Ver. 14 reads, "God ... who always leads us in triumph."

The picture is that of a conquering Roman general returning from battle. Before him goes the priest, burning incense, and directly behind, the victorious officers of his army, and finally the captives, most or all of them in chains.

The odor of the incense signifies *victory* to the conquering general, and to the officers who follow him. To the captives, however, it signifies death, probably in some public place, to show the Roman populace what happens to those who resist Rome. Our history books have much to say about such celebrations of victory, and here in II Corinthians they appear as one of Paul's famous metaphors.

How appropriate, then, is Ver. 14, where the apostle thanks God, who always leads him on in triumph, "making manifest the savor of His knowledge *by us* in every place."

"For we," he says, "are unto God a sweet savor of Christ" (Ver. 15), i.e., when we proclaim the good news about Christ, it is like a sweet fragrance to God; He is pleased.

And, says the apostle, this applies whether we preach Christ to those who are saved or to those who perish. God is vindicated in either case. Our success or failure, i.e., the *results* of our preaching, in no wise affect the fact that we are always victorious if we preach Christ in truth. It is not success, but *faithfulness* that pleases God. Paul was imprisoned for preaching Christ and was finally beheaded, but in II Tim. 4:8, after having learned that he would be executed, he joyfully wrote:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day ... "

How gloriously the apostle will be rewarded "at that day," not for his success, but for his *faithfulness*.

And God is pleased with us; it is sweet fragrance to Him, if we are simply *faithful* in witnessing for Christ. Whether we seem to others to have won or lost, we have won with God. *He* is pleased, and in Him we are always conquerors.

But note: It is not merely the mention of Christ that pleases the Father, but the proclamation of the blessed truth that He died for our sins and arose again as our living Savior. This is clearly stated in Eph. 5:2:

"... Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor."

Let a man preach the "social gospel," or any other message than that proclaimed by Paul and he may appear successful, but God is not pleased since Christ, an eternal sweet savor to Him, has not been glorified.

In the Old Testament tabernacle an incense was burned which filled the structure with sweet fragrance, and God was very specific as to this. In Ex. 30:9 He declared:

"Ye shall offer no *strange* incense thereon ... "

This was symbolic. God knew that some day false teachers would be substituting "another Jesus" and "another gospel" (II Cor. 11:4), which would be a stench in His "nostrils." Thus it is that Paul wrote by divine inspiration:

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

And he repeats this because of its profound importance. Indeed, this passage explains why the leaders of the professing Church today are cursed by confusion and division.

In the early 1900s there was a movement called *The Victorious Life Movement*, through which professing believers sought to make themselves more pleasing to God. Actually, however, it was a futile exercise in introspection; it was centered in *self*. Each day, the Christian was to look within and ask, "Am I as spiritual as I was yesterday?" "Do I have victory over the old nature?" etc. But God is not pleased with this. He says, "*Bury the old man.*" "*Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed*" and *be occupied with Christ*:

"The Father loveth the Son He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:35,36),

WHO IS SUFFICIENT? II Cor. 2:16: "To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

Is the apostle asking who is "sufficient" to *comprehend* these things? By no means. He asks, rather, who is equal to such responsibilities. What manner of preacher ought he to be who preaches a gospel that may determine the eternal destiny of some of his hearers, indeed, that may prove fatal to some who come into contact with it?

Surely Paul did not consider himself "sufficient for these things." In the very next chapter, Verse 5, he says:

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."

How often, in Paul's epistles, we find such phraseology as that of I Cor. 15:10:

"... I labored more abundantly than they all: yet *not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*"

NOT CORRUPTING THE WORD OF GOD: II Cor. 2:17: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

The Greek *kapeluontes* means literally, "making gain by corrupting," and is rendered variously as "peddling an adulterated message" (Verkuyl), "bartering the Word of God" (Panin), "trying to make a petty profit out of the Word of God" (Way), "a peddler of God's message" (Goodspeed), and (mostly), "*corrupting* the Word of God." It appears evident that the word came to be used of the tricks used by petty peddlers or hucksters to sell their goods (See *Arndt and Gingrich*), and thus of any corruption for base gain.

Paul was by no means a petty peddler of the Word, "*but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God,*" he says, "*speak we in Christ.*" And, certainly, his message was not *cheap*.

Paul's message was and is powerful because it was eternally true, and was sincerely delivered to his hearers. So powerful is this message that Paul suffered and died to proclaim, that we are fully convinced that if it should suddenly become popular, thousands of self-seeking ministers would "jump on the band wagon" and say, "I saw this blessed truth years ago; isn't it wonderful!" But these were the hucksters of yesterday; why should they suddenly join us now? As the apostle spoke "sincerely" and "in the sight of God," so he expected any who preach the Word to do the same. Only thus can any preacher of the Word be "*a sweet savor of Christ.*"

CHAPTER III

II Corinthians 3:1-18

YE ARE OUR EPISTLE: II Cor. 3:1-5: "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?"

"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

"And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;"

The defiant members of the Corinthian Church were denying one of the most important facts of divine revelation: the unique character of Paul's apostleship.

True, our Lord *on earth* had twelve apostles, and *only* twelve. These were promised twelve thrones in the coming kingdom, in which they would rule with Christ over the twelve tribes of Israel.

When Judas proved a traitor, Matthias was Scripturally appointed to bring the number up to twelve again, and immediately thereupon we read that *"they were all filled with the Holy Ghost"* ([Acts 2:4](#)). How great an error, then, to teach that the eleven acted in the flesh when they appointed Matthias, and it is still a greater error to teach that Paul was God's choice for Matthias' place. Paul at this time was the enemy of Christ, and would not have qualified for any of the stipulations of [Acts 1:21,22](#). Moreover, there was *immediate need* of a twelfth apostle, since the earthly establishment of the kingdom was to be offered at Pentecost (see Acts 2:14; 3:19-21).

It was *after* Christ and His kingdom had been finally rejected and had sent Stephen back to God with the message, *"We will not have this man to reign over us,"* that God did a wonderful thing. Rather than judging Israel and the world, he *saved* Saul, the leader of the rebellion and appointed him an apostle to preach to all men *"the gospel of the grace of God."* It was through this *other* apostle that the present dispensation of grace was ushered in. How far out of the way, then, were the recalcitrant Corinthians in implying that Paul was not an apostle because he was not one of the twelve, or that he should have come with "letters of commendation," indeed, should have asked *them* for a letter of commendation upon leaving them to minister in other areas.

Letters of commendation? What greater letter of commendation could he have had than the Corinthian Church itself, doubtless the largest of all the churches he had rounded. "Need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?" he asks (Ver. 1).

And there was another way of looking at this, for the apostle continues:

"Ye are our epistle written *in our hearts*, known and read of all men."

"... ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone but in fleshy tables of the heart" (Vers. 2,3).

Obviously, they had been saved to serve; they had been won to Christ to tell others about Him and in this they were written on the apostle's heart, not with ink, or on tables of stone, but by "*the Spirit of the living God.*"

According to Ver. 3, *the Lord's people* are a letter from Christ, penned by the Holy Spirit, addressed to all the world. Thus we should not only proclaim His grace to all, but *live* the life as well ([Rom. 6:4](#); [Eph. 2:10](#); [Col. 2:6](#)). Remember, beloved reader, that we ourselves are the only gospel some people read with any care.

PAUL AND THE NEW COVENANT: // *Cor. 3:6-11*: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

"But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face to Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

"How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

"For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

"For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious,"

The details of the New Covenant are outlined for us [in Jer. 31:31-34](#), though the covenant is alluded to elsewhere in Jeremiah. This covenant is unique in several ways:

1. It was *promised* about 600 years before Christ. ([Jer. 31:31](#)).

2. It was *made* at Calvary ([Matt. 26:28](#)), about 33 A.D.

3. It will be *fulfilled* when Christ returns to reign over Israel and the world ([Rom. 11:26,27](#)).

It is unique, also, in that it is the one Old Testament covenant that is *entirely spiritual*. There are no legal stipulations, nothing about sacrificial offerings, or holy days, or a land, a kingdom, or a throne, but only of the forgiveness of sins, of knowing the Lord, and of an imparted desire to do God's will.

The reason why the fulfillment of this covenant will take place only after the present dispensation has run its course is because the mystery had to be revealed before the promise could be fulfilled. What Israel failed to do under "the letter," i.e. the Law, she will be impelled and enabled to do by the Spirit, when her Messiah returns.

It should be carefully noted that Peter at Pentecost said nothing about the New Covenant being fulfilled. In fact, he did not even mention the New Covenant. When his convicted hearers asked, "What shall we do?" he sent them right back under the Law, to John the Baptist's "*baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*" ([Acts 2:38](#); cf. [Mk. 1:4](#)). Not one word can be found in Peter's Pentecostal address about the death of Christ *for us* or "the gospel of the grace of God." Rather he *charged* his hearers with the death of Christ and *warned* them that He was alive again ([Acts 2:22-24](#); [Acts 3:14,15](#)). Paul was the *first* to declare:

"BUT NOW the righteousness of God *without the Law* is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets" ([Rom. 3:21](#)).

THE NEW COVENANT AND US: With whom was the New Covenant made? "With the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" ([Jer. 31:31](#)). Is it in any way related, then, to the Gentiles? Some answer "No," and have concluded that in the above passage Paul must have been proclaiming a kingdom gospel, and that therefore the Corinthian epistles must have been written to Jew,²³ rather than to Gentiles, that the celebration of Christ's death at the Lord's table is not intended for us, etc. But they are wrong.

Again and again, in his epistles, Paul makes it clear that he proclaimed only one gospel, "*the gospel of the grace of God.*" Indeed in [Acts 20:24](#): he declares his desire to "finish" the ministry which he had "received of the Lord Jesus." Certainly he never speaks of having been sent to proclaim more than one gospel; it is always *one message*, which he received from the Lord in glory.

But the apostle *explains* as follows how it is that the New Testament affects the Gentile as well as the Jew:

²³ Amazing oversight of I Cor. 12:2.

With whom was the *Old Covenant* made? Clearly with "the children of Israel" (Ex. 19:3-5). Did it not, then, have any relation to the Gentiles? Yes it did, for we read in Rom. 3:19 that "What things soever the Law saith, it saith to them that are under the Law: **THAT EVERY MOUTH MAY BE STOPPED, AND ALL THE WORLD MAY BECOME GUILTY BEFORE GOD.**"

If God required of *any* group the righteous standards of the Old Covenant, the Law, that group would surely be condemned at the outset, for the apostle declares that "without" such "holiness, *no man shall see the Lord*" (Heb. 12:14).

But "the blood of the New Covenant" was shed, not only to redeem Israel, but to replace the Law with a "better" covenant.

Addressed to Gentiles, Col. 2:14 has our Lord:

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and *took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.*"

Indeed, referring to both the Old and New Covenants in Heb. 8 the apostle declares:

"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for a second.

"For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Heb. 8:7,8).

And further on:

"In that He saith, *A New Covenant*, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Ver. 13).

This declaration by Paul shows that 600 years before Christ, when God first promised to make a New Covenant, the first had already grown old and ineffective. If I say to a friend: "I am going to purchase a *new* car," I have already implied that I have an old one. Thus, by promising to make "a new covenant," He has called the first "*old*" and "ready to vanish away." And so the Old Covenant, affecting both Jew and Gentile has, by the precious blood of Christ, been replaced by the New Covenant, also affecting both Jew and Gentile, for if the Gentile is condemned by the Law, the Old Covenant, he may also partake of the blessings of the New, for, "the blood of the New Covenant" was shed to remove the curse of the old. See Heb. 2:9, where we read that our Lord was made for a little while lower than the angels "for the suffering of death . . . that He by the grace of God should taste death *for every man.*"

It goes without saying that "the blood of the New Covenant," was also shed for the Gentiles, for this was *His* blood, the only blood He shed.

It also goes without saying that the blessings of the New Covenant are *in fact* bestowed upon believing Gentiles. Examine [Jeremiah 31:33,34](#) and see. Has not God written His law upon *our* hearts? Do we not *desire* to obey His will ([Rom. 8:3,4](#)). Is He not *our* God? Are we not His people? ([Tit. 2:14](#)). Do we not know Him, from the least of us to the greatest of us? ([Gal. 4:9](#)). Has He not forgiven us *our iniquities*--"*according to the riches of His grace*" ([Eph. 1:7](#)). Will He ever remember *our* sins against us? *Never!* ([Eph. 1:6](#)).

Do we receive these blessings because they were in any way promised to us? No; what was *promised* to Israel, we receive by *grace*. We receive these blessings because "the blood of the New Covenant" was shed for the sins of the whole world, "*that He might reconcile both [Jews and Gentiles] unto God in one Body by the cross*" ([Eph. 2:16](#)).

THE MINISTRATIONS OF DEATH AND LIFE: Contrasting the New Covenant with the Old, the apostle points out that "the letter," with its requirements and penalties, "*kills*." Therefore the dispensation of the Law is called "*the ministration of condemnation*" and "*the ministration of death*" ([II Cor. 3:7,9](#)).

The ministration of the Law began in a blaze of glory. Mt. Sinai was "altogether on a smoke...as the smoke of a furnace." There were thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake, driving the people back. There was the sound of a trumpet, "exceeding loud." There was the glorious Shekinah cloud in which God Himself appeared and literally "spake all these words" ([Ex. 19:9 - 20:1](#)).

But ere Moses had even come down from the Mount with the tables of stone, the people were breaking the very first commandment, dancing naked like heathen around a golden calf.

From here on, at the very outset, the Law took on another aspect. Judgment had to be pronounced and penalties inflicted. Nor could any escape its just sentence of condemnation and death. What had begun in glory now lead only to gloom, "because *the Law worketh wrath*" ([Rom. 4:15](#)).

But there can be no gloom associated with the administration of the New Covenant, says the apostle, for under it righteousness and life are ministered to all who will receive them by faith. This is because the claims of the Old Covenant were fully met by Christ at Calvary. Thus the ministration of the New Covenant outshines that of the Old in every respect:

"If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones was glorious . . . how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious, for if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had

no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."

If I light a lamp in a dark room at night the glory of the lamp will fill the room with light. But when the sun rises the glory of the lamp will fade until one can barely notice that it is lit. Thus the ministration of the Law has "no glory in this respect, by reason of" the infinite glory of the ministration of grace.

What emotions must have filled the heart of Paul as he was first sent, by the grace of God, to minister righteousness and life to men cursed by sin! It was a foretaste of what Israel will some day receive by promise, but all the more remarkable because ministered during "this present evil age," entirely by grace and apart from any promise.²⁴ Surely "*where sin aboundeth, grace did much more abound.*"

Imagine being appointed by the rejected, but glorified Lord, to proclaim to all men everywhere:

"BUT NOW the *righteousness of God* without the *Law* is manifested, being witnessed by the *Law* and the prophets;

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ²⁵ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is *no* difference:

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:21-24).

Indeed so far does Paul distance the Law from grace that in Rom. 4:4,5 he says:

"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

"But to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith is counted for righteousness*,"

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

How appropriate, in the light of all the above, is the fact that it is not Peter nor any of the twelve, but Paul, by inspiration of God, who calls himself and his co-

²⁴ Save that which God made to Himself in eternity past (Tit. 1:2).

²⁵ See the author's booklet, *The Faith of Christ*, explaining the meaning of Paul's significant term, "The faith OF Jesus Christ," used 7 times in his epistles.

workers *"able ministers of the New Covenant."* As we stated at the beginning of this section, *the mystery had to be revealed before the promise (to Israel) could be fulfilled.*

MOSES AND HIS VEIL: II Cor. 3:12-18: "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.

"And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

"But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament [Covenant]; which veil is done away in Christ.

"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

"Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

How often the mistranslation of a single word has obscured the meaning of a whole passage, or perhaps several passages of Scripture! The account of Moses and his veil is a case in point.

It is generally supposed that Moses, having come from the presence of God with the Law, had a countenance so glorious that he covered it with a veil in order to address the children of Israel.

This is not so. It is true that the children of Israel could not "stedfastly" behold Moses' face, but he did not hide his glory from them.

This incident took place, it must be remembered, after the apostasy of the golden calf, as Moses brought down the Ten Commandments for the second time. It is true that Aaron and the children of Israel "were afraid to come nigh," when they saw the glory of Moses' countenance, *but he called them back.*

"... and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.

"And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai" (Ex. 34:31,32).

Nothing is said here about Moses covering his face with a veil. Indeed, it is distinctly stated that when Moses came out from the presence of the Lord a second time,

"The children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone" (Ex. 34:35).

It was when he had *finished* speaking with them that he put the veil over his face, that they might not see the glory *fade*.

The misconception of this incident has no doubt arisen from one word erroneously supplied in the *Authorized Version*. Verse 33 in the *Authorized* reads:

"And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face."

The word "till" is not found in the original²⁶ and its injection tends only to confuse the picture. More correction we might supply the word "when," so that the passage reads:

"And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face."

It does not seem, however, that it is necessary to supply any word, for as it is the passage reads simply:

"And Moses, done speaking with them, put a veil on his face."

The point is that Moses had no intention of hiding the glory of his countenance from the children of Israel, but rather wished them to see it. This is why he called them back when they fled. He put the veil on his face when he had done speaking, only that they might not see the glory *disappear*.

This explains II Cor. 3:7 and 13, where we read that *"the glory of his countenance . . . was to be done away"* (Lit., "disappear"), and that he "put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly *look to the end of that which is abolished*" (Again, lit., "*which was to disappear*").

The glory of the Law will never fade away; but the ministration of it, though begun in glory, ended in shame and disgrace, and this is what Moses' transient glory typified. As he communicated the Law of God to the children of Israel his face shone, but this glory soon passed away and the further ministration of the Law brought judgment and death.

²⁶ The *Authorized Version* wisely indicates this by printing the word in italics.

It is interesting to note that the dispensation of the Law began and ended as men with shining countenances addressed the people of Israel.

It began as Moses, with the glory of God upon his face, gave to Israel the divine commandments. It ended as Stephen, his face also aglow with heaven's glory, charged Israel with breaking these commandments.²⁷ And the record regarding Stephen is no less significant than that regarding Moses.

"And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).

And this man, with shining countenance, closed his address with the words:

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

"Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53).

But the glory departed from Stephen's face too; not because of any failure in him, but because of their wickedness, for in response to these words they dragged him out and stoned him to death. And so the ministration of the Law had indeed ended in gloom.

But Israel could not - and cannot yet - see it. As the apostle states: Though the veil is off Moses' face, it is still upon their hearts (II Cor. 3:15). They do not see that the Law can only condemn them.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:3,4).

UNFADING GLORY OURS: But we do not minister condemnation and death. We minister righteousness and life. Hence the apostle says:

"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness [boldness] of speech.

²⁷ Sir Robert Anderson called this the "secret crisis" in Israel's history, after which God raised up Paul to proclaim salvation by grace, apart from the Law.

"And not as Moses, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished [was to disappear]" (II Cor. 3:12,13).

God is not today demanding obedience and prescribing penalties for disobedience. He is rather imparting life, through the Spirit, "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," not bondage (Ver. 17).

The glory of this ministry will never fade. We may speak without reserve, not needing, as Moses did, a veil to hide the passing glory.

"But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (Ver. 18).

The glass here referred to is, of course, a mirror. We look into it, not through it. This mirror, in which we behold Christ, is the Word. Nor is this the only passage in which the Word is called a mirror. In James 1:23, 24 we read:

"For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

"For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

Thus, in the divine Mirror we may behold *ourselves*, or we may behold *Christ*.

It is well to use it first to behold ourselves and see the ruin sin has brought. But let us not stop here. Let a man look into a mirror and find a bright light in it and the glory will be reflected in his face. And so it is with the Word. When we see ourselves in it we must necessarily be disappointed, but when we look for *Him* in the Word and find *Him* there, His glory casts its reflection upon us!

What need have we then to hide our face? If David could say: "*They looked unto Him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed*" (Psa. 34:5), how much more should this be said of us! We know, or should know, more of Him than those of David's day, and those Scriptures specially addressed to us send us forth, not to proclaim God's righteous demands, but to proclaim Christ, the Righteous One, who met those demands at Calvary and offers justification and life to all.

And as, in our study of the Scriptures, we turn from the shame of man to the glory of Christ; as we behold Him and see all we have and are in Him, His glory is reflected in us and we become gradually more like Him, "*changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*"

CHAPTER IV

II Corinthians 4:1-18

THEREFORE WE FAINT NOT: *II Cor. 4:1-6*: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

"But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

"But if our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost:

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

As Moses was used of God to dispense the Law, so Paul was used of God to usher in the dispensation of grace. With Paul the Ministration of Condemnation and Death was replaced by the Ministration of Righteousness and Life.

But why does the apostle speak of "mercy" in connection with not fainting in this ministry? Is not grace far more abundant than mercy? Mercy is for those who either have sinned, or are in trouble, and Paul was indeed in trouble. For preaching Christ and His grace, the apostle had "suffered trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds."

There was much now to cause the apostle to faint and to tempt him to give up. Turn to [II Cor. 11:23-29](#) and note the fearful persecutions which he had already by then endured.

There is a great lesson for us here, for Satan hates grace and does all in his power to oppose it. Indeed, [I Cor. 15:58](#) deals directly with this tendency on our part to become discouraged and give up:

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that *your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*"

We find more such encouragement in Gal. 6:9, where the apostle urges us:

"Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Notice carefully: "WE shall reap *if we faint not.*"

Often, to be sure, one sows and another reaps, and *both* will be rewarded for their labors, but often Christians fail to reap the spiritual fruit of their labors because they have become discouraged and faint. But here we have God's unfailing promise that "*we shall reap if we faint not.*"

Whatever the cost, however, the apostle was determined to keep his ministry honoring to God. In Ver. 2 he emphasizes the negative side of his ministry, listing those things he had "renounced":

"hidden things,"

"dishonesty,"

"craftiness,"

"handling the Word of God deceitfully."

Rather, by sharp contrast, he informs us what his policy was in preaching the Word:

"... but BY MANIFESTATION OF THE TRUTH COMMENDING OURSELVES TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD" (Ver. 2).

Thus he could say to the spiritual leaders at Ephesus, "*I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you*" and "*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20:20,27).

This was indeed preaching with a clear conscience. But how different from much of the preaching - and lack of it - which we see today on every hand.

"Hidden things": How many of these have been revealed of late in the civil courts, to the disgrace of Christianity.

"Dishonesty": A scandal for unbelievers nationwide to gloat over.

"Craftiness": Rampant in the Church today. Interdenominational boards *must* have at least an understanding among them that *it is best not to discuss certain Bible subjects*. They have contributions coming in from Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, *et al*, and they should not jeopardize the income to this work of the Lord! This policy of tacitly classing such subjects as water baptism

taboo is thought necessary simply because "*an interdenominational organization is impossible without compromise.*" There are many more forms of this sin, but this is one that has gained respectability and is widely defended.

"Handling the Word of God deceitfully." How many a plain Scripture has been perverted or re-worded, to defend some religious doctrine!

All this Paul *renounced*, and we should renounce it. May God make it our passion to present the Word intelligently to others and to shun the very thought of *using* the Scriptures to defend or promote our own views.

As we have seen, Paul got his message across by "*manifestation of the truth.*" There was no human philosophy, no psychological approach, no sophistry, no appeal to tradition. He simply related to his hearers *what God says* and as the Holy Spirit applied the Word, hearts were convicted and souls saved.

And now, with the written Word complete, how great is our opportunity - and our responsibility. How great the challenge to direct men to the *highest authority*, to open *the Bible* and simply show them *what God says!* And this author has often been thrilled to see that look of joyful comprehension as the *Word* does its work in the sinner's heart.

Does the reader recall the two broken-hearted disciples on the way to Emmaus, when the risen Lord overtook them and dispelled their grief by simply showing them that the crucifixion had been predicted in Bible prophecy as part of God's great plan? In Luke 24:32 we find them saying to each other:

"Did not our heart burn within us as He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

This is what men need so sorely: the *Word*, rightly divided and plainly presented. And it is only as we do this that we can "commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, once told how he had engaged two Chinese linguists to help him translate the New Testament into Mandarin. When they had reached Romans 1, they suddenly disappeared. Later Mr. Taylor was able to locate one of them and questioned him as to why he had abandoned the work so suddenly. His reply: "Who told *you* about the sins of the Chinese people?" The terrible indictment of Romans 1 had stricken his conscience.

It is a truth we should never underestimate: show the lost what the Bible says, simply and rightly divided, and you will have their consciences on your side.

IF OUR GOSPEL BE HID: *Ver. 3:* Note how all through Paul's epistles he emphasizes the unique character of the message committed to him. In *Ver. 3* it is not "the gospel," but "*our* gospel." Paul, by the grace of God, and no one until Paul,

Proclaimed *complete salvation* through the *finished, all-sufficient work of Christ* in dying our death at Calvary.

Appropriately he designates this message "*the gospel of the glory of Christ*" (Ver. 4).²⁸ Before Paul the cross was spoken of as a thing of shame, the place where Christ was slain by wicked murderers. Thus the charges and warnings of Peter's Pentecostal message. But Paul's "preaching of the cross," is distinctly *good news*. It reveals the Christ of Calvary, not as a *Victim* but as a mighty *Victor*, gloriously accomplishing what He had set out to do. Heb. 1:3 expresses it beautifully:

"Who being the brightness of [God's] glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Here we have no one slaying Christ. Rather He, the Almighty One, purges our sins "*by Himself*" and, the work done, He sits down at the Father's right hand. Note: there is no additional "purgatory" for us. Our Lord purged our sins, paying the last farthing of our debt, and when He had finished the work, He went home and sat down. (cf. [Col. 2:14,15](#); [Heb. 10:11,12](#)).

God's holy Law and a wicked Satan *both* point the finger of accusation at us and say, "*He is guilty. He must die,*" But our Lord answers them both, saying "*I died his death.*"

HID TO THEM THAT ARE LOST: Ver. 3: This is the truth simply stated. A Christian believer may not understand the distinctiveness of "the gospel of the glory of Christ," yet it is by this message that he was saved. He was not saved as the preacher *charged* him with the death of Christ, but as he heard the good news that Christ, in love, paid his debt of sin. This means that many who oppose those who proclaim the Pauline gospel, are actually preaching it themselves - and then, too often, trying to prove that Christ on earth and Peter at Pentecost preached the same thing! These Christian leaders may be confused, dispensationally, so that their total message is not consistent, but Paul's gospel, his "preaching of the cross" (as good news), is not hid to them.

The most adamant anti-dispensationalist among Fundamentalists, still preaches to lost sinners that:

"We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

²⁸ It is unfortunate that the A.V. translators departed from the *Received Text* here, for the Greek reads, not "the glorious gospel of Christ," but "*the gospel of the glory of Christ,*" and this is surely what the Pauline gospel is.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3:5).

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9).

Only to the lost is this gospel hid, and it is this fact that should convict those who preach Paul's gospel for salvation, yet oppose his distinctive apostleship and "the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles."

THE WILLING DUPES OF SATAN: Ver. 4: Mark well, the lost are the *willing* dupes of Satan. He is called the "god" of this world, or age. He was "cast out" at Calvary (John 12:31), and Christ would have replaced him as the Prince of this world had Israel accepted Him (Acts 3:19-21), but Israel and the world *worshipped* Satan, were led by him and walked in his ways. Thus, today, the Lord Jesus Christ is rejected and Satan remains the prince, yes, the *god* of this age, all by the will of man and the sufferance of God.

This being the case, the "god of this age" has an easy time "blinding the minds of them that believe not" to keep the light of the glory of Christ from shining in.

How fitting, then, for the apostle to continue: "*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*" (Ver. 5). Paul did not preach himself, much less ask others to be good and do good to make themselves acceptable to God. No, his constant theme was *Christ* and His all-sufficient satisfaction for sin:

"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness;

"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:23,24).

And in proclaiming this message he was *their* "servant for Jesus' sake."

LIGHT SHINING OUT OF DARKNESS: Ver. 6: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

What a mighty verse is that with which our Bible virtually opens: "*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light*" (Gen. 1:3). Ah, but here is an even greater light. Paul himself had experienced the glory of that light; a light more brilliant than that light, "above the brightness of the noonday sun," which had stricken Saul of Tarsus, the cruel persecutor, down so that he "fell to the earth" (Acts 26:13,14). No, it is not physical light that Paul speaks of here, it is *spiritual light* that "shines in our hearts." But the same God who caused light to shine through the stygian darkness of a ruined universe simply by His Word, is the God who speaks *spiritual* light into

the hearts of believers: light that gives *"the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (Ver. 6).

When that light shone into Paul's heart, it was because he had seen *Christ* ([I Cor. 15:8](#)), and we are similarly blessed when we see Christ in the Word.

Finally, note that we receive "the knowledge of the glory of God" as we behold "the face of Jesus Christ" (Ver. 6).

It is as we behold a man's face that there is *recognition, mutual understanding, a true meeting together*, and thus it is when we behold the face of Jesus in the study of the Word. We know Him, we love Him, we trust Him, and long for the day when we shall see Him in glory. And then:

One glimpse of His dear face
All sorrow will erase!

THIS TREASURE: // Cor. 4:7-15: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

"So, then, death worketh in us, but life in you.

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

"Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

In [II Cor. 4:1-7](#) Paul calls his message: *"this ministry,"* i.e., of "righteousness and life" (Ver. 1), *"our gospel,"* or good news (Ver. 3), and *"this treasure"* (Ver. 7).

What a treasure is "the gospel of the grace of God," enriching vastly everyone who receives it!

But we must not forget that "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels*" (us!), so prone to break, so apt to be crushed.

Amazing! God does not deposit "the riches of His grace" in golden receptacles or steel coffers. He does not commit them to angels or archangels, but to *men*, frail fragile men, albeit redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Again Paul is our example in this, for in Eph. 3:8 he says:

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Indeed, he states in I Cor. 1:27-29 that God has "*chosen*" the foolish, the weak, the base, those that "are not," "to bring to nought the things that are, *that no flesh should glory in His presence,*" and this is exactly what is taught here in II Cor. 4:7.

EARTHEN VESSELS: Vers. 8-12: The apostle now shows how he himself was often at the breaking point, yet through the power and grace of God, always came through victoriously.

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Troubled on every side | yet not distressed ²⁹ |
| Perplexed | but not in despair |
| Persecuted | but not forsaken |

Note: the first of each of the above pairs shows that Paul was indeed an earthen vessel: *troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted and often cast down*. But the second in each pair shows the power and grace of God in keeping him from going to pieces: *Not distressed, or crushed, not in despair, not forsaken, not destroyed*.

How many of God's servants have experienced both factors, the weakness of human nature and the love and power and grace of God in preserving them for His service!

Note the words "*on every side*." He was *surrounded* by trouble; yet the Lord did not allow it to smother or crush him. God always said to His enemies, as it were: "Thus far and no farther."

Often he was "perplexed," experiencing the truth of Rom. 8:26: "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Yet he was never in "despair," for he well knew the truth of the foregoing passage and was wholly willing to leave the

²⁹ The English *distress* had a much stronger usage 380 years ago when KJV was translated. We might be distressed over the slightest matter, while they sooner spoke of "a ship in distress," or "distress of nations."

outcome in the loving hands of Him who worketh all things together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose ([Rom. 8:28](#)).

The apostle was often persecuted, but never forsaken. He had learned the value of Christian friends, and walked daily in fellowship with God.

Often he had been "cast down," but never had he been "destroyed." There may be an allusion here to the boxer, for Paul, in his writings, uses many of these metaphors from the games and public life of the Roman world. In that case this may be an allusion to the boxer: knocked down, but not out. In any case, the apostle had come through many adversities, but by the grace of God was still "fighting the good fight of the faith."

Thus indeed, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, *that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.*"

Beloved reader, God will not allow men to boast in His presence. This is why He does not use many mighty or noble persons. No, He has *chosen* "earthen vessels" to carry His message of grace to the lost, so often using them mightily though they have little or none of this world's qualifications.

About 100 years ago the *Cambridge Inter-College Christian Union* invited Dwight L. Moody to address them. Some of the distinguished Cambridge professors were horrified, for Moody was known to be an uneducated man. But they were more horrified when Moody announced that his first message would be on "Dan'l" (He could not pronounce *Daniel*).

However, as Moody began to speak they sat up, as it were, and took notice. Soon they were listening intently and following his every word and, before the meeting was over many of them humbly placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

How amazing that God has committed the riches of His grace to earthen vessels, Christian friend, and that He uses us to show to all that it is He who keeps us from cracking and breaking up! Indeed, with all our weakness, we are invincible as we trust Him for needed help.

THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS: *Vers. 10-12:* Many people think that the Christian life is a life of calm contentment, and it is indeed true that some great and godly believers have lived their entire lives thus. But Paul's testimony here bears witness that in some cases the saints have had to bear almost unbelievable opposition and persecution for their faithfulness to God and His Word.

The irresponsible Corinthians may "live and reign," but Paul is "troubled on every side... perplexed ... persecuted . . . and cast down," because of his faithfulness to them.

He had little in this life; he longed for the resurrection life of Christ in glory. And little wonder, for he here describes himself as "*Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,*" and "*alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake,*" and this, "*that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body,*" and "*in our mortal flesh*" (Vers. 10,11). How he longed to share the fellowship of our Lord's sufferings, that he might impart to them, *now*, while "in the flesh," the life of Christ! Indeed, he died a thousand deaths that they might have life (Ver. 12). Thus:

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" (Ver. 7).

We repeat: God will not allow men to boast in His presence. He saves us freely, "by grace, through faith . . . lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). He chooses the weak and commits His message of grace to earthen vessels, so often using men with little or none of this world's qualifications, so that it will be evident that the victory was *His*, not theirs.

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH: // Cor. 4:13: "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak."

It is inspiring to hear the Psalmist, though "greatly afflicted," say, "*I believed, therefore have I spoken*" (Psa. 116:10).

It is inspiring too, to see the Apostle Paul, "troubled ... perplexed . . . persecuted . . . cast down . . . always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" - it is inspiring to see him take his stand with David and to hear him declare that he has "*the same spirit of faith,*" adding "**WE ALSO BELIEVE, AND THEREFORE SPEAK**" (II Cor. 4:13).

If only all who believe "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery" would *speak out today* there would be a sweeping REVIVAL TOMORROW, the results of which would be as refreshing as amazing. And those who believe the heaven-sent message committed to Paul, and now to us, *should* speak out, for this is "the spirit of faith."

Alas, however, there are still comparatively few who have "the spirit of faith"; who will stand openly for light which God has so graciously given them. They say, "I believe it but do not talk about it; it causes so much trouble." They say, "We must tread softly," and water down their message for "the fear of man," or because they are popular, and enjoy "the praise of men." Some profess to feel that their ministry will be restricted if they do not compromise with popular religious opinion.

Little wonder that in their unfaithfulness they *lose* the power of the Spirit in their preaching. David and Paul and Luther and Darby could not have been so easily silenced.

By God's grace let us not drift with the crowd, with the multitude of those who no longer feel it matters that God's Church is confused and divided; with the pragmatists who say: "The mystery revealed to Paul certainly unlocks the Scriptures, but it is an unpopular message, and with such a message how can I keep the crowds coming?"

We can well imagine what these self-seekers would do if suddenly the truth of the mystery were to become popular, for we have seen it happen on a local scale. Brother "*Just-So-That-I-Profit*" would quickly climb the bandwagon and exclaim: "I saw this blessed truth years ago. I've always said it would be widely accepted some day. Isn't it wonderful! I'm thrilled to be preaching it!" But *his* "testimony" brings no glory to God; only fading glory to himself.

Where the Word of God is concerned, then, let us rather stand with David and Paul, who said "We believe and therefore speak" *when it was not easy to speak*. This is "the spirit of faith."

And as we stand, we may rejoice in the apostle's own assurance:

"... He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,

"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5,6).

THAT BLESSED HOPE: How Paul's heart glowed with "that blessed hope" of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to take His own out of this world to be with Him in glory! He speaks of it here in connection with the resurrection of the body already referred to in this chapter:

"Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (Ver. 14).

Here is further evidence that Paul never dreamed that the dispensation of grace would continue for *almost two millenniums*. He felt it was amazing that our Lord would wait for *a quarter of one century* before recalling His ambassadors and declaring war on this Christ-rejecting world. How fitting, then, that he should add:

"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God" (Ver. 15).

The word "redound," here means to return in abundant overflow, like the incoming tide. Thus "the abundant grace" of God to us, should, "through the thanksgiving of many," return in a refreshing overflow "to the glory of God."

"THE OUTWARD MAN" and "THE INWARD MAN": // Cor. 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The Scriptures consistently teach that there is an *inward* man and an *outward* man, though we should know this from observation and experience. The body is only the *house* in which the true man, the *inner* man, lives.

Stop and think a moment. These eyes of yours do not actually see. It is *you*, inside, who sees *through* them. One moment after a man has died, his eyes are still in perfect condition, but they see nothing. The man himself, the spirit and the soul, who saw *through* them, "the inner man," has left the body, and the eyes have been left behind as the lens of a camera or the windows in a house; they never saw anything. It was the camera itself, or the tenant of the house, who had seen *through* them. Our eyes and ears are but *physical instruments* to make possible our seeing and hearing.

The apostle, recognizing the above distinction, declares that his persecutions have not caused him to faint, for while "the outward man" indeed "perishes," "*the inward man is renewed day by day.*"

We know by Scripture, observation and experience, that "the outward man" does indeed *perish*. While Adam was enjoying the beauty of the Garden of Eden, God warned him about eating of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." "For," said He, "*in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" ([Gen. 2:17](#)).

And in that day Adam indeed became a dying creature, and by him "sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Rom. 5:12).

Thus, as far as *the outward man* is concerned, all men everywhere: rich as well as poor, educated as well as illiterate, the mighty ruler as well as the poor slave: all are *perishing creatures*.

Despite the constant battles to keep the body alive; despite all the efforts of medical science, and of the nutritional experts - and of those who claim to have gifts of healing, the death rate still remains at one per person with few indeed living to be even 100 years of age. Despite all the surgery and all the pills and medicines, and all the vitamins and natural foods, men still continue to die.

People who believe the Bible have no trouble understanding this, for they recognize the truth of God's Word as to the fall of man. Thus they can quote Heb. 9:27,28 in their *entirety*, including the "as" and the "so":

"And AS it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

"SO Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without [apart from] sin unto salvation."

Thank God, the believer in Christ does not need to "block out" the thought of a perishing body. He knows that our blessed Lord died our death for sin at Calvary,

"... that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14,15).

Let us thank God without ceasing for this glorious deliverance from the bondage under which so many are "petrified," as it were, at the very mention of death.

Thank God, while the outward man is being steadily dissolved, "the inward man," the real *you*, may be, and *should* be, "renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:16). But *how* is this accomplished?

The answer is simple, but there is no *other* way. We are spiritually renewed only as we take the time for *Bible study and prayer*.

Away with the foolish notion that after our conversion to Christ everything will somehow take care of itself. Those who entertain this notion are often quick to quote Rom. 8:28, but fail to *practice* the part of this verse which applies to themselves. They are apt to neglect meeting with God's people³⁰ to hear a Bible-teaching pastor lead them in the study of the Word. They're too busy to do more than give a verse or two their passing attention and, perhaps, breathe a hurried prayer. The religious TV shows are good enough for this.

What if we stopped eating or breathing, what would happen to the outer man? The same is true, spiritually, of the inner man. Remember our Lord's words to Satan, man's archenemy:

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

And Peter, after he had begun to understand the great Pauline message, declared to his Jewish readers:

³⁰ See Heb. 10:25 as to this.

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere [or pure] milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2).

There is no other way for the inward man to be renewed day by day than by prayerful study of the Word.

So, dear reader, if you would be strong against the adversities of life and the discouragements of physical infirmity, turn off that TV and get your Bible out, asking God for light as you give yourself to the study of His Book.

But in addition to studying the Word prayerfully, one who wishes to be "renewed day by day," should be a *praying person*, for prayer is the very breath of the Christian life. Don't wait until discouragement has taken over before you do this. That's like waiting until you are down in bed with malnutrition and disease, before you start realizing the value of proper food and fresh air.

Take this exhortation to heart, beloved, and begin *now* to give the proper attention to the Word and to prayer - the kind of prayer that gets one close to God. Then, and then alone, you will rejoice as "*the inward man is renewed day by day.*"

A VALUABLE INVESTMENT IN GLORY TO COME: II Cor. 4:17,18: It has always puzzled us that so many Bible students, yes, so many Bible *teachers*, have considered this passage of Scripture without fully seeing that it presents the believer's affliction as a *valuable investment in glory to come*. Few commentators, even, seem to have grasped this clearly. Some have made much of at least some of the contrasts in these verses, but evidently have not fully grasped the connection between the one and the other. In considering this important fact, then, let us first review the great contrasts this passage presents.

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. "Affliction" | "Glory" |
| 2. " <i>Light</i> affliction" | " <i>Weight</i> of glory" |
| 3. "A moment" | "Eternal" |
| 4. "But" (merely) | "Far more exceeding" |
| 5. "The things which are seen" | "The things which are not seen" |
| 6. "We look not" | "We look" |

Let us now consider each of these great contrasts individually:

1. AFFLICTION vs GLORY: No one but our Lord Himself can fully grasp Ver. 17, for only He left the glories of heaven, where all was harmony and angels rushed to do His bidding, to experience the *disharmony* and rebellion of this sin-

cursed world. But in the ages to come we, redeemed sinners, will *share His glory* as He shared our shame. Thus Paul could say:

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are *not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*" (Rom. 8:18).

Note carefully: this glory to come will not merely be revealed "*to us*" but "*in us*." We shall be glorified. *What an investment*, then, is the present affliction!

2. LIGHTNESS vs WEIGHT: Gal. 6:2 and 5 declare in our English translation that we should "*bear one another's burdens*," yet also that "*every man shall bear his own burden*." Is this a contradiction? Perhaps in the translation, but certainly not in the original language. True, if we obeyed *both* these injunctions even as they appear in the English, our happiness would be greatly increased. However, the two Greek words for "burden," here, have a marked difference in significance. In Ver. 2 the word is *baros*, denoting *heavy pressure*,³¹ while in Ver. 5 it is *phortion*, an *allotted* load, whether heavy or light.³² Thus our Lord could say: "Take My yoke upon you . . . for My yoke is easy and *My burden* [Gr., *phortion*] is light" (Matt. 11:29,30). How different was Peter's admonition at the great Jerusalem Council, concerning the Law, particularly as administered by the rulers then in high places. How he warned his hearers lest they place a yoke upon the neck of the disciples "*which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*" (Acts 15:10).³³

However, in II Cor. 4:17 we have to do with a "weight" [*baros*] of *glory*! - *glory* which must indeed *weigh heavily* against the "light affliction" we presently bear. What a prospect! "An eternal *weight of glory*!" And *what an investment!*

3. MOMENTARINESS vs ETERNITY: Ver. 17: A "moment" is the briefest period of time. It is not a minute, or even a second,³⁴ but an *instant*. In the Greek the word is an adjective. Our afflictions which now can seem so endless are, in their true perspective, only *momentary*. When we have attained to the glory to come we shall see the former afflictions in their proper dimension: as only "for a moment," or an instant. Yet these momentary afflictions work for us "a far more exceeding and *eternal weight* of glory! What an investment!

When the Church was stronger its pastors and theologians had much to say about *eternity* as related both to the saved and to the unsaved, but today it seems little thought is given to this subject, even though it is so manifestly important. Few believers, even, give enough thought to the fact that our momentary afflictions gain

³¹ Our words, barometer, *et al*, come from this Greek root.

³² *Phortion* was used of the contents of a soldier's knapsack, whether full or half empty; also of a ship's cargo, whether heavy or light. I.e. it had to do with an *allotted* load, entirely without regard to weight.

³³ The Greek word *baros* does not appear here, but the idea surely does.

³⁴ Radio broadcasters and football coaches know that second is a much longer period of time than most people realize. Indeed, our stop watches have their seconds divided into *tenths*. A man may lose a contest by *one tenth of a second*.

for us *eternal glory*, i.e., that our present sufferings are a *priceless investment* in the glory to come.

Before we proceed to the next great contrast in this passage, however, we beg leave to digress briefly, to point out a related truth regarding the adjective *momentary*, in Ver. 17.

Under the title "*Momentariness vs. Eternity*," we said: "Our afflictions, which now can seem so endless are, in their true perspective, only momentary.³⁵ A whole long life of affliction and suffering, when viewed in the light of eternity will then be correctly seen as but *momentary* (in A.V.: "*but for a moment*").

But where our *present experience* is concerned this is even more so, for God has graciously provided that our afflictions come to us only one moment at a time; one moment *after* another. Thus the present moment of sadness we suffer now will have been gone for one week seven days from now. We are not asked to bear *this* moment's suffering for more than *this one moment*. Thus we seek God's help "moment by moment." For this present life the passing of time is a blessed provision.

There is one way, of course, in which we may suffer last week's pain all over again, and that is to *brood* over it, but this is self-pity, and self-pity is *unbelief*.

"Thou art my God. My times are in Thy hand."

--Psalm 31:14-15

What need to worry then, or fret?
The God who gave His Son
Holds all my moments in His hand
And gives them, one by one!

4. INSIGNIFICANCE vs THAT WHICH EXCEEDS FAR MORE: Ver. 17: Note the meaning of the word "but" here. It is not a conjunction (as in, "not this but that"). It rather carries the sense of "*merely*," as in, "but a child," or "but one step." By using this word the apostle *discounts* our present afflictions as hardly worth considering. They are "*but for a moment*," or "*merely momentary*."

Yet, in an amazing contrast he declares that these afflictions which last "but for a moment," work for us "*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*"! What a contrast between the *insignificant instant* and its gracious "earnings," which *exceed far more! What an investment!*

5. THE VISIBLE vs THE INVISIBLE: Ver. 18: Does it not seem a bit foolish to say: "We look not at the things which are *seen*, but at the things which are *not*

³⁵ The Greek *parautika* in II Cor. 4:17 is an adjective, not a noun, but the phrase, "*but for a moment*," expresses the sense beautifully.

seen"? Does not the word "seen" indicate that we *do* look at them? Ah, but think this through: the apostle rightly declares that "the things which are seen are *temporal*."³⁶ All we can see and feel and touch will eventually pass away. As H. F. Lyte wrote in his hymn, *Abide With Me*: "Change and decay in all about I see." After we are gone, the things we treasured on earth may, for a while, be preserved as antiques by those left behind, but give them time: wear, the elements and other factors will finally consign them to oblivion. They are all *temporal* (temporary in character).

"*But that which is not seen is eternal.*" Love, sincerity, honesty, faithfulness, all those qualities which are unseen (except indirectly) are *eternal*. Long after material things have passed away, they will endure.³⁷ And must we not include those "things," (including persons) which we are *not yet permitted* to see: our blessed Lord, first of all, then the saints who have gone before, myriads of angels, the glories of heaven and a thousand blessings which await the believer in Christ.

Yes, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yes, and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel, yes, and Peter and Paul - we shall see them all. Not forever will heaven be closed to the earth; nor forever will dispensational distinctions prevail. God has clearly stated that it is His purpose:

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might *gather together in one* all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Eph. 1:10).

This will be the glorious *consummation* of the mystery! Then we will be gloriously repaid for simply having been left here on earth when our Lord, who *loved* us, so wanted us to be *with Him*. How we will rejoice, in that day, that we were left in this sad scene for a while to witness to others about the wonderful Savior who loved and died for them! What glad memories will flood our minds in that blessed day! And as to our sins: *all paid for and gone!* Indeed even our failures as *Christians* will have been dealt with at the *Judgment Seat of Christ*; the slate all wiped clean! As Avis B. Christiansen put it, it will be "*Only glory by and by!*" What a privilege, then, to proclaim reconciliation while we can to those *who* do not yet know Him! *What an investment* in glory now unseen!

6. NOT LOOKING vs LOOKING: Ver. 18: Mark well, the apostle does not say, "We see the things which are not seen"; he says, "We *look at* the things which are not seen." This is important. The Greek root *skopeo* means to *consider* or *keep in view*. Paul did not fix his spiritual eyes, or his attention, upon "the things which are seen," for he knew they would soon pass away. He "looked," rather, "at the things which are *not* seen," and rightly so. Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter wrote:

³⁶ As opposed to that which is *eternal*.

³⁷ We do not consider *evil* qualities here, for they are not included in Paul's discussion.

"Whom having *not seen*, ye love; in whom though *now ye see Him not*, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Pet. 1:8).

And concerning "those things which are above," Paul himself says:

"If ye then be risen with Christ, *seek* those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

"*Set your affection* on things above, not on things on the earth.

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3).

On what do we "set our affection"? This is what makes all the difference in the Christian life. Occupation with "the things that are seen," with "things on the earth," is bound to spell spiritual defeat, while occupation with "the things which are *not seen*," with "those things which are above" will as surely spell spiritual victory, and - *what an investment!*

MEANWHILE: Think, beloved reader: Our *light* affliction, which is *but for a moment*, indeed *instantaneous* when compared with eternity, "*worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!*"

What an investment in eternal glory to come is this *light, momentary* affliction that befalls us now! Oh, that all could see that this is what the Apostle Paul--who suffered more than any of us - teaches here, for the edification and joy of believers who are called upon to bear afflictions. What a blessing, when in sickness or trouble, to be able to say: "*it is all a valuable investment in glory to come!*"

CHAPTER V

II Corinthians 5:1-21

MORTALITY SWALLOWED UP OF LIFE: // Cor. 5:1-5: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

"If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of [by] life.

"Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

AN INTERMEDIATE BODY? Dr. Lewis Sperry Chalet, a widely recognized dispensational Bible teacher, has taught in his 8-volume *Systematic Theology*, that each believer who dies will be provided with an *intermediate body* between his death and his resurrection. Dr. Chafer's *Theology* declares that "apart from the divine provision of an intermediate body, the believer's desire that he should not be unclothed or bodiless, could not be satisfied (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. IV, P. 415).

Due to the well-deserved respect Dr. Chafer has earned among dispensational believers, his theory has become rather widely accepted among the members of the so-called "Grace Movement." For this reason we explain why we believe that this is not what this passage teaches, for this interpretation creates too many insurmountable problems.

1. If there truly were *two* "houses from heaven" prepared for the deceased believer, one an "intermediate" house and the other an "eternal" one, Verse 2 would have been the place to say so. But nothing is said to even imply this. We long to be clothed upon with our "house" (singular) which is from heaven, i.e., our resurrection body.

2. The *present* dwelling place of the believer's soul and spirit is here called a "tabernacle," or *tent*, indicating that we may "pull up stakes and move" at any time, while the "house" the apostle refers to is said to be "eternal,"³⁸ evidently referring to

³⁸ Dr. Chafer brushes aside the significance of this important word by *adding* the words: "eternal--with respect to its qualities as any body from heaven must be." But if it is only an intermediate body, as Chafer himself calls it, how can "qualities" make it "eternal"?

our resurrection body as compared with our present body, which is indeed temporary.

3. A tent itself is a temporary affair. The Bedouins and Arabs of the nomadic desert tribes, live in *tents*, wandering from place to place, while those more permanently fixed live in houses. Thus Paul calls our present body a "tabernacle," or tent, in which we live temporarily, while "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our *house* which is from heaven" (Vers. 1,2).

The body in which "the inner man" now resides is fragile, perishing, often a burden and a temptation, for since the fall it has not been conducive to spiritual living. But the new and glorified body will be forever free from any tendency toward sin, sorrow or death.

THE PROBLEM SOLVED: It is clear that the apostle longed, not for death, but for the Rapture of believers, when "mortality" will be "swallowed up of life," an event which he deemed to be near at hand (Ver. 4; cf. [I Cor. 15:54-57](#)). But it is also clear that "*this* [present] tabernacle" may be "dissolved," in which case the "inner man" would leave the body and go to be with Christ. But there is an important truth about this eventuality that Dr. Chafer seems to have missed. *Time is no factor in heaven*. This is beautifully illustrated by the journey of Gabriel from the presence of God, who is "far above all," to Daniel's presence here on earth. How many hours, days or years did this journey take Gabriel? None at all. In [Dan. 9:23](#) Gabriel informs Daniel that he "came forth" at the "*beginning*" of his 21-day prayer. Dan. 10:12,13 contains the very words of *Gabriel*:

"Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel, for from the *first day* that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

"But the Prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me *one and twenty days*: but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me...

And here was Gabriel, standing before Daniel, immediately at the close of Daniel's 21-day prayer and Gabriel's own 21-day contest with the Prince of Persia! So how long, actually did it take Gabriel to "fly" from the presence of God, "far above all," to Daniel's presence on earth? No time at all! *Time is not a factor* where heaven and heavenly things are concerned. Thus the apostle says in Ver. 4:

"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; *not for that we would be unclothed [disembodied], but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life*" (II Cor. 5:4).

The apostle was not longing for death and the dissolution of his body; he groaned and longed *for the Lord to give him his new, glorified body*. But Paul who

said, "to *die is gain*" knew that if his tent body³⁹ were dissolved he would be going to meet the blessed One who had a new, glorified body for him, "mortality swallowed up of *life*": *Christ's* life. And this, not after many years, for there are no years in heaven. Indeed, the fact that Paul longed, not to go to be with Christ in a disembodied state, but to go to Christ to receive a glorified body, is evident from his words in Rom. 8:22,23:

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."⁴⁰

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Mark well, "even we ourselves groan . . . and wait," *for what?* for death and disembodiment? No! for *"the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."*

And this new, glorified body will not be "made with hands," i.e., a *human* product, like the tents Paul toiled day after day to make. It will be *a divine creation*, "eternal in the heavens."

So we are destined for glory, Christian friend, glory greater than the highest archangel will ever know. Let us then press forward, if "groaning," also "longing" for the wonderful things promised to us in His Word.

"... if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17).

Once we see that time is not a factor in heaven, that there all is an *eternal present*,⁴¹ II Cor. 5:1, 2, 3 and 4 all become clear. The "building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (Ver. 1): a temporary intermediate body? Hardly. It is the believer's everlasting, glorified body (Phil. 3:21). "We groan" and "earnestly desire"--a temporary, intermediate body (Ver. 2)? Is this the believer's hope? Never! We desire to be clothed upon "with our house which is from heaven," to be changed into the likeness of Christ, now glorified at the Father's right hand.

³⁹ The phrase, "our earthly house of this tabernacle," reads literally, "the house of the tent" in the Greek, meaning a tent dwelling, or a tent *kind* of dwelling, the word "house" here referring simply to a *dwelling* (Gr., *oikia*).

⁴⁰ The words "until now" indicate a change in dispensation with the raising up of Paul. When Christ was on earth with the twelve, proclaiming "the gospel of the kingdom," they wrought mighty miracles of healing. And when the kingdom was *offered* at Pentecost they again wrought many miracles of healing. But this program passed away as the King and His kingdom were rejected, and now Paul says: "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together *until now*."

⁴¹ Cf. Ex. 3:14, where God instructs Moses to tell the enslaved Children of Israel: "I AM hath sent me unto you."

Thus "being clothed we shall not be found naked" [i.e., disembodied] (Ver. 3). Will we be "clothed" only with a temporary, intermediate body? No such thing is even hinted at here. He still refers to the eternal "house which is from heaven." And in Ver. 4 the apostle was obviously not longing for death and the dissolution of his physical body; he "groaned" and was "burdened," earnestly longing for his new glorified body, "that mortality might be swallowed up of *life*" - *Christ's life*.

An important passage in I Cor. 15 confirms all this since it is almost universally agreed that I Cor. 15 is the great resurrection chapter and that not until the rapture will we receive our glorified bodies.

I Cor. 15:54 deals with the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the transformation of the living saints. Concerning the *dead in Christ* he says:

"... this *corruptible* shall have put on *incorruptibility*."

But referring to the living saints, he says:

"And this *mortal* shall put on *immortality*."

Note this carefully: "This *mortal*" refers, not to the dead, but to those who are "apt to die," as all living saints are. And when shall these receive their glorified bodies? *Immediately!* They will go immediately from mortality to immortality, though some of the dead in Christ will have been "with Him" for many years: Paul and his comrades for almost two millenniums of *time on earth*.

Nothing is said about the dead having lived meantime in temporary intermediate bodies, nor is any explanation given as to why the living saints would not need such bodies. Indeed *nothing whatever is said or even implied about any temporary intermediate body*. Appropriately so, for nothing is said *anywhere* in Paul's epistles about any temporary intermediate body for members of the Body of Christ. This doctrine rose from a mere conjecture meant to answer what seemed to be an insurmountable problem. What Paul does say, so appropriately, and by inspiration of God is:

"Behold, I show you a mystery;⁴² We shall *not* all sleep but we *shall* all be changed" (I Cor. 15:51).

THE GRAND CLIMAX: II Cor. 5:5: "Now He that hath wrought us for the *selfsame thing* is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

Verse 5 is indeed the *grand climax* of this section of II Corinthians. The word "wrought" here (Gr. *katergazomai*) has the sense of *working out*, as in Phil. 2:12, "*work out* your own salvation" (i.e., from strife and its results). It has the idea of bringing about, developing, or preparing. This is a common usage of the English

⁴² Lit., "tell you a secret."

word "wrought" even today. And surely God has not "wrought" us for some temporal secondary blessing. No, He "*hath wrought us for this self-same thing*": to be glorified with Christ, with a body "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). There is no place here or in the preceding verses for a temporary, intermediate body. But this word *katergazomai* is used throughout Paul's epistles of that which God is bringing about for and in the members of the Body of Christ.

BLESSED ASSURANCE: To assure us of this glory to come, God has "*given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*" It is most important to bear in mind that an "earnest" is *not* a sample. Rather it shows that the buyer is *in earnest*. Consistently it refers to a *down payment, the firstfruits, a pledge*. It is a first payment (on the principal), a pledge that the purchaser truly means to acquire the whole. The "firstfruits" in Israel were that part of the whole crop which ripened first, thus a pledge that the rest of the crop would follow. In no case is an earnest *something like* the thing purchased; in every case it is *part of it*: the down payment.

Now to assure us that He has wrought us for this very thing (i.e., the eternal glory to come), God has given us the "*earnest of the Spirit.*" The Spirit does not yet have all of us but, thank God, we have all of Him, to help and enlighten in times of need. Eph. 1:14 declares that the Spirit:

"... is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

Rom. 8:22,23 states that not only does "the whole creation" groan and travail in pain,

"but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Finally, II Cor. 1:22 states that God has

"sealed us,⁴³ and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

Ah, but when the entire man is redeemed, not only the spirit and the soul, but also the body, then the Holy Spirit will have full possession of us, and we will wholly and joyfully fulfill God's will for us. Hallelujah!

ALWAYS CONFIDENT: // Cor. 5:6-9: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.

"(For we walk by faith, not by sight):

⁴³ We are not sealed *by* the Spirit, but *with* the Spirit, the Spirit Himself the seal (See Eph. 1:13).

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

"Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him."

We have shown that II Cor. 5:1-5, and indeed Paul's epistles as a whole speak, not of three physical bodies for the believer but of *two*.

The one has to do with *this life*; the other with *the life to come* (II Cor. 5:1).

The one Paul calls a *tent*, the other a *building* (II Cor. 5:1).

The one is *earthy*, the other *from heaven* (II Cor. 5:2).

The one is *temporary*, the other *eternal* (II Cor. 5:1).

The one is *corruptible*, the other *incorruptible* (cf., I Cor. 15:54).

The one is called *vile and humiliating*, the other *glorious, like Christ's glorious body* (cf. Phil. 3:21).

In the one we *groan*, in the *other* - *forever blessed* (II Cor. 5:4).

We have seen, too, that *time is not a factor* in eternity, so that Paul did not long for disembodiment at death, or for a temporal, intermediate body between death and resurrection. He longed to be *with Christ*, that mortality might be swallowed up of *life* and that he might receive his "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor. 5:1,4).

Now it is in view of this promised coming glory that the apostle declares, "*Therefore, we are always confident*" (Ver. 6).

"We are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight:)" (Ver. 6,7).

Our glorious position with Christ in the heavenlies and all of our "all spiritual blessings" there, are enjoyed by faith, not by sight. Indeed, there is nothing for sight in our present situation, for "*the things which are seen are temporal*" (4:18), but there is much, so much, for faith, for by faith "*we look... at the things which are not seen*" and these are "*eternal*" (*ibid*).

But this present situation is not the *best*; it is future, not present; we enjoy it only by faith. Thus the apostle says:

"We are willing⁴⁴ rather to be absent from the body, and to be present [Lit., at home]⁴⁵ with the Lord" (Ver. 8).

Note carefully that there is nothing here about a temporary, intermediate body, only about *going home to be "with Christ."*

The apostle expresses his feelings about this matter beautifully in Phil. 1:23,24, where he says:

"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better [Lit., "better by far"];

"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

He was "in a spot" between two: his deep longing to be with Christ and his responsibility to minister to the saints.

"Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (Ver. 9).

Why this? Absent from Christ, as we are, we are still *"accepted in the Beloved"* as far as our position is concerned (Eph. 1:6). Thus, when we have gone to be with Christ, finally without sin, will we not be "accepted of Him"? Ah, the reason why Paul strove - and why we should strive to be "accepted of Him" whether present or absent, is explained in the next verse.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (Ver. 10).

Before discussing this important subject, however, there is more that should be said about the passage we have been considering.

SOUL SLEEP: Verses 6-8 of the above passage are the death knell to the doctrine of soul sleep, or unconsciousness between death and resurrection.

Nowhere in Scripture do we read of soul sleep, but always of body sleep. Dan. 12:2 speaks of "them that *sleep in the dust of the earth.*" In Matt. 27:52 we read that "many *bodies* of the saints which slept arose." Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" and *then* "fell asleep" and devout men carried *him* (i.e., his body) to his burial (Acts 7:59,60; 8:2). Thus too, "David . . . *fell asleep... and saw corruption*" (Acts 13:36).

⁴⁴ From *eudokeo*, to be *well pleased*, thus, not merely to prefer, but to heartily prefer.

⁴⁵ The phrase "at home" in this passage, is used of being *with those we know and love*, referring, not to the house but to our loved ones. Being "at home with the Lord," is surely that. When believers go to be *with Him* they will at last be *at home!*

But note carefully that according to II Cor. 5:6-8 the believer is *either* "at home in the body" and "absent from the Lord," *or* "absent from the body and . . . present with the Lord." At any time we are *either* in the one state *or* in the other. Nothing is said of anything between: a period of unconsciousness, a special temporary body or anything to account for the *time* between death and resurrection, for *time is not a factor in eternity*.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST: II Cor. 5:10-12: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

"For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance and not in heart."

Twice Paul forewarns believers that "*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*" (Ver. 10, cf. [Rom. 14:10](#)).

We must be careful, however, to distinguish between "*the Judgment Seat of Christ*" and "*the Great White Throne*," where the final judgment of the unsaved will take place.

Every believer in Christ has already been judged for his *sins* at Calvary. We read in [Heb. 9:26](#) that Christ appeared "*to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*." "*There is therefore now no condemnation [or "judgment"] to them that are in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 8:1). Since our Lord *put away* all our sins by paying for them Himself at Calvary, there are no more of these left to be dealt with. But here in II Cor. 5:10 the apostle refers to a judgment of the believer's life *as a Christian*. This is also true of Rom. 14:10 above.

The Greek word for this judgment seat is *bema*, the dais upon which judges in court actions, or judges at sports events, stood, or sat. The judges at the former, of course, dealt out *justice*, while those at the latter dealt out *rewards* to those who excelled at sports events. The word *bema* is used ten times with respect to legal trials and two with respect to the giving out of awards as at sports events ([Rom. 14:10](#); [II Cor. 5:10](#)). Apart from the word itself, however, the *bema* is often referred to in Paul's epistles (e.g., [I Cor. 3:12-17](#); [Eph. 6:8](#); [Col. 3:24](#)). This word is *never* used, however, in connection with God's judgment of the unsaved. Believers have only the happier aspect of *bema* to face, with its *rewards* or *loss of rewards*, the latter of which can, however, be a most embarrassing and humiliating experience.

NO BELIEVER EXEMPT: With this last in view believers should establish it well in their minds that not one member of the Body of Christ will escape having his Christian life reviewed at the Lord's *Judgment Seat*. This is stated emphatically in the epistles of Paul:

"We shall *all* stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10).

"We must *all* appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ" (II Cor. 5:10).

"So then, *every one of us* shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

OUR CONDUCT TO BE JUDGED: Here in II Cor 5:10 the apostle warns the permissive Corinthians that our *conduct* will be reviewed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Every one who had tolerated immorality among them, and every one in particular who had *committed* the immorality will stand before Him who shed His life's blood to save them, "that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."⁴⁶ Bad," here, is a negative word, meaning "not good" or "lacking good." Thus today we might say, "whether it be *good* or *no good*." The thought is, "whether deserving rewards or not." The vilest sins of these Corinthians had been paid for and "put away" by the death of Christ on the cross, but the question at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be: What about their lives *as Christians*? Will the results of this examination be mostly rewards or loss of rewards?

As we have seen, *all* believers, without exception, will be called upon to answer for themselves at the Judgment Seat of Christ, including this phase of it, for "*with God there is no respect of persons*." The apostle makes this clear in writing to the Colossian saints:

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.

"But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong that he hath done, and *there is no respect of persons*" (Col. 3:23-25).

Neither position, nor merit, nor any other consideration will save any saint from *losing* any reward he does not deserve. He may have been a popular Christian leader on earth, yet suffer bitter disgrace at the Judgment Seat of Christ, for *there is no respect of persons with God*.

⁴⁶ Gr., *kakos* "the lack in a person or thing of those qualities which should be possessed." (Vine). It is the opposite *agathos*, good.

OUR SERVICE TO BE JUDGED: But our service and testimony as *Christians* will also be reviewed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Will *that* merit rewards or no? This aspect of the *bema* is clearly outlined for us in I Cor. 3:10-15. There it is explained that while no man will lose his salvation at the *bema*, some will be "saved so as by fire" (Ver. 15), i.e., like a man fleeing naked from his burning house with everything lost but his life.

This phase of the Judgment Seat will also affect all the members of the Body *without exception*. In I Cor. 3:10-18 terms such as "every man," "no man" and "any man" occur no less than *ten* times, clearly indicating that there will be no exceptions. "Let every man take heed how he buildeth, . . . "For other foundation can no man lay than . . . Christ Jesus," . . . "Every man's work shall be made manifest . . . it shall be revealed by fire," . . . "If any man's work abide . . . he shall receive a reward," . . . "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss," . . . "If any man destroy [Gr., *phtheiro*, to mar] the temple of God, him shall God destroy ["mar," same word]."

It should be carefully observed that the question in I Cor. 3 is not one of conduct, but of *service*, indeed, of the *kind* of service rendered, or our *workmanship*. Hence the repeated use of the word "work": "Every man's *work* shall be made manifest," . . . "The fire shall try every man's *work* of *what sort* it is," . . . "If any man's *work* abide [i.e., abide the fire of the divine scrutiny] he shall receive a reward," . . . "If any man's *work* shall be burned, he shall suffer loss . . . "

This having been established, let us go back to the beginning.

As God's instructed "masterbuilder," the Apostle Paul had laid the foundation for the Corinthian church---and the Church of the present dispensation, and warns his co-laborers to take care how they build upon it (I Cor. 3:10). In this Church, as in the Messianic Church, Jesus Christ is again the foundation; there could be no other (I Cor. 3:11), but it is now Jesus Christ viewed and known in a different way from that in which He had previously been known.

To Peter and the eleven our Lord was known as "*The Christ [Heb., Messiah], the Son of the living God*" (Matt. 16:16). It was upon a recognition of His royal claims, His *Messiahship*, that the Millennial Church was to be built (Matt. 16:18). But the Church of *this* dispensation is built upon a recognition of the *rejected* Christ as *Lord*, and *the Great Dispenser of Grace to a doomed world* (Rom. 10:9-13).

This is the foundation upon which we are to build. No longer are we to know Christ "after the flesh" (II Cor. 5:16) or to proclaim His right to reign on earth. We are to know Him now in His *present glory*, "far above all," and to proclaim His grace, undiluted and unadulterated.

It was "by the grace of God" that Paul had laid this foundation, and it is to keep God's temple of grace from being marred that he warns believers to take heed how they build upon this foundation (I Cor. 3:10), especially in view of the fact that the

great Building Inspector will some day subject the completed structure to a thorough examination.

Alas, few of God's servants have heeded the warning! The vast majority have taken *Petrine* material and built it upon the Pauline foundation. They talk about "building the kingdom" and try vainly to carry out the "great commission" given to Peter and the eleven. They have taken the law, baptism, tongues, healings and signs of the times from a former dispensation and have brought them into the dispensation of the grace of God, until the Church is so confused and divided that no one, seemingly, knows what to believe. Thus has the temple of God been marred, and for this the *builders* will have to give an account (I Cor. 3:17). It will be a bitter experience indeed for many a presently popular Christian leader to see his works go up in flames "at that day" as so much "wood, hay and stubble." And the cause? simply because he failed to "rightly divide the Word of Truth."

Conversely, must it not be like weighing "gold, silver and precious stones" to the heart of our blessed Savior, as He observes His children truly endeavoring to "rightly divide the Word of Truth," and contemplates the value of such "rightly dividing" to the world and to the Church?

It is sometimes argued that in spite of failure to rightly divide the Word of truth, souls are now being saved in great numbers, but will the builders of the Church never awaken to the fact that hands raised and people coming forward do not measure the success of their work? *Does their work abide?* And more particularly, will it abide the fiery test of the Judgment Seat of Christ? This is the question.

How important it is, then, for every servant of God to realize that the *only* way to become an *approved workman* for God, one who need not be ashamed when his testimony is reviewed at the *Bema*, is to obey II Tim. 2:15:

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH."

THE TERROR OF THE LORD, mentioned in II Cor. 5:11, is an important subject, appropriately following Paul's warning that

"we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"⁴⁷ (Ver. 10).

But, it is objected, "Is not 'terror' a strong word to use where God's dealings with *believers* are concerned?" Let us see. The Greek root here is the well-known *phobos*. It is translated "terror," in our *Authorized Version*, only 3 times: [Rom. 13:3](#); [II Cor. 5:11](#) and [I Pet. 3:14](#). It is also rendered "afraid" once ([Luke 2:9](#)), and "fear"

⁴⁷ Again, "good or no good," i.e., whether or not they are worthy of rewards.

all the other times (a total of 45). This settles the basic meaning of the word as *being afraid, or that which makes afraid*.

Some have defined the word to mean *reverential trust*, but without the slightest Scriptural foundation. Note the Holy Spirit's *usage* of this root word alone: [Matt. 28:4](#): "for fear of Him the keepers did shake"; [Luke 2:9](#): "and they were sore afraid"; [Luke 5:26](#): "And [they] were filled with fear"; [I Cor. 2:3](#): "in fear and in much trembling"; [II Cor. 7:15](#): "With fear and trembling ye received him"; [Heb. 2:15](#): "them who, through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"; [Rev. 18:10](#): "the fear of her torment."

We do not deny that the fear of God may *produce* reverential trust but it is not in itself reverential trust. It is exactly what the term implies: *fear of God*. It is the natural result of an appropriate appreciation of our own nothingness and of the infinite greatness and majesty of God. It stands opposed to pride and self-confidence and is accompanied by a wholesome fear to disobey Him.

Is this all contrary to grace? Of course not; these are the teachings of the apostle of grace.

Think a moment. If the President of the United States should graciously invite *you*, dear reader, to dine with him at the White House, would you not prepare for the visit with considerable fear and trembling? And this is a democracy! Your fear would not spring from any concern over what the President might *do* to you. It would spring, rather, from an appropriate appreciation of the importance of the presidency, if not of the president himself. Nor would it be fitting if, thus invited, you were to become too familiar with the president and treat him as a pal. The fact that the president had invited you to dinner would be no excuse for forgetting the dignity of his office.

But does not [I John 4:18](#) teach us that "perfect love casteth out fear"? Ah, but this passage from 1 John deals with the *love of God*, not the *fear of God*. Read it, and you will see that it says that an appreciation of *the perfect love of God* will cast out for us the fear of man and of *persecution*.⁴⁸ The very fact that Paul, the Apostle of grace, has more to say about the fear of God than any other New Testament writer should make it evident that the fear of God is *not* inconsistent with grace.

As to the Judgment Seat of Christ, then, we have God's promise that even the most unfaithful saint will still be saved, for salvation is wholly by the grace of God, but it will be a shameful and bitter experience for any child of God in that day to have to suffer loss while others gain rewards; to see his works go up in flames, as it were, while he himself is saved only "so as by fire"; to have to stand disgraced and empty-handed before the One who gave His life's blood to save him; to be told that he has done no *real* service for God and his fellow-men How appropriate, then, are Paul's words in II Cor. 5:11:

⁴⁸Note Ver. 37: Our love is "*made perfect*" as we " *dwell in God.*" His love is ever-perfect.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but are made manifest unto God; and I trust also, are made manifest in your consciences."

In writing the passage we have considered, the apostle was not again "commending himself to them," but was rather giving them an opportunity to "glory" in his behalf before those who gluttoned only in outward appearances (Ver. 12).

THE CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST: // Cor. 5:13-15: "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause."

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead."

"And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

In the first chapters of II Corinthians Paul has been defending his God-given apostleship because some among them had questioned this. They had said in effect, "He's not a legitimate apostle. Ask him if he is one of the twelve Christ named and see if he dares to answer that!" Many religious leaders today, in effect, do the same. They minimize his apostleship and so minimize his message as the carnal Corinthians did. But those who do this today should either accept the divine inspiration of the Scriptures or be prepared to deny it, when they read in Rom. 11:13:

"For I speak to you Gentiles, *inasmuch* as I am the apostle of the Gentiles; I magnify mine office."

Again and again Paul magnifies his office⁴⁹ in this way, and this was *necessary*, lest the whole Church be plunged back into the bondage of legalistic religion.

A few had asked why, if he was a legitimate apostle, he had not come to them with letters of recommendation, or asked *them* for such letters to others. But he had already given ample response to this:

"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or *need* we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?"

"Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, *known and read of all men*" (II Cor. 3:1,2).

The rebellious members of the Corinthian Church had denied one of the basic facts of divine revelation: the unique character of Paul's apostleship,⁵⁰ arguing that

⁴⁹ Note: He magnified *his office*, not himself. This makes an interesting study in Paul's epistles.

he had brought with him no "letters of commendation." But Paul could boldly respond:

"Letters of commendation?" What greater letter of commendation could he have had than the Corinthian Church itself, doubtless the largest of all the churches he had rounded, known far and wide. Thus his *"Need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?"* (Ver. 1).

"BESIDE OURSELVES" OR "SOBER"?: // Cor. 5:13: "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause."

Since youth it has been this writer's earnest desire and prayer to learn, not only the grammatical technicalities, but the *sense* of any given passage of Scripture. The reason? We had heard many of the Bible teachers entertained at our home, argue at length about the grammatical details of the Hebrew and Greek, only to have one of them propose a rendering of the passage which violated its obvious sense.

The above is one passage where, especially, we must ask, "Lord, show me the *sense* of this *passage*; *just what it is Thou art saying.*"

First we must ask ourselves whether the very few words which actually comprise II Cor. 5:13 in the Greek justify the extended wording of our *Authorized* translation. The AV *can* convey the impression that Paul might have had times when he was "beside himself," and *not* "sober"? Many Liberals teach this. But let us see.

In our experience it is only certain commentators to whom one can turn for help in really difficult passages, men who *study* such passages in depth to find much-needed help for themselves and their readers. Most, sad to say, pass over such passages lightly, dwelling largely on those Scriptures we already understand and rejoice in. Yet, the difficult passages, *understood*, can often yield the greatest blessing. We believe that this is so with II Cor. 5:13.

To understand many a passage it is important to consider its context, especially its *preceding* context. In this case this yields much help. And what does the preceding context tell us?

1. The Corinthians as a church were badly backslidden. This is evident, not only from Vers. 10, 11, but from Paul's first letter to them, for I Corinthians is an epistle of rebuke.

⁵⁰ See the first pages of Chapter III for a discussion of Paul's apostleship in relation to that of the twelve.

2. They--Paul too--were "all to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive⁵¹ the things done in his body ... whether it be good or bad [Lit., worthless]": a frightening prospect for backslidden believers.

3. "Knowing therefore the *terror* of the Lord," he says, he "*persuaded*" men, realizing that he himself was "manifest unto God," and trusting that he and his way of life would be "made manifest" to their *consciences*.

All this casts its light upon II Cor. 5:13. Some might well have considered Paul, with all his warning, persuading, etc., to have been "beside himself," but Paul replies in effect: "That is for God to say, not you." or, "*Leave that to God*. But if, on the other hand, you acknowledge me to be 'sober,' then remember: I have done all this intense warning and persuading for *your* sakes, that my words and ways might commend themselves to your consciences in the sight of God and that this might bear fruit in your lives."

This we believe to be the fair and natural sense of II Cor. 5:13 in the light of its context. We pray it will bring light and blessing to those who have experienced difficulty with the passage.

With Ver. 13 thus understood, the rest follows naturally.

CONSTRAINING LOVE: // Cor. 5:14-21: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more,

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

⁵¹ Gr., *komizo*, to receive back.

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

"THE LOVE OF CHRIST": When we consider all the Old Testament prophecies about the love of Christ and all the types that foreshadow it; when we reflect on all the evidences of His love recorded in the four records of His earthly ministry; when we see Him born a babe in a manger that He might be *one of us*, see Him going about doing deeds of mercy and love, and even hear Him praying from the cross for those who had clamored for His death: when we consider all this, is it not remarkable that the phrase *"the love of Christ"* is found *only three times in the whole Bible* - all three in the epistles of Paul! And all three of these occurrences are deeply significant. They are:

1. [Rom. 8:35](#): "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (With this the Christian life under grace should commence.)
2. [Eph. 3:19](#): "...to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."
3. [II Cor. 5:14](#): "The love of Christ constraineth us."

This great truth of the love of Christ became the dominating factor in Paul's life, the theme of his message. We search his epistles in vain for one single word about *his* love for Christ, but they abound with exclamations about *the love of Christ* to him, to the Church, and to a Christ-rejecting world. Indeed, every epistle signed by his name opens with those words of mercy and love:

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINING: The Greek *sunecho* is a strong word. It is used in Luke 8:45, where we find our Lord *"thronged"* and *"pressed,"* so that, humanly speaking, He *could not* leave the multitude. Paul was similarly constrained by love that swept him along as an ocean tide, not his love to Christ, but *the love of Christ* to him. Again and again circumstances were such that he must have been tempted to quit his strenuous ministry, but *"the love of Christ,"* so lavishly bestowed upon him, the chief of sinners, and so graciously proclaimed to all men, exerted a powerful, yes, an irresistible influence upon him.

To fully understand II Cor. 5:14-21, we must consider the circumstances involved. The message of the twelve, offering Christ's return to earth, and the establishment of His promised kingdom ([Acts 3:19-21](#)), had been rejected, and Saul of Tarsus had led his nation in a flaming rebellion against God and His anointed Son (Here see [Psa. 2](#) and [Psa. 110:1](#)). But instead of visiting Israel and the world with the prophesied judgment for their rejection of Christ, God in grace *interrupted* the prophetic program and, holding the promise of the kingdom in abeyance, ushered in the present dispensation of grace.

How did He do this? By *saving Saul*, His chief enemy on earth, and making him, not only the herald, but the *living demonstration* of the riches of His grace.

But *how* did He save Saul? Acts 9 tells the touching story, and Paul himself repeats it in detail twice.

"Yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," Saul had gone to the high priest, *requesting* authority to go to Damascus and arrest Christ's followers "whether they were men or women," and "bring them bound unto Jerusalem" where he would urge that they be put to death (Acts 9:1,2; 26:10). But on the way to Damascus the Lord broke through the heavens, as it were, to stop him in his wild career. Revealing Himself to Saul in glory above the brightness of the noon-day sun (Acts 26:13), the Lord asked him in the tenderest way "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*"

In a moment the pitiless persecutor became the docile, yea the devoted bond-slave of Christ, overwhelmed by the love that had saved him and had appointed him an apostle (Rom. 1:5) rather than crushing and cursing him forever.

Paul never got over it: this infinite love, so lavishly bestowed upon him, was now to be proclaimed to all the world! How could he do less than let the world know? Ah, but the world was at enmity with Christ. Then how could he do less than to take the place of that blessed One who had taken *his* place at Calvary, "*filling up that which still remained of the afflictions of Christ*" (Col. 1:24).

We read in II Cor. 11:23-29 the long list of sufferings he had already by then endured for Christ, and hear him conclude: "*Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?*" and we ask ourselves what kept him pressing persistently on in the face of so much opposition, persecution and discouragement?

His answer is, "*The love of Christ constraineth us,*" or, more literally, "The love of Christ bears us along." He doubtless had greater reason to be discouraged than we will ever have, but he *couldn't* quit, for a sense of the infinite *love of Christ* - to him and to a lost world - bore him along as resistlessly as an ocean tide. And this continued year after year until, on his last journey to Jerusalem, surrounded by dangers and confronted with "bonds and afflictions," he still had grace to say:

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Nor, years later, after still more unreasonable persecution and imprisonment, did he regret the course he had taken, for among his very last recorded words we find this triumphant declaration:

"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown. . ." (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Soon the "weariness and painfulness," the "hunger and thirst," the "cold and nakedness" would all be exchanged for that which he had so eagerly looked forward to: *"to depart and be with Christ, which is FAR BETTER."*

Without in any way disparaging the twelve or their ministry for Christ, it is still a fact that compared with the twelve apostles Paul seems like a blazing torch next to twelve candles, and this is not strange, for to him was given the greatest revelation *of the love of Christ.*

PRAYER FOR THE UNSAVED: Extreme Calvinists, or "Five pointers," as they are sometimes called,⁵² generally teach that we should not pray for the salvation of the lost. This is an old error, based on the *fact* that we are nowhere explicitly instructed to pray for the lost and the *claim* that the Scriptures supply no examples of such prayers. Anyway, they say, what folly to be praying for lost souls, many, or most of whom God may already have consigned to the Lake of Fire.

One thing is certain with regard to the above. If it is unscriptural to pray for the non-elect, it would surely be inconsistent *to preach* the gospel to them.

Abraham Kuyper, Dutch theologian and statesman (1837-1920)⁵³ recognized this fact. While he was *Minister of State* for the Netherlands he had occasion to travel to America aboard a Dutch Liner. The captain, a God-fearing man, knowing he had a widely-known Bible scholar aboard, asked Kuyper whether he would be willing to bring "just a simple gospel message" to the passengers at the Sunday morning service. Kuyper declined on the ground that he could not be sure that all those who would attend were "uitverkooren," i.e., the elect.

⁵² The original Five Points of Calvinism, so-called, were adopted at the Synod of Dort in 1619, 55 years after Calvin's death, in answer to the *Five Articles* of the Armenians, but the Dutch theologians went so much farther than Calvin in their teachings on election and salvation that they actually contradicted Calvin's views on these subjects as expressed throughout his *Commentary on the New Testament*. Indeed the theologians kept out-Calvinizing Calvin by revising the *Five Points* again and again, until today the popular version is called TULIP, which stands for: **T**otal Depravity, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace and the **P**erseverance of the Saints. Since the "Five Pointers" have gone so far *past* Calvin in their teachings on election and salvation we feel fully justified in identifying them as extreme Calvinists. They are certainly *not* Calvinists.

⁵³ Those were the days when the fear of God was more widespread and the Word of God more widely taught than, perhaps, at any time in Europe's history. W. E. Gladstone (1809-1898), for many years Britain's Prime Minister, was also a devoted theologian, producing several important books on the Bible and Christianity.

The captain accepted that and then looked up Peter Stam, the author's father, also aboard and well known to many Dutch sea captains through his help to missionaries, incoming and outgoing, and his assistance to many immigrants hoping to get settled in America. The captain explained to Mr. Stam just what had happened and asked, "Would *you* be willing to bring 'just a simple gospel message' at our Sunday morning service?" Dad put out his hand and replied, "Please let me!"

Later we received correspondence from others who had been aboard the same ship at that time. Evidently there was real joy, especially on the part of the Godly captain, that Peter Stam had brought a clear gospel message filled with the love of Christ for sinners.

But the extreme misrepresentation of Calvin's teachings on election constitute not merely a slander against his name, but a slander against God's Word on the subject. May the author be permitted to introduce another brief illustration to bring this out more clearly? We sat at a dining room table years ago, immediately opposite another table where two pastors were engaged in discussion. One was a "five pointer," and the other was slowly being convinced of the validity of these teachings. At one point Pastor No. 2 said to Pastor No. 1, "I believe that your teachings on election are correct. That's the way I present it at my church." Then, after a brief hesitation, he continued: "But there is one thing that troubles me, I must confess." "What?" asked Pastor No. 1. "Well," said Pastor No. 2, after more hesitation, "Not one soul was saved in our church all last year; not one came to Christ." "Well," responded Pastor No. 1, "Maybe the Lord doesn't want any more people saved in that area." I could remain seated no longer, but went over to Pastor No. 1 and said, "What an appalling thing to say! You have just slandered the God who has clearly *stated* that He would have *all men* to be saved, and would have *none* to perish; that Christ tasted death for *every man*; that God has *no pleasure in the death of the wicked*. You should be afraid to say or even think that God is as cold and hard-hearted as you portray Him.

But can it be that a believer with *the love of Christ* in his heart can doubt that we should pray for the salvation of the lost? Then consider:

Can it be that we should preach the gospel and *not* pray for *all* who hear it? that we should seek "by *all means*" to "save some," (I Cor. 9:22), but *leave out prayer*? that we should "pray for all men" (I Tim. 2:1) *except the lost*, since most of them may not be among the elect? Should we pray for open mouths to proclaim the message of grace (Eph. 6:19), *but not for open hearts to receive it*, since God has already made up His mind about this? Can it be that Phil. 4:6,7 exhorts us to be *anxious* about *nothing*, but to *pray* about *everything*, but not about our lost loved ones--for whom we would most naturally be anxious?

If we are to refrain from praying for the lost on the ground that God has destined some to be lost anyway, we should stop praying for *anything*, for God "worketh *all things* after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11).

Beloved reader, let us pray that the *love of Christ* may "constrain" us even as it did Paul. If we are filled to overflowing with the *love of Christ* there is little danger that we will lose interest in witnessing to others of that love and praying for them too. Indeed, a deep appreciation of the *love of Christ* is the greatest single motivation for loving, faithful Christian service.

INTELLIGENT CHRISTIANITY: II COR. 5:14: "... the love of Christ constraineth us *because we thus judge ...* "

What caused the love of Christ to bear Paul along like a resistless ocean tide? Not his emotions or feelings, but an intelligent conclusion: that "if Christ died for all,"⁵⁴ "then were all dead." And he concludes further:

"And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again" (Ver. 15).

Does this not make common sense? He died our death, then arose again that we might have His life. Thus it is our responsibility - we who have life in Christ - to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. It is not our love to Christ but His to us that constrains us to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Christ and those for whom He died.

The "Five Point" Calvinists deny that Christ died for all. They believe in "*Limited Atonement*," "*Limited Redemption*," thus denying Paul's clear statement here that "Christ died for *all*," and perhaps a dozen other such passages from the inspired apostle's pen. Among them:

Rom. 3:22: "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, UNTO ALL and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference."

Rom. 11:32: "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, THAT HE MIGHT HAVE MERCY UPON ALL."

I Tim. 2:4: "WHO WILL HAVE ALL MEN TO BE SAVED, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

I Tim. 2:5: "For there is one God, and ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN [not *some* men], The Man Christ Jesus;"

I Tim. 2:6: "WHO GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR ALL, to be testified in due time."

I Tim. 4:10: "WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF ALL MEN, specially of those that believe."

⁵⁴ Not as their substitute here, but as their *representative*. Representing them, He died their death.

Heb. 2:9: "... that He by the grace of God SHOULD TASTE DEATH FOR EVERY MAN."

In addition to all this the apostle states specifically that the lost will perish "BECAUSE THEY RECEIVED NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED" (II Thes. 2:10).

Would it not be a tragedy if the missionaries we send to heathen lands to proclaim the gospel could *not* say to their hearers, "God loves you. Christ died for you." Indeed, this writer can testify that God's assurance that He loves all men and that Christ died for all, is the *only* basis he has for believing that God loves *him* and that Christ died for *him*. Think this through, dear reader, and see if you have any better basis upon which to rest your assurance that you are saved.

OUR GREATEST DRAWBACK: // Cor. 5:14,15: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

"And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

Before leaving this subject, let us ask ourselves what is the greatest drawback to loving, faithful Christian service. The writer had the answer to this question vividly illustrated for him years ago when we had been enjoying a rather intimate acquaintance with the First Mate of a Dollar Liner, a distinguished and vigorous man who had spent many years on ocean liners sailing the high seas.

One day he intimated that he would very much enjoy going out in a common row boat, so we made arrangements to hire a small boat for a day of fishing on New Jersey's beautiful *Greenwood Lake*.

It was a lovely summer's morning as we got into our boat and I rowed him out to a spot some distance from shore.

I have since forgotten how well we did at fishing, but I do recall that when it was time to return, my friend insisted that since I had done the rowing so far he would row us back to shore.

He had been working the oars for some time when he remarked that distances are deceiving on the water, whether from a row boat or an ocean liner. With all his rowing we were still far from shore.

Since he was not as accustomed to rowing as I, I suggested that he let me row the rest of the way back. He seemed willing enough, so we exchanged seats again and I pulled in the anchor and rowed back to shore!

He was a First Mate on a Dollar Liner but had failed to make headway in a small row boat because he had forgotten to take in the anchor! I can still hear him "ho-ho-ing" over it!

This incident came back to me recently as I asked myself what, above all else, is the greatest drawback to Christian service; what, more than anything else, keeps us from *constantly* and *consistently* making known to others the riches of God's grace.

After considering the many and varied hindrances to Christian service referred to in the Word, I thought of "our beloved brother Paul," who above all men could say: "*I . . . labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily*" (Col. 1:29).

I recalled how the magistrates at Philippi, yielding to the mob, had abused him and Silas, tearing the clothes off their backs, beating them with many stripes, and then casting them into prison, where the jailer threw them into a dungeon and made their feet fast in stocks (Acts 16:22-24).

And then I recalled what the apostle and his companion had done after leaving Philippi. They had gone straight to Thessalonica, where again they boldly proclaimed the gospel in the face of bitter opposition. Paul writes of it in I Thes. 2:2:

"But even after we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God, with much contention."

We read in II Cor. 11:23-29 the long list of sufferings he had already by then endured for Christ, and hear him conclude: "*Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?*" and we ask ourselves what kept him pressing persistently on in the face of so much opposition, persecution and disappointment.

The answer, we believe, is found in II Cor. 5:14: "*The love of Christ constraineth us,*" That love, we have said, bore him along as resistlessly as an ocean tide, so that he could truthfully say:

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God."

"But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but *I labored more abundantly than they all; yet, not I, but the grace of God which was with me*" (I Cor. 15:9,10).

Beloved reader, if we *truly* desire to be used in service for Christ, should we not pray for a deeper appreciation *of the love of Christ?* This was what motivated Paul to press on in his ministry, regardless of opposition and persecution.

May we never cease to search the Scriptures as to *the love of Christ*, and may the results be to us what they were to Paul.

A DISPENSATIONAL IMPERATIVE: // Cor. 5:16-18: "Therefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."

Many passages of Scripture, indeed, the Scriptures as a whole, must be considered in the light of *dispensational truth*, but here, in II Cor. 5:16-18, we come upon *Dispensational Truth Proper*, as the apostle begins to use dispensational phraseology in earnest: such phraseology as "*henceforth [twice]... have known . . . yet now no more . . . a new creation . . . old things passed away, all things new...*" and then introduces the glorious *new message of reconciliation*.

KNOWING MEN AS THEY ARE AND CHRIST AS HE IS: The phrase "after the flesh," here, is sometimes interpreted to mean "in a carnal or fleshly way," but the context forbids this. The word "henceforth," especially as it relates to Christ, indicates a change to take place "*from now on.*" Basically his argument is that we are no longer to view men as Jews or Gentiles. Believers among these two are now *one in Christ, all one body, and every one members one of another* ([Gal. 3:28](#); [I Cor. 12:13](#); [Rom. 12:5](#)), and unbelievers have no part in the Body of Christ. Thus we are rather to view men as "complete in Christ," or completely out of Christ, having no part whatever in the riches of His grace. All, whether Jews or Gentiles, are either members of the One Body, or have no part in it, even if occupying a conspicuous position at a church.

That this is the correct interpretation of the words "after the flesh," here, is confirmed by what the apostle goes on to say about the Lord Jesus Christ. "Though we have known Christ after the flesh,"⁵⁵ he says, "yet now henceforth know we *Him*⁵⁶ no more" (Ver. 16).

What a vast difference there is between our Lord as He walked this earth "in the flesh," with "no place to lay His head," and surrounded by trouble, sin and sorrow, and the same blessed Person as He came to be after His ascension to heaven:

"At [God's] own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:20).

⁵⁵ As some, or many, of them doubtless had known Him.

⁵⁶ i.e., "Christ after the flesh."

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21).

"Head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10).

"Head over all things to the Church" (Eph. 1:22).

"Far above all heavens" (Eph. 4:10).

And these are only five of the hundreds of Scripture passages that relate to the exaltation and glory of our blessed Lord. And *this* is how we are to know Him. And we *can* know Him thus, for not only have we been exalted *with Him*, not only do we have a position in heaven *in Christ*, but in our present state here on earth we have been given "*access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*" (Rom. 5:2). Indeed, the same chapter in Ephesians that has so much to say about our position in Christ, *also* states that "through Him [the Lord Jesus Christ] we both [believing Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18). Yes, and our blessed Lord is referred to as a "*forerunner*" in Heb. 6:20, beckoning us to follow Him into the Father's presence. And finally, He emboldens us to enter the Holiest in heaven itself via a "new and living way" specially "consecrated" to our use (Heb. 10:20).

Ah, *thus* are we to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, not still taken up with "the Babe in the manger," "the lowly Jesus," "the man of Galilee," or "the carpenter of Nazareth."

A NEW CREATION: Ver. 17 is often interpreted to mean that at conversion to Christ a man becomes "a new creature," and that *for him* "old things are passed away" and "behold, all things are become new" (See Ver. 17).

But this is simply not true. How often believers in Christ have found themselves struggling with the old nature, with its envy, anger, pride, etc. A new creature, with all the old bad habits passed away and only good remaining? By no means. Those who interpret the verse in this way confuse the believer's *standing* with his *state*. The Apostle Paul illustrates this in two passages concerning the old man and the new. In Col. 3:9,10 he says: "... ye *have put* off the old man with his deeds; and *have put* on the new man..." (this relates to our *standing*), but in Eph. 4:22,24 he *exhorts* us to "*put off...* the old man... and... *put on* the new man..." (this relates to our *state*).

Actually II Cor. 5:17 does not say that the believer is a "new creature." The wording of this verse in the Greek would have to be rendered: "So that if anyone in Christ a new creation." The A.V. translators unfortunately added the words "he is," as to a "legitimate ellipsis," making the passage uphold the reading (above) which states what we have shown to be an untruth. The believer is *not* a new creature (except *in Christ*) and his old temptations and sins have *not* all passed away.

If only the translators had supplied the words "*there is*" rather than "he is." The actual wording, especially in its dispensational context, lends itself far better to "there is" than to "he is."

A.V. does indeed supply the words "he is" to a "legitimate ellipsis," but the words supplied are not legitimate and, indeed, affect the credibility of God's Word. But who can deny that with believers now given a place in Christ *there is* a new creation? And this truth is a natural continuation of the dispensationalism taught in Vers. 15,16.

Not the believer's temptations and sins, but the old dispensation, the Law, with all its solemn rites, its stern commands, and its severe penalties, has given place to "*the dispensation of the grace of God*" (Eph. 3:1,2), with all believers now seen "in Christ" and all "one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5: I Cor. 12:13). This is nothing less than "*a new creation*" as Paul calls it in the passage we are considering (II Cor. 5:17).

The term "in Christ" is typically Pauline. He uses it continually in His epistles and, indeed, it is thus that we stand before God, and should stand before men. An appreciation of this great truth will transform our lives and our experience as Christians. Also, it will give us a clear understanding of God's purpose and program and will enlighten us in our study of the Word.

ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD: II Cor. 5:18: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us *the ministry of reconciliation.*"

Note: all things *in this new program* are of God. *He* has reconciled us to *Himself--by Jesus Christ*; we had no part in it.

"While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10).

As the enmity was entirely on our part, so the reconciling love of God is entirely His. It was we who needed to be reconciled to God, not God to us.

And now He has given to us "*the ministry of reconciliation.*" We can understand it clearly and proclaim it in the power of the Spirit, only as we obey *the divine imperative*: study it *dispensationally*, "*rightly dividing the Word of truth*" (II Tim. 2:15).

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION: Faithful and intelligent ministers of reconciliation will not depict "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" as an angry God whom sinners must placate and conciliate so that He might forbear their sins and be reconciled to them. This would not be ministering reconciliation according to II Cor. 5:18, 19.

What, then, is the true "ministry of reconciliation"? God could not have given us clearer information on the subject. In Ver. 18 He declares that He has "given to us the ministry of reconciliation," and in Ver. 19 He goes on to explain in the simplest language what this ministry consists of.

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word [or message] of reconciliation."

In this context "God was in Christ," *at Calvary* of course, "reconciling the world"⁵⁷ unto Himself for, as we have seen, "*When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son*" ([Rom. 5:10](#)).

What a glorious message to proclaim! In simple form it is stated on a large display on the western wall of the headquarters at *Berean Bible Society*. It reads: "GOD LOVES YOU - CHRIST DIED FOR YOU - *Believe and be Saved.*" Thousands of passersby read this message of reconciliation every day.

God does not impute our trespasses unto us; they were all imputed to Christ who, in mercy and grace, "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" ([Heb. 9:26](#)), so that there need be no more fear of any believer ever standing before the Great White Throne.

What a precious message is ours! Since Christ died for "the world," for "all," and for "every man," we can say to any individual, "God loves *you*," "Christ died for *you*." Also, we can confidently say to the convicted and fearful evildoer, "God is not *against* you." He gave His Son that He might have you with Him in heaven's glory.

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST: // *Cor. 5:20,21*: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Ambassadorship! What a calling! The embassy! The luxurious living quarters! The secretaries, the aides, and all the rest of the entourage! Private conferences with great statesmen of other countries! etc.

Ah, but think of the poverty, the humiliation, and the persecution which the ambassadors of Christ have so often endured! Yet what should an ambassador expect who has been left in a nation which has declared war on his government? Surely he cannot expect cordial treatment. Rather he may look for suffering,

⁵⁷ The world of people; He did not not die for this world system.

imprisonment, and even death. And so it has been with many ambassadors for Christ.⁵⁸

Paul earnestly pleaded with the lost to be reconciled to God and for this he "suffered trouble as an evildoer, even unto bonds" and was finally beheaded by the wicked Nero.

Paul was indeed earnest about his calling. "...as *though God did beseech you by us*," he said, "*we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*" (Ver. 20).

Here surely we have *the love of Christ* "constraining" Paul. "We pray you in *Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled to God." "You would not have Christ," he said, "but I am here in His stead."⁵⁹

Think of it! Paul *begging* men, "in Christ's stead," to be reconciled to God.

At this point an illustration may be of help.

We ask the reader to picture a wealthy banker, coming down the walk of his luxurious estate to a limousine, waiting to take him to his place of business. As he is about to enter the automobile a tramp standing nearby, breathes obscenities at the banker. Hesitating, the banker turns to the tramp, asking what the trouble might be.

"Men like you are my pet gripe," says the tramp. "You have more clothes than you can wear, more beds than you can sleep in, more money than you can use, a grand estate and all sorts of servants to do your bidding, while here I stand in rags without one cent to my name."

"I'm truly sorry," says the banker, "and I will help you if I can. Why not let me buy you a good suit of clothes and give you a job at the bank. Then, if you work hard, as I have, maybe some day you will be as well off as I."

"Oh, get into your big limousine and go to your bank" exclaims the tramp, "it upsets me just to talk to you."

At this point the banker, with tears in his eyes, puts his arm about the tramp and begs him...

But wait. Have you ever seen a rich man go to such lengths to try to help one who did not wish to be helped? If you have, what you saw was but a faint portrayal of what Christ in His love is doing every day to reconcile the lost to God.

⁵⁸ One important indication that we are living in "the dispensation of the grace of God" is the fact that Paul, the ambassador of grace, was left imprisoned in enemy territory, "an ambassador in bonds" (Eph. 6:20).

⁵⁹ As Christ represented Paul at Calvary, Paul now represented Christ in a Christ-rejecting world.

Note carefully, however, that Paul's very pleading with men to be reconciled to God proves in itself that he did *not* believe or teach *universal reconciliation*. Nor is universal reconciliation taught anywhere in the Scriptures. Consistently, life and death, justification and judgment, mercy and wrath are set over against each other as alternatives, and God surely has not kept men through the ages, in a constant state of false alarm.

Indeed, it may not be long before God recalls His ambassadors of reconciliation and declares war on His enemies.

1900 years ago man declared war on God. Both the Jews and the Gentiles arrayed themselves "*against the Lord, and against His Anointed.*"

A counter-declaration was, of course, inevitable and was the very next number on the prophetic program (Read carefully [Psa. 2:1-5; 110:1](#)).

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20,21).

As Sir Robert Anderson once put it: "God's throne of righteousness has been turned into a '*throne of grace.*' For the present '*grace reigns*'" ([Rom. 5:20,21](#)).

But on what legitimate basis does grace now reign?

II Cor. 5:21 explains: God made Christ, who "knew no sin," to *be sin*⁶⁰ for us, that we, the sinners, "might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

A thousand hallelujahs rise from our hearts as day after day after day God still waits to judge this wicked world. How loving is His heart! How infinite His grace!

Yet, the dispensation will finally be brought to a close and the day of grace will give place to "the day of His wrath." Thus we beg any unsaved friend *who* may read these lines to turn to Christ now, while there is yet time. Do not gamble; do not take that dreadful chance, but receive Christ now as your Lord and Savior and rejoice with us in "*the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.*"

⁶⁰ At Calvary (as our blessed Representative) He became the very embodiment of sin, suffering its full penalty for us.

CHAPTER VI

II Corinthians 6:1-18

RECEIVE NOT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN: *II 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 succored 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."

Almost every student of the Word knows that all except Paul's personal epistles (those to Timothy, Titus and Philemon) were written to local churches, local assemblies of believers.

What many have failed to observe, however, is the fact that these epistles were *publicly read in these churches*, and that in these audiences many unsaved people were undoubtedly present, people who had come from personal interest or who had been brought there by members of the congregation. Few local churches indeed are composed *exclusively* of believers.

Now it is natural, and evident in several of Paul's letters, that he has these unsaved people in mind and, in certain places, *addresses* them. Thus he sometimes shifts from addressing believers to addressing the visiting unbelievers.

For example: [II Cor. 5:20](#) is surely addressed to the unsaved, while the verses immediately preceding are just as surely addressed to the saved.

There are those who insist that "Paul wrote to believers" and that therefore [II Cor. 5:20](#) must refer to the reconciliation of *believers* to God. But such an interpretation surely requires a good deal of straining and twisting of the plainest Scriptures, not only in this case but in others where Paul clearly addresses the unsaved.

[Col. 1:21, 22](#) teaches plainly that believers *have been* reconciled to God. Read it carefully:

"And you, that were sometime [at one time] alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled,

"in the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight."⁶¹

Thus when, in II Cor. 5:20, the apostle pleads, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" he is unquestionably pleading with the unsaved in the congregation.

All this affects **II Cor. 6:1**: "*We . . . beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*"

Granted, some believers have received the grace of God in vain *as far as bearing fruit is concerned*. There are many barren Christians. But this is not what Paul is discussing here, for continuing the subject of the reconciliation of the lost to God, he goes on to explain:

"For He saith, I have heard thee in A TIME ACCEPTED, and in THE DAY OF SALVATION have I succored thee: BEHOLD, NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME; BEHOLD, NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION."

These are hardly the words he would use in addressing saved but careless believers, but they are the words he would use in addressing the unsaved. How consistently the apostle stressed to the unsaved the urgency of receiving Christ *now*; how he reminded the saints that the rapture of the Church is imminent and that *this* will bring "the accepted time" to a close and will usher in "the day of His wrath"!

We must take this opportunity to impress upon the minds of our unsaved readers: You cannot be saved yesterday; that is past. We cannot promise you that you can be saved *tomorrow*; you may not live until tomorrow, or, the Lord may come to take His own away before then, or, if you are here alive other things may hinder you from being saved. "*Behold! NOW is the accepted time; Behold! NOW is the day of salvation.*"

Do you recall how Governor Felix trembled as Paul witnessed to him about Christ? He was so deeply moved that he said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee." But though he did call for Paul again and again, the conviction that had gripped him passed and evidently he was never saved.

But we have more reason than Felix to ponder urgency, for remember that the dispensation of grace will not last forever; indeed, it is evident that it is fast drawing to a close, and then: "*the great day of His wrath*" (**Rev. 6:17**).

⁶¹ The "if" with which the next verse begins represents a *challenge*, not a doubt. A mother may say to her 21 year old son, "If you are 21, *act it!*" She does not doubt that he is 21 years of age but challenges him to *act his age*.

This has been dispensational teaching and harmonizes with the dispensational truths the apostle taught in II Cor. 5:16-19.

Ver. 2 of Chapter 6 is a parenthesis, hence Ver. 3 refers back to Ver. 1. He urges the unbelievers present at the service: "*Receive not the grace of God in vain.*" i.e., "Do not let our words fall on deaf ears." But he says this only to awaken them, not to "offend" them, for this would hardly speak well of his ministry. Indeed, in Ver. 4 he expresses his desire as to this: "*in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.*"

The verses that follow, through Ver. 10, should be dealt with in three parts, and as we do this we shall see what great cause we have to thank God for the translators of the *King James Version* of the Bible. These gifted and devoted translators here show their desire and their God-given ability to find the *sense* of a given passage of Scripture. Note this carefully.

"POOR, YET MAKING MANY RICH:" // Cor. 6:4-10: "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

"In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

"By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

"By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

"By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

"As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Mark well that in Vers. 4, 5 every phrase begins with the preposition "in"; in Vers. 6-8a every phrase begins with the preposition "by," and in Vers. 8b-10 every phrase begins with the preposition "as." These three different prepositions represent three different shades of meaning.

ABOUT PREPOSITIONS. Here we must point out a fact about the Greek preposition "*en*" that many thoughtful students of the Word already know, and all should know.

Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* states: "The uses of this preposition are so many-sided, and often so easily confused that a strictly systematic treatment is impossible" (P. 257).

Moulton and Milligan's *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* likewise states: "It is impossible in our limits to deal exhaustively with the extended uses in late Greek of this 'maid-of-the-work' among the prepositions" (P. 209).

Both agree that this Greek preposition is often best expressed in English by *in, on, as, with, by* and *among*.

Surely the learned and godly men who translated our English Bible knew all this, and they also must have noticed that *in the Greek* all the phrases from Ver. 4 through the first two in Ver. 7 begin with "*en.*" But they also knew that a change of subject begins with Ver. 6. Before Ver. 6 the apostle deals with his personal circumstances in his service for Christ, while from Vers. 6-8 he explains how he copes with these circumstances. Then, in Vers. 9,10 he relates the blessed results!

Since the apostle had said that in "*all things*" he wished to approve himself as a minister of God, he now goes into detail, and indeed, the apostle's personal life was a commentary on his ministry.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE APOSTLE SERVED THE LORD: // Cor. 6:4,5: "...in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

"In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings."

Here the English preposition is always "in," and the Greek preposition always "*en.*"

1. "*in much patience*": The heathen were not disposed to promote the message Paul was so eager to proclaim. There must have been all kinds of red tape and many a run-around in his efforts to evangelize cities and towns. But he adapted himself to the situation and learned the lesson: "*much patience.*" In the long run this proved to be to his great advantage.

2. "*in afflictions*": He needed only to *remind* the Corinthians of the afflictions he had endured in the rounding of their own church ([Acts 18:6-13](#)).

3. "*in necessities*": He knew what it was to *need* things ever so badly yet to find them utterly unobtainable. Or, could he be referring here to the physical want he had so often suffered?

4. "*in distresses*": The Greek here, *stenokoria*, denotes *to be cramped in space*, to feel pressure from every side. He had experienced this pressure many times, especially at the uproar at Ephesus ([Acts 19:23-41](#); [II Cor. 1:8](#)).

5. *"in stripes"*: As he wrote this letter the apostle had already received many stripes as an evildoer. Precisely what were these stripes? There is great confusion among commentators as to this, but we believe it to have been exactly what the word "stripes" indicates. We believe that this punishment was inflicted with a common whip, which left *one* sore or bloody *stripe* at each stroke.

Even in the Old Testament law Moses speaks of a certain number of *"stripes,"* not strokes. This implies a single stripe for each stroke: marks that could be *counted*. This could hardly apply if the beating were a scourging with a many-tailed whip, as some think.

Recall how brutally Paul and Silas were treated by the magistrates at Philippi. Having beaten them with "many stripes," they *"cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely; who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison [a dungeon, Acts 16:24], and made their feet fast in stocks"* (Acts 16:24). But later we find the jailor, now gloriously saved, *washing* their stripes (Ver. 33), evidently the marks from a single whip.

Some have interpreted the words "in stripes" to refer to beatings with rods. But then how shall we account for Paul's words in II Cor. 11:24,25, where he *distinguishes* these "stripes" from the punishment inflicted by rods:

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one.

"Thrice was I beaten with rods..."

In II Cor. 11:23 Paul, in defending his apostleship says:

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool), I am more; in labors more abundant, *in stripes above measure* "

He refers here not to the stripes he received in one beating, but to the frequency with which he was called upon to suffer such whippings. This is obvious from the following verse:

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one" (Ver. 24). Why "forty stripes *save one*"? The answer is found in the Mosaic Law concerning such punishment:

"And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.

"Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee" (Deut. 25:2,3).

Thus the Law of Moses protected its criminals from being held in utter contempt, defending their human dignity as the image, albeit the fallen image, of God (I Cor. 11:7).

6. *"in imprisonments"*: When Paul was forced to defend his apostleship in II Cor. 11, he challenged his readers as we have seen:

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am mere... *in prisons more frequent...*" (Ver. 23).

Thus he was imprisoned more often, perhaps much more often, than appears in the record of Scripture. Three of Paul's imprisonments, however, stand out particularly. Let us consider them:

His imprisonment at Philippi. As we consider the details let us put ourselves in his place, as it were, and that of Silas, his fellow prisoner. There had been no trial, no legal procedure; the whole was purely a mob action:

"And the *multitude rose up together against them*" (Acts 16:22).

"And the magistrates *rent [tore] off their clothes, and commanded to beat them*" (Ver. 22).

"And when they had *laid many stripes upon them*" (Ver. 23).

"They *cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely*" (Ver. 23).

"Who [the jailer] . . . *thrust them into the inner prison [a dungeon.] Note: the jailer "sprang in" Ver. 29 and made their feet fast in stocks*" (Ver. 24).

Let us ponder upon each detail of the sufferings of Paul and Silas that day as if we were the victims, and we will understand why Paul recalls in I Thes. 2:2, how he and Silas had been *"shamefully entreated . . . at Philippi."*

His imprisonment at Caesarea. It would seem from Acts 24:23 and 27 that Paul was in bonds in Caesarea, first in charge of a Centurion and then in prison for at least two years.

But we must go to his letter to the Hebrews for more information as to what happened during those two years. First, it is evident from Heb. 10:32,33 that the believers there were themselves suffering persecution for their faith in Christ. Their enlightenment in the faith had brought about "a great fight of afflictions." They were "made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions" as they took their stand with Paul and the other Christian believers. But the most touching information is found in Ver. 34:

"For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

Think! These former Hebrews now not only "had compassion" on Paul in his bonds, but courageously took their stand with him! Result: they themselves were robbed of their belongings, their possessions confiscated. "But," says the apostle, "you *took joyfully* the spoiling of your goods" (Ver. 34). What victory! Now they were entering into Paul's own experience in "suffering the loss of all things" ([Phil. 3:8](#)) "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" (*ibid*).

His imprisonment in Rome. II Timothy, Chapter 1, especially the closing verses, give us an intimate view of some of the sufferings and heartaches the apostle was called upon to bear during his last Roman imprisonment. But there were also encouragements - refreshing examples of Christian fidelity.

In Ver. 15 he says: "All they which are in Asia⁶² have turned away from me." Not from his message, for Timothy was still the pastor at Ephesus and Paul urges him to continue faithful in the teaching of the Word. No, they had turned away from *Paul*, the prisoner. They had forsaken him in his hour of need, afraid that if they stood with him or even visited him, they themselves might become implicated. They were afraid to become revolved.

It appears that it was at **Ephesus** that Paul was arrested for the second time, and that it was in this vicinity that the stampede, the flight of many of his friends, took place. Indeed, Ver. 15 may well suggest that Phygellus and Hermogenes were the leaders in this defection.

Now that he was again in prison at Rome circumstances had not changed. Of his few remaining companions in Rome, Demas had forsaken him and Crescens and Titus had gone elsewhere (4:10).

"Only Luke," that beloved and faithful physician, was still with him (Ver. 11). The apostle's heart must have ached as he looked back at his first "answer" (before Nero), when "no man" stood with him.

All this must have been especially disappointing as he recalled how the Ephesian elders had embraced and wept and kissed him, sorrowfully accompanying him to the ship on his last journey to Jerusalem before being sent to Rome ([Acts 20:36,37](#)).

Without doubt the bitterest ingredient in Paul's cup of suffering was one which he shared in common with his Lord, that his closest friends deserted him when he

⁶² A province in Asia Minor.

needed them most. Yet he was not bitter, but said, "*I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge*" (II Tim. 4:16).

In addition to Luke there was one other signal exception to all the fear and cowardice that had gripped Paul's "Asian" brethren. It must have meant much to Paul at such a time to have this brave Christian look him up in his Roman dungeon.

Onesiphorus might have said: "I couldn't find him," for II Tim. 1:17 indicates that he had not found it easy to locate Paul. But to Onesiphorus' everlasting credit we read Paul's grateful words:

"But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me" (II Tim. 1:17).

And more:

"... he OFT refreshed me, and was *not ashamed* of my chain" (Ver. 16).

What a picture! A good, brave man, risking his life again and again to encourage, doubtless with food to refresh, and clothing to warm, and comforting words to hearten the valiant warrior for Christ.

Many others loved and honored Paul, but not enough to risk life and liberty to stand with him. They should have thanked God for him every day, but now they were careful to stay away. It was the old story of cowardly infidelity: "Don't get *me* involved." We still hear it whenever there is an important issue to deal with: "Don't get *me* involved."

But one thing more interests us about Onesiphorus. Did he bring his wife and children with him to visit Paul in prison? Did he allow *them* to jeopardize their welfare for Paul's sake? II Tim. 1:16 surely implies this, for the apostle prays for special mercy unto "the *house* of Onesiphorus," though Onesiphorus himself doubtless took the lead in the matter, encouraging his wife and children to come with him to encourage dear Paul.

How appropriate, in this letter, is the more personal word to "timid Timothy":

"... God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, *nor of me His prisoner*, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (II Tim. 1:7,8).

Paul is now gone, but the battle over his God-given message still rages. May we take to heart those personal words of Paul to his beloved Timothy and be, by

divine grace, "partakers of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

7. *"in tumults"*: The apostle experienced many a tumult (uproar, riot) during his ministry for Christ, but without doubt the most notable of these was the uproar at Ephesus, which had taken place but recently.

He writes about this in 1:8, where he says:

"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life."

From this brief statement one would already conclude that the uproar at Ephesus had reached dangerous proportions, but the record in Acts 19 gives us much more light on the subject. Consider it thoughtfully.

First Demetrius, a silversmith, who had brought "no small gain" to the craftsmen, called a meeting of the craftsmen "with the workmen of like occupation," and warned them that Paul's teachings that "they be no gods, which are made by hands," were putting their income in jeopardy. Demetrius' additional word makes thoughtful readers smile, however. After stressing the danger to their profitable industry, he added:

"But also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth" (Acts 19:27).

That did it! They all had special reasons for promoting the worship of Diana!

"And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*" (Acts 19:34).

How would the reader like to have been Paul at this time? But there is more. Soon...

"...the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius⁶³ and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre" (Ver. 29).

Now the tension was rising, especially for Paul, who "would have entered in unto the people," had the disciples permitted him to do so (Ver. 30). Thank God, some of "the chief of Asia [Asiarchs] who were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre" (Ver. 31). So greatly was Paul respected in Ephesus by those who did not have financial gain at stake.

⁶³ Very close to Paul (Rom. 16:23; I Cor. 1:14) and called in III John 1, "the wellbeloved Gaius."

But so great was the confusion by this time that Ver. 32 states:

"Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly⁶⁴ was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together."

Hereupon we read that

"...all with one voice, about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Ver. 34).

Reading all this one can see how modestly the apostle refers to the matter in writing to the Corinthians. He must indeed have been "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that [he] despaired even of life."

How Paul and his co-workers must have rejoiced in the wonderful way in which God overruled! We can almost see Paul and his disciples embracing one another (20:1) and rejoicing that the enemy's assault had indeed strengthened the church he had, by God's grace, founded there.

8. *"in labors"*: There is an abundance of Scripture as to Paul's willingness to work with his hands.

In Acts 18:3 we are informed how the apostle found Aquila and Priscilla,

"And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought; for by their occupation they were tentmakers."

But this was not an exceptional case. "Even to this present hour," he says in I Cor. 4:11,12, *"we . . . labor,⁶⁵ working with our own hands."*

And there is more. In his farewell to the Ephesian elders, he declared:

"Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:34).

One can almost see the apostle stretching forth his hands to the elders as he says this.

Yet he challenges the Corinthians as to their failure to do their part in this matter. In I Cor. 9:6-11 he reasons:

⁶⁴ The word "assembly" in this passage is the well-known Greek word, *ekklesia*, so often rendered "church" in A.V. And, indeed, this particular statement about *that* assembly, would aptly describe the condition of the professing Church today!

⁶⁵ The Greek *kapaio* ("labor") means "to be worn out." And he adds the words, in II Cor 4, "working with our own hands." which clearly indicates that he refers to physical work.

"Or I only and Barnabas, have we not power to forbear working?"

"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"

"Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?"

"For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn, Doth God take care of oxen?"

"Or saith He it altogether for our sakes?, For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

Ah, Paul, of all people, should not have had to work with his hands to found or to serve a church. But he did so again and again, and in II Thes. 3:8,9 he explains why:

"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

"Not because we have not power [or moral right], but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us."

9. *"in watchings"*: The apostle who had gone through so much persecution and faced so much opposition, must surely have known much of this. How often, when his body longed for sleep, he had had to remain awake and watchful to protect himself and those who were with him. This was especially so when groups conspired to slay him.

10. *"in fastings"*: Fasting, in the Bible refers to voluntary or involuntary abstinence from food and even to lack of food. Speaking here, as he does, of the difficult circumstances attending his ministry, it seems *doubtful* to this writer that he would here be referring to any voluntary religious fast. He doubtless refers to the many times that he either forbore eating, perhaps for the sake of others, or lacked food.

CHANGE OF SUBJECT: CHANGE OF PREPOSITION: // Cor. 6:6-8: "By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

"By the Word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

"By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report..."

A glance at the Greek text will show that "*en*" continues in use with all of these phrases until "the armor of righteousness" where *dia* or *through*, begins to be used. Yet the translators would have been in error had they continued at Ver. 6 with the preposition "in," for at Ver. 6 a different subject is introduced, a subject which *in English* requires a different preposition.

In Vers. 4, 5 the subject is the circumstances in which Paul served his Lord, but in Ver. 6 through the words "good report" in Ver. 8 the subject is how he coped with these adverse circumstances and this, *in English* requires a different preposition. Let us not forget that *in English* the Greek preposition "*en*" may mean *in, on, as, with, by* and *among*.

In this case (Vers. 6-8b) the subject is how the apostle *coped* with his adversities and *in English* this clearly *requires* the preposition "by," not "in."

A failure to see the foregoing has caused even the translators of the famed NASV to continue right on with "in" in Ver. 6, but our thoughtful A.V. translators correctly changed the preposition to "by." This is surely what the English translation calls for. Turn back the page and see whether this is not so, realizing all the while that *now* Paul is telling us how he *coped* with the difficult circumstances in which he found himself.

HOW PAUL COPED WITH HIS CIRCUMSTANCES: The Words used in our English translation are so clear that little comment is needed. How did Paul cope with his adversities? "*By pureness [or purity]*," both morally and physically; "*by knowledge*," or by intelligently proclaiming the Word, "rightly dividing the Word of truth"; "*by longsuffering*," both under provocation and with the behavior of others; "*by kindness*," by a gentle temper; "*by the Holy Ghost*." How often he emphasizes this! "By love unfeigned," love sincere and true, not superficial or a *lack* of love covered with a deceptive veneer. Happy is the Christian who naturally loves people. "*By the Word of Truth*." Often in Paul's epistles we find the fact emphasized that the gospel and the Word of God are *truth*. "The truth of the gospel" is twice referred to in Gal. 2, and the truth of the Word of God scores of times in Paul's epistles. "*By the power of God*," for "the preaching of the cross [Paul's gospel] is unto them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is *the power of God*" (I Cor. 1:18), "For... the gospel of Christ . . . is *the power of God* unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Rom. 1:16), "*By the armor of righteousness*, on the right hand and on the left." Righteousness is always a strong protective armor, and the words "on the right hand and on the left," should ring a familiar note to those who live in the 1990s. The "right" generally refers to those who are conservative, often ultraconservative, while the left refers to those who are liberal, often ultraliberal, and these two terms may have just such a significance

here. "The armor of righteousness" was to Paul firm protection, both on the right hand and on the left; whether they attacked him from one extreme or from the other, ultraconservatives or ultraliberals. "*By honor and dishonor,*" whether he was praised and applauded or despised and belittled, he sought to use both for the glory of God. Likewise, "*by evil report and good report,*" whether falsely accused or justly dealt with, it was his great object that Christ be honored by his response.

But now the subject changes again and the translators seeing this recognized the fact that it would also be necessary to change the preposition in the English.

In the first case Paul had related his afflictions in the circumstances in which he served the Lord. Here the natural preposition would be "in": "in afflictions . . . in stripes... in labors," etc.

But in the second case the apostle exclaims how he coped with these afflictions. Here the proper preposition *in English* would be "by": "by longsuffering... by kindness... by love unfeigned," etc.

**ANOTHER CHANGE OF SUBJECT, AND OF PREPOSITION: // Cor. 6:8b-10:
"As deceivers, and yet true;**

"As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Here the *Greek* preposition itself is changed, clearly indicating a change in subject, a change which demanded a consistent change in preposition. Now, instead of "in" or "by" the preposition, in English as in Greek, must be "as" (Gr. *hos*) for here the apostle *describes* the glorious results of the way in which he had coped with his afflictions, and *as* is distinctly a *descriptive* word.

We should also observe that the connective, "and," Gr., *kai*, appears in most of the pairs in this section, but for a very special reason.

"And," or *kai*, can be used for simple addition, as in "*Paul and Barnabas.*" It can also be used for identification as in, "*God and our Father,*" indicating that God *is*, or is also, "our Father." In such cases it is sometimes rendered "*God, even our Father.*"

Finally, it can be used as here, for a sort of emphasis, as in "having nothing *and* possessing all things," a remarkable combination! Or as in "unknown *and* well-known." Some have supplied the word, "yet," or the phrase, "at the same time," This is generally the meaning, but the additions are not necessary if one knows how *kai* is used here and simply remembers to *give it emphasis*, in print or vocally

if read aloud: "Unknown *and* well-known." Yes, a remarkable combination! "Having nothing *and* possessing all things." This was indeed how Paul was known.

How wonderful it will be now to see how the apostle had come to be recognized and respected in coping as he did with the afflictions he endured.

"As deceivers *and* true;" In II Cor. 12:16 the apostle says to these same Corinthians, "*Being crafty, I caught you with guile.*" Ah but what honorable, loving "craft"! Indeed, in this same epistle, to these same people, he writes with deep sincerity:

"[We] have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (II Cor. 4:2).

"As being unknown, *and* well-known;" Paul was not like the "do it big" men of our day. He did not seek fame or glory or power, nor the luxurious living that goes with it. It was not his bearing, or his vast audiences, or his imposing place of meeting that made him well known. In this respect he was indeed an unknown. It was *what he said* that made him so well known. It was this that had people talking far and near; it was this that convicted so many and led them to give themselves without reservation to the One who had died to save them. Yes, in a word it was "*the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery*" ([Rom. 16:25](#)).

Strange! Many a vast audience is hardly known beyond its perimeter, while a single small voice, like that of [John Darby](#) in the 1800s, or some seemingly insignificant church, pastored by an "unknown" man of God is being discussed far and wide and its teaching of the Word seriously considered by thoughtful people.

"As dying and lo we live;" Paul had been written off many a time. "He's finished," they said again and again, but he said:

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (II Cor. 4:11).

"As chastened *and* not killed;" It seemed many a time as though the persecutions he suffered would terminate his ministry and his life, but he knew better than others that these things were being permitted to train him for even more fruitful service. He knew and rejoiced that:

“. . . whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.

". . . for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12:6,7).

But would God chasten *Paul*? He says so. Read it again. Yes, and even Paul became a better, a more fruitful, servant of God through this Fatherly training. But with all the persecution he suffered he was *not*, like some criminal, put to death for some felony.

"As sorrowful, *but alway* rejoicing;" Here the Holy Spirit Himself changes the connective, "and," to the words "but alway,"⁶⁶ and certain it is that believers have gone through deep sorrow while at the same time experiencing an undercurrent of profound joy. This must have been the more so in the life and ministry of Paul.

"As poor, *but many* enriching;" Here again a change is made from the connective, "and," to the words "but many," contrasting the one man with nothing and "the many" he has made rich. How deeply Paul drank of the cup of poverty at times, but see how many he has, by God's grace, made rich, fabulously rich! How earnestly he has instructed us as to "the riches of Christ," "the riches of His glory," "the riches of His grace," "the riches of His mercy," how He "became poor that [we] through His poverty might be rich." And the foregoing is only a glimpse of the riches of Christ proffered to us. And still he leaves us with a basic fact. Referring to "the mystery" which was "hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints," he says that,

"... God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you [i.e., 'you Gentiles'], the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).⁶⁷

"As nothing having *and* all things possessing;" We are back to "and" or *kai* again and consistently so, for many dear saints, poor in this world's goods, have rejoiced that they are also, at the same time, rich in spiritual assets. Surely we should heed the apostle's word as to this:

"Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours;

"Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.

"And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21-23).

Many years ago, Dr. Harry A. Ironside sent the author a greeting card at year's end. It was a verse of poetry based on Rom. 8:17 and written in his own hand. Whether he was the author of the verse, we do not know, but we suspect he was

⁶⁶ The author has not been able to discover why the word "always," in A.V., is sometimes spelled "alway." There appears to be no difference in the meaning.

⁶⁷ If Israel had received Christ as her Savior-King and the Gentiles had come to "rejoice with His people Israel," that would have been *the fulfillment of prophecy among the Gentiles*. But this is not the case today. We cannot go to the Jewish synagogue to find Christ; we find Him rather in a Gentile church, which very few Jews, if any, even attend. The prophets never predicted this; this is *"this mystery among the Gentiles,"* and God would have us appreciate the wonder of it.

since it was signed only with his own signature. The poem, which has always been a blessing to us reads as follows:

WHAT A PROSPECT!

What a prospect, child of glory
Does the future hold in store!
By the wildest flight of fancy
Thou couldst never ask for more:
Heir of God! Joint-heir forever
With His own beloved Son.
God *could* not to you have promised
More of bliss than He has done.

s/ H. A. Ironside

THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD: // Cor. 6:11-18: "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

"Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

"Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

"Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

After discussing what the Christian ministry ought to be and what, by grace, it was for him, the apostle begins to appeal to them:

"O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged" (Ver. 11).

"Our mouth is open unto you" is a Hebraism meaning, "I'm speaking freely to you, without reservation." "Our heart is enlarged." What an expression! Paul was a large-hearted man, and in cases such as this his heart was further enlarged. In 7:3 he says:

"Ye are in our hearts to die and live with you."

How fortunate the Corinthian believers were to have such a pastor, such a friend!

UP TIGHT: // Cor. 6:12: "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels [Lit., "your own inner feelings]."

We have an expressive phrase for this in English today. It is the phrase, "*up tight*." They were not "up tight" in his heart. He loved them freely, heartily. They were "up tight" in their own inner feelings. And this is so with many who are not living close to the Lord today. They get into worldliness and sin and their guilt consciousness has them "up tight."

FOR A RECOMPENCE: // Cor. 6:13: "Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children) be ye also enlarged."

"Let's balance this thing out," he says. I have a large place in my heart for you, especially under these circumstances. My heart is enlarged toward you; now let yours be enlarged toward me.

This was an appropriate exhortation, for the love between Paul and the Corinthian believers had not been mutual. In II Cor. 12:15 he had to write:

"I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved."

THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD: What an appropriate exhortation to believers today is the remaining portion of this chapter! The Church today is more like the Corinthian church of Paul's day than was any other assembly of believers to whom Paul wrote.

They were carnal and worldly and surely did not act as believers ought to act. And this is so of the Church today. Whereas Paul's teaching on Christian separation says, "*touch not* the unclean thing," the new evangelicalism teaches that we should *involve ourselves* in the lives of unbelievers in order to win them to Christ: we should involve ourselves in their worldliness and in their worldly practices so as to make ourselves more one with them.

Thus the Church has become so worldly, and the world so religious, that the distinction between them has been all but obliterated. In many cases one can scarcely tell the difference between a Christian and an unbeliever. An actor or

comedian, deep in the things of the world--this world system that God condemns--will testify how glad he is that he has come to trust in Christ. And perhaps some of them *have* come to trust in Christ. They simply remain part of "the world" too. To such and to us all, the apostle says:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (II Cor. 6:14-16).

Beloved Christian reader, heed the exhortation. "*Be not yoked together with unbelievers,*" whether in marriage, or in business, or in your social life. Dr. C. I. Scofield once said:

"An unequal yoke is anything that unites a child of God with an unbeliever in a common purpose." Thus the "separation" spoken of in Ver. 17 is "not separation from contact with evil in the world or the Church, but separation from complicity with it or conformity to it."

Mark well, he speaks of separation from the evil in the world *or in the Church*. How important; for there is much evil in the Church from which consistent believers must separate themselves.

Right in this Corinthian congregation there was a man living openly in gross immorality, and Paul says, as it were: "You can't be buddy-buddy with that man. *Excommunicate him!*" Indeed, the apostle has much to say about breaking fellowship with believers who have gone astray in doctrine or conduct. If they persist, he says, withdraw yourselves from them; have no fellowship with them.

Here is just where the new evangelicalism of our day has failed and done much spiritual harm. It teaches that we *should* have fellowship with the world - to win the lost to Christ! Ah, but when you do this, dear friend, the lost cannot truly respect you, for they will see no difference between you and themselves.

Note carefully: Ver. 16 does not say "What agreement hath the temple of God hath the temple of Satan?" It says, "What agreement hath the temple of God with *idols?*" You can't consistently have a pagan idol in the temple of God, How can God share His temple - "which temple ye are" - with an idol?

But of those who live consistently, separated as sacred to God, He says:

"I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Ver. 16).

If God could not endure the presence of idols in the *land* He gave to Israel, how can we expect Him to tolerate the presence of idols in the believer's heart and mind? Hence the apostle's closing plea in Vers. 17,18:

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty."

A NEGLECTED TRUTH: Here is where the blessed truth of *sanctification* should naturally come to mind but, alas, sanctification is one of the great neglected truths of modern theology.

Diligent Bible students know that the words "holiness" and "sanctification" in our *Authorized Version* come from Hebrew and Greek roots meaning simply "to set apart" or "to separate." In Bible *usage*, however, they mean "to set apart as sacred," "to consecrate," to *dedicate*. The following passages are but a few of the many that bear this out.

Gen. 2:3: "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

Ex. 3:5: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is *holy* ground,"

Matt. 6:9: "*Hallowed* be Thy name."

II Cor. 11:2: ...I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

In these passages the Hebrew and Greek words in question are variously rendered "sanctify," "holy," "hallowed" and "espoused," but in each case the meaning is clearly, "set apart as sacred," "*consecrated*," "*dedicated*."

What rich blessing many believers would experience if they realized that both in our salvation and in our walk it is God's purpose to set us apart *as sacred to Himself*, much as the bridegroom can say of his bride: "*She is mine--mine alone!*"

True Scriptural sanctification, or holiness, does not consist in dos and don'ts, nor is it to be confused with sinless perfection. It is rather a consecration to God which in itself will keep us separate from the world and from apostate Christendom.

Does Scriptural sanctification, then, mean that we can be of no spiritual good to the unsaved about us? On the contrary, we can bear a more effective witness to

them if they see that our hearts are wholly given to Him, not to be seduced no matter what the attraction, just as a husband and wife who are wholly devoted to each other exert a better influence on those about them than would otherwise be possible.

That God would have His people wholly separated to Himself is clear from hundreds of Scripture passages. We cite but a few:

John 17:17: "Sanctify them through Thy truth. Thy Word is truth."

Eph. 5:25,26: "... Christ ... loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.

"That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."

I Thes. 5:22,23: "Abstain from all appearance [Lit., "every form"] of evil.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly..."

The new evangelicalism makes little of all this, in fact, it teaches the opposite. Ridiculing the fundamentalists, one of them, in his book, *The Case For Orthodoxy*, says: "... the fundamentalist is virtuous because he does not smoke, dance or play cards... And the fundamentalist defends his negations in the name of the very Lord who came that men might have life, and have it more abundantly."

This is amazing! Would even a permissive Christian suppose that smoking, dancing, or playing cards have any connection whatever with the "abundant life" which our Lord would have us enjoy?

And *The Case For Orthodoxy*⁶⁸ is but one example of hundreds of books being published by the neo-evangelicals, with a view to obliterating the distinction between the Church and the world.

In Joe Bayly's *Gospel Blimp*, for example, it is not the separated Christians but "those worldly Griscoms" who win their cigarette-smoking, beer-drinking neighbors to Christ. In Bayly's novel, of course, it is easy to picture the separated fundamentalists as below par mentally, inconsistent Scripturally and not willing to become "involved" with the unsaved, while the Griscoms have oh so great a concern for the lost! But *how* do the Griscoms win their neighbors to Christ? By *staying away* from church and going to the shore with them on Sunday, thus demonstrating that they are not "Holy Joes"! That's all easy in a novel.

But this writer avers that his father's⁶⁹ policy was more apt to win the respect of the unsaved. When unsaved friends would send word that they were "coming over

⁶⁸ By Edward John Carnell.

⁶⁹ Peter Stam, Sr.

on Sunday," he would respond in obedience to **Heb. 10:25**: "Come right over and go to church with us. We always go to church on Sundays." This, more than showing worldly people that we are not "Holy Joes," will win the respect of the lost and let us never forget that gaining the *respect* of the unsaved is one of the prime requisites of effective soul-winning.

The new evangelicalism is extremely subtle, extremely well financed and has become extremely popular. This is why we agree with a statement by Dr. Bob Jones, Jr., with reference to modernism, neo-orthodoxy and the new evangelicalism. "Of the three," says Dr. Jones, "the last group is the most dangerous, since it is the most subtle and the most persuasive, and the most influential in bringing believers into compromise. It persuades them that it is not necessary to stand against infidelity or to press the battle against unbelief. So God's people, having laid down their arms, find themselves quickly conquered and enslaved."⁷⁰

We bring to a close this section on the importance and the need of true sanctification with two Scripture passages on the subject:

II Tim. 2:21: "if a man therefore purge himself from these,⁷¹ he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

I Thes. 5:23: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

⁷⁰ *The Four Groups in Protestantism*, P.6.

⁷¹ The evils of the preceding context.

CHAPTER VII

II Corinthians 7:1-16

COMPLETE SANCTIFICATION: *II Cor. 7:1*: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*"

The apostle has made it abundantly clear in Chapter 6 that God's people are not to be likened to a mere building, but to a very special building, a *temple*, or *shrine*, where He is *worshipped*. Also that *sanctification* is not mere separation from the world and sin, but separation *to God* as His alone. It is *consecration*, *dedication*, which is indeed the sense often given to the word in our English translation.

The word "flesh" (Gr., *sarx*), here, does not refer to the body, but rather to the *nature* which man received from fallen Adam. Thus we are to cleanse ourselves from all "filthiness of the flesh [the old Adamic nature] and the spirit,"⁷² that we may perfect our holiness, or complete our *sanctification*, to God. (See here the two passages with which we brought Chapter 6 to a close.)

"*These promises*," of course, refer to God's promises of fellowship with us if we are wholly separated to Him. Idols cannot be tolerated in the temple of God and "ye," he says, "*are the temple of the living God*" (6:16), a shrine where God should be worshipped and adored. Nor can mere separation from the world or sin satisfy His loving heart. He would have us consecrate ourselves wholly *to Him*.

And we may depend upon it, beloved readers, that if we are wholly consecrated to Him, He will surely keep "these promises," and we will enjoy the consciousness of His presence with and in us.

LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES: Let us never forget that when we sin the spirit is defiled along with the "flesh." The heart and mind, with their desires and thoughts and motives are, indeed, the *cause* of outward defilement. Recall our Lord's words with regard to this in Matt. 15:18-20:

"... those things which proceed out of the mouth *come forth from the heart*, and they defile the man.

"For *out of the heart* [the inner man] proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

"These are the things which defile a man ..."

⁷² Yes, the believer's spirit, the most exalted part of his being, may also be defiled.

Let us then apply the exhortation to ourselves:

"... let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the *flesh and spirit*, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," i.e., perfecting our consecration to Him.

At this point (May 10, 1991) Pastor Stam's sight, already poor, took a rather serious turn for the worse, so that virtually all his notes from here on will be taken from his radio broadcasts on II Corinthians, dictated by Pastor Stam himself.

We trust that these riches of grace will prove as great a blessing to you as the previous pages.

(Signature--Pastor Paul M. Sadler)

THE HEART OF PAUL: II Cor. 7:2-16: The *Scofield Reference Bible* has entitled this passage, "*The Heart of Paul*," so we use this title here with apologies to Dr. Scofield.

PAUL'S PLEA FOR MUTUAL LOVE: II Cor. 7:2 - 4: "Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

"I speak not this to condemn you; for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

"Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation."

When a person has a guilty conscience he is apt to blame others, even those who are trying to help him, for his troubles. It was so with the Corinthian Christians. Some of them actually found fault with Paul, as though *he* had wronged *them!* Imagine! After all his labors for them, after a multitude there had come to know the Lord through his ministry, a ministry that could well have cost him his life; after this *they* grew careless and disgraced themselves and the Lord, and now were offended that *he* should be concerned about their plight!

But he protests: "*We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.*" It was *they* who had wronged and defrauded others, especially God and Paul, letting the apostle labor for them in the face of the gravest dangers, without contributing even one small coin toward his meagre needs.

The apostle well knew what was behind their petty criticisms, and he used it in II Cor. 12:17,18, challenging them:

"Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?"

"I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?"

Titus had been sent with the "brother" to "stir up" in the Corinthian saints the "Face" of giving (8:6) in connection with the "collection" (I Cor. 16:1) being taken up for the poor Judaeans saints (See [Gal. 2:10](#); [I Cor. 16:1-4](#); [Rom. 15:25-31](#)).

On this occasion Titus had been sent with the "brother" to remind them of their *promises*, heartily made a year previous ([II Cor. 8:10](#)), that they might hasten to "perform the doing of it" (8:11) lest he, and they, be "ashamed" when the gift was finally sent from many Gentile churches, and the Corinthians were found "unprepared" ([II Cor. 9:4](#)).

But in all this Titus and his co-worker had been most careful not to "make a [personal] gain" out of their visit.

How careful the apostle had been to make sure that all would be done so as to glorify the Lord. He would send *their* gift by the hand of *two* of the brethren *approved by them in writing*, and if it seemed appropriate that *he* should go, *they* would go *with him*" ([I Cor. 16:3,4](#)). And so now he had sent to Corinth one whom they well knew and whose "earnest care" for them should find sincere response from them. Further, since this involved what should be a large contribution (from a large congregation) he also sent this "brother," praised "throughout all the churches" for his faithful gospel ministry ([II Cor. 8:16-18](#)) so that even the beloved Titus should not be alone in overseeing this offering for the Judaeans saints. Note Paul's motive in this.

"Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" ([II Cor. 8:20,21](#)).⁷³

The apostle does not protest here that he has not wronged them in order to *condemn them*, for he had already assured them: "*To are in our hearts to die and live with you*" (Ver. 3).

He had been "very outspoken" to them; this was necessary, but he had also boasted to others about them, and was now "filled with comfort" and "exceeding joyful" that there appeared to be some change in their attitude. And he experienced this comfort and joy in the midst of "all [his] tribulation."

⁷³ At Oxford University in 1862, Dean J. S. Howson preached a thoroughly documented sermon on *The Character of St. Paul*, with an outstanding section on "*His Conscientiousness and Integrity*." We wish all could read it. It is one of the *Hulsean Lectures*, now long out of print.

PAUL AND TITUS: // Cor. 7:5-7: "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

"Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

"And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more."

Paul's love and concern for the Corinthian believers could hardly be demonstrated better than it is in Vers. 5-7.

Titus was a buoyant, refreshing person, but in this case it was more than Titus' appearance that encouraged Paul; it was the news that Titus brought from Corinth.

When Paul had come into Macedonia and had failed to find Titus he was "troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears," for the apostate Jews continued to hound him wherever he went. Ah, but finally Titus appeared and Paul was "comforted," "not by his coming only" but by the news from Corinth (Vers. 6,7). Their "earnest desire," their "mourning" and their "fervent mind" toward him had caused his heart to rejoice.

THE "SORRY" LETTER NECESSARY: // Cor. 7:8-10: "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

What a difference between the repentance of the believer and the remorse of an unbeliever! Believers who have fallen into sin and have repented thereof have changed their attitude. This, indeed, is what the word "repentance" means. But the lost can only look back with guilty remorse at their sinful past.

Thus Paul could say in affect, "I'm glad no damage was done by that letter of rebuke; in fact, it evidently did a great deal of good."

GODLY SORROW WORKETH REPENTANCE: To be "sorry after a godly manner" is to repent and this causes "damage ... in nothing." Indeed, such sorrow eventuates in "salvation," not from sin but from the problems into which we have

gotten ourselves by sin. This broad use of the word "salvation" is found in [Phil. 2:12](#).

The Philippians, too, had gotten themselves into a difficult situation through their own sin. There was a division between two women, and everybody began to take sides until the church was seriously divided. It was with respect to this division that Paul wrote, "*My beloved . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*" He was not about to go to Philippi and take sides with one or the other. Much less would he do this from a distance for there was doubtless fight and wrong and both sides. Thus he exhorts them to "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling," knowing what the results would be if the breach were not healed.

The repentance referred to in this passage never need be repented of (Ver. 10). We will always look back with gratitude at the sorrow it wrought "for a season."

THE SORROW OF THE WORLD: The sorrow of the world, by contrast, "*worketh death,*" says the apostle (Ver. 10). Think it through: the sinner's guilty remorse can cause him nothing but fear, tension, worry, and those other attitudes of mind that can be so devastating. Certainly, none of them can produce "salvation" from his depraved state. They can only end in *death*.

WHAT PAUL'S LETTER HAD WROUGHT: // Cor. 9:11,12: "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

"Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you."

Note that here Paul does not refer to their improvement in general but to their godly repentance "*in this matter*" (Ver. 11), i.e., the incest brazenly practiced by one brother and winked at by others. Here his letter had certainly done its work. Let us examine it further:

"*What carefulness,*" (vs. permissiveness).

"*What clearing of yourselves,*" (of the reproach they had caused).

"*What indignation*" (against the sin and the person so brazenly involved in it).

"*What fear*" (lest God disown *their* witness for Him).

"*What vehement desire*" (vs. their former carelessness).

"What zeal" (to set things in order).

"What revenge"⁷⁴ (against the former sin).

TWO HAPPY PEOPLE: // Cor. 7:13-16: "Therefore we were comforted in your comfort; yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

"For if I have boasted anything to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.

"And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

"I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things."

In the above passage we find two men rejoicing exceedingly: Paul and Titus. But of Titus we read that his "inward affection" for the Corinthians was the "more abundant" as he remembered their "obedience," how "with fear and trembling" they had received him (Ver. 15).

This was no doubt partly due to their own failures, which he had come to discuss with them. However, it must also have been partly due to Titus' own strength of character.

It is interesting that in Paul's letter to him he addressed him as a general in the Army might address his lieutenant, directing him to set in order the things that are wanting, to exhort and convince the gainsayers, to stop the mouths of unruly and vain talkers, to rebuke sharply those who live in sin and to reject willful heretics ([Tit. 1:5,9,11,13; 3:10](#)).

An interesting comparison between Timothy and Titus is found in what Paul has to say with regard to visits they both made to Corinth.

Timothy was head and shoulders above the Corinthian believers, both morally and spiritually, yet when Paul sent him there he had to write a letter in advance, exhorting them: "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him..." (I Cor. 16:10,11).

⁷⁴ In 10:6: The sincere believer is instructed to be ready "to *revenge* all disobedience, when [his] obedience is fulfilled." It is well to stop sinning, but retribution should be made.

But now that Titus has been to Corinth and has returned, Paul writes to the Corinthians commending them for their "obedience" to him and the "fear and trembling" with which they had received him (Ver. 15).

The reader will recall that Titus had specially been taken, with Paul, to Jerusalem as a test case for Gentile liberty from the Law, and regarding his firm stand there we read that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised either as he, with Paul "gave place by subjection, no not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with [the Gentile believers]" ([Gal. 2:3,5](#)).

There is much more we could say about Titus, but we merely cite the fact that Paul chose him to be the pastor at Crete, whose inhabitants are described as "always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" ([Tit. 1:12](#)). Timothy would hardly have been the pastor in this situation. He was better fitted for intellectual Ephesus.

In any case, Paul and Titus rejoiced together, Titus to bring refreshing news and Paul to hear the news he so earnestly longed for. His boasting to Titus about the Philippian church had been valid. A great change had been wrought, especially "in this matter," and, hopefully his beloved Corinthians would further "grow in grace."

CHAPTER VIII

II Corinthians 8:1-24

PAUL AS A FUND-RAISER: II Cor. 8:1-7: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

"How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

"For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

"Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

"Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

"Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."

Those who entertain the unscriptural notion that truly spiritual men of God will not mention the needs of the ministry to any but the Lord, should consider the case of the Apostle Paul. Were he living today, he would certainly be considered a diligent and successful "fund-raiser" for the Lord's work.

As the kingdom program with its "all things common" gave place to the dispensation of the mystery, and those who had disposed of their goods to enter the kingdom began to lack, Paul was used more than once "to send relief" to these needy saints ([Acts 11:29,30](#); [Rom. 15:25, 26](#)). Indeed, after his agreement with the apostles at Jerusalem to help their poor ([Gal. 2:10](#)), he made *an organized effort* to raise funds for their "poor saints" from among the Gentile churches of [Macedonia](#); [Achaia \(Greece\)](#), [Galatia](#) and the rest of [Asia Minor](#) (See [Rom. 15:25,26](#); [I Cor. 16:1](#); [II Cor. 8:1-6](#); [Acts 15:23-29](#); [16:4](#); cf. [Gal. 2:10](#)).

Twice the apostle sent emissaries to awaken the wealthy but greedy Corinthians to their financial responsibilities ([II Cor. 8:6](#); [9:3](#)) and in his letters to them he did not refrain from informing them of poor churches who were doing better than they ([II Cor. 8:1-5](#)) or from reminding them of their good intentions of the year previous, urging them to fulfill their promises without further delay, lest he

and they should both be embarrassed by their failure to do their part (II Cor. 8:10,11; 9:2-5).

Those who feel that appeals for funds for the Lord's work indicate a lack of faith and spirituality will probably be surprised to find that the Apostle Paul, in his letters to the churches, has *far more* to say about this matter, even proportionately, than any other writer in the Bible. And this is just as it should be, for Paul was the apostle of *grace*, and the spirit of giving should be the believer's natural response to the infinite grace bestowed upon him; moreover, the fact that God is still giving men an opportunity to be saved by grace, through faith in Christ alone, should stir the hearts of all true believers to make sacrifices to quickly get the message out to the teeming millions of lost souls all about us.

It is true, to be sure, that some men of God have acted in the energy of the flesh in their efforts to raise funds for the Lord's work, while others, greedy of filthy lucre, have brought reproach upon the name of Christ by using the Lord's work for their own material advantage. It is to be feared that this flagrant disregard of the Word and will of God, especially among high-priced evangelists, who live in luxury on the sacrifices of others, has discouraged many sincere Christians from giving to the cause of Christ. Such unworthy men also should learn from the Apostle Paul, that he never raised funds for his own advantage and that he was always completely honorable in his use of the funds entrusted to him (See I Cor. 16:3,4; II Cor. 8:19-23; 9:3-5).

The failures of certain religious leaders in financial matters do not, however, diminish the responsibility of God's people to do their part financially in the work of the Lord. The apostle, by the Spirit, makes it clear and emphatic that God has "*ordained*" (1.) that His people should support personally those who preach the gospel (I Cor. 9:14), (2.) that it is a "*rule*" that His people contribute to the ministry of those who are reaching out into new fields with the message of grace (II Cor. 10:13-16), and (3.) that they should be "*forward*" to help the poor, especially poor *believers* (II Cor. 8:1-5; Gal. 2:10).

MUCH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT: The reader will recall that the Corinthian believers had cleared themselves completely "*in this matter,*" i.e., in the matter of the incestuous person. But in many other matters there was still much room for improvement.

They had been very self-centered, especially where their finances were concerned. How would Paul now deal with them about this?

Would he merely compare them with some poor but generous church? No, not *merely*. It was not like Paul to compare churches, nor would this be apt to encourage generosity in the church that lacked it. Rather he would inform them of "*the grace of God*" bestowed on some other church or churches. And there was such a church, or group of churches, which God might well use to inspire the Corinthian saints.

THE CHARACTER OF THE MACEDONIAN CHURCHES: *II Cor. 8:1-5:* As each individual has his own character, so it is with local churches. This writer, in his years of ministering to local churches, has often noticed this. In one church it was *love* which he felt and saw above all else. In another it was their *sense of responsibility* - also a great virtue. In another it was *generosity*; in another *love for the study of the Word, etc.*

But while there is a great abundance of Scripture passages that describe the character of the Macedonian churches,⁷⁵ the first five verses of II Cor. 8 provides us with an amazingly comprehensive description of their character. And all of them together were as one.

1. As a church they were *bitterly persecuted*. The apostle refers to their "*great trial of afflictions*" (Ver. 2), especially from the apostate Jews, who had persecuted Paul and had sought to kill him ([Acts 20:3](#); [21:31](#); [23:15](#); [23:30](#)). Who knows what "stripes," "imprisonments," yes, and executions had taken place among them? Doubtless many bore in their bodies the evidences of these persecutions.

2. They were a *joyful church*. The apostle bears witness to "*the abundance of their joy*" (Ver. 2). Few were the criticisms or complaints at the Macedonian churches. They expressed the joy of victorious living in the midst of vicious persecution. On every hand there were smiles, tears of joy, inspiring testimonies.

3. They were not merely a poor church but a *very poor* one. Paul refers to "*their deep poverty*" in Ver. 2. Whoever moved among them could see the signs: poor homes and furniture, scarcity of good food, hard work for little pay, etc. And think:

4. "[their] great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty *abounded unto the riches of their liberality*" (Ver. 2).

Persecution, poverty - *and joy* had made out of them a *generous assembly* (Vers. 1-4), so that they begged Paul, "with much entreaty" to receive the gift they had collected for "the poor saints at Jerusalem," a gift which Paul testifies, was all they could afford, yes, and *more* than they could afford (Ver. 3).

What a testimony to the grace of God! What a joy to be among such people!

5. Finally, they did *not* give as Paul had hoped; merely in response to his appeals, "*but first gave their own selves to the Lord and to [Paul] by the will of God*" (Ver. 5). "Is there anything else we can do? Is there some way in which we can be of greater help?"

⁷⁵ Especially that of the church of Philippi, the city from which Paul had undoubtedly written this letter to the Corinthian saints.

Oh, those Macedonians, and especially those Philippians! Little wonder Paul refers so often to these trophies of grace! Surely "the grace of God bestowed upon them," and bringing forth so much precious fruit, should inspire the Corinthian saints to loving, joyful, sacrificial service for Him who,

"Though He was rich, yet for your sakes... became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9).

TO PROVE THE SINCERITY OF YOUR LOVE: // Cor. 8:6-9: "Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

"Therefore, as ye abound in everything; in faith, in utterance and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

"I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Titus, who had "begun" the grace⁷⁶ of giving among the Corinthian believers some time previous, had been sent again to "finish in [them] this same grace also" (Ver. 6).

This matter should by now have been consummated. Thus Paul, now speaking with apostolic authority, *commands* them: "As ye abound in everything⁷⁷ . . . see that ye abound in this grace also" (Ver. 7).

⁷⁶ The Greek root *charis*, from which our "Charisma" and "Charismatic," are taken, occurs often in *Romans* and in the *Corinthian* epistles, and most of all here in II Cor. 8. It is usually, though not always, translated "grace" in our English versions. As is indicated here, the *charis*, or grace, of *giving* goes farthest to prove "the sincerity of [our] love."

Sad to say, most of the leaders of the modern *Charismatic*, or *Pentecostal Movement* know little of "this grace." Which of them have "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need"? (Acts 2:45). Of which of them can it be said: "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own," or "Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need"? (Acts 4:32-35).

You say, "But the Macedonians did not do this." True, but it was the *Pentecostal* program as we find it in Acts 2-4, and this is what our Charismatic friends profess to follow in obedience to our Lord's consistent teachings during His earthly ministry, and especially in His *Sermon on the Mount*. Should not our modern Pentecostals obey these commands if they would "prove the sincerity of [their] love"? But the Macedonians were following *Paul's* program for giving (II Cor. 8,9, cf. Acts 11:29,30).

It should not be overlooked that the *Charismatic Movement* is now reported to be the fastest growing of all Christian organizations.

THE PROOF OF LOVE: Giving is the natural expression of love. Love willingly and gladly makes sacrifices. "God so *loved* the world that He *gave*" gave His all – *His only begotten Son*" (John 3:16). "Christ also *loved* the Church, and *gave Himself* for it" (Eph. 5:25), and every true believer should exclaim with Paul: "*He loved me and gave Himself for me?*" (Gal. 2:20).

In an affectionate letter to the Philippians, he says:

"Now ye Philipplians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

"For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Phil. 4:15,16).

In sad contrast, Paul had to write to the large and wealthy church at Corinth, which could so easily have supplied his modest needs, but among whom he had worked with his own hands to support himself *and* his company:

"I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

"And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself" (II Cor. 11:8,9).

"And I will gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (II Cor. 12:15).

Men of God whose sincere desire it is to make Christ known, are often grieved, both over those who give to the work of the Lord and over those who do not. That is, those who, like the Macedonians, give so faithfully and generously, can so often, like them, ill afford it, while others who, like the Corinthians, profess to love the truth, but sacrifice so little to make it known, can so often, like them, best afford to help in the work, and could be greatly used of God if they only would.

In rich America, sad to say, the latter are in the great majority. Think what could be accomplished if all believers who had the means, also had the love and vision to do their part in getting the message of grace out to others! The responsibility, of course, rests the more heavily upon those who have come to know the gospel of God's grace in all its purity, and each of us should ask himself the question: "Am I, by a failure to do my part in the work, hindering a real awakening in the Church and

⁷⁷ Some of their gifts, or graces, they enthusiastically "gloried in" as some Pentecostals today "glory in" the gifts of tongues, knowledge, healing, etc.

a real ingathering of souls? Am I partly responsible for the conditions which exist in the Church and in the world today?"

Paul found it necessary to challenge the Corinthians to prove the *sincerity* of their professed love to God and to others, by calling upon them to do their part *financially*:

"I speak not by commandment,⁷⁸ but by occasion of the of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, That ye through His poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:8,9).

MY ADVICE: II Cor. 8:10,11: "And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

"Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have."

Note the words "advice" and "expedient." More than a year previous the Corinthian Christians had enthusiastically agreed to participate in this great offering for the impoverished Judaeans. But, as with many of God's people today, the nearer the time for the redemption of their pledge drew near, the less they felt like doing it. Therefore Paul "advised" them that it was "*expedient*" for them to *do* their part without further delay, for it would be embarrassing to him, not to mention them, if all the Gentile churches, with a veritable army of their delegates, were *forced* to proceed to Jerusalem without a representation from the largest church of all (See [II Cor. 9:4](#)).

Paul Rader used to say, "*Promises* are good, but *performance* is better." It is said that on one *occasion* Paul was accosted by one who had repeatedly promised to help his ministry financially. "I'm going to send you a good check one of these days," said Paul's "friend." With that Rader stopped, as though he had forgotten something. "Do you have a dime?" he asked. The man, thinking Rader wanted to make a telephone call, quickly gave him a dime. "There!" said Rader, "Now I *know* I've got *that!*" It is said that the "promising Christian," took the rebuke to heart and immediately wrote out a generous check for Paul Rader's ministry.

A WILLING MIND: II Cor. 8:12-15: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

"For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

⁷⁸ i.e., the Lord did not command me to write thus.

"But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality:

"As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."

The sense of the above we perceive to be as follows: "No one is asking you to do more than you can or to give more than you can afford."

The policy for *Christian giving* was set at Antioch, the Gentile city where "the disciples were first called *Christians*" ([Acts 11:26](#)) and Saul, recently saved, was called to be their leader ([Acts 11:25,26](#)). The Bible law of "first mention" looms important here.

And exactly what was "*Christian giving*"? It was a distinct break from giving as taught in the Sermon on the Mount and at Pentecost. When the Judean believers who had practiced the program of "all things common" and "sell that ye have and give alms,"--when these began to experience serious lack, they appealed for help to the brethren at Antioch with the result that:

"... the disciples [at Antioch] every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

"Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" ([Acts 11:29,30](#)).

This has remained the policy for *Christian giving* ever since (See [I Cor. 16:2](#); [II Cor. 8:1-5](#); [12-14](#)).

THOUGHTFUL GIVING: Christian giving, however, is not a casual affair, relieving the Church of financial *responsibility*. By no means. The disciples at Antioch contributed "every man according to his *ability*," and Paul instructs believers in [I Cor. 16:2](#) to give "everyone ... *as God hath prospered him*." Thus here in [II Cor. 8:12](#) the apostle declares that our gifts are "*accepted [by God, of course] . . . not according to that a man hath not*": God never asks us to give what we do not have. Rather it is accepted "*according to that a man hath*." God expects *proportionate* giving. What a serious thought for rich Christians to ponder! If a multi-millionaire contributes a \$100.00 check God accepts that contribution in the light of that man's riches, "according to that [he] hath." Hence Paul's strong "charge" to rich believers in [I Tim. 6:17-19](#).

The rich may carefully keep others from knowing about their finances but God knows and He "accepts" our gifts in the light of what they really cost us.

Notice how tactfully Paul says, "I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened" ([Ver. 13](#)) as though the Corinthians were being burdened and the

Macedonians eased! Indeed, he even suggests that some day *they*, the Corinthians, might be poor and the Macedonians well off! As for Paul, his desire was for all to do their part, "that there may be equality."

THE DELEGATES: // Cor. 8:16-19: "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

"For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

"And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

"And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:"

It will be remembered that due to the large number of Gentile churches participating and the size of the offering for the Judaeen poor, the gift was to be delivered by *delegates*, two or more from every church.

These delegates would be men approved *in writing* by the congregations (I Cor. 16:3) "and," says the apostle, "if it is meet that I go also, *they* shall go with *me*"⁷⁹ (I Cor. 16:4).

In the case of Corinth Paul himself had provided three trusted men in addition to any whom they might wish to appoint.⁸⁰

Titus they knew well, and *trusted*. Indeed, he had shown his great affection for them often, and again now as he was not only sent by Paul, but went to them "of his own accord" (Ver. 17).

With Titus, Paul sent "the brother,"⁸¹ also known "throughout all the churches" as a consecrated man of God (Ver. 18). In fact "all the churches," as a Christian fellowship, had chosen him to travel with the other delegates to watch over and deliver the collection. Many believe that this was Luke and, indeed, he would have been an appropriate choice for this position.

"AVOIDING THIS": // Cor. 8:20-24: "Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

⁷⁹ Thus maintaining his apostolic authority.

⁸⁰ For there was much strife among them (I Cor. 3:3; II Cor. 12:20).

⁸¹ The language indicates that they already knew him.

"And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

"Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

"Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf."

We have said that the pattern for *Christian* giving was set at Antioch, where the disciples were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26).

This is most significant, for Antioch⁸² represented the Church as a whole. The church at Antioch included *Jews* (Acts 11:19), *Grecians*⁸³ (Acts 11:20) and *Gentiles* (Gal. 2:11-13). As with *the other* churches "among the Gentiles," it was probably the Gentile believers whose numbers grew most rapidly.

Even when the Judaeans learned that the *Grecians* were worshipping Christ, they were concerned and sent Barnabas to look into the matter.

"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23,24).

A "good man" indeed! How could he help but recognize the work of the Holy Spirit at Antioch? And what could he appropriately do but urge them to "cleave unto the Lord"?

The next thing Barnabas did was to go to Tarsus to find Paul, who had so earnestly desired to begin his ministry at Jerusalem, but to whom the Lord had insisted: "*Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles*" (Acts 22:21).

It was thus that Paul became, for the present, the pastor of the church at Antioch⁸⁴ and the apostle of the Gentiles, for this church became the headquarters of his great ministry among the Gentiles for years to come.

⁸² In Syria.

⁸³ Grecianized Jews.

⁸⁴ "A whole year" (Acts 11:26)

But let us return to Antioch as the place where the disciples of Christ were first called "Christians," or "Christ-ones." Here were Jews, Grecians and Gentiles all worshipping *Christ*. *Christ* was the one who had drawn them all together and had made them one. It was *Christ* whom they all loved and worshipped. Little wonder it was there that believers were first called "*Christians*!"

Surely this church and all those represented by it would not want to bring reproach upon the name of *Christ*. This is why Paul wrote as he did. Here at **Corinth**, and at all the other churches founded by Paul, were Jews, Grecians and Gentiles, all brought together as one in *Christ*. Surely they would not lightly disgrace *Him*. Rather they must "provide," or prepare beforehand, "honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (Ver. 21).

It was in such preparation, or provision, that Paul was sending, along with their delegates and Titus, and the brother already mentioned (perhaps Luke), still another brother whom Paul had often proved diligent, in many things, and who would surely be the more so now considering the confidence Paul had in the Corinthians (Ver. 22).

Any questions as to Titus? "He is my partner and fellow helper concerning *you*" (Ver. 23). They well knew this and they knew that they, as a church, sorely *needed* these two who had loved and served them so sincerely.

Any questions as to the other brethren mentioned? "They are the messengers"⁸⁵ of the churches and the glory of Christ" (Ver. 23).

DISPENSATIONAL CHANGE: What a change had taken place since Pentecost! Then everyone had lived spontaneously for everyone else, even to the selling of their houses and lands and donating them for the common good (**Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35**). Then the "multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul. Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32).⁸⁶ This was indeed a foretaste of the Kingdom to come.

But the Pentecostal program gradually failed (**Acts 5:1,2; 6:1; 11:27-30**) and as it did many of those who had given up their means for the common good, began to experience deep need. Hence the plea to the first Gentile church, at Antioch, and their response "*every man according to his ability*" (**Acts 11:29**). And this has remained the pattern for Christian giving ever since (cf. **I Cor. 16:2** and **II Cor. 8:12**). This not only provides for *proportionate* giving, but it prevents the exorbitant losses sustained by the Pentecostal disciples.

⁸⁵ The Greek here is *apostoloi*, but this is evidently used in the primitive sense of "one sent." Most translations have recognized this, rendering the word "messengers."

⁸⁶ What a difference between this way of life and the now - discredited communism! Communism says, "You've got plenty; give me some," while the disciples at Pentecost said, "I've got plenty; you take some."

And now we come to Verse 24, a verse which probably has no equal in Paul's writings for *harshness*. No doubt this was thoughtfully written, and certainly it was written by divine inspiration:

"WHEREFORE SHOW YE TO THEM, AND BEFORE THE CHURCHES, THE PROOF OF YOUR LOVE, AND OF OUR BOASTING ON YOUR BEHALF."

No doubt they *needed* this rebuke, as do many Christians today who are quick to promise, but slow to perform.

CHAPTER IX

II Corinthians 9:1-15

LEST OUR BOASTING SHOULD BE IN VAIN: // Cor. 9:1-7: "For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

"For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

"Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

"Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

"Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty and not as of covetousness.

"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

What! Must we belabour this subject still further? Hasn't the apostle said quite enough about it by now? Yes, and he acknowledges: "It is *superfluous* for me to write to you,"⁸⁷ but he deemed it necessary "lest our boasting [glorying] of you be in vain." This was a valid conclusion, since the Corinthians had promised again and again for more than a year but still there was no performance. They were "forward" in suggesting, in promoting, and all of that, so that Paul could tell the Macedonians that **Achaia**⁸⁸ had been ready⁸⁹ a year ago. He had said, "That big church in Corinth has been with us for a year" (Ver. 2). Indeed, "their zeal," their enthusiasm, had "provoked very many."

Now, however, it seemed of the highest urgency to send Titus and his co-workers to them to help them in actually "making up" their contribution. When the suggestion had first been made the Macedonian churches were prompt and

⁸⁷ In the sense that he should not need to write them further about this subject since they already knew the facts.

⁸⁸ Greece, the area of the Corinthian church and her branches or offshoots.

⁸⁹ i. e. Ready to begin with the project, not ready with a gift!

generous in their response, making up a considerable contribution almost on the spot.

Thus Paul informs the Corinthians that he is sending these brethren to "make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the gift might be ready" when the delegates from the other churches reach Corinth, that their gift might be "a matter of bounty and not of covetousness," i.e. not merely a collection gathered because there were those who wanted *their* money.

What an embarrassment it would have been to Paul - and to *them* - if upon arriving with the delegates from all the other churches with the massive offering they bore, the brethren from the largest church of all had not even gotten their gift together!

Since their gift had not yet been gathered the apostle reminds them that,

"He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

We cannot out-give God. Any sacrifice made for His cause would enrich them far beyond the amount they gave. The farmer who sows bountifully reaps *far more bountifully* for the size of the crop is always much greater than the amount of the seed sown.

The apostle does not say that God will recompense generous contributors with material things, We cannot *use* God in this way--as some modern evangelists teach. It has been said: "If you want to prosper in business, give to the Lord" - meaning "give to our ministry." The fact is that those who are faithful in giving He sometimes promotes to a teaching ministry or missionary work but he surely will enrich their lives and make them more rewarding than they ever were.

Whatever we do, we should avoid giving "grudgingly," or "of necessity," i.e. because we don't know how to avoid it (Ver. 7). If we can't give from the heart then we should have the honesty and courage to say "No." God knows our hearts and knows whether we do or do not *really* want to make a sacrifice for Him. This is why Paul goes on to say in Ver. 7, "*For God loveth a cheerful⁹⁰ giver.*" We have a good example of this in the Macedonians. They gave gleefully, happily. They really wanted to help the poor saints at Jerusalem.

ENRICHED IN EVERYTHING: // Cor. 9:8-15: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

"(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

⁹⁰The Greek word here is *hilaros*, our "hilarious."

"Now he that ministereth seed to the sewer both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:)

"Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

"For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

"Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

"And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift,"

If there are two verses in this extended passage on giving, that belong together, they are the following:

II Cor. 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

II Cor. 9:8: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

May we all associate these two verses in our minds throughout our Christian lives: *II Cor. 8:9* and *II Cor. 9:8*. But to make them more meaningful, perhaps we should paraphrase *II Cor. 8:9*, simply, and by no means changing the translation in any way.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich [so very rich⁹¹], yet for our sakes He became poor [so very poor⁹²], that ye through His poverty might be rich [so very rich⁹³]."

⁹¹ John 1:3: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Col. 1:16,17: "All things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

⁹² Isa. 53:3: "He is despised and rejected of men... He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Matt. 8:20: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Matt. 27:46: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

⁹³ Rom. 8:16,17: "... we are the children [born ones] of God. And if children [born ones], then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." I Cor. 3:21, 22: "For all things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours."

It is in the light of all this that the apostle could say:

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

This was true with respect to the Corinthian believers, and it is true with respect to the humblest believer today.

WHY GOD ENRICHES US: We have already seen the answer to this in Ver. 8: "*that ye may abound to every good work.*" This is followed by a parenthesis in which the apostle refers to the man who "disburses abroad and gives to the poor" (this was their particular challenge), and he says of him, "*His righteousness remaineth forever,*" and explains that such a man "both ministers bread for your food and multiplies your seed sown," thus increasing "the fruits of your righteousness."

God does not save us just to make us happy forever. He says in Ver. 11, "Being enriched in everything *to all bountifulness.*" True, we are not saved by good works, but we are saved *unto* good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). These good works cause many to thank God, bringing glory to His name (Vers. 11,12).

THE FRUIT OF CHRISTIAN GENEROSITY: We have seen from Vers. 11,12 above that in addition to helping others by our giving, it causes many to thank God for His goodness, bringing glory to His name.

The word "experiment" (Ver. 13) is *dokime* in the Greek, having to do with *proof*. Thus the proof given by your *diakonias*, service, or ministry, of your acknowledged⁹⁴ subjection to the gospel of Christ, will bring glory to God.

We take it that the sense here is that the impoverished saints in Judaea were praying and longing that the grace of God might work in the Corinthians "exceedingly," for their need was indeed great. The Corinthian believers may have expected this, but did they realize how truly valuable were these Judaeans prayers in their behalf? Perhaps unwittingly, these poverty-stricken saints were praying the same prayer for the Corinthians as was Paul: that the grace of God might abound in them.

CONCLUSION: What an amazing way to close two chapters written on the subject of Christian giving! Leaving all the rest behind, as it were, he calls our attention to God's great gift to us.

⁹⁴ The word "professed" in Ver. 13, does not mean that their subjection to the gospel was not genuine. The word would have been better rendered "confession" i.e., of your subjection to the gospel of Christ.

This gift, he says, is *indescribable*, not "unspeakable." In Chapter 12, Verse 4, we find Paul, "caught up into Paradise," where he "heard *unspeakable* words, which it is not *permitted* to a man to utter," but this "unspeakable" is a different word altogether. God's gracious gift to us is rather beyond our comprehension and certainly beyond our ability to describe in words.

But let us note carefully that it is this precious gift which he calls to their - and our - attention *with respect to Christian giving*. However we may fail in understanding or practicing the apostle's teachings and exhortations in the foregoing two chapters, let our grateful praise go forever to Him who gave His beloved Son to die in agony and disgrace that we might be justified and glorified, as "in the ages to come" He shows "the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" ([Eph. 2:7](#)).

CHAPTER X

II Corinthians 10:1-18

PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS MINISTRY: *II Cor. 10:1-12*: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

"But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;)

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

"And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

"For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

"That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible.

"Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

In Chapter 10 the apostle appears to turn from dealing with the backslidden Corinthians as a whole, to answer the legalizers and Judaizers among them who

were belittling his apostleship and ministry, for these were exerting a profound influence on the Corinthian congregation. But how humbly and lovingly he protests!

In Rom. 12:1, where he deals with the Christian's *conduct*, he says, "I beseech you therefore brethren, *by the mercies of God* to give your bodies as living sacrifices to Him and His service." But here, writing to self-important people who looked down on him and caused others, conversely, to become puffed up, he says, "I Paul myself beseech you *by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.*"

Does the reader recall the touching story recorded for us in John 13? Imagine the Creator of the universe washing His disciples' feet! Paul partook of this divine humility. He did not come with self-importance or pomp, but in *love* he sought to show them *the truth*. He even got a job making tents to support himself and his co-workers while establishing the vast assembly at Corinth.

How wrong the Church of Rome has all this! They have their bishops and archbishops arrayed in costly robes and living in riches. They take their chief bishop and set him on a throne in the greatest palace on earth, gorgeously appareled, and given a position quite distinct from, and far above, any other person in the Roman Church and - the one *final* voice.

And they call him the Vicar, the representative, of Christ on earth, the Christ who became poor that we might become rich, the Christ who was, and still is, "rejected of men." What a flagrant misrepresentation of what Christ was when He dwelt among men, and what He would have His servants be as they labor among men.

But it is not only the Church of Rome that misrepresents Christ in this way. Modern Protestant Evangelicalism exalts intellectualism above the plain truth of Scripture, and too often it graduates from its seminaries men with a few degrees but precious little temperature. They feel it so important that they impress the world, but the world remains unimpressed, while the Word of God says, "*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*" (I Cor. 1:19). Indeed, Paul counted all his own learning loss "*for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*" (Phil. 3:8).

The apostle had come to the Corinthians in humble simplicity (II Cor. 1:12). He readily acknowledges that as to his appearance, when among them, it was "base" (Lit., lowly), but that he was more bold when writing to them. Indeed, the Corinthian critics voiced this as one of their objections:

"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" [Lit., unimpressive] (Ver. 10).

They did not realize that it was *what* he said that was so effective. Corinth was a great seat of learning, and the Greek philosophers who held forth there were

masters of oratory, yes, and sophistry. But Paul, though their peer intellectually, had renounced all this display of wisdom and had come to Corinth in *the power of truth*. And the result: Why, right here at Corinth was overwhelming evidence of the power of his ministry: the great church which, by the grace of God and despite much suffering and peril, he had founded.

Thus he beseeches them that he may not need to be bold when he appears among them, certainly not with that "confidence" with which he had contemplated being bold against those who considered him as "walking according to the flesh," i.e., *not* being led by the Spirit. Some of these had in fact understood all the apostle's talk about coming to Corinth, as mere bluff, as though he wouldn't *dare* to appear among them.

Paul readily agreed that he was still "in the flesh," but denied that his spiritual warfare was waged "after the flesh" (Ver. 3). "For the weapons of our warfare," he says, "are not carnal [Lit., physical], but [they *are*] mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (Ver. 4).

Strong language this, and followed by a statement as to how, specifically, God used these "mighty weapons" to "pull down strongholds":

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (Ver. 5).

On several occasions Paul says, as it were, that it would be up to them whether he came to them "with a rod" or "in love and in the spirit of meekness." See the following:

I Cor. 4:21: "What will ye, shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love and in the spirit of meekness?"

II Cor. 13:2,3: "If I come again I will not spare, since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me."

The trouble was that the Corinthian Christians wanted so to *be* something rather than faithfully serving God. But God does not merely *bear with* the "nothings" among His people. "God hath *chosen* the foolish . . . the weak . . . the base things . . . the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are, *that no flesh should glory in His presence*" (I Cor. 1:27-29),

Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22), but God had to send him to tend sheep for 40 years before He could use him to deliver Israel from Egypt.

Joshua and the hosts of Israel were commanded to march around Jericho, a large city, once each day for six days, and seven times on the seventh, until they

were all *exhausted* from marching, and *then* they heard Joshua say, "*Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city*" ([Josh. 6:16](#)) and, indeed, it was God who overthrew the walls of the city so that they "fell down flat" ([Josh. 6:20](#)).

Gideon was about to attack the Midianites with an army of 32,000 men, but God made him whittle it down to only 300 before he could give him the victory.

Paul was highly educated, but he had to learn to call it "garbage" and "loss" before God could use him.

Surely this all speaks to us believers, especially those of us who occupy places of leadership. We may have great plans and set great goals for ourselves, but unless we take Paul's place of humility, God will not bless our efforts as He did Paul's. "*The proud He knoweth afar off*" ([Psa. 138:6](#)) and "*God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble*" ([I Pet. 5:5](#)). If we want to serve Him, dear reader, we must do it because we *love HIM*, for He will not have us boasting, some day, about how much we accomplished for *Him!*

Note it was when *their* obedience had been fulfilled (Ver. 6) and their gift had gone to Judea, that there would be time enough to punish all the "disobedience" of those who were causing such distress at the Corinthian church.

Don't go by the "outward appearance," says the apostle (Ver. 7). "If a man trust to himself that he is Christ's," let him think again, that Paul is Christ's too - and with greater evidence to substantiate his claim.

Does the reader recall the king God gave to the people of Israel because they *demand*ed a king? Saul was his name and he was tall, strong and handsome. He would surely be elected in America if they gave him a bit of TV exposure. But he was a complete failure. Then, when God sent Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons, he looked at the firstborn, Eliab, and said, "Surely this is the man, right here!" ([I Sam. 16:6](#)). But God said, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him . . . for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (Ver. 7).

As to Ver. 12, the closing verse of this section of II Corinthians, the apostle deals with something that is always being done, but which *he* dare not do:

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with, some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

Why always compare ourselves with others? What matters is that the best of us "*come short of the glory of God*" ([Rom. 3:23](#)). It is "not wise" to compare ourselves with others for then, assuredly, we have taken our eyes *off* God.

It will be remembered that there was great rivalry among the Corinthian believers to promote the leaders they preferred. The really serious thing, however, was that some Judaizers and legalizers had infiltrated their ranks, questioning the apostleship of Paul, whom God had so mightily used to found the great church at Corinth.

These Judaizers came with *recommendations* from the Messianic Church in Jerusalem and asked, in effect, "How can Paul claim to be an apostle of Christ? Christ had twelve apostles when He was on earth, and Paul was not one of them. Ask him if he is one of the twelve - and Christ certainly did not have *thirteen* apostles!"

This is not too different from what some people are saying today. They make much of the twelve apostles and their "great commission." They claim to be working under this commission, even though they do not and *cannot* obey it.⁹⁵

As to Paul, those who claim to be working under the great commission to the twelve, give Paul a position which we must say is at least unclear.

He was an apostle, but not the one who replaced the twelve in their apostleship and ministry, as we find him in fact doing in the record of Acts. They seem to ignore the fact that it was he, not they, who wrote the epistles to the Church, the Body of Christ, or that he wrote more books of the Bible than any other Bible writer including all the twelve put together. Nor, it seems, do they ever declare clearly or emphatically that our glorified Lord used him to usher in "the dispensation of the grace of God" and to proclaim the special truths associated with this dispensation (See [Eph. 3:1-21](#)). Nor do they explain that it was he, not they, who "changed the world" (as is so often said of the twelve).

THE DIVINE RULE FOR MISSIONARY FINANCES: // Cor. 10:13-18: "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

"For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you; for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

"Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

⁹⁵ Matt. 28:20: They do not teach men "to obey all things whatsoever (Christ had) commanded them." (Cf. Matt. 23:2,3). Mark 16:15-18: They do not preach the gospel that the twelve preached: "*the gospel of the kingdom*" (Matt. 4:23; Luke 9:1,2). Most denominational teachers deny that *faith and water baptism* are necessary to salvation (Mark 15:16). "These signs" do *not* follow all "them that believe." Few of them even claim to "take up serpents" or "drink any deadly poison" with immunity. Acts 1:8: The Holy Ghost does not come upon them as He came upon *all* the disciples at Pentecost, nor do they receive the power freely bestowed upon *all* the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:4-16,38).

"To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

It was comparatively easy for these Judaizers to come into Corinth and build on the foundation laid by Paul and then belittle *him* for his lack of recommendations from "the mother church." But when Paul had come to Corinth he, most assuredly, did not build upon another man's foundation. Outside of the synagogue to which he had first come, and from which he had had to separate himself, his was entirely a ministry to the Gentiles, and here God had used him to establish what was probably the largest Christian assembly in the world at that time.

And he had done this according to a "rule" which God had "distributed," or "allotted" to him with respect to reaching out farther with the gospel. The rule was essentially this: "Reach out no farther than permitted by the funds supplied by God's people." Following this rule Paul and his co-workers had been able to reach as far as Corinth. Ver. 14 explains:

"For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you; for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ."

He had not had to "stretch" his funds to evangelize Corinth. He had not had to build upon other men's foundations. He had not boasted of other men's labors, as though they were his own accomplishments. No, he had moved forward in his evangelistic efforts only as sufficient funds were contributed by God's people. Indeed, it was his hope that now, with the Corinthian church established, *their* faith might be increased, and he might be "enlarged abundantly" by them, according to this rule to preach the gospel in the regions beyond [them] (Vers. 15,16).

Thus he replies to his detractors: "We have not had to boast of things 'made ready to our hand' by others" (as *they* had so freely done). Rather we can praise Him for His leading and for the fruit borne at Corinth--with funds provided by Him through His people.

Now Paul longed to go to Rome and Spain, and we have no doubt that he attained the latter objective as well as the former (See [Rom. 15:24,28](#) and Pp. 230-237 of the author's 4th Volume of *Acts, Dispensationally Considered.*)

But all this would be accomplished only "according to this rule," not confusing faith with presumption, but looking to God to prosper him, through the financial

support of His people. And thus he would always be able to practice what he had so long and so faithfully preached:

"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (Vers. 17,18).

CHAPTER XI

II Corinthians 11:1-33

THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST: II Cor. 11:1-3: "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed bear with me.

"For I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

If Ver. 1 of this passage is difficult to understand, the two following verses, certainly, are not. Moreover, we believe that a study of Vers. 2 and 3 will help us to understand Ver. 1. Let us, then, begin, with Vers. 2,3.

THE NAME "CHRISTIANS": Where, and from what causes, were the disciples of Christ first called *Christians*?

In answer Acts 11:19 informs us that:

"... they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch,⁹⁶ preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only."

"And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch spake unto the Grecians,⁹⁷ preaching the Lord Jesus" (Ver. 20),

The rendering "Grecians," here, cannot be correct, for a large part of the Judaeian church as far back as Acts 6 was made up of *Grecians* (**Acts 6:1-7**). In Acts 6:1 we find them murmuring against the Hebrews that their widows were being neglected in the "daily ministration." And - be it carefully noted - the twelve immediately responded by calling the multitude together and setting the matter right (6:2-7). Thus the appointment of the first "deacons." And be it further noted

⁹⁶ Antioch in Syria. They were traveling northward.

⁹⁷ This is one place where the translators of the *King James Version* did not follow the majority of texts, although they did follow the Greek of Stephen's 1550 *Textus Receptus*, often called the *Majority Text*. The author has 35 translations in his library, mostly old translations, 27 of which were published as *Bible translations*. 26 of these render the word in question "Greeks," while the *King James Version* alone renders it "Grecians." Hardly, then, could KJV have followed the majority of texts.

Actually this is a question of textual criticism rather than one of translation for the Greek of *Textus Receptus* (Stephens 1550 here is *Hellenistees* (Hellenists, Grecians), while the Greek for "Greeks" is *Hellenas* (Hellenes). Thus *Textus Receptus* failed to follow the majority of texts in this instance and the *King James Version* translators followed suit.

that the deacons chosen were evidently themselves Grecians, at least there is not a Hebrew name in the list. In this matter the twelve apostles surely showed (1) their good faith, and (2) recognized the place of the Grecian believers as a legitimate segment of the Judaeian church.

If, then, *Christ* was preached to *Grecians* in Acts 11:20, *why* does the passage say that *until then* the disciples had preached the Word to "none but unto the Jews only"? As we have seen, the Grecians *were* Jews and formed a large part of the church in Judaea. And *why* should it be "men from Cyprus and Cyrene" who should now preach Jesus Christ to the Grecians? And *why* should "the church in Jerusalem" be concerned about this? *Why* should they send Barnabas to look into the matter?

And, greatest question of all: *Why* did Barnabas, when he had seen the grace of God at work among these people, go directly to Tarsus to find Paul? Can we ignore the fact that previously, when Paul had sought to "join himself to the apostles at Jerusalem . . . they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple," but that *Barnabas* befriended him and "took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way... and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:27).

Clearly Barnabas had learned directly from Paul about this. The Acts record, in Chapter 9, informs us that "the brethren ... [then] brought him [Paul] down to Caesarea, and sent him forth among the Gentiles, to Tarsus" (Acts 9:30), but another passage on the conversion of Paul recalls how at that same time Paul, so eager to begin his ministry in Jerusalem was praying in the temple, and was in a trance when the Lord said unto him:

"Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me" (Acts 22:18).

As we know, Paul answered the Lord, arguing that with his background of persecution of Christ and His followers, he was just the person to present Christ to the Jews ([Acts 22:19,20](#)). But the Lord silenced him, answering summarily:

"Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" Ver. 21).

Clearly Barnabas knew all this, and knew that the twelve had sent Paul to Tarsus. Therefore, seeing that God had shown His grace to the Gentiles (*not* Grecians) at Antioch, he went immediately to Tarsus to find Paul, who then taught the new believers there for "a whole year" ([Acts 11:26](#)).

But what could the men of Cyprus and Cyrene have preached to these Gentiles? It says they were "preaching *the Lord Jesus*." Their message was filled with *Him*. They might have told how Christ, Israel's Messiah, had been crucified, yet had prayed for the forgiveness of His murderers from the cross. Evidently they

were *not* preaching Judaism to these Gentiles, but only *Christ*. Judaism and the Law did not even apply to them.

"And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

This was when the Judaeen leaders became concerned, for *their* message was built on *Judaism*,⁹⁸ which the disciples were clearly *not* preaching to these Gentiles. It was then that the leaders sent Barnabas to Antioch to look into the matter.

"Who, when he came, and had seen *the grace of God*, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should *cleave unto the Lord*" (Ver. 23).

Just the right advice! The disciples and those who had come to trust Christ, kept talking about *Christ*, loving *Him* and worshipping *Him*. What did they need with Judaism? *Christ* was the blessed Savior to whom Judaism had pointed. *Christ* was all they needed. So they continued to talk about *Christ* to each other and to those who did not yet know Him. Result: "Much people were added unto the Lord." Mark it well:

11:20: "preaching *the Lord Jesus*."

11:21: "a great number turned to *the Lord*."

11:23: Barnabas: "Cleave to *the Lord*."

11:24: "much people were added to *the Lord*."

Everything was centered in *Christ*. They could not have preached Judaism to these Gentiles for they were in no way related to circumcision or the Law or any part of Judaism.

Thus it was appropriate for Barnabas to leave directly for Tarsus to seek Paul, who, as we have seen, became their pastor for "a whole year." What joy they must have shared as these new believers discussed *Christ*, His person, His work and

⁹⁸ As late as 20 years after (Acts 21:19-21) when the leaders of the church at Jerusalem were poised to bring Paul under Judaism, he told them "*what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry*." To this he received a passing "Praise the Lord," but they immediately responded:

"Thou seest, brother, how many thousands [Gr., *Murias*, myriad, or tens of thousands] of Jews there are which believe, and *they are all zealous of the law*."

"And they are informed of thee that thou teachest all the *Jews which are among the Gentiles* to forsake the law of Moses, saying that they *ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs*."

This is exactly what Paul had consistently taught, especially in his epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians (See also Gal. 2:2,6-9). But the Jewish elders' aim was to commit Paul himself to Judaism and the Law. Thank God their plans were foiled - *by God Himself* (See Acts 21:27-30).

His attributes. Indeed, they were so wrapped up in *Him* that the people of that area simply called them "*Christians*" the people of Christ.

"And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Ver. 26).

God's answer to the brutal murder of Christ by Israel's leaders was *Christ Himself*; proclaimed as the all-sufficient *Savior* by Paul who had not only "consented" to the stoning of Stephen, but had become our Lord's bitterest enemy on earth - and was *then* saved by "*exceeding abundant grace*," as the Lord, now glorified in heaven, tenderly asked him, "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?*" ([Acts 9:4](#)), and appointed him as the apostle of grace then and there ([Acts 26:16-18](#)). Thus the great theme of Paul's epistles is Christ; everything centers in Him.

GODLY JEALOUSY: Paul was naturally jealous over the Corinthians with Godly jealousy. They had truly been in love with Christ at the beginning, wholly taken up with Him, And, indeed, Paul still hoped to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ - to be His alone.⁹⁹ But he feared that as the serpent had beguiled Eve through His subtilty¹⁰⁰ so their minds might be corrupted from "the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). Then it would no longer be Christ *only*, Christ *enough*, Christ *all*.

"BEAR WITH ME": Now, perhaps, we are in a better position to understand Verse 1. The apostle was distressed, deeply distressed. For one thing, there were now Judaizers in the Corinthian Church who sought to prove from the Scriptures, that Christ was *not* enough, and gradually, with some of them, the all-sufficiency of Christ was being displaced by the Law of Moses.

Naturally, these Judaizers found Paul and his message of grace most distasteful. Indeed, they questioned his very apostleship. They represented a church of *Jewish kingdom disciples*.

Paul, thus, was *obliged* to defend his God-given position. If his apostleship could be discredited, so could his message, "*the gospel of the grace of God*" ([Acts 20:24](#)), the message that had brought salvation, light and blessing to these Corinthians.

And so, in II Cor. 11 we have Paul vigorously defending his apostleship, so vigorously that he must begin by beseeching his readers: "Bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed [Lit., "really"] bear with me."

We take it that Paul here uses the words "folly" and "foolish" by way of accommodation, for it would be more than strange to find divinely-inspired foolishness in the Bible! No, Paul was about to defend his apostleship with such

⁹⁹ To those who have trouble reconciling John 3:29 and Rev. 21:2 with Eph. 5:21-27, we suggest the author's pamphlet, *The Church, The Bride, and The Body*.

¹⁰⁰ See I Tim. 2:14, cf., Gen. 3:6.

vigor that it might, at times, seem foolish *to them*. Thus: "Bear with me in what may sometimes seem to you to be folly." He writes this to prepare them for a maximum defense.

ANOTHER JESUS: ANOTHER SPIRIT: ANOTHER GOSPEL: II Cor. 11:4-6:
"For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

"For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

"But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things."

How appropriate the Corinthian epistles are to the situation in which we find ourselves today! Few today know Christ as He should be known and this is because so many Christian leaders are preaching "another Jesus." Comparatively little is said about the One who came from heaven's glory to bear the disgrace and penalty for our sins and now dispenses to believing sinners the riches of His grace. Rather Christ is presented as One who is so nice to know, One with whom we can go down the road of life hand in hand so that we may have "happiness all the time," as the modern hymn says. But this is not the Christ Paul preached.

Just as in the days of *Modernism*, Christ is still proclaimed as "the man of Galilee," "the carpenter of Nazareth," etc., but hear Paul's Spirit-inspired words in II Cor. 5:16:

"... yea though we have known Christ after the flesh,¹⁰¹ yet now henceforth know we *Him* no more."

We are to "know," or recognize our Lord, not as the earthly Jesus, who, while proclaiming His royal rights as Israel's king, went about healing the sick, casting out demons and doing good generally, but as the glorified Lord at the Father's right hand, dispensing the riches of His grace to all who will receive.

We believe also that "another spirit," here refers to "another spirit" *from the Holy Spirit*, whom they had, by the grace of God received. We believe the context demands this interpretation. We do not believe that it refers to another attitude on the part of the Corinthian saints, for this would hardly harmonize with an allusion to the Lord Jesus preceding it and an allusion to the gospel following.

The Church today has surely perverted and "wrongly divided" the Scriptures where the person and work of the Holy Spirit are concerned. The Holy Spirit's ministry in convicting men of sin, imparting eternal life to those who believe, sealing them and baptizing them into Christ and His Body, bears little resemblance to the

¹⁰¹ As some of the Corinthian believers had known Him.

"Holy Spirit" whom false teachers have so thoroughly associated with emotionalism, sensualism, and outward demonstration. Theirs is "another spirit," certainly not the Holy Spirit of the Bible.

As to "another gospel," which they had not hitherto received, Paul had previously written - and by divine inspiration:

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

And realizing fully that this was a strong statement, he repeated it for emphasis:

"If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Ver. 9).

And as Christian ministers have continued to mix Paul's *"preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery"* with the gospel of the kingdom, the preaching of the Law, the Sermon on the Mount, *et al*, their followers and they themselves have continued to reap the curse of [Gal. 1:8,9](#). Rather than the clear, powerful proclamation of *"the gospel of the grace of God"* holding sway, all is a Babel of confusion in Christendom.

But strangely the apostle says that if men should come to the Corinthians with "another Jesus ... another spirit ... or another gospel," the Corinthian believers "might well bear with [them]." And the reason:

"For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (Ver. 5).¹⁰²

They "might well bear with" such men because he, Paul, could make short work of them. He acknowledged that he was "rude," or simple, in speech, "but not in knowledge." They knew this. Indeed he had been "thoroughly made manifest among them in all things."

PAUL'S SELF-RELIANCE: // Cor. 11:7-12: "Have I committed an offense in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

"I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

"And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

¹⁰² His answer to those who exalted the twelve above Paul as the final authority (Here see Gal. 2:6-9, 11-19).

"As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

"Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

"But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion, that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we."

We know - and the Corinthians knew - that Paul was no orator. Rather he preached plain truth in simple language. Indeed, this was the power of his message.

An unsaved man was once urged to go and hear a widely proclaimed preacher, a true intellectual. He went and sat in the front seat, expecting to have some of his spiritual needs met. The preacher opened his sermon, however, with the words: "It is a peculiar psychological phenomenon..." and the man in the front slumped down in his seat and fell asleep.

It was what Paul said, *plainly*, that the Holy Spirit used in such mighty power. Thus he says in I Cor. 2:4:

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing [Lit., *persuasive*] words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Ah, but the fact that Paul did not parade his learning, does not mean that he was not a learned man. Indeed, he was a veritable giant intellectually, and in the knowledge of the Scriptures. His plain-spoken way, his simplicity of speech, was deliberate; he meant it to be so. Thus he could speak plain truths boldly.

But with the self-important bishops from Jerusalem it was an altogether different matter. Were they not fully qualified to come to Corinth (from which Paul was now absent!) and ask the Corinthians whether Paul could prove that he was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, one of the twelve! If not, what right did he have to call himself an apostle? His lack of stature was evident from his simplicity of speech, his plainness of dress, his preaching without salary and his lack of letters of commendation from *the* Church at Jerusalem.

The authorities there, with James¹⁰³ as their acknowledged head, had sent these emissaries to Corinth to discredit Paul and to teach the Corinthian saints that

¹⁰³ James was not one of the twelve. He evidently gained the ascendancy at Jerusalem because of his personal relationship to Christ. He was "the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19), now head of the Church and of the twelve, although our Lord had specifically appointed *Peter* to this position (Matt. 16:15-19; Acts 2:14). This explains such passages as Gal. 2:9, where Paul calls "*James, Cephas and John*," those who "seemed to be somewhat," and those "who seemed to be pillars." while he clearly states that "the gospel of the *circumcision*" had been committed to *Peter* and that *God* had "wrought effectually in *Peter* to the apostleship of the Circumcision" (Gal 2:7,8). The author has written extensively on James and the harm he brought to the cause of grace. See

salvation without obedience to the Law was impossible. But what an argument they gave for legalism! "Just look at *Paul*," they said, "He is no qualified preacher, much less an apostle." Ah, but they misjudged Paul, for his arguments here are to men parading their own questionable qualifications and recommendations.

Had he committed an *offense*, he asked, in preaching the gospel freely, i.e., without cost, thus abasing himself so that they might be exalted? He knew beforehand that this would cause much discussion about "the growing church at Corinth," and less about himself. Will these Judaizers now *condemn* him for this? How self-effacing his ministry among them had been!

Some 12 years previous the apostle had gotten a job making tents with Aquila and Priscilla, to support himself and his *co-workers*, but as the Corinthian church was founded and rapidly grew, would one not conclude that they should have *offered* to support him, indeed should have *insisted* on doing so? But not the Corinthians! For 12 years, as he labored tirelessly among them, this thought, evidently, had not struck them. As the burdens of the work became greater and more time-consuming, it was the beloved Macedonians, especially the church at Philippi, who, out of their "great trials" and "deep poverty," supported him financially (8:2, cf [Phil. 4:15,16](#)). "*I robbed other churches*," he says, "*taking wages of them to do you service*" (Ver. 8). Imagine, the poor, afflicted Macedonians supporting him while he worked for the rich Corinthians, yes, and *lived* among them making certain that he would not be in any way a burden to them (Ver. 9).

But the overbearing Jerusalem bishops, with their haughty attitudes and their exorbitant demands actually convinced some of the Corinthian believers that all this proved that Paul was not qualified to be a preacher, much less an apostle.

Ah, but they were no match to a man of God such as Paul, for Paul *pointed* to his manner of life to "cut off occasion from them which *desire* occasion, that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we," i.e., fragile human beings (Ver. 12).

When the apostle declared that no one would stop him from this glorying in his way of life "in the regions of Achaia," it was *not* because his love for the Corinthians had waned, but it *does* show that the Corinthians' manner of life had spread throughout that whole region.

FALSE APOSTLES: // Cor. 11:13-15: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

"And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

his *Acts Dispensationally Considered*, Vol. II, Chapter 25, and Vol. IV, Chapter 40. This is a more interesting - and *important* - subject than most realize.

"Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

Here the apostle is bold and outspoken in his response to the Judaizers who had infiltrated the Corinthian church to destroy Paul's apostolic authority and his God-given message of grace.

It is rather frightening, is it not, that religious leaders of high repute, men who stand in the pulpit and preach from the Bible, may be "false" and "deceitful." But the thoughtful student of the Word will be realistic about this.

Does the reader recall how at the great Jerusalem council of Acts 15, *"false brethren" were "unawares brought in,"* says Paul, *"to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus; that they might bring us into bondage"* (Gal. 2:4).

Think: *False brethren . . . secretly brought in . . . to spy out* the liberty from Moses' law which the Gentile saints had so richly enjoyed, so as *to bring them into the bondage of the Law*, a yoke which neither these Judaizers nor their fathers had been "able to bear" (Acts 15:10).

Thank God for "our beloved brother Paul," that "good soldier of Jesus Christ," who could later write:

"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5).

But does some reader suppose that this sort of thing happened only in those days, and under those particular circumstances? Then he should search the Scriptures further.

It was not merely Paul, writing to the Ephesians; it was the Holy Spirit speaking to believers of every generation, who said:

"... be no longer children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14).

Indeed, II Tim. 3:13 warns us that:

"... evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."¹⁰⁴

Such passages of Scripture as the above should alert God's people *not* to be too ready to place their trust in one who happens to be "a man of the cloth." The

¹⁰⁴ This by no means indicates that they are *innocently* deceived. These are "evil men," self-deceived, determined to believe what they wish to believe.

Bereans were commended because they subjected even Paul's words to the Word of God. Indeed, while they listened to Paul "with all readiness of mind" i.e., gave him an interested hearing, they "*searched the Scriptures daily [to make certain] whether these things were so.*" And we may be sure that if they had found that Paul had taught anything *contrary* to the Old Testament Scriptures they would have rejected even him.

For this God calls the Bereans "*noble.*" They were the spiritual aristocracy of their day, and "*therefore many of them believed*" (Acts 17:12). God help us, in this day of gullible Christians, to follow the example of the noble Bereans.

All this is the more so because *behind* all false teaching is Satan, "the father of lies." We read in our text that it is nothing amazing that these "deceitful workers should be transformed into the apostles of Christ, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing¹⁰⁵ if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness..."

Generally, when a man gets drunk or steals from another, it is thought by religious people that he is under the power of the devil, but this is not Scriptural. God's Word says that men do these things *of themselves*, quite apart from any help from the devil:

"Now the works of the FLESH are... these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, wrath, factions, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and the like..." (Gal. 5:19-21).

And James 1:14 rightly adds:

"... every man is tempted when he is *drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*"

It is no credit to Satan if a man gets drunk, or a woman yields to immorality. Satan, the prince and god of this world, wants a *good* world - without Christ, who died to save its sinners.

The reader has doubtless seen portraits of Satan, with *horns, hooves, a tail and a pitchfork*, but unquestionably Satan himself is the artist who conceived this portrait so that he might not be readily recognized.

God's Word describes Satan as a glorious being who is able to transform himself into "an angel of light," and send forth ministers "*transformed* as the ministers of righteousness"¹⁰⁶ (Ver. 15).

¹⁰⁵ "No big deal," as modern English would have it.

¹⁰⁶ Though they are not.

Indeed, Satan has an extensive wardrobe. He appears in many ways: a serpent, a roaring lion, a dragon, etc., but in the present dispensation of grace he appears as an angel of light and transforms his ministers into "ministers of righteousness" (Vers. 14, 15).

Therefore Enemy No. 1 to the world today is not the atheist, who belittles Christ and the Bible and does not believe that there even *is* a God, but the one who teaches his hearers to "be good and do good" so that they may "feel better about themselves."¹⁰⁷ Their outlook is wholly humanistic.

TWO MISSING INGREDIENTS: In the "salvation" offered by these "ministers of righteousness," there are two missing ingredients, both essential to salvation as taught in the Word of God.

The first is *sin*. They never face up to the fact that things in this life tend to go wrong rather than right, take longer rather than happening immediately, result in "misfortune" rather than "good fortune," and that the cause for all this is *sin*. There is much in their writings about almost everything else, but they carefully avoid the subject of *sin*.

The second is *the shed blood of Christ as the payment for man's sin*. To them man is not essentially bad, but essentially good, so why should he need a *Savior*? What need does he have for one to shed his blood to save him from the penalty of sin? Yet this is the very theme of the Word of God.

Thus, Christian friend, *do not be gullible*. Hold any man suspect in whose preaching these two subjects are missing, for if you listen to him in the light of God's Word you will surely find that his religion as well as his collar is on backward.

Let us rejoice that we have God's authoritative Word on both sin and salvation - the subjects we most need to understand. This brings to the writer's mind one verse from great hymn, *How Precious is the Book Divine!* This verse reads:

*It shows to man his wand'ring ways,
And where his feet have trod,
But brings to view the matchless grace
Of a forgiving God.*

AS A FOOL RECEIVE ME: // Cor. 11:16-21: "I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

¹⁰⁷ How often we hear such phraseology today! A man says: "I've done this or that, and now I feel so much better about myself." Indeed, he may say that he now has gotten to "like" himself. Such should discuss the matter with Isaiah, David and Paul!

"That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly in this confidence of boasting.

"Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

"For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.

"For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

"I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also."

Paul had come to pagan Corinth and, by the grace of God, had founded the great church there at almost unbelievable toil and expense--and at the risk of his life. How could they now question his qualifications as a man of God and an apostle of Christ?

Yet, as they grew in number and entertained one noted preacher after another, they *did* question Paul's qualifications and minimize his apostleship. How they boasted of these other preachers! This one was "so learned," that one "so eloquent," and the Reverend Doctor So and So comes to us with "no less a recommendation" than one from the Jerusalem church itself, and so on.

And Paul; who was he? He had come among them as a tent maker, recommended by nobody. And all those 18 months he worked without salary. What kind of a preacher would do that? So soon they forgot all his labors and persecutions and all his love and tears in their behalf. Soon they forgot that it was not those other preachers; it was Paul who had come to them in their pagan state with the good news of God's grace and had founded this great church.

Again and again the apostle apologizes for his boasting in this epistle. He knows that boasting is foolish, but they have forced him to remind them of *his* qualifications. If his apostleship could be disproven it would mean that the gospel of the grace of God was nothing more than a product of his imagination, so this was necessary.

So, admitting that boasting is foolish, he says in Vers. 18,19:

"Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

"For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise."

This was cutting sarcasm, but they well deserved it. In Ver. 20 he says in effect: "they make slaves of you" (he had *served* them), "they devour you, even financially" (he had laboured *without charge*), "they take" (he had *given his all*),

"they exalt themselves" (he had *abused* himself), "they 'slap you in the face' I speak concerning reproach" (*they had insulted him*).

So these "great men," with their important recommendations, their eloquence - and their big salaries, really did not amount to much when compared with this humble man of God who had first led the Corinthians to Christ and had caused them to rejoice in the riches of his grace.

PAUL'S SUFFERINGS FOR CHRIST: // Cor. 11:22-29: Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

"Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

"In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

"In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

"Beside those things that are without that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

"Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"

It should be carefully noted that in defending his apostleship, Paul does not recall his great accomplishments, but his *sufferings* for Christ. How different from many modern evangelists who have suffered little for Christ, indeed, in some cases have lived lavishly on the sacrificial gifts of the poor. From what the apostle has already told us about these Judaizers it must have been in some measure the same with them.

But Paul does not say: "in this campaign we had more than 2,000 people come forward," or "in that one 360 professed to accept Christ." The apostle knew how shallow some professions can be and how deceptive such statistics. But, indeed, he did not even recall the case where occult leaders spontaneously burned their occult books, valued at more than *50,000 pieces of silver!* (Acts 19). He rather recalls his sufferings for Christ. This was better proof of the quality of his ministry.

Does the reader recall how to the Galatians, who had also been induced to question his call of God as an apostle, he threw the certificate of his apostleship down on the table, as it were (Gal. 1:11-16) and, closing the epistle, says:

"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks [lit., the brand] of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).

Thus, the apostle did not wish to boast, but when forced to do so he had at least boasted of the right things.

Were these Judaizers Hebrews, Israelites, of the seed of Abraham? So was he. But in suffering for Christ he was more - much more.

Speaking as the "fool" they thought him to be, he lists sufferings they had not even begun to endure.

While we will not deal at length with each one of the sufferings he mentions, we do hope that our readers will thoughtfully consider each one, for he had already by this time in his ministry suffered almost unbelievable afflictions and persecutions for Christ.

Think: five times he had received "forty stripes save one" (40 was forbidden by law); thrice he suffered shipwreck, a night and a day he spent in the deep; he was in all kinds of perils, in weariness and painfulness and watchings *often*, in cold and nakedness, and all this besides his daily concern for all the churches he had, by grace, founded. Little wonder he closes the list by asking:

"Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?"

How did the lives of the self-important Judaizers compare with this? We have already had this answered for us in Vers. 19-21 where he unquestionably refers to these men, who had already taken so much from them.

GLORYING IN INFIRMITIES: // Cor. 11:30-33: "if I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

"In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

"And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."

Note the words "must needs" in Ver. 30. They surely indicate that the apostle did not even wish to glory in his sufferings but was forced to do so in defense of his

apostleship. His detractors could not begin to match the list Paul presents. They had asked much, and given little. But if it was necessary for him to glory, he would rather glory in his sufferings than in his accomplishments.

It should also be observed, from Ver. 31 that when Paul spoke as in the presence of God he did not hesitate to express this.

It is interesting that the apostle closes this section by recalling just one specific incident, his very first deliverance, when "the Jews took counsel to kill him." They watched the gates of Damascus day and night but the disciples let him down outside the wall in a basket, and so he escaped (Vers. 32,33, and cf [Acts 9:23-25](#)).

The apostle is still not through "boasting," but from here on he glories in something that every believer may freely glory in: his position and blessings in Christ.

CHAPTER XII

II Corinthians 12:1-21

VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THE LORD: II Cor. 12:1-6: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

"And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

"How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

"Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

"For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."

The apostle may be referring here to an event that had indeed taken place some 14 years previous. Having been stoned at **Lystra** he was dragged out of the city and left there, supposedly dead. But while the disciples stood around "he rose up and came into the city" ([Acts 13:19,20](#)).

While Paul does not specify the place, but only the time when the experience of II Cor. 12:3,4 took place, the details match closely.

He does not even state - though he implies - that this experience was his own; evidently because he is speaking of the new man "*in Christ*."

Note that the word "*glory*," used several times here at the beginning of II Cor. 12, is the same Greek word as "*boast*" in 11:16. Actually the Greek here has two meanings, or two *shades* of meaning, according to the context in which it is used.

In 11:16 it clearly means *to boast*, but here, in Chapter 12, the sense is *to rejoice as in victory*, and this agrees with the context here.

In today's English we might render Ver. 1 above: "*It is not profitable, indeed, for me to rejoice too victoriously;*¹⁰⁸ *I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord,*" and this was far more important.

Visions, of course, are *seen*, and revelations *heard*, and it is significant that again and again when Paul *saw* the Lord, he *heard* Him too, i.e., the Lord appeared to him to *reveal* something to him. Consider the following:

At the apostle's conversion he already *saw* the Lord as the twelve had never seen Him, in glory brighter than the brightness of the noon-day sun ([Acts 26:13](#)). Paul *saw* Him in His *ascended* glory in heaven, as the twelve had never seen Him. But the Lord had appeared to Paul to *reveal* something to him: He said:

"... I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" (Ver. 16).

The twelve had been sent to proclaim our Lord's kingdom rights - even after the ascension ([Acts 1:6-8](#); [3:19-21](#), et al); *Paul* had been sent "to testify *the gospel of the grace of God*" ([Acts 20:24](#)). Hence the apostle never speaks of "*my gospels*" (in the plural), but always of "*my gospel*" ([Rom. 2:16](#); [16:25](#); [II Tim. 2:8](#)). Nor does he ever say or imply that the revelation of Christ to him concerned *different* messages, but rather that one message was gradually committed to him in a series of revelations ([Acts 20:24](#); [26:16](#); [I Cor. 9:17](#); [II Cor. 12:1-4](#); [Gal.1:11,12,15,16](#); [Eph. 3:1-4](#); [Col. 1:24-26](#)).

Soon after his conversion, when he returned to Jerusalem, he again *saw* the Lord and *heard* Him speak. Hear the apostle as he bears witness to this fact:

"And it came to pass that when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple I was in a trance, and *saw* Him *saying* unto me, *Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me*" ([Acts 22:17,18](#)).

So again Paul both *saw* the risen, glorified Lord, and *heard* Him as He imparted further light on His program for the present dispensation of grace.

These are only two examples, but it is clear that the Lord *often* appeared to Paul with further revelations. It was when he was first converted that the Lord spoke to him, making him...

"... a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" ([Acts 26:16](#)).

¹⁰⁸ It should be observed here that the translators of the *Authorized Version* are to be highly commended for their sensitive application of this distinction.

And now, 25 years later, he says:

"I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord" (II Cor. 12:1).

TWO ERRORS REFUTED: Two serious departures from a rightly divided Word are refuted in these opening verses of II Cor. 12.

THE SO-CALLED "ACTS 28 THEORY," the first, was an error largely promoted by Charles H. Welch of England, in the early 1900s and accepted by ninny dispensationalists. Welch taught that: "Paul's early epistles" were "*Scriptures pertaining to Israel*" and "written to Jewish readers." This in spite of [Rom. 11:13](#); [I Cor. 12:2](#); [Gal. 2:2,9](#) and [I Thes. 2:13-16](#), all of which *state* that his readers are *Gentiles*.

He taught that "Acts 28:23-31 forms a *Dispensational Frontier* with different programs on either side," i.e., the Jewish, kingdom program before Acts 28 and the dispensation of the mystery after. He taught that "Paul followed the same pattern [as Peter and Stephen] in his address at [Pisidian] Antioch," but he utterly ignored the climax of Paul's message in Vers. 38,39: justification by faith without the Law, and the fact that it was the Jews who rejected this great truth and the Gentiles who asked to hear more ([Acts 13:42,44-47](#)).

The "Acts 28 theory" contains many more errors, but be it said to the credit of Pastor J. C. O'Hair, that he pressed for open, public discussion of the subject in the light of the Scriptures, with the result that it was so fully answered that it almost died out for many years. Now, however, it seems that this teaching may be on the rise again.

This error is refuted particularly in the passage we are considering by the fact that rather than the revelation of the mystery being committed to Paul as a new and different message, the same man who had heard the Lord appoint him as "a minister and witness *both of these things, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee*" ([Acts 26:16](#)), was now saying "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord" ([II Cor. 12:1](#)). Thus the Lord gradually revealed to Paul in its fulness, "*the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery*" ([Rom. 16:25](#)). It was *one* message, gradually unfolded to him. Indeed, in Acts 20, on his last journey to Jerusalem, whence bonds and afflictions awaited him, he said:

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might FINISH MY COURSE with joy and *the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God*" (Ver. 24).

Could he tell us more clearly that he wished to finish his course with joy *in the proclamation* of the message which the Lord had committed to him at the beginning? The apostle did not run *two* courses!

SOUL SLEEP, the second of these errors, strangely seems to be associated with the Acts 28 theory. We see no reason why this should *necessarily* be so, but the Bible teachers who held to the Acts 28 theory in our younger days, also believed in soul sleep, except for Dr. E. W. Bullinger, who held that man does not *have* a soul, but *is* a soul; i.e., that man's spirit in the body makes the soul. Thus when the spirit goes to be with the Lord at death, the body is buried and there is no soul. In either case, however, there is no conscious existence between death and the resurrection.

It has always puzzled this writer that anyone could teach soul sleep when the Scriptures consistently teach *body sleep* and *never* soul sleep. The following are some examples:

Dan. 12:2: "them that *sleep in the dust of the earth.*"

Matt. 27:52: "many *bodies of the saints which slept* arose."

Acts 13:36: "*David... fell asleep... and saw corruption.*"

Acts 7:59,60; 8:2: Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit" and *then "fell asleep"* and devout men carried *him* (i.e., his *body*) to his burial (Acts 7:59,60; 8:2).

But the error of soul sleep is also refuted in the particular passage we are studying. In Vers. 2-5 the apostle makes it clear that *he* did not believe that the elimination of the physical results in unconsciousness, for he states that while he did not know whether he was "in the body or out of the body" when "caught up to the third heaven,"¹⁰⁹ he was an intelligent witness of the unutterable things seen and heard there. The reader should also give thoughtful consideration here to II Cor. 5:6-8 and Phil. 1:21.

Verse 7 is a beautiful closing to this section. Though the apostle might desire to glory, he would not be a fool; he would simply tell the truth. But he hesitated even to do this as yet, for in his relation of the facts some might think of the apostle above that which they had observed or had heard of him. Thus he goes on to tell of the sufferings, including especially his "thorn in the flesh" given to him by God lest he should be "exalted above measure" (Ver. 7).

PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH: II Cor. 12:7-10: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

¹⁰⁹ Also called "Paradise" (Ver. 7), from a Persian word meaning *beautiful garden*.

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: lot when I am weak, then am I strong."

There is much to be noted in this precious passage of Scripture.

Being in the third heaven and seeing and hearing unutterable¹¹⁰ things would not provoke one to pride, but rather to humility. But *having had* this experience is another matter. Indeed, Paul himself was now tempted to boast, so that the Lord had to give him a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him humble. Exactly what this thorn was we are not told, so do not need to know.

Ver. 7 explains why this affliction was called for, but the *Authorized* rendering: "the *abundance* of the revelations," can hardly be correct. It was not the *number* of the revelations that tempted Paul to pride. The A.V. "abundance" has been variously rendered: "excellence," "magnificence," "pre-eminence," "transcendence," "exceeding greatness," "marvelous character," etc., but the Greek word is *hyperbole* (our "hyperbole"). Thus the English translation in the *T. R. Interlinear*, beautifully renders it "*surpassingness*." That's it exactly, and so easy to understand!

Next, this thorn was given to *Paul by God*, who directed Satan to send a messenger to "buffet" him (Ver. 7). It must have been painful indeed, added to the many sufferings he was already bearing. It reminds us of the words of Christ to Ananias at Paul's conversion:

"I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16).

But this was *in addition* and might, in Paul's view, prove a hindrance to his ministry. The Lord knew better, however.

On an earlier occasion it had been "infirmity of the flesh" that had detained Paul among the Galatians, and this had not hindered his ministry there. Consider Gal. 4:13,14:

"Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

¹¹⁰The words Paul heard were both *inexpressible* and "unlawful" for man (The Greek has no article) to utter (See Ver. 4).

"And my temptation [Lit., "testing"] which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus."

And he adds in Ver. 15:

"I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me."¹¹¹

Paul's thorn in the flesh must have been painful, however, for he says:

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me."

We take it that he refers here to three *special* times of prayer, perhaps together with others, for it must have been on his mind and in his prayers almost constantly. But the Lord answered him in a beautiful way regarding this painful affliction that he must bear, perhaps, for the rest of his life.

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (Ver. 9).

What a glorious revelation: not merely that God will *strengthen* Paul when he is weak, or *work for him* when he is weak, but that *God's own power* is "made perfect," or *best demonstrated* in Paul's weakness!

Little wonder the apostle exults: "*Most gladly*, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." And little wonder that he adds: "Therefore *I take pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches [insults], in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, *for when I am weak, then am I strong*" (Vers. 9,10).

"I OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN COMMENDED": // Cor. 12:11-21: "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds,

"For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

"Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

¹¹¹ It appears that Paul's painful problem with his eyes afflicted him *before* the particular "thorn in the flesh" referred to in II Cor. 12. Paul's life was indeed a life of physical infirmity as well as of persecution.

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

"But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty I caught you with guile.

"Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

"I desired Titus and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

"Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

"For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

"And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed."

A VERBAL SPANKING: Paul had become a fool in glorying, but they had put him in such a position that he *had* to defend his apostleship or let God's message of grace be rendered null and void. He ought to have been commended by them. They should have been proud of him, for in nothing had he been behind the greatest leaders at Jerusalem: in learning, in the working of signs, wonders and mighty deeds, in the evidences of his God-given apostleship: in nothing. And they should have recognized this. *He* was modest enough to add to his defense, "*though I be nothing.*" He understood that it was only by grace that "*Saul, the sinner,*" had become "*Paul, the Apostle*" (See [Rom. 1:5, 12:3; 15:15; I Cor. 15:10](#)).

But had he made of them an inferior church? In no way, except that he had labored among them without salary and, with a tinge of sarcasm he asks them: "*Forgive me this wrong.*"

And now the apostle is considering coming to them for the third time, and they must expect the same from him, for he never had sought theirs (i.e., what was theirs) but *them*. How earnestly he had desired to "present [them] as a chaste virgin to Christ." He wanted them *for Christ*. And then, as to personal finances. "The children," he says, "ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." This was his conviction. He would gladly "spend and be spent" for them. But what had been the results of this care for them? Sadly, he had had to add the words,

"... though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (Ver. 15).

His "Be it so" (Ver. 16) shows that the apostle accepted their unloving attitude as a matter of fact. He was not made bitter by it. But he presses home to them the fact that "I did not burden you." This was important to his defense.

As to the rest of the verse, Paul was most certainly *not* a crafty person. Indeed, it was his deep desire, "by manifestation of the *truth*," to "commend [himself] to every man's conscience *in the sight of God*" (4:2).

The thought is, and he says it rather humorously, that *in this case*, being crafty, he had caught them with guile.

But the apostle continues in a serious vein as he reminds them that he had asked Titus to go to Corinth with regard to their promised gift to the poor saints at Jerusalem, and with them he had sent a brother as a witness. "*Did Titus make a gain of you?*" he asks. We have studied Titus' character and by now they knew him well. Titus would be the last person to use the situation to his own personal advantage. Thus Paul's challenge: "*Walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?*" (Ver. 18).

Had he been excusing his conduct toward them? Far from it! "*We speak before God in Christ,*" he says, "*but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying*" (Ver. 19). They were the ones making excuses for their behavior, but he spoke "before God in Christ," so as to "*edify*" them (build them up) and make of them the kind of Christians they ought to be.

This whole verbal spanking had stemmed from his fear that when he arrived at Corinth he would not find them to be what he had hoped for and that they would not find him to be what they had hoped for: "lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults" (Ver. 20). Such had been their past; would it still be so with him in their midst?

The last verse of this chapter shows how serious their moral condition had remained until this time:

"And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed" (Ver. 21).

CHAPTER XIII

II Corinthians 13:1-14

"SINCE YE SEEK A PROOF": *II Cor. 13:1-3*: "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

"I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

"Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you."

Paul was now preparing to visit the Corinthians for the third time, and predicted that every word would be established in the old, Scriptural way: "in the mouth of two or three witnesses."

Verse 2, at least as we have it in our *Authorized Version*, seems confusing, but there are several facts we can glean from it.

First, Vers. 1 and 2 together indicate that Paul *had* visited Corinth a *second* time. We are not given the details of this second visit, doubtless because we do not need to know, but it does appear that it had not been a pleasant visit.

He now writes to those who have been sinning, and to all the rest (too many condoning the sin), that if he comes again, according to his plans, he "will not spare, since [they] seek a proof of Christ speaking in [him]" (Vers. 2,3).

STRONG IN CHRIST: *II Cor. 13:4-6*: "For though He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

"But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates."

Did they suppose that Paul was too "weak" to do as he said? Then he bids them remember that Christ was crucified through weakness, but now lives by the power of God. Thus Paul might also be weak physically, but will have life and strength with Him, "*by the power of God toward [them].*"

And now the apostle faces the possibility that some of them may never have been truly saved. Urging them to carefully examine themselves whether truly "in the faith," or "reprobates," he adds:

"But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates" (Ver. 6).

"DO THAT WHICH IS HONEST": *I Cor. 13:7-10*: "Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

"For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.

"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

Paul's prayer that the Corinthian saints might keep themselves from evil could have been motivated by the desire that *he* might appear approved, for when they fell into sin it did indeed bring reproach upon his name. Yet this was not the case. He would rather have them simply *honest*, though he be thought a reprobate. He knew that *honesty*, speaking the *truth*, would always prevail in the end.

"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (Ver. 8).

Even when men oppose the truth, they only help to confirm it when all has been said and done.

Indeed the apostle rejoiced in his own weakness and their strength, for his main objective from the beginning had been their growth to spiritual maturity. But sadly, where the truth is concerned, many are like Pilate, who said to Jesus, "What is truth? And when he had said [Note: not "asked"] this he went out."

Paul had been given apostolic power "to edification, and not to destruction," thus he sent this rebuke in writing. If he had been among them he might have had to use sharpness, but it was his desire to edify them, to build them up to spiritual maturity. Also, when writing one thinks more carefully than when he speaks.

"BE PERFECT": *II Cor. 13:11-14*: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

"Greet one another with a holy kiss.

"All the saints salute you.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

Who can read these last few words of this epistle and doubt that Paul deeply loved the saints at Corinth, even the erring saints?

In Ver. 11 he urges them to do all those things which will make for their joy in Christ. "Be perfect," i.e., be mature; "be of good comfort," expect God to help you; "be of one mind," those who love each other, sooner think together; "live in peace," and the result: "the God of love and peace shall be with you."

THE "HOLY KISS": Ver. 12: Bible commentators have written at length on this brief passage of Scripture and, in general, have come to two basic conclusions:

1. Since greeting one another with a kiss was evidently a custom of that time and place - as it is in some lands today (i.e., France), the passage does not bind us to greet each other precisely in this way. Its parallel in America today would be a hearty handshake.

2. In any case, the passage is written directly to and about "brethren," and does *not* teach, or sanction, promiscuous kissing.

We believe, however, that in the light of the context this passage teaches much more than technicalities about a mode of greeting.

Note: in connection with the parallel exhortation in I Cor. 16: In Ver. 19: *"The churches of Asia [in Asia Minor] salute you."* Paul had doubtless told the believers at these churches about the great work which God had done at Corinth, and it is possible that he had asked them to remember the Corinthian believers in their prayers. And now, the brethren from all these "Asian" churches had asked Paul to send their greetings to the Corinthian believers.

Next: *"Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house"* (Ver. 19).

Aquila and Priscilla were the beloved tentmakers who had given Paul a home and employment when he first came to Corinth ([Acts 18:3](#)). They had witnessed the rounding of this great congregation, had seen God's blessing on Paul's ministry there and must often have discussed this with the members of "the church . . . in their house." And now they all joined Aquila and Priscilla in sending their very special ("much") greetings.

Ver. 20: "All the brethren greet you ... "

It is against this background that the apostle continues: *"Greet ye one another"* (Ver. 20).

Has the reader ever attended a church where the atmosphere was cold and forbidding? No one said, "Good morning; I'm glad to see you," or gave you a friendly handshake. After the service they all filed out, barely speaking to each other or to you. Did you feel like ever again attending that church?

Such a church, evidently, had the congregation at Corinth become. They had not grown in grace and in the knowledge of the Word, and had to be fed with "milk," like little babies, unable to digest solid food.

As a result there were contentions among them, as the various cliques in the congregation championed their favorite preachers and downgraded the others. They were "puffed up *for* one against another," each feeling that *he* was the best qualified to judge. Some boasted of their spiritual gifts, others took brethren to court before unbelievers, and still others profaned what should have been a precious communion service, by spreading feasts in the church for themselves and their families and friends, while others had little or nothing.

They were anything but generous with their God-given funds and were often inconsiderate of one another, while their women spoke out boldly right in the church services and all were, in general, poor examples of the love and grace of God.

Every one, it seemed, was doing "his thing" (16:14), and *not* in love. This was the kind of congregation where the individual members would not be quick to greet each other warmly - except within each clique. Rather, there were undercurrents of suspicion, bad feeling, and unkind gossip.

Hoping now that his earnest exhortations would speak to their hearts, the apostle says in effect: All here, and throughout "Asia" send their greetings. Now "greet ye one another--and *do it heartily*" (i.e., "with an holy kiss").

How this should speak to assemblies where true brotherly love has vanished! "Greet ye one another with a warm, hearty handshake," he would doubtless say to us Americans.

In many churches the members greet each other with a word or a nod, but this alone can even *increase* the coldness of the atmosphere. As Jim enters the door he sees Joe, whom he cannot abide! "Morning Joe," he says, and Joe replies as coldly, as both go their ways saying to themselves, "*That was some greeting!*"

It might have been quite different had Jim given Joe a warm word and a hearty handshake along with his "Morning." Then Joe would doubtless have responded and both would have felt better about each other.

This, in the light of its context, especially the parallel passage in I Cor. 16, is undoubtedly what the apostle meant by his exhortation: "*Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.*"

In Ver. 13 of our text the apostle gathers up in one brief sentence, all that he had said about the saints' greetings to the Corinthian believers: "*All the saints salute you.*"

And his closing word, like that in all his epistles, is:

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." (Ver. 14).

We hear these benedictions so often in our churches that we are apt to think of them only as the formal conclusion of the service, when in reality they are, or should be, a blessed reminder that God's message to us, and to all, is a message of love and grace! How precious to see this in a world so full of bitterness, conflict and sorrow!