



TURNING OUR PAIN INTO PRAISE!!!



**A Bible Commentary On The Book Of II Corinthians
"Effective Expositions For Life"**

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Dedication Note

Dear Friends, as I begin this study on the Book of II Corinthians, I know that usually this page would be a page of Acknowledgments addressed to those who made a contribution to the writing project or to those who have faithfully supported the writer during the many hours of research and development. Of course, I have written a large number of books and booklets, and I have paid tribute to many people, most importantly to my Lord Jesus Christ and to my precious wife, Jo Anne. But instead of giving you another repetitive list of my dear friends and great servants of God who have made a huge impact on my life and work projects down through the 54 years of full-time Christian ministry, I want to do something different this time. At the time of this writing, my wife and I are daily blessed with two wonderful little boys who are bringing so much joy and excitement to our lives. These two little fellows are our great grandsons, Jackson Glenn Carrigan and Sawyer Wayne Beard. Jackson is our 14 month old who is walking everywhere we will let him go full-speed ahead. This precious little fellow is the son of my granddaughter, Anna Carrigan and her husband, James. Then, Sawyer is our 9 month old who is trying so hard to crawl everywhere, and he is the son of my granddaughter, Rachel Beard and her husband, Landon. Both of these precious children are God's gifts to our entire family.

Therefore, I want to dedicate this in depth study of **II Corinthians** to these two beautiful little boys with hopefully bright futures ahead for both of them. There is not a day that goes by, but what Jo Anne and I pray for these little boys' protection, an early salvation for both of them, and eventually a life of service for our Lord Jesus Christ. Often times parents, grandparents, and great grandparents have dreams for their boys to become great athletes, mighty sportsmen, lawyers, doctors, or academicians. But, my prayer is that God might call these great- grandsons into the full-time ministry, whereby they will continue to carry on the mantle that God placed upon me and my son, Joel Frye, many years ago. It is truly the prayer of my wife, Jo Anne, and me that both Jackson and Sawyer might be used by God in a mighty way and never get caught up in this world to where they might negate our spiritual legacy, which we are trying to leave for all of our grandchildren and these two precious little guys which God has given to us. As you read the text and passages of Scripture in the pages of this book, I would ask all of you to please join us in prayer for the future of these wonderful little fellows, whom God has given to our entire family.

And, before closing this note, I want to once again give Jesus the glory for everything He has done for our family. We love Him more than anything or any person we might know on this earth. He alone is worthy of all of our praise, and there would never have been the Frye family if it had not been for Jesus' bringing Jo Anne and me together as we prayed for God's wisdom and guidance, even when we were still teenagers contemplating marriage, and yes, what God wanted us to do with our lives. Now hopefully, our grandchildren and great grandchildren will follow in our footsteps seeking to discover God's perfect will for their lives. Jackson and Sawyer, we love you more than we could ever express in words!

Introduction

Dear beloved friends, it gives me great pleasure to introduce you to this brand new commentary, which God has instructed me to write on the **Book of II Corinthians**. I sincerely love this book because it is very special to me. It is special to me because back in 1997, I went through a terrible time of clinical depression in my life. My doctors and counselors all told me that my depression was the result of my negligence in dealing properly with a terrible automobile accident, which I had in Uganda, East Africa on December 4, 1993. During this tragedy, which happened four years before this bout with depression, one of my staff members and I were thrown out of an overturning Isuzu Trooper, and shortly thereafter, my dear friend died in my hands as I was walking along beside of his stretcher trying to pump his heart and keep him alive. This was one of the saddest days of my life, but because I wanted so much to demonstrate an air of super-spirituality to show just how much of a man of God I really was, I just did not handle this tragedy very well at all. In fact, I did not want to show the deep hurt and pain that I was going through. So, after my wife and I went through some intense Christian counseling in 1997, I came back home from Dallas, Texas with the reality that I was going to have to develop a battle plan in order to really defeat the depression in my life.

So, when I got home from the counseling, I determined that in addition to many other steps in my battle plan, one of the greatest things that I could do was to spend hours and hours in the Book of II Corinthians because it has so much help for those who are in agonizing pain. For weeks, days on end, I devoured the Book of II Corinthians until God really changed my entire outlook on suffering, the pain it could cause, and of course, what good could come out of it. This decision to study and meditate on II Corinthians literally changed my life and helped me to deal with the clinical depression in a victorious way. Ever since that day, I have spent hours and hours in studying, preaching, and teaching this Book of II Corinthians. I have used it in counseling many other people, and I have recommended it to scores of hurting people and told them how they needed to read this letter written by Paul the Apostle.

I must tell you that I believe the reason God used this book in my life in such a positive and rewarding way is because it was written by Paul to a very troubled church, which was literally making Paul's life miserable, along with many others in and around Corinth. Thus, as we go through this verse-by-verse exposition of this wonderful book of the Bible, it is my prayer that God will use this study to help every person who might read these words to be encouraged, given hope, and ultimately delivered from the bondage of pain and suffering. We may never know why God allows so much suffering in the life of a believer, but we will ultimately see what has been accomplished in our lives through the suffering and pain we go through. If we can come to understand, just in a small way, why God has allowed the suffering, we should be able to genuinely praise the Lord for even those tough times we have to go through.

Well, I have tried to get you excited about this study. Let's now focus in on some preliminary information that might help us enormously to better understand the content of this great Book of II Corinthians.

Introductory Notes

Background: Paul the Apostle established the church in Corinth in approximately A.D. 50, while on his Second Missionary Journey. He spent 18 months in Corinth.

Paul wrote his first letter, mentioned in **I Corinthians 5:9**, sometime after he left Corinth.

He wrote his second letter, **(I Corinthians)** about A.D. 54-56 from Ephesus.

Then, he made a hurried trip from Ephesus to Corinth to deal with the problems there. **(I Corinthians 1)**

After leaving, he wrote a severe third letter. **(II Corinthians 2:4)**

In Macedonia, Paul wrote a fourth letter **(II Corinthians)** about A.D. 55-57.

After writing this fourth letter, Paul made a final visit to Corinth. **(II Corinthians 13:1; Acts 20:1-4)**

Reasons For This Letter

1. Paul wanted to express his gratitude for the Corinthian Christians' response to the stinging epistle he had sent. **(II Corinthians 7:5-7)**
2. He wanted to prepare them for his impending visit. **(II Corinthians 13:1-2)**
3. He wanted to encourage them in collection of the offering for the needy in Judea. **(II Corinthians 9:1-5)**
4. He wanted to warn his friends of the dangers of spiritual indifference. **(Chapters 10-13)**
5. He wanted to defend his Apostleship which was truly under attack. **(Chapters 1 and 2)**
6. He wanted to show the Corinthians how he had turned the enormous amount of pain he had endured into genuine praise for Jesus Christ. **(Chapters 1 and 2)**

Now, let's move forward with this marvelous study of God's Word and get some personal encouragement as we allow God to "turn our pain into praise"!

Chapter One

"THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT"

Scripture: II Corinthians 1:1-11

Introduction

It truly goes without saying, but we will say it, "We live in an extremely troubled world." Everywhere you look on TV, every radio station you listen to, every Internet message you receive, every tweet you get, and in every newspaper you read, all we see is the evil and wicked trouble that is going on here on this earth. This is not only happening here in America, but it is also happening all over the world.

Why, this very morning as I turned on the TV to watch the morning news, I saw where Iran had shot down one of our U.S. drones that was flying over the Gulf of Oman in the Persian Gulf. Everywhere we look there is trouble! The whole world seems to be on edge, and seemingly, that is the way things were when the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthian believers.

This is a letter where Paul shares with the Corinthians some of the terrible suffering that he had gone through for the sake of the Gospel and how God had brought him through this pain and agony. Thus, Paul wanted to also share just how God had comforted him in the midst of all of his trials, pain, and tribulations. Paul was confident that if God had been with him through all of his suffering, then surely, God would be with the Corinthians and comfort them if they would only appropriate His divine power and presence in their lives. As we look at this very first chapter in this new study, I pray that each of you readers who is going through a difficult time in your life will find some true encouragement and strength to keep on going for Christ and not quit, because the work of the Kingdom of God desperately needs you. So, let's begin this verse-by-verse study and see what we might glean from our very first lesson in II Corinthians.

I. NOTICE THE AUTHOR OF THIS LETTER. v. 1a

A. He is described as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. v. 1a-1

After having studied the life of Paul the Apostle for over 60 years, I must tell you that I believe he was probably the greatest servant of God that ever lived in the service of King Jesus. Paul always started his letters by telling up front to Whom he belonged, and he always was ready to give Christ praise for anything good that happened through his ministry. Even if the Corinthians had attacked him, as we learned in my commentary on First Corinthians, Paul was still a man of integrity and one that gave Jesus all the glory for anything Christ did through him.

In my commentary on First Corinthians, I also discussed in detail the Biblical qualifications of a true apostle, and therefore, I would just ask you to get my commentary on that book to learn what the true qualifications of an apostle were and to discover that there are no qualified apostles living in this dispensation of time, even when we have scores of radio and TV preachers claiming to be one. I will just mention one valid proof for an apostle. A true Biblical apostle had to have seen Jesus Christ in His resurrected body.

Therefore, unless you know someone that is living who is over 2,000 years old, then there are no present day apostles.

"Paul begins by emphasizing his Apostleship. His authority does not come from any religious institution or governing body. It comes from the Lord Himself. The teachings of Paul were taught to him by Jesus. Paul's message comes with the full authority of the Lord Jesus."¹

I hope you got the point in this last little paragraph. We need to see that what Paul is about to give the Corinthians in this letter didn't really come from Paul, but it came from our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore, the Corinthians back there in the First Century needed to understand that this letter was coming with the complete authority of Christ Who had appointed Paul as an Apostle. Thus, we too need to get the weight of the truths that we will glean in this book by understanding that these words are a part of the infallible and inerrant Word of God.

B. He is described as an appointee of God. vs. 1a-2

In the second phrase in this first verse, we discover that Paul told the Corinthian believers that he was not an apostle by his own choice, but God, in His sovereignty, had chosen Paul as an apostle, and therefore, Paul had gone to Corinth to establish the church there by the will of God. And now, Paul was writing to the church again in the perfect will of God.

If you have read other commentary books that I have written, then you know that I spend much time talking about the need for God's born again believers to find God's perfect will for their lives, and then, learn to live in that will of God. I say this because if any child of God is to have peace, happiness, and fruitfulness in his or her life, it can only come by finding and developing God's perfect will for which He has a unique plan and purpose. I would even pray that during this study in II Corinthians that you will become extremely diligent in finding God's perfect will as you learn to turn your pain into praise.

C. He is described as an associate of Timothy. vs. 1a-3

"Next, Paul mentions his colleague: 'And Timothy our brother.....' (**II Corinthians 1:1**) When Paul associated men like Timothy, Sosthenes, and Silvanus with him in his opening salutations in his letters, he was not sharing either his office or his authority with them. He was simply showing his regard and commendation. There is all the difference in the world between 'Paul, an Apostle' and 'Timothy, our brother.' The Corinthians knew Timothy. Paul had recently sent Timothy to them on a fact-finding mission, although it is not at all certain that he had been able to fulfill the assignment. Some think Timothy was the one Paul entrusted to take **I Corinthians** (the long letter) to Corinth. Eventually, Titus replaced Timothy as Paul's messenger to the Corinthian Church. Titus was made of sterner stuff than Timothy was. By the time Paul wrote **II Corinthians** (the last letter), Timothy was back with Paul."²

¹ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 271.

² Exploring II Corinthians, By: John Philips, Kregel, pages 19-20.

We must not forget that Paul probably led Timothy to Christ in his hometown of Lystra when Paul first went there. So, I believe Paul called him a brother because Paul was his example and mentor, and Paul would not esteem himself higher than this dear brother who would become the pastor of the Church in Ephesus. Paul loved Timothy as we are able to see throughout Paul's mentioning of Timothy and also, in his writings to Timothy later in Paul's life.

II. NOTICE THE ADDRESSEES OF THIS LETTER. v. 1b

A. The letter was addressed to the church of God.

In the second part of verse one, Paul says that the letter has been written to the church of God which is at Corinth. Therefore, we must conclude that Paul was trying to share with those who had been saved in the church at Corinth. But, we too must remember that many of these people in the church at Corinth, as we saw in **I Corinthians**, were not acting like truly saved people. So, I think we could say that Paul was being extremely gracious to these people, although he knew that many of the professing believers in the wicked city of Corinth really didn't live as truly saved and genuine Christians. Therefore, I believe it would be good for us to go back and be reminded about the early church in Corinth.

"It may be helpful to take another look at the history of Paul's relationship with the Corinthian Church. He founded the church in Corinth somewhere around 52-53 A.D. He stayed there for about a year and a half (18 months), then, went to Ephesus. Except for a brief trip to Jerusalem, he remained in Ephesus for a lengthy period of time, preaching and teaching and making converts. In Ephesus, he wrote **I Corinthians**.

We know about the first lost letter from **I Corinthians 5:9**, *'I have you in my letter.'* Paul had written that first letter to warn the Corinthians against following a worldly lifestyle. In response to that letter, the Corinthians wrote back to him with many questions. In reply to that letter, Paul wrote a second letter that we now call **I Corinthians**. In that letter, Paul answered their questions and instructed them in how to walk in power and resolve problems in the church."³

The Corinthian Church apparently reacted badly to that letter, because in **II Corinthians**, we learn that Paul made a quick journey to Corinth. We know little of what Paul did and said there or how long he stayed. We do know that it was probably an unpleasant experience for Paul and the Corinthians, because Paul later wrote in **II Corinthians 2:1**, *'I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you.'* Paul probably went to Corinth with a sharp and severe rebuke, and the Corinthians may not have received it well—but we can only speculate.

After Paul returned to Ephesus, he sent another letter to Corinth. It was carried there by Titus, who was gone a long time. This was Paul's third letter to Corinth; like the first, the third letter is no longer known to exist.

Transportation and communication being slow in those days, Paul grew anxious to hear what was happening in Corinth. He became so troubled that he left Ephesus and went to Troas and then up into Macedonia to meet Titus. In the region of Macedonia, probably in the city of Philippi, Paul and Titus met. Titus brought Paul an encouraging report about the

³ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 270.

Corinthian church, and Paul responded by writing a fourth letter, which we now call **II Corinthians**."⁴

B. The letter was addressed to the city of godlessness.

Paul said that he was sending this letter to the church in Corinth. Now, we have already learned a lot about the church in Corinth, but not very much about the city of Corinth itself. I must tell you that it has been my privilege to go to the city of Corinth twice in my years of ministry, and truthfully, I have only been to a couple other cities in my entire life where the archeological discoveries have revealed as much wickedness as I discovered in the city of Corinth. Truly, it was very popular city in the southern part of Greece in the province of Achaia. It was renowned for its commercial business, its Greek athletics, its architecture, its idol worship, which included the worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and fertility, its slavery, and most of all, its blatant wickedness and debauchery. Let me give you some information from Dr. John MacArthur's commentary describing the city of Corinth.

"Few cities in the ancient world were blessed with as favorable a geographic location as Corinth was. The city was strategically located on the narrow isthmus connecting the mainland of Greece with the Peloponnesus, the large, leaf-shaped peninsula that makes up the southern-most part of Greece. (Since the completion of a canal across the isthmus in the late nineteenth century, the Peloponnesus is now technically an island.) Corinth thus controlled the trade route between the northern and southern parts of Greece. In addition, travelers going to and from Italy from northern Greece and Asia Minor embarked and disembarked from Corinth's port towns, Cenchrea on the southeastern side of the isthmus, and Lechaenum on the northwestern side. Since the isthmus was narrow (less than four miles wide at its narrowest; the road connecting Cenchrea and Lechaenum was about ten miles long), many ships captains elected to unload their cargo at one of the two port cities and have it and their ship (if it was small enough) hauled across the isthmus to the other city, where they would reload their cargo and set sail again. They thus avoided a long and dangerous sea voyage around the southern tip of the Peloponnesus."⁵

"Corinth in Paul's day was a large and prosperous commercial city, one of the leading cities in Greece. It owed its prosperity not only to the trade that flowed through it, but to several other factors as well. Corinth hosted the biennial Isthmian Games, which drew large crowds to the city. It also had the coveted status of a Roman colony and was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia (which is why the city's unbelieving Jews were able to bring Paul before the Roman governor, Gallio; Acts 18:12-17.) Corinthian brass and pottery wares were famous throughout the Roman World."⁶

"But Corinth also had its dark side. A sizeable percentage of its population consisted of slaves, and it was a center of the slave trade. Corinth was such an immoral city that its name became a byword for sexual vice; the verb to 'Corinthianize' means to commit sexual immorality, and 'Corinthian girl' became a slang term for a prostitute."⁷

⁴ Ibid, pages 270-271.

⁵ The MacArthur's New Testament Commentary, II Corinthians, pages 2-3.

⁶ Ibid, page 3.

⁷ Ibid.

"After fighting a few wars over the years, the Corinth city-state was controlled by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. The city was destroyed by the Romans in battle in 146 B.C., and was rebuilt about a century later. Under the Romans, Corinth became the seat of government for Southern Greece or Achaia."⁸

C. The letter was addressed to the church of Godliness.

Well now, this third point on our outline seems to be a duplicate of the first point, which we discussed earlier, but there is just a little difference. In the first part of the verse, Paul seemed to have been discussing the position that the church members had in Christ. But now, when he refers to the saints, he is emphasizing their behavior as believers in Christ. You see folks, there is a great deal of difference in our position in Christ which was given to us at the moment of salvation, and in our practice of Godly living as saints after we get saved. Again, one is our position in Christ, and the other is our practice for Christ.

III. NOTICE THE ASPIRATION IN THE LETTER. v. 2

In this short greeting, Paul really greets the Corinthian church once again with a note of encouragement, and an implied prayer for the people to not only receive God's graciousness, but also, the peace that only God can provide. This greeting was a pleasant one, especially after how Paul had to get firm and blunt with these people in **I Corinthians**. Now, let's look at two points which Paul tries to make in order to encourage the people to aspire to greater things in the Lord.

A. It is an aspiration for the pleasure of God. v. 2a

In the first part of this verse, Paul greets the people with a statement, which implies that he wanted the people in Corinth to continue to receive the graciousness of God. It was truly by grace that these Corinthians had been saved, if they were surely saved, but Paul wants them to have God's grace and graciousness for their daily lives. You see folks, when we get saved, we get saved "by grace through faith," and then, every day that we live, we need living grace. Eventually, when the time comes, we will need dying grace. So, Paul prays that these troubled Corinthians will be filled with the grace of God in their daily lives. Thus, if they are being blessed with the grace of God, this would surely bring the pleasure of God to their hearts. In other words, they will enjoy their service for Christ, if they are continually blessed with the grace of God. Therefore, I truly need to mention right here that no believer will ever aspire to greater things for God, unless he or she is completely dedicated to Christ, while at the same time appropriating the grace and pleasure of God daily. With the pleasure of God in one's heart, he or she will desire to be more, and yes, do more for the Savior.

B. It is an aspiration for the peace of God. v. 2b

It is one thing to have the grace and pleasure of God in one's life, but it is another thing to have the constant peace of God the Father demonstrated in one's life by the indwelling

⁸ biblestudy.org. page 1.

presence of Jesus Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is completely impossible to aspire to greater things for God unless one aspires to live every day with the peace of God. We are told this in **Philippians 4:7**, where Paul says these words, ***"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*** What a tremendous promise this is from God through Paul the Apostle. So, here in this book of **II Corinthians**, Paul again uses this Jewish greeting to share with the Corinthians his prayer for them.

Therefore, in the first part of this verse, Paul uses the Gentile greeting of grace, and here in the second part, he uses the Jewish greeting. Thus, we need to remember that there were probably many vagabond Jews who had migrated to Corinth that got saved under Paul's ministry, and then, there were the Gentiles in this wicked city that Paul showed grace to. So, both of these greetings were very appropriate.

IV. NOTICE THE APPRECIATION IN THE LETTER. vs. 3-11

A. There is an appreciation for God's compassion. v. 3

Paul begins in verse three by saying that it was his desire for the great God of heaven and earth to be extremely blessed or praised for everything that He had done for every child of God through His mercy and comfort. What Paul is affirming in this short verse is that God is truly the God of love and compassion, and that He had shown this to all saved people through His mercy and comfort. Let me give you some further words about this verse from Dr. Oliver B. Greene.

"Two feelings rise simultaneously in the apostle's mind: (1) Overwhelming gratitude and deep appreciation for deliverance from his distress. (2) His keen sense of his entire unity of heart and souls with his brother believers in the Corinthian church.

Paul's desire was to impart to his brother believers whatsoever blessings he himself had received from God, 'the Father of mercies....' I see a double meaning here: I believe 'Father of mercies' points out that God is the source from whence all mercy proceeds, but I believe it goes further and points out that mercy is the most inherent attribute of God. **James 1:17** reminds us, ***'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'***

The very word 'Father' implies tenderness, mercy, longsuffering—more. It also suggests close and affectionate relationship between God and man. David said, ***'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust' (Psalm 103:13-14).*** ***'.....and the God of all comfort.'*** Comfort comes from God, and apart from God there can be no comfort or consolation for poor, depraved mankind. Greek scholars tell us that the meaning here is not only comfort to one's heart, but also indicates that God is the Father of all encouragement, cheer, and strength."⁹

B. There is the appreciation for God's comfort. vs. 4-7

⁹ The Second Epistle Of Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 28-29.

Now, as we take a close look at these next few verses, we are going to see a great revelation of the tremendous suffering that Paul had been through. Remember, the title of this commentary is "Turning Our Pain Into Praise". Most assuredly, this is what we are going to see from these verses. Paul had gone through horrible suffering, but now, he gives testimony of how God had brought him through all of his suffering. Obviously, God did this so that Paul could comfort other suffering people who would need comfort as well. Thus Paul wanted to let the Corinthians know that yes, he had gone through unbelievable suffering, but God had given him the victory and comfort. Therefore, Paul wanted to share this comfort with others who were going through some of the same kinds of suffering for the cause of Christ.

1. Notice the scope of this comfort, which Paul describes. v. 4a

Paul tells the professing believers in Corinth that God will comfort us in all of our tribulation. "The word 'comforteth' is *parakaleo*. It occurs eighteen times in this epistle. It is akin to the word for 'comfort' in the preceding verse, *paraklesis*, which occurs six times in this chapter and eleven times, in all, in the epistle. It means to call someone to one's side for exhortation, comfort, or consolation. Both words are kindred to *parakletos*, the word for 'the Comforter.' This particular word was used in courts of law to denote a counsel for the defense, one who pleads another's cause. It also signifies one who succors or comforts, which is just what the Lord Jesus was to His disciples. Paul had proved that He is just such a Comforter to His people."¹⁰

I think that if we know anything about the Apostle Paul, we know that from the very first day of his salvation, on the road to Damascus, he really began to go through a tremendous amount of suffering. But, we must consider the fact that before he got saved, he made hundreds of other believers suffer horribly. Paul was what you might say, now receiving the recompense of his own horrible deeds before he came to Christ. We will see throughout this commentary that right in the midst of Paul's suffering for the cause of Christ, God comforted him. And, we know that even after this epistle was written, Paul suffered tremendously, even to the point of his death in Rome by Nero. Yes, Paul went through terrible suffering, but he was truly given comfort by the same Holy Spirit who baptized Paul into the body of Christ the day he got saved. Paul took all of the comforting experience, which he received from Jesus, and he gave it to others who were going through suffering as well. Therefore, we must concede that Paul's suffering was used by God in helping him to comfort others; even these Corinthian believers.

2. Notice the strength of this comfort, which Paul describes. v. 4b

In the last part of verse four, we are told by Paul that when we are comforted by God during the times of our suffering, we are given strength within us by the power of the Holy Spirit in order to face what we must face. And beyond this, the strength which God provides us during our times of suffering should then be used to make us strong enough to help others.

¹⁰ Exploring II Corinthians, By: Dr. John Phillips, Kregel, page 26.

But, there is a question which always comes with suffering in the life of a true believer in Christ. That question is one which I was having to deal with this very morning. That question is, "Why does God allow so many bad things to happen to good people?" Let me give you John MacArthur's answer to this, plus, we will look further at the seven main reasons God allows His children to suffer so much. Please notice the following words.

"Many people today question why bad things happen to good people. But Scripture rejects the underlying assumption that people are truly good. The Apostle Paul declared, **'There is none righteous, not even one,' (Romans 3:10)**. Bad things happen to all people because they are sinners who live in a fallen, sin-cursed world.

Because believers are redeemed sinners who live in a fallen world, bad things even happen to them. In fact, God allows those things to happen for several important reasons."¹¹

"First, God allows bad things to happen to His people to test the validity of their faith. According to **Proverbs 17:3, 'The Lord tests hearts.'** Centuries earlier Moses told Israel, **'The Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not' (Deuteronomy 8:2).**"¹²

"Second, God allows bad things to happen to His people to wean them from the world. Trials strip away the worldly resources that believers trust in, leaving them completely dependent on divine resources."¹³

"Third, God allows bad things to happen to His people to call them to their heavenly hope. To the Romans Paul wrote, **'We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint' (Romans 5:3-5)**. Those who hope for heaven will never be disappointed in this life, and suffering is the first step in producing that hope."¹⁴

"Fourth, God allows bad things to happen to His people to reveal to them what they really love. Those who seek the proven character that suffering produces (**Romans 5:3-4**), and to be fellow sufferers with the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 5:41**), will gladly endure trials. But those who focus on worldly things will react with anger and despair when trials strip them away."¹⁵

"Fifth, God allows bad things to happen to His people to teach them obedience. The Psalmist acknowledged, **'Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.....It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes' (Psalm 119:67, 71)**.

Sixth, God allows bad things to happen to His people so He can reveal His compassion to them. Believers' suffering allows Him the opportunity to display His loving-kindness, which, David declared, is better than anything else in life: **'Because Your loving kindness is better than life, my lips will praise You' (Psalm 63:3)**.

¹¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, Moody Press, page 12.

¹² Ibid, pages 12-13.

¹³ Ibid, page 15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Finally, God allows bad things to happen to His people to enable them to comfort others in their trials. Jesus said to ***'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers'*** (Luke 22:31-32)."¹⁶

3. Notice the sympathy of this comfort, which Paul describes. vs. 5-7

In verse five, we now see the tremendous identification that Christ Jesus has with our suffering. Because He went through so much suffering on the cross for our sins, He readily identifies with whatever we might be going through. Also, because He did die on the cross and then rise from the dead, we have the consolation of this risen Christ Who has promised to not only sympathize with us, but also, to provide His resurrection power for us to deal with our pain and suffering. Therefore folks, if our suffering is tremendous, then rest assured that God's comfort for us will be tremendous as well. Because Jesus took our place on the cruel cross of Calvary, we also have access to His resurrection power. Truly, Jesus can readily identify with our individual suffering because He bore on the cross all of the sin and suffering for the entire world. I would say that Jesus definitely showed us His tremendous sympathy.

"Paul viewed God's comforting of him not only as an end in itself to express His care and fulfill His promise, but also, as the means to an end. Suffering believers receive God's comfort so that they will be able to comfort those who are in affliction. Believers receive comfort as a trust or stewardship to be passed on to others. The purpose of this comfort is to equip the comforted to be comforters."¹⁷

Now, let's take a very close look at verse six. "If the purpose of our affliction is divinely intended to be beneficial to others, to encourage and strengthen the faith of other believers, then we should rejoice and be exceedingly glad that we are partakers of the suffering of Christ, the suffering He endured for us."¹⁸

"This (six) verse shows one of the reasons for the suffering that the Apostle Paul had endured: It was ***'for your consolation and salvation....'*** It shows that all of his trials were for the welfare of his converts and would turn to their benefit, that they might be comforted. His affliction was for their advantage."¹⁹

"Paul does not mean to say that the suffering he endured was particularly for the comfort of the Corinthians alone, but rather that his sufferings had been endured in the general purpose of promoting the Gospel of the saving grace of God, that men might be saved from sin, that they might reap the benefit of his trials and tribulations. He endured whatever sufferings and tribulations came upon him in order to spread the true Gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ."²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid, pages 16-17.

¹⁷ Ibid, page 22.

¹⁸ The Second Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 34.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, pages 34-35.

Let's now look at verse seven. "'Our hope of you is steadfast'—meaning, 'We have a firm, unshaken hope in regard to your faith and your conversion to Christianity through the grace of God. We have a confident expectation that you will stand up under afflictions and prove that you are genuinely born again. We believe you will be able to bear the trials and tribulations regardless of how severe they may be, thus showing that you are in Christ, sustained by the hope that is in Christ, knowing that in Him you are more than conquerors.'"²¹

May I tell you at this point, that I sincerely love Paul the Apostle because of his willingness to suffer at the hands of horribly wicked people just in order to get the message of hope and comfort to other people? Paul's primary goal was fulfilling the Great Commission. This too, should be our primary goal in life as believers. If we don't identify closely with Paul's willingness to suffer for the cause of the Gospel, then, we will never be able to endure whatever suffering Satan sends our way, only with the tolerance of God. Satan cannot do whatever God won't allow him to bring to pass. We must remember this because of the story of Job!

C. There is an appreciation for God's commitment. vs. 8-10

As we continue this wonderful study, we now come to some of the most important verses in the entire book. In these next several verses, we are going to see Paul's unusual transparency as he really shares with the Corinthian people about the great hurt and suffering that he had been going through for a long time because of his commitment to Christ and his proclamation of the Gospel. Paul was just very open about his suffering, but he also shared with these people that God had been very committed to him by providing the grace and comfort that he had needed. Paul did not try to hide the way he had been treated by those who had hurt him so dastardly, but he was just open and honest, I believe, for the purpose of confronting some of the Corinthians who had opposed him so much, and yes, even doubted his apostleship. If you read my commentary on **I Corinthians**, then you might remember that I gave an entire chapter in that book about the attacks that Paul received regarding the validity of his apostleship. So, I think we can rightly say that Paul was not going to cover up the hurt he had received from these professing Christians, but he also shared the gracious comfort that God had constantly given to him.

Therefore, we can see just how committed Paul was to Christ and proclaiming His Gospel, and we can also see the commitment of Christ to comfort Paul during the times of his suffering and yes, mistreatment. We will talk a lot more about this in the next several paragraphs of this book.

In these verses, 8-10, we are going to see just how Paul, God's man, had been so severely treated, but then, as we move on, we will discover the good that came out of Paul's tremendous suffering and mistreatment. We need to pay much attention to these verses in order for us to learn how to deal with undeserved reproach and pressure brought on by wicked and vicious professing Christians who are nothing more than just plain hypocrites. Then, we will see in the following verses how Paul dealt with all of these attacks and pressures orchestrated by Satan. We will also see what Paul discovered

²¹ Ibid, pages 37-38.

concerning the reasons that God had allowed these problems and this suffering to come his way. Hopefully, we will learn just why God sometimes allows us to go through similar hurts because of the practice of our faith and because of our proclamation of the Gospel message. We have already seen earlier in this commentary seven reasons that God allows us to suffer, but we will follow Paul's story and see some other reasons that he in particular was allowed to bear this terrible cross because of his faith.

D. There is an appreciation for God's children. v. 11

In verse eleven of this chapter, Paul tells the Corinthians that they had been instrumental in helping him to overcome the hurt and heartaches he had endured. He thanked them for offering prayers of thanksgiving for his previous ministry to them, and he complimented them on being faithful to prayerfully thank God regularly for Paul's ministry among them. Therefore, Paul was indeed encouraged by the prayers of thanksgiving which the true Corinthian believers expressed on his behalf. Those who were genuinely saved, thanked God for him daily, while those who were phonies castigated and attacked his apostleship—probably because of their jealousy and insecurity.

Having said all of this in the previous paragraphs, I would like to now take this exegetical exposition of this wonderful chapter one step further. I want to give you an inserted outline that I did several years ago on this text when I was teaching and writing on depression, when this horrible thing captivated me after the horrible vehicle accident I had in Africa back in 1993. The following inserted outline will be rather lengthy, but I pray it will help all of use in dealing with despair and depression.

"When Despair Captivates The Child Of God"

Scripture: II Corinthians 1:8-12

Introduction

As we take a deeper look at these next verses about Paul's suffering and depression, I want to quote two great pastors from the past, just to let you know that some of the greatest preachers and church leaders who ever lived went through horrible bouts with depression due to the attacks by Satan carried out by those who hated or disliked these great servants of God. Just remember that this was indeed what Paul had been going through, and yet, he was probably the greatest servant of God ever to live for Jesus on this earth. So, if these other great men of God went through the "Valley Of Despair", then, surely we should never believe that we are immune to this happening to us. In truth, I used to be somewhat skeptical about preachers and servants of God going through these horrible valleys of depression until I went through this same thing four years after the terrible accident in Uganda, East Africa.

I discovered these next two examples of great servants of God going through depression many years ago. I wrote down what they said, but honestly, I don't know where they came from because it was so long ago. Please notice them carefully!

"You seem to imagine that I have no ups and downs, but just a level and lofty stretch of spiritual attainment with unbroken joy and equanimity. By no means! I am often

perfectly wretched and everything appears most murky." So wrote the man who was called in his day 'The Greatest Preacher in English-speaking world', Dr. John Henry Jowett. He pastored leading churches, preached to huge congregations, and wrote books that were bestsellers.

"I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extreme wretchedness as I go to." These words were spoken by Charles Haddon Spurgeon, whose marvelous ministry in London made him perhaps the greatest preacher England ever produced.

Now, as we continue on with the interpretation of Paul's words to the Corinthian church members about his terrible trials, I would like to say that I am convinced that this great Apostle went through unbelievable bouts with depression. Truthfully, though I can't prove it because I am not a psychiatrist, I believe Paul the Apostle was bipolar. Therefore, let's continue on with this verse-by-verse exposition.

I. PLEASE NOTICE THE TRANSPARENT PREACHER. v. 8a

Many years ago, back in 1993, I was involved in a terrible vehicle accident in Uganda, East Africa. One of my best staff members, Pastor Wayne Birkhead, was killed in this accident. Four years later, I woke up one morning and did not want to go on living. I was in the deep dark valley of depression. It was during those days that I heard a lot of people and counselors saying, "Pastor Stan, you need to talk about your feelings, etc., if you are going to get well." The truth is, folks, I didn't want to talk about this deep dark depression at all, but eventually I found out that it is impossible to get well without talking about it to some friends that you have confidence and trust in. This is exactly what Paul did when he wrote this letter to the Corinthians. He just had to "get it off of his chest", and so, he wrote and became extremely transparent about the problems and suffering that he was enduring. Let's look at three points about this transparency.

A. Notice the recipients of this transparency. (Brethren) v. 8a-1

The first thing Paul does in this verse is to declare that he is writing to his brethren, which indeed reveals that most of these Corinthians were indeed saved, although we know, that a lot of these church members in Corinth didn't act like it. I make this observation about the word "brethren" to show that yes, even God's saved children sometimes go through terrible bouts of suffering, hardship, and even deep depression.

I also believe that Paul mentions that they were his brethren in order to hopefully, soften the blow that would be coming when he just candidly revealed some of the people that were contributing to his depression. He stated the place, Asia, where much of his suffering came from. And of course, when he stated the place, then, the people in Corinth would know who he was talking about because they knew where Paul had ministered and the churches he had planted and served.

May I interject something right here? Often times when people have done wrong things to us and caused us some horrible pain and suffering, we sometimes are reluctant to tell who it was that caused or contributed to our hurt. But, may I tell you that if we don't reveal who these hurters are, then, we may just contribute to their doing further damage to other servants of God because of our silence, and because no one wants to hold them accountable.

Truthfully, I have seen this going on and on in our churches. People do horrible things to others within the churches, and then, the leaders of the church don't want to publicize who it was that caused all the problems. They believe it is best to cover it up and just let these people go on living their daily lives, destroying the lives of others without accountability. Paul the Apostle had great courage and boldness to reveal the people who had hurt him so terribly. If you read my commentary on **I Corinthians**, you may remember that Paul even called some of the troublemakers' names.

B. Notice the reason for this transparency. v. 8a-2

The reason for Paul's transparency was that he had been completely to the bottom, and he at one time had been in a total state of despair. Pay attention to this phrase: *"...that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we despaired even of life."*

"To show the Corinthians the power of God's comfort, Paul reminded them of a serious, life-threatening situation from which God had delivered him. The apostle used the phrase 'we do not want you to be unaware', or its equivalent, six times in his epistles. It expressed his great concern that his readers not have inadequate information. (In other words, Paul wanted them to get the truth from him, and not from some church gossip.)

The situation that produced the affliction, which came to Paul in the province of Asia is unknown. It may have involved Paul's being beaten (**II Corinthians 11:23-25**), imprisoned (**cf. 11:23**), or both. Since he gave them no details, the incident must have been well-known to the Corinthians. But though they were aware of the situation, they did not know its severity or how God had worked in it. It had evidently happened recently, after Paul wrote **I Corinthians**, since he did not mention it in that letter. Since it happened in Asia, before he came to Macedonia (**2:13**), it likely took place in Ephesus, the chief city of Asia. In **I Corinthians 16:9**, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he planned to remain in Ephesus, 'for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.' Possibly, one or more of those adversaries had come close to taking the apostle's life."²²

"The word for 'pressed' is *bareo*, which means to be 'weighed down.' Paul says that he was completely overwhelmed by his circumstances that the burden was more that he could bear."²³

The next thing Paul tells the Corinthians is that he had been without strength to face what he had experienced. Paul had just gone through a terrible time, probably up in Ephesus, whenever this took place, and he just could never have gotten through it without the help of the Lord. It is truly amazing to me just how plain and courageous Paul was in what he shared with the church in Corinth. It is almost like he had to get across to the Corinthians that he would not still be in the ministry, after what he had gone through, if he had not been helped by God, and if he was not so resolute in getting the Gospel to lost men. And yet, the main thing that is obvious is that Paul even despaired of life, which seems to

²² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, Moody Publishers, pages 25-26.

²³ Exploring 2 Corinthians, By: John Philips, Kregel, Page 33.

tell us that he thought he was either going to die from injuries or that daily he was walking in danger of being killed.

C. Notice the revelation in this transparency. v. 8a

Well now, the revelation in this verse is that Paul had gone through such a horrible experience at Ephesus, that it was indeed just a miracle that he even survived the ordeal. Praise God, he lived to tell about it, but he did want the Corinthian church to know the price that he had paid to preach the Gospel message. Once more, going back to my commentary on **I Corinthians**, there were people in the church that attacked Paul's credibility as an Apostle. Just maybe he desired to convince the Corinthians that he would never have gone through what he had to go through were it not for the truth that he was the real deal. And may I say, no greater statement could ever be made than that Paul was truly the real deal!

II. PLEASE NOTICE THE TREMENDOUS PROBLEM. vs. 8b-9a

At the risk of repeating some things I have already stated, it was indeed evident that Paul had been through a terrible ordeal; one in which he would never have survived, were it not for the help of Jesus. I just want us to get the picture of how bad the situation really was for Paul in Asia—although we don't know exactly what happened. But what we do know, is that Paul felt like he was at his wit's end, and probably thought he would not ever get out of the pain and suffering. But Paul must have been familiar with **Psalm 107:23-31**, which states, *"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"*

A. The problem included an intolerable squeezing. v. 8b

Going back to that word "pressed", I would just like to say that Paul must have been at the point where he thought all of his life was being squeezed out of him by whatever problem he went through in Asia. Yes, Paul was not only familiar with **Psalm 107**, mentally, but he had experienced the storm and Jesus had come to his rescue. He was truly squeezed, but not to death! He came close, but God had gloriously intervened.

B. The problem included an insufficient strength. v. 8c

The second point that I would like to mention again is that the problem Paul told the Corinthians about was that while going through so much suffering in Asia, he was almost completely out of strength. He didn't have the strength to go on. Therefore, I am confident

that because his strength was almost gone, the only hope he had was in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have read many commentaries by different conservative authors to see if any of them might agree on what kind of problems Paul had in Asia that took away all of his strength, but not one of these men could agree on what the problem was. So, we must conclude that it might have been a combination of a deteriorating physical problem, some kind of emotional despair, and more likely, the constant attacks that he went through from hypocrite professing believers in Ephesus under the leadership of a man named Demetrius.

C. The problem included an intense sadness. v. 8d

In the last phrase of verse 8, Paul tells the Corinthians that he even despaired of life itself while he was facing the problems in Asia. The word "despaired" in the Greek actually means to have lost all hope with nothing he could have done about it. Personally, I believe Paul was either dying because of sickness, depressed emotionally because of the constant abuse of others, or he just felt forgotten by God, which of course, would have been a spiritual problem. Having gone through deep dark depression back in 1997, I can tell you that depression is a constant threefold attack of body, soul, and spirit. Thus, Paul was just at the point of giving into all of these attacks by Satan. Let me give you some information by Dr. John Phillips about Paul's trials in Ephesus.

"Then events took over with a vengeance. We know from the book of Acts that Demetrius the silversmith instigated a serious riot in the city, whipping up the people to a condition of wrathful rage against Paul. The city secretary eventually managed to calm the people down, but matter remained so serious and unsettled that the next day Paul voluntarily left the city for Macedonia (**Acts 19:23-20:1**). It is not certain whether it is to this event that Paul alludes (points) to here."²⁴

"Very like the riot mentioned in the book of Acts was only one of a number of incidents Paul had to face at the time. The Jews never ceased from stirring up trouble against him and the heathen, such as Demetrius the silversmith, thirsted for his blood. The book of Acts records only a fraction of the events in Paul's eventful life."²⁵

D. The problem included an imposing sentence. v. 9a

So friends, Paul had been through horrible suffering, probably in Ephesus, the capital of Asia at that time. It is obvious that Paul even thought that he was going to die, and maybe he came very close to dying. Of course, we do know from **Acts 14:19-20**, that before the Ephesus event, Paul had been stoned and left outside the walls of Lystra for dead. I believe he actually did die, and God brought him back to life. But the point I am trying to make, is that Paul truly had experienced death before he referred to the event in Ephesus, and thus, he could readily attest how serious and imminent death was for him every day that he lived. And, this should be a reminder to every one of us as a child of God, that we live every day of our lives on the threshold of death. We just need to really take this matter seriously and live every moment of every day in view of our going home to be with Jesus.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

III. PLEASE NOTICE THE TIME PURPOSE. vs. 9b-10

Now that we have taken a serious look at the seriousness of Paul's problem which brought him close to dying in Ephesus, we need to really discover just what God was trying to teach Paul through this terrible ordeal, so that we too can come to some understanding about why God lets us go through so much as faithful believers. I hope what we learn in these coming verses will help us better deal with the hurts and heartaches which we might face in our lives.

A. Paul was allowed to go through despair in order to bring him to a recognition of his inadequacy. v. 9b

I suppose the hardest thing that any "Type A" person, like Paul the Apostle, will ever have to admit is that he or she isn't adequate in and of himself or herself to deal with the hard knocks of life. This is difficult for us to accept, but sometimes God just allows Satan to attack us in order to stop us from always depending upon self and begin to totally and completely depend on God for everything we need. Of course, this goes against our self-sufficient pride, but we must humble ourselves and admit readily that we can't handle every hard knock God allows to come our way.

I will confess to you right here that when I walked through the dark valley of deep depression back in 1997, it was extremely hard for me to accept the fact that I couldn't handle the problem. So, God allowed me to be brought to the bottom in order for me to get up and totally depend upon Him.

B. Paul was allowed to go through despair in order to bring him to a reliance upon God's sufficiency. v. 10

Did you read this statement carefully? God allowed Paul to go through a horrible ordeal, not only to show him his insufficiency, but He allowed Paul to go through his many problems in order to bring him to a complete reliance upon God's sufficiency. Truly, it is hard for every assertive Christian person in this world to admit his inadequacy. Therefore, God permits the devil to attack us in all three areas of our lives (body, soul, and spirit) in order to show us that we are nothing, and we can handle nothing without the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit.

1. Paul learned that God had truly been sufficient in the past. v. 10a

In the first part of verse 10, Paul tells the Corinthians that God had been faithful to bring him totally through the trials in the past, implying that the Lord had been completely sufficient whenever He was needed and that whatever the severity of Paul's problems, God was always there. Paul knew that he was not sufficient to handle all of his problems, but he knew that Jesus was.

When Paul uses the term "so great a death....", he was referring to a very serious calamity, which he had faced at some time. Let me share Oliver B. Greene's comments about this death. "The original language used here speaks of a peculiar death—probably death or mutilation by wild beasts. The manner of the death which threatened Paul was so frightful that the apostle regarded the rescue and deliverance as great a miracle as a

literal resurrection from the dead. Therefore, he felt that he owed his life to God as if God had raised him from the dead, as when Abraham offered Isaac. Abraham did not actually slay his son, yet in his heart he went every inch of the way, lacking only the final stroke which God forestalled by providing an animal for the sacrifice. In **Hebrews 11:17-19**, Paul speaks of God's deliverance of Isaac as having raised him from the dead."²⁶

2. Paul learned that God was being sufficient in the present. v. 10b

In the second phrase in this verse, Paul told the Corinthians that God "doth deliver". In the Greek, this short phrase is a present tense verb talking about what God is capable of doing for us in the present time. In other words, just like God had been faithful to get him out of dire straits in the past, he was assured that God would do it when needed in the present. So, we need to see that God let Paul go through so much suffering in order to teach him of His faithfulness and sufficiency to and for him in the past, and because of God's faithfulness to Paul in the past, he was not worried about the future. In a simple way, we might just say that God had proven His sufficiency and credibility in the past and in the present. Therefore, He could be counted on in the future, regardless of what we might have to face or go through.

3. Paul learned that God would be sufficient in the future. v. 10c

We build our resumé's and attempt to sell ourselves to those we want to work with, or to those we are presently working with, by showing our credibility and trustworthiness. In other words, if one has been faithful and trustworthy in the past and in the present, then most assuredly, we will be able to trust him in the future, unless he does something that might negate or destroy our faith in him. And folks, we know this is not going to happen by God Himself. God has always been sufficient in the past, He is faithful in the present, and we can truly trust Him for the future. It only stands to reason that if we can trust God enough to save our souls when we repent of our sins and put our faith in Him, then surely, we can trust Him to save us from the many life-threatening problems we might face down here on earth right now.

Therefore, the primary timely purpose for God's allowing Paul, the servant of God, to go through so much was to convince him that God will always be faithful and sufficient for every need we might have. Thus, because of God's proven work on our behalf in the past, certainly, we can depend upon Him for the future.

IV. PLEASE NOTICE THE TENDER PEOPLE. v. 11

In this verse 11, Paul seems to be telling the Corinthian believers that he would probably never have been able to be delivered from his near-death experiences, had it not been for the faithful prayers of the Corinthian people. Paul was showing his appreciation for not only their faithfulness in praying for him, but also for their showing gratitude to him by telling others how much they appreciated the ministry that Paul had given them while he was there

²⁶ The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 43.

in Corinth. The fact is that any man or servant of God is always encouraged by the prayers and thanksgivings of others to whom he or she has ministered to and with.

I talked a lot about this very thing in my commentary on **I Corinthians**, but I will not take much time to speak of it again here. I would like to say that one of the greatest things that any person who gets saved could ever do is to always show gratitude, appreciation, and endless respect for the one God used in bringing the Gospel message to those who are lost. We should never get over showing appreciation to that person God used to get the Gospel to us. We should never quit showing respect for that person as well, even into their older years. In other words, we should never get over the incident or incidents and the person or people which made it possible for us to hear the wonderful Gospel message.

A. First, these are passionate people. v. 11a

In addition to what I have already shared about verse 11, I would just like to add that Paul had been encouraged and prayed for by passionate believers who took their responsibility seriously. We too need passionate saints who will be faithful, pray fervently, and show appreciation for the impact that we may have had on their lives. Just as it is our responsibility to show respect and appreciation for those that God may have used in bringing us the Gospel, others whom we have helped or ministered to should also have respect and appreciation for what we have done for them. We must never forget the messenger or messengers God used to show us that He loves us, and also, that we could be eternally saved, if we would repent of our sins, put our faith and trust in Jesus, and of course, receive Christ into our hearts. Let's never forget the messengers God used to bring us the message!

B. Second, these are praying people. v. 11b

"The meaning here is that the prayers of the Corinthian believers on Paul's behalf had been effective. The Greek word translated 'helping together' means 'cooperating, assisting, and working together.' Christians should pray for one another at all times. The temptations that face us are common to all men, and the trials and tribulations we encounter are, in a sense, common to all men because the devil is no respecter of persons. He persecutes and tries all believers, therefore, we need to pray for one another. Paul believed and taught that the Church of the living God is one Church and born again believers are ONE BODY. We should cooperate and help each other in every way possible."²⁷

"...that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf." The 'gift' mentioned here means the favor the Corinthians had shown Paul in praying for him while he was in such danger and so near death. He was stalked by death wherever he went, and through the prayers of the Corinthian Christians, he had been delivered from death. He is therefore thanking them for the gift—the prayers of many persons in the Corinthian church. God had heard and answered their prayers."²⁸

²⁷ Ibid, page 45.

²⁸ Ibid.

C. Third, these are positive people. v. 11c

I don't mean to read more into this verse than I should, but I see something in the phrase "*.....thanks may be given by many on our behalf*". To me, this points out that the truly saved people in the Corinthian Church who were praying for God's deliverance for Paul must have been very positive people. I say this because positive people have faith to believe in the promises of God, whereas, negative people do not. Thus, God caused these positive people who believed in the promises of God to constantly pray for Him to get Paul out of all of his troubles and trials. Why were they so positive about this? I sincerely believe it was because they had seen so many lives changed through the ministry of Paul when he had come to Corinth and established their church. So, because they had seen Paul believe God and establish the church, the people were influenced to also believe God on Paul's behalf.

Therefore, I must tell you that many years ago, back in 1997, when I went through terrible depression as a result of the horrific accident I experienced in Uganda, East Africa, the time came when I just had to eliminate negative people from my life and only spend time with the positive people. I mean that I seriously considered whom I should talk to and whom I should not. I even asked my personal secretary in the huge church I was pastoring to screen all calls that came in and to make sure that I did not talk with the negative folks who always had so many negative things to gripe about. Also, I asked her to screen my mail so that I didn't have to read any of the negative letters that came in. And for sure, I did get a lot of negative mail because I was up in the state of Ohio where a lot of the people were extremely liberal. Because we had a TV and Radio Ministry, I really got some horrible attacking letters, especially because I preached the Word of God in the old fashioned way crying out against liberalism, homosexual, lesbianism, and every kind of immoral person coming down the pike. And too, because I preached that abortion was murder, a lot of people called wanting to attack me, while others wrote anonymous letters. So my dear friends, just like Paul had to have some positive people praying for him, it is mandatory that when we walk through the valley of depression, we have to get some positive news, because a depressed mind is usually negative.

"Many times we cry out to God for mercy and deliverance. When mercy and deliverance are obtained by prayers and supplication and intercession, I believe the answer to such prayers should be acknowledged by a prayer of praise, honor, and glory to God. We can—and we do—call upon God for help and for deliverance in the hour of peril and danger. But when He answers, we should also offer a prayer of praise, and glorify God. Paul did not want the Corinthian believers to forget that it was God who had given the victory and answered their prayers. He wanted them to praise God for His goodness and mercy in the hour of Paul's great peril." ²⁹

V. PLEASE NOTICE THE TRIUMPHANT PRODUCT. v. 12

As we get into verse 12, I just want to mention that there is so much in this verse that I am going to give you some information from the discussion of Paul's bout with despair and depression. And then, in our next chapter, I will provide some more thoughts about this verse and how it relates to serving God with genuineness and honesty. So, let's move forward and

²⁹ Ibid, page 46.

in the process, let's ask the Holy Spirit to reveal a lot of precious truth just from this great verse in the Bible.

Up to this point, in the discussion of the first eleven verses of this chapter, we have talked in detail about how Paul had gone through so much, and yet, he had been delivered from some terrible incidents of danger and hurt. Paul has been quite transparent about revealing the problems that came his way, as well as the people and the town where he had been hurt the worst. Now, in verse 12, we are going to see the results of Paul's triumph over the attacks, the threats, and the evil that misguided and sinful men and women brought his way. Paul didn't deserve the horrible way he was treated, and often, neither do we when we are attacked because of our Christian faith. Why, Paul even asked the questions of the Galatian churches in **Galatians 4:16**, *"Have I become your enemy because I have told you the truth?"* In other words, because of the Word Paul preached with no reservation, he had become a hated man. But then, we need not expect any other kind of treatment when we stop and consider what Jesus went through during His ministry, and ultimately during His trial and crucifixion. Now, let's look at three triumphant products that Paul gained from his horrendous suffering.

A. Paul gained a joyful life of simplicity. v. 12a

Just what did Paul gain from the horrible suffering and hurts which he endured during his years of ministry? Well, it is obvious from verse twelve that Paul did indeed gain a terrific victory in three areas of his personal life and ministry through his many years of suffering. He is very forthright and transparent when he reveals this to the Corinthian church members.

First, in the very first phrase, Paul tells these professing believers at Corinth that he had a completely clear conscience about why he had gone through so much. It was not like Paul felt that he had received all of his suffering as the result of chastisement for judgment for his sin. But no, Paul came to realize that God had indeed allowed him to go through the suffering to give him personal triumph in three areas. The very first thing he mentions here is the triumph of a joyful life of simplicity.

Every time I read this verse, my heart just cries out for this life of simplicity. Even yesterday, which was a Tuesday, I just truly cried out to God to please help me simplify my life because of the many pressing decisions I am faced with right now. You see folks, even if we are faithful servants of God, in these days of running to and fro and in this time of uncertain pressing problems to solve, it just seems that life is always very cluttered and never simple. Yet, I long for the life of simplicity which Paul talks about in this verse. I do pray that it will not require God to allow more and more suffering to come upon me and my family, because it just seems that we have really had our share. Of course, some of you readers might think that we must not have been very teachable or that we have really been distant from God. I don't think this is true! However, it may just be that because of our personal desire to really be committed to the work of Christ here in America and in Africa that our family and our GIMI Ministry has recently been under constant attack. So yes, I am really crying out for a life of simplicity. Paul was given this by our Lord through his trials, and I pray that God will give us this life also as a result of our trials.

B. Paul gained a joyful life of sincerity. v. 12b

One of the main problems that Paul was still trying to solve in Corinth was that the people were still accusing him of not being genuine and sincere as a true apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may have been vagabond Jews from Jerusalem or some other city, but they were there absolutely attacking everything good and holy about Paul the Apostle. They were doubting his integrity, his motives, his methods, and just about everything. So, right here in the middle of verse 12, Paul tells the Corinthians that his undeserved hurt and suffering was not given by God because of his sin or hypocrisy, but God had allowed all of those things he experienced to bring forth some positive fruit in his life. The first fruit or product as I already mentioned was to bring Paul to a life of simplicity.

Now, the second fruit Paul mentions was a joyful life of sincerity. The word sincerity in the Greek is the word "*eilikrineia*", which means something able to withstand the light of the sun with inspection. In other words, Paul was telling those in Corinth that his life was truly an open book because of the way he had endured so much suffering, and he had dealt with it without becoming so bitter and angry.

Many years ago, I read an old writer on this passage of Scripture, and he stated that the word "*eilikrineia*" actually means something that can withstand the heat of the sun without melting like wax. In other words, Paul was telling the people in Corinth that he had lived righteously with genuineness before them while with them, and also, when he was away from them as well. In other words, the heat of controversy or accusations of others was not going to melt the wax of a phony testimony or hypocritical life, because his life was genuine and "without wax". What Paul was saying to the people was that he had lived a life of genuineness and integrity before the Corinthians, and regardless of how much they turned up the heat of adversity, they would discover that he was the real deal and would not melt under their hot accusations. Paul told them that he had a clear conscience about this without any guilt at all. In other words, he had been living the right way, with the right motives, and with the right goals or purposes. Paul was truly a sincere man of God, and so should we be in this day of so much hypocrisy and religious pretending.

C. Paul gained a joyful life of submission. v. 12c

In the very last part of this verse, Paul tries to finalize the thought about his sincerity and genuineness before the Lord and the people by telling them that his decision to follow Christ and to live a Godly life of integrity was not a choice he made through fleshly wisdom. No, in fact, his genuine life was the result of God's working grace in his life admonishing him to live a life of righteous conduct everywhere, but he had especially tried to live this kind of life before the Corinthians. Of course, this kind of life would be impossible if one was not totally and completely surrendered or submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. So, we must come to the recognition that very few people will probably ever surrender to Christ in totality unless these people go through much suffering. Therefore, one of the end results of Paul's horrific suffering was that it humbled him and brought him on his knees to complete surrender to the perfect will of God.

You see folks, Paul came to the conclusion in his life that he needed to live a life of sincerity and integrity before the world, just because this was the way God wanted him to live. And yes, as sad as it is to say, Paul had tried doubly hard to do this before the high-maintenance and conflicted Corinthians, which he never could seem to please. These

people were uniquely hard to handle and deal with, and truly, they gave Paul more “hell on earth” than any other group of people. This is why I would never give the name "Corinth" to any church I started. I would be too afraid that a modern group of people might follow the pattern of the other Corinthian Church if we gave that name to it or any other group.

Conclusion

So, my dear friends, Paul's suffering was horrific, but yet, he allowed God to give him a triumph through everything he went through in his personal life for the cause of Christ. The amazing thing is that he didn't turn bitter through it all. I must tell you that this is the hardest thing as an elderly servant of God that I must deal with in this life. I just want to ask, "When does this hurt and injury stop for the long-time servant of God?" Maybe it doesn't down here, and thus, this is why I am praying every day for the return of Jesus to rapture His Church. But, until this time comes, I suppose that what we need to be praying for is the comfort that God alone can provide for us during these evil days. It is very clear to me that the only way we can endure this constant suffering and come out with some evident triumphant purposes, is for us to appropriate the comforting power of the "*parakletos*", the precious Holy Spirit of God, and then, to ask Him to enlighten us to the reasons God is allowing us to go through so much suffering and hurt.

Chapter Two

"SERVING IN SINCERITY AND TRUTH"

Scripture: II Corinthians 1:12-2:17

Introduction

In the first chapter of this book, I wrote much about the suffering of Paul the Apostle as the result of his dedication to Christ and his love for taking the Gospel to the lost world. Truthfully, Paul went through horrible times of suffering and abuse by the hands of some phony professing Christians in Corinth, and also, in many other cities and towns where he shared the Gospel message.

When he wrote this epistle, **II Corinthians**, he wrote it dealing explicitly with the attacks and hurts which he had received from this false group in Corinth and in Asia, but yet, to also share with the people how God had brought him through these terrible hours of suffering. He also was quick to be transparent and tell the people how and why God had allowed him to go through so much for the sake of the Gospel. Of course, we learned in the last part of Chapter 1 of this book, that God brought Paul through his suffering to provide some great triumphs in his life. In the previous chapter, we talked about the three purposes or triumphs in Paul's life because of all of his suffering. First of all, it was that he began to live a life of simplicity. Secondly, he also was made to check out or evaluate his sincerity. In other words, was he completely sincere or real without any evidence of wax or pretention? Of course, the answer to this question was yes, and Paul had a clear conscience to verify it. Thirdly, through Paul's enormous suffering, he was brought to a point of brokenness, whereby he was able to totally and completely submit or surrender himself to Jesus without reservation. So, out of all the terrible suffering that Paul went through, he learned three very important lessons. Thus, good came out of the bad, and Paul had no regrets for the hurt and pain that he had experienced.

Now, as we look further into this chapter of **I Corinthians**, we are going to dig down deeper into what Paul talked about, when he talked of sincerity and integrity as a man of God. In the remaining verses of **Chapter 1**, and then, throughout **Chapter 2**, we will discover some marvelous truths that will be applicable to our personal lives as we go through suffering. Before moving on to the verse-by-verse exposition, let me share four things with you in this introduction about the terrible things Paul was accused of, and how he handled the accusations.

1. Paul was accused of inconsistency in conduct.
2. Paul was accused of insincerity in compulsion.
3. Paul was accused of inaccuracy in correspondence.
4. Paul was accused of infidelity in commitments.

I. PAUL DEFENDS HIS GENUINENESS. vs. 1:12-2:4

Well, the fight goes on and on! What I am referring to is Paul's long battle with the Corinthian Church about whether he was a true apostle or man of God. The naysayers said that he was guilty of inconsistency in his conduct, insincerity in his compulsion, and inaccuracy in his correspondence. They said he was guilty of infidelity in his commitments. Let me just say that having studied the life of Paul the Apostle for over 60 years, these accusations are totally absurd. Anyone with common sense who has read Paul's life story and his conversion to Christ knows without question that all of these accusations are flat wrong. They are lies that have been fabricated by the demons of hell working through religious pretenders.

A. Paul defends his genuineness by claiming a clear conscience about his conduct.
v. 12

There is probably nothing on earth that is as wonderful as having a clear conscience when it comes to our lifestyles, our ministries, and our service to the Lord. This is just what Paul affirms to the Corinthian doubters when they were attacking him and his apostleship. In verse 12, he just tells them that his conscience was clear when it came to being a genuine servant of God. Of course, I believe that many of the people in the church at Corinth were just mad at Paul because they were jealous of his success in planting the church there. I am sorry to say that this is true so often in our modern day churches as well. There are so many people within the churches who are pretending to be great Christians, and yet, when it comes down to really doing anything effective for Christ, they accomplish nothing, or at the least, very little. Yet, these are the people that are jealous of others who are really successful in reaping a harvest for Christ in their particular field of ministry. I heard it said many years ago, that those who are jealous of you just want to criticize you to try and bring you down to their level, so that they will be more comfortable when they are with you. In other words, those who do nothing or very little desire to bring those who are successful down in order to feel more secure when they are around these successful people. Truly, insecure people are doing a huge amount of damage to the Kingdom of God during these days of so much wickedness and evil. I will just tell you that a large number of these insecure people are not only members of local churches, but they are pastoring or trying to lead these churches.

So, Paul told the Corinthians that he had a clear conscience about his conduct while he was at Corinth and also since he had left that very confused and immoral city in Greece. In other words, Paul had no shame or guilt about his lifestyle and ministry while serving the Corinthians and others.

B. Paul defends his genuineness by claiming a clear conscience about his compulsion.
v. 12b

I love what Paul tells the Corinthians about his lifestyle and conduct after he had been through so much suffering for the cause of Christ. Paul just candidly tells the people in Corinth that not only was his conduct without reproach and that he had a clear conscience about the way he had lived and conducted himself, but also, he stated that his motives were pure for everything he had done. Paul just says to the professing believers in Corinth that God had produced three great things in his life through all the suffering he had gone

through. I have already mentioned these in Chapter 1 of this book, but let me mention them again. First of all, Paul stated that as a result of his trials and suffering, he had a new life of simplicity. In other words, Paul wasn't trying to impress anyone, but that his entire ministry was for the simple purpose of winning people to Christ and then helping to develop those people in the faith. Secondly, Paul stated emphatically that he was the real deal—a genuine and sincere servant of the living God. In fact, he had no other reason for living. His desire was to tell everyone he could about the new life that he had found in his relationship to Christ, and he wanted to do this to show his appreciation to God for saving him. Thirdly, the last thing I will mention for the second time about Paul's triumph from his terrible suffering was that this pain and suffering had brought him to a more completely surrendered or submitted life to Christ. In other words, the suffering that came his way had been used by God to humble him, and to give him a more teachable spirit so that he could learn from God, but also, teach others as well. So, I believe we can say "Amen!" to what Paul told the professing believers in Corinth. He had a clear conscience about his motives and his works in the church at Corinth. What a tremendous peace Paul must have had, even with all of the attacks from these confused and vicious people.

C. Paul defends his genuineness by claiming a careful content in his correspondence.
vs. 13-14.

Well, in addition to being accused of improper conduct and wrong motivations, Paul was also accused of not being honest in his letter writing to the Corinthians. So, let's take a look at some further words about this from Dr. John MacArthur's commentary on this passage of Scripture in verses 13-14.

"The simple statements offer the powerful testimony of Paul's conscience regarding the second allegation against him. Not only was Paul innocent of moral wrongdoing; he also was not guilty of relational wrongdoing. He had defrauded no one; he had used no one for his own selfish ends; he had deceived and manipulated no one. Later in this letter he pleaded with the Corinthians, ***'Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one'*** (7:2), while in 11:9 he reminded them, ***'When I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.'***"³⁰

"Nor did Paul write his letters to the Corinthians with a hidden agenda; he wrote nothing else to them other than what they could read and understand. There was no deception involved; Paul wrote what he meant, and meant what he wrote. His letters were clear, straightforward, consistent, genuine, transparent, and without ambiguity. Both read and understand are compound forms of the verb *'ginosko'* (to know), forming a play on words in the Greek."³¹ In reality, what Paul was telling the Corinthians was that the letters he had written to them were totally consistent with the life he had lived before them. Therefore, the people needed to open their eyes and see that when a person's conduct and deeds are consistent with everything in his or her life, including writing letters, there is

³⁰ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, By: John F. MacArthur, Moody Press, page 35-36.

³¹ Ibid, page 36.

no room for castigation and criticism. Once more, I will say that the people in the church of Corinth were making fools of themselves.

"The last and most serious charge against Paul was that he was a false teacher. The false apostles alleged that he was guilty of spiritual wrongdoing because he taught errant theology. Like the two previous charges, Paul replied to this charge throughout this letter. In 2:17 he wrote, ***'For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.'*** In 4:2 he reminded the Corinthians, ***'We have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.'***

Paul was no spiritual con man, no huckster twisting the truth of God for his own ends, as the Corinthians well knew. They should not have been ashamed of Paul because he allegedly mishandled and twisted God's Word. Instead, he should have been their reason to be proud, as they were his. They should have boasted in the Lord about how God had so mightily used Paul, both in Corinth and elsewhere. The Corinthians should have been so proud of Paul that they eagerly looked forward to the day of our Lord Jesus, when they will embrace him in eternal and perfect fellowship. Paul looked forward to that day, when the presence of those to whom he had ministered would bring him great joy."³²

D. Paul defends his genuineness by claiming a consistent Christianity in his commitments. vs. 15-2:4

Well now, the Corinthians attacked Paul about his conduct, his compulsion or motives, his correspondence or letter writing, and now, they attacked him because they said he didn't honor his promise to come and visit them as he had promised. In other words, in the minds of these vicious Corinthian phonies, Paul could do no right. But, the real problem was the wicked viciousness of the false professing believers in the church at Corinth who were filled with so much hatred. Once again, I must say that I believe it was because of their jealousy of Paul the Apostle that they brutally attacked this wonderful servant of God.

So, let's look at the way Paul responds to another accusation from these wicked Corinthians.

1. Paul claims consistency in his plans. vs. 15-16

The next thing we see here is that Paul was accused of not being consistent in honoring his commitment to the plans he made and had shared with the Corinthians. In verses 15-16, Paul tells these people that he had every intention in the world to come to them and honor his commitment just to be an encouragement or benefit to the people. However, it seems that at the time he had shared this information, he was still not sure which route he would need to take on his way through Corinth, up to Macedonia, and then, return to Corinth yet again. It seems that Paul was not sure that he could honor the stops in Corinth, so he left a possible alternative which consisted of possibly having some of these Corinthians escort him back to Judaea, if he didn't get to stop in Corinth for the second

³² Ibid, pages 36-37.

time on his return from Macedonia. Paul indeed wanted so much to be an encouragement to the Corinthian naysayers, but due to the difficulty in travel during those days, he just didn't know how it would ultimately work out. But, these perverse and foolish Corinthians would not so much as cut Paul just a little slack or give him a little leeway in fulfilling his plans. Truly, these were harsh, brutal people, even if they professed to be saved believers. Yet, Paul must have truly been a courageous man if he was willing to allow some of these corrupt people to accompany him back to Judaea and Jerusalem.

2. Paul claims consistency in his pronouncements. vs. 17-20

In verses 17-18 of our text, Paul asks the question, "Do you think that I was making an empty promise or speaking with lightness when I promised to come see you again?" And then, Paul said, "Do you think that I promised to come again to see you out of an ulterior motive inspired by fleshly desires?" Then he states, "Do you not know that I am a man of my word saying yes when I mean yes, and no, when I mean no?" But then, Paul really takes aim at these corrupt Corinthians by saying, "Is it impossible for you people in Corinth to understand that sometimes, we can't be emphatic with our words of yes and no, because there are sometimes extenuating circumstances which we can't know everything about before we get to a certain point?" Once more, it is very obvious that the corrupt Corinthians would not give Paul any wiggle room when it came to his pronouncements or plans. Truthfully, they just wanted to be ugly and rude to this great servant of God. Folks, I just don't understand, except for His patience and grace, why God didn't just zap these ruthless professing Christians in Corinth? Let's look at some more information concerning this verse 18.

"'As God is true' is equivalent to 'as the Lord liveth'. God is faithful and true. He cannot lie nor can He break His promise. He cannot deceive. So the Apostle Paul, called and ordained of God, was true, honest, and upright in all of his preaching, teaching, and speech. He could appeal to God as his witness on that occasion, to witness that he was telling the truth."³³

Now, let's look at verses 19-20 and see what God wants to show us. "Throughout the history of the church, heretics have always assaulted the nature of Christ, and the false apostles at Corinth appear to be no exception in their effort to diminish Him. Having slanderously accused Paul of being untrustworthy because of his change in travel plans, they also alleged that his teaching on the Lord Jesus was untrustworthy. Responding to their attack on his Lord, Paul emphasized Christ's nature as the God-man by using the full, rich title, the Son of God, Christ Jesus."³⁴

"Paul was not the only one who preached the truths of the Son of God to the Corinthians; Silvanus and Timothy had preached the message to them. Silvanus (Silas) was a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church. The Jerusalem Council entrusted him to carry its decision to the church at Antioch (**Acts 15:22**). He later became Paul's companion on the apostle's second missionary journey, replacing Barnabas (**Acts 15:39-40**). Timothy was Paul's beloved son in the faith (**Acts 16:1**), he was uniquely qualified

³³ The Second Epistle Of Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 56.

³⁴ MacArthur, Op. Cit., page 43.

to minister alongside the apostle. Both Silvanus and Timothy had ministered with Paul at Corinth (**Acts 18:5**). Their preaching was not untrustworthy, it was not yes and no, but was a firm, unwavering, resounding yes to God's truth in Jesus Christ."³⁵

3. Paul claims consistency because of his possessions. vs. 21-22

In verses 21-22, Paul the Apostle tells the Corinthian naysayers that all of his authority came from God Almighty Himself, because he was placed in the body of Christ and confirmed there with the work of God's choice. Paul goes further to state that not only was he placed and established there by God, but if the Corinthians were true believers, then they too had been placed in the body by God also. Therefore, Paul's authority came from the anointing by God through His Holy Spirit, Who Paul describes as the One Who had sealed him and the truly saved people in Corinth. Because Paul possessed the indwelling Holy Spirit, he was sealed until the day of redemption.

Verse 22 here reaffirms the fact that once a person is truly saved, he or she cannot lose his or her salvation because these saved people are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Personally folks, I sincerely believe that Paul said this here in this verse in order to get the people acting so foolishly in Corinth to really examine themselves to see if they were genuinely saved. Later in **Chapter 13 Verse 5**, Paul admonishes these same people to examine themselves to see if they truly were saved. Now, why do I believe he mentioned eternal security and the need to make sure that the people were saved? I believe he did this because these people in Corinth were not acting like saved people at all.

Now, the question I have is this, "Do you really possess true salvation, confirmed and affirmed by the indwelling Holy Spirit?" If you don't, then this would be a good time to stop your Bible study, repent of your sins, and ask Jesus to come into your heart and save your soul. Once you have done this, you will receive the assurance of your salvation produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

4. Paul claims consistency because of his passion. vs. 23-2:4.

I believe that any Christian who has ever studied the life of Paul the Apostle will agree with me that Paul was a very passionate man. In fact, I believe he was a type "A" person with many highs, and yes, many lows. He was somewhat aggressive in his deportment, and he was blunt and candid when he needed to be. That is how he was with these phony people in Corinth who were giving him problems about everything. Paul was so passionate, according to verse 23, that he even called upon God to be his witness about why he had not gone to Corinth as he had previously planned. The reason was that he was so upset with the people to the degree that he was afraid he might do or say something he should not have said or done. In other words, Paul wanted a period to cool down before he went to the city. Of course, the people took his absence in coming to mean that he had lied to them, and so, they got even more upset with him.

"Only after defending his integrity by affirming his loyalty, honesty, reliability, and authenticity did Paul finally explain why he changed his travel plans. And he prefaced his explanation with the solemn oath, ***'I call God as witness to my soul.'*** The apostle

³⁵ Ibid, pages 43-44.

appealed to God to verify the truth of what he was about to write and to judge him if he were lying.

It was to spare the Corinthians the rod of discipline (**13:2, 10**); **I Corinthians 4:21**) that Paul came no more to Corinth. He mercifully wanted to give them time to correct the problems he wrote of in I Corinthians. Also, some at Corinth were guilty of being led into mutiny (the mutiny that prompted Paul to write the 'severe letter' referred to in **II Corinthians 2:4**) against him by the false teachers who had come to the church, and he wanted to give them time to repent. The apostle was also hoping for a good report from Titus about the Corinthian's repenting and rejecting the false apostles in favor of him before visiting them. That report, a positive one as Paul hoped, is described in **II Corinthians 7:6**. The apostle displayed great patience and sensitivity toward the Corinthians. He knew that, as Augustine wrote, 'As severity is ready to punish the faults which it may discover, so charity is reluctant to discover the faults which it must punish.'

"³⁶

"Ever sensitive to avoid provoking unnecessary conflict, Paul quickly added the very positive disclaimer, **'Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy.'** Paul never abused his apostolic authority to gain prestige or power, or to further his own selfish aims. His goal, even in disciplining the unruly Christians, was the joy that holiness would bring them."³⁷

In **Verse 24 of Chapter 1**, Paul compliments the Corinthians as having some of their people who were truly saved and standing firm for the Lord. This genuine salvation gave the people courage to stand, even when there were so many false apostles and teachers there in the church. Yet, Paul did know that those who were standing firm were doing so because of their genuine salvation and exercising a strong faith.

As we move into Chapter 2 of this book, we find Paul once more telling the Corinthians that he was resolute in his decision not to come at that particular time because he didn't want to come for the purpose of heavy discipline. As we discovered on the last page of this commentary, Paul was just praying that the people would repent of their sins and that Titus would indeed come and tell Paul that the people had gotten right with God and that there was a spirit of revival in the church.

"Paul's sensitivity and patience with the Corinthians did not mean that he was unwilling to discipline them if they did not repent. His zeal for the purity of the church made him willing to cause them to sorrow if necessary. If he did, the only thing that would make him glad would be the repentance of those whom he made sorrowful. It was his concern for purity in the Corinthian church that prompted the letters he wrote them (**2:9; 7:8**). Paul, of course, hoped they would repent, so that when he came to Corinth, he would not have sorrow from those who ought to make him rejoice. But, unlike many in the evangelical church today, Paul did not place church unity above truth and holiness. He was willing to confront unrepentant sin, even at the cost of his own joy."³⁸

So now, as we move into **Verse 4 of Chapter 2**, we discover the real passion of Paul the Apostle as he shares about the tears he had shed over the church at Corinth. He

³⁶ Ibid, page 46.

³⁷ Ibid, page 47.

³⁸ Ibid, pages 47-48.

emphatically stated that he was blunt with them because he had a tremendous love for the Corinthians; thus, the reason for his broken heart.

"It took real love, not sentimentalism, for Paul to confront the Corinthians' sin. Writing **I Corinthians** and especially the 'severe letter' caused him much affliction and anguish of heart and many tears. Nothing is more painful for a pastor than confronting sin in his beloved congregation. But Paul's goal in writing was not so that they might be made sorrowful, but that the Corinthians might know the love, which he had especially for them. He took no pleasure in their sorrow, but desired that it would bring them to repentance **(7:10)** and joy. The apostle exemplified the truth of **Proverbs 27:6: 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend.'**"

II. PAUL DEFENDS THE GUILTY. vs. 2:5-11

In the previous verses, which we have been discussing, Paul was doing everything he possibly could to convince the Corinthians that he was truly the real deal and a genuine apostle of our Lord. The radical group in the church at Corinth was just resolute and determined to destroy the reputation of the man who had founded the church there in Corinth. We have already talked about this situation, and we have mentioned several reasons why these people may have been determined to discredit Paul, but the few things we do know, is that they obviously hated Paul, they were jealous of him, and they resented the fact that so many people in the church in Corinth did, in fact, love and respect Paul tremendously. So, Paul took much time in the previous chapter to try and defend himself from these "wolves" that were attacking him. Now, we are going to move on and see how Paul's defense of himself turns into a defense of another person who must have hated Paul as well because in **I Corinthians Chapter 5**, Paul had instructed the church how to deal with a young man who obviously was committing immorality with his step-mother. The people were lovingly overlooking the situation and defending their negligence by using their love for him as an excuse. But, when Paul saw what they were doing, he just nailed it down that this man should be ostracized and turned over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, with the purpose of reclaiming him if he would repent and get right with God. So therefore, we now pick up on this story as Paul recognizes that the man had indeed repented, but now, the church would not forgive him for what he had done and restore him to proper fellowship in the body of believers. Let's look at how Paul defends this guilty man.

A. Paul's defense reveals the results of the man's sin. v. 5

Have you ever heard anyone say, "Well yes, I have done wrong, but it has hurt nobody but me?" I have heard many people down through the years make statements like this or similar to it, but they too are so wrong. There is no way that any person on earth can sin without affecting and hurting numbers of other people. This is truly what had happened in the Corinthian church, because the entire church family was truly affected by the sin of the young man in the church who committed fornication with his step-mother. I don't know how long it took for the people's actions toward this young man to be taken in putting him away from the body of believers and then turning him over to Satan for the destruction of his body, while at the same time he remained saved. But, however long it took, after they took the disciplinarian action toward the man, he did repent of his sin, and I believe he

wanted to be accepted back in the fellowship of believers. But, just like the people didn't want to take any action toward him originally, now they don't want to forgive him and restore him into the body of church members. Let's look very close at **verse 5**, and see what God is trying to teach us.

"The clause, if any have caused sorrow assumes the condition to be true. Paul acknowledged the reality of the offense and its impact on the church.

One of the chief causes of an unforgiving heart is pride. A prideful reaction to an offense can run the gamut from wallowing in self-pity to violent retaliation, and everything in between. But there was no place in Paul's heart for self-glory, self-protection, self-pity, a wounded ego, or retaliation. Paul acknowledged that the offender who assaulted him caused sorrow, but he refused to take it personally (**2:10-12**). By refusing to make an issue out of his personal injury, the apostle intended to soften the animosity toward the repentant offender. The church would deal with him apart from any consideration of Paul."³⁹

"The members of the 'Paul party' at Corinth (**I Corinthians 1:12; 3:4**) were deeply offended when Paul was publicly insulted. They perhaps felt that the sinning individual needed more discipline and penance before being restored to fellowship. Paul, however, defused the situation by insisting that the offender had not really caused sorrow to him. He was not bitterly resentful, nor did he seek vengeance on the one who had insulted him. He dismissed the grief and embarrassment the individual had caused him and urged the church to deal with him objectively. They had no right to carry out a vendetta on the apostle's behalf.

Paul humbly rose above the offense and forgave the offender, refusing to see himself as a victim or to carry a grudge against the one who offended him. There was no place in Paul's mind for pride or bitter resentment, because how people judged him was inconsequential. As he wrote in **I Corinthians: 'To me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the One who examines me is the Lord' (I Corinthians 4:3-4).**"⁴⁰

"Though he was not concerned about the offense as it related to him, Paul was concerned about its ramifications in the Corinthian congregation. The man's offense did cause the Corinthians some sorrow, since he had caused strife in the congregation. While acknowledging to the Corinthians that the offender had caused sorrow.....to all of them, Paul added two disclaimers to minimize the impact of the offense. The sorrow was limited in extent; it had only affected the Corinthian church in some degree. Paul also did not want to say too much about the offense; he did not want to exaggerate it. Instead, he downplayed the incident and cautioned the Corinthians not to blow it up out of proportion. The man had repented; the incident was closed; and it was time to move on."

"Paul had nothing but love and forgiveness in his heart toward the person who had wronged him. He was not about to let that individual steal his joy, impair his usefulness, or become the dominating issue in the Corinthian church. Paul exemplified the forgiveness Jesus commanded. Responding to Peter's question, **'Lord, how often shall my brother sin**

³⁹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, II Corinthians, By: Dr. John F. MacArthur, Moody Press, page 53.

⁴⁰ Ibid, page 54

against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' (Matthew 18:21) Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven' (v. 22)."⁴¹

B. Paul's defense reveals the rightfulness of the man's sentence. v. 6

In **verse six**, Paul continues his defense of this guilty man by telling the Corinthians that this man's sentence was deserved and that they had done right in how they disciplined him. But now, it was time to move on from this severe punishment, which the man had received from so many of the church members.

May I tell you that having been a pastor of thousands of people during my 53 years of full-time ministry, I sincerely believe that this man had not only been disciplined, but he had probably been castigated, criticized, lambasted, gossiped about, run down, and without a doubt, rejected and ostracized by a lot of people in the church. Yes, the church did right after neglecting to do so for a long time, but now, there was no need to go on extending the pain and suffering because the man had repented. If we have truly been saved by grace, then it is time we show some grace.

C. Paul's defense reveals the requirements of the man's situation. vs. 7-11

1. The Corinthians were required to forgive the man. v. 7a
2. The Corinthians were required to comfort the man. v. 7b
3. The Corinthians were required to love the man. v. 8
4. The Corinthians were required to display their obedience before the man. v. 9
5. The Corinthians were required to exemplify Jesus to the man. v. 10
6. The Corinthians were required to defeat Satan before the man. v. 11

III. PAUL DEFENDS THE GOSPEL vs. 2:12-17

A. Paul defends the Gospel by preaching it. vs. 12-13

Up to this point in our study of **II Corinthians**, Paul had described his hurt and how God had allowed him to suffer so much. Then, he defended his apostleship before the naysayers and hypocritical “wolves” that were ripping him to pieces. Then, in point two of this outline, Paul really defended the man who had been ostracized by the church because of his sinfulness. It was time to forgive that man and move on with the work of the Lord.

Well, that is what we are going to discover in these next few verses because Paul tells the Corinthians about the main emphasis in his ministry and life. That main emphasis was the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. He rehearsed his preaching experience in Troas, where God changed his course, and led him on over into Macedonia. However, when he

⁴¹ Ibid.

arrived in Troas, Paul was deeply disappointed because Titus, his colleague and the recipient of his mentoring, was not there when he arrived. Yet, Paul seemed to have decided not to worry, but to immediately go on to Macedonia after he had been given the vision as described in **Chapter 16** of the **Book of Acts**. Paul's desire was to constantly be on the road or on the seas going to another town or city to preach the Gospel to more and more people. I will tell you once more that this has been my desire and overwhelming passion since I started out in the ministry at the age of 18.

B. Paul defends the Gospel by patterning it. vs. 14-16

As we come near the end of this **Chapter 2**, we find Paul in **Verse 14**, moving from his desire to preach the Gospel to his desire to pattern the Gospel by the way he lived his life. We might just say that in the middle of this writing project to the Corinthians, Paul just exuded praise and thanksgiving to God for the privilege of not only preaching the Gospel, but also, in trying to live out the Gospel before a lost world. May I affirm that it is totally worthless for any preacher of the Gospel to try to preach the message of the Bible, if he is not living out this message in his daily life? The indication here is that Paul felt that if his testimony was not a pattern for others to see Jesus in him, then there would be no victory or triumph in his life. He wanted the people around him to be able to just look at his life and experience the fragrance of Jesus radiating from his life and personality.

Then, as we dig into **verse 15**, we discover that Paul once more, did not only want to preach the Gospel, but he also wanted saved people, and yes, even the lost people in the world as well, to smell the fragrance of Jesus whenever they came close to him. Most assuredly, the saved people would understand the experience better than the lost, but he definitely desired that he might just provide the sweet fragrance of Jesus so that the lost people might be convicted of their sin, then repent of their sins, and of course, ultimately get saved. But if they do not get saved, the very fact that they are permitted to get the fragrance of the living Christ through a true servant of God, they will truly know the difference of the smell of a genuinely born again believer with the fragrance of Christ flowing from his or her life and the smell of death associated with still being dead in trespasses and sins.

Just to give further clarification of what Paul is saying to the Corinthian church, let me give you the Amplified Bible's translation of verses 15-16. ***"For we are the sweet fragrance of Christ (which exhales) unto God, (discernible alike) among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; To the latter it is an aroma (wafted) from death unto death—a fatal odor, the smell of doom; to the former it is an aroma from life to life—a vital fragrance, living and fresh. And who is qualified (fit and sufficient) for these things?—Who is able for such a ministry? (We?)"*** In other words, Paul is asking the question, "Who is able to live such a life as to exemplify a wonderful pattern of those who have genuine salvation?" If we do live a patterned life like Paul is referring to, then two things will happen. For the saved people, this pattern will provide an encouraging aroma or fragrance to help the believers to be even more dedicated to Christ. But for the lost people, this patterned life will make them very uncomfortable, and it will provide a true fragrance compared to the stench of death which every lost person exhales.

Now, if these complicated verses seem to confuse you, let me say it another way. When a true child of God is living under the power of the resurrected Lord, he or she will display

a life of beauty and graciousness, which will truly encourage every saved person he or she is around. On the other hand, if a lost person comes in contact with this radiant believer displaying graciousness and kindness, then, the lost person will be exposed as being a spiritually dead person, and he or she will be extremely uncomfortable around this true child of God. But, hopefully the positive outcome for this lost person will be that he or she will see such a difference in the patterned life of a true believer that he or she will desire to get saved and pass from death unto life. The bottom line is that Paul desires that he and every truly born again child of God should live with such a positive and influential testimony that lost people, coming in contact with this believer, will desire to follow the pattern that he or she has seen and come to Christ.

C. Paul defends the Gospel by preserving it. v. 17

We now come to the last verse in this chapter. This is another very hard verse to understand. So, I want to give you another quote from the Amplified Bible, although I am a solid King James Bible preacher, I still believe sometime we need to get a clearer understanding of what God is trying to say to us. Therefore, in **verse 17**, we find these words: ***"For we are not, like so many (as hucksters, tavern keepers, making a trade of) peddling God's Word—short-measuring and adulterating the divine message; but as (men) of sincerity and the purest motive, we speak (His message) in Christ, the Messiah, in the (very) sight and presence of God."***

Let's take another look at what Dr. John MacArthur says about this last verse of our text. "The many false teachers who lack true spiritual power and operate in their own inadequacy resort to peddling the Word of God. Peddling is from the verb *kapeleuo*; which is derived from the noun *kapelos*. A *kapelos* was a huckster, a con artist or street hawker who cleverly deceived unwary buyers into purchasing a cheap imitation of the real thing. Paul had in mind especially the false apostles at Corinth, who peddled a corrupt mixture of divine truth and Jewish legalism to the Corinthians."⁴²

"But, unlike those spiritual con men, Paul, in sincerity, spoke in the power of Christ in the sight of God. Since he recognized his own inadequacy and depended entirely on God's power to energize his ministry, the apostle had no need to resort to corrupting the Word to influence people. Paul 'did not—preach the Gospel—in cleverness of speech' (**I Corinthians 1:17**), but in the power of Christ. *Eilikrineia* (sincerity) comes from *eile* (sunlight) and *drino* (to judge). It pictures something held up to the light of the sun for inspection. Paul's pure life and unadulterated message would stand up to the closest scrutiny. Any man can proclaim a whittled-down false gospel, but those who preach the true Gospel can do so only by means of divine power.

Paul found his way out of the gloom of discouragement by focusing on his privileges instead of his problems. The contemplation of those privileges—of being associated with the King of kings in His Triumph, of influencing people for eternity, of pleasing God, and of having His power undergirding his ministry—healed his broken heart and restored his joy."⁴³

⁴² Ibid, page 74.

⁴³ Ibid, pages 74-75.

Conclusion

As I have already stated, Paul the Apostle was the real deal. He was as genuine as the day is long, and he was a man of God with genuine and sincere motives. He was not attempting to preach the Gospel for the purpose of gaining fame or fortune. He was not egocentric in a quest for applause. Paul was a genuine man of God, operating with the right motives. He was only interested in getting people saved, and yes, in preserving the integrity of the Gospel message. He had been under attack for some while, but he was not going to allow the religious phonies in Corinth to destroy his joy and his ministry. Paul truly defended his genuineness, but he also defended the repentant guilty man, which the church was not ready to forgive for his sin of fornication. Then, primarily, Paul wanted to preach the unvarnished Gospel message without contaminating it, without taking the sting out of it, and without changing it to accommodate the sins of the people. Paul truly served God with sincerity and with integrity.

Chapter Three
"MINISTERS OF A NEW COVENANT"
Part I
Scripture: II Corinthians 3:1-18

Introduction

This next chapter, Chapter 3, is going to be a long one. I say this because Paul is not only going on to defend his apostleship to the Corinthians, but he is going to bring to light the "New Covenant", which moves the saints of God away from just the legalism of the Old Testament Law. Instead of just trying to obey or adhere to the letter of the Law, Paul is now going to reveal to the Corinthians how they can keep the Law, but now, with a new liberty and graciousness which the Old Testament had not provided. Paul will introduce the people to the spirit of liberty which is associated with the "New Covenant", and he will instruct the people on the truth that the Law alone only condemns, but the New Covenant extends the grace of God to everyone that will believe in Christ and in His New Covenant.

In addition to talking about moving away from the letter of the Law to the spirit of the Law in the lives of believers, Paul goes on to talk about the suffering, which probably will accompany the preaching of the New Covenant. The suffering which the saints would have to endure, would still be worth it in view of the ministry that God gives to His faithful servants of God who are preaching the message of Christ and His liberty.

It is extremely important for us to see in these chapters of study that a person cannot be forgiven of his or her sin until he or she is transformed by the power of God's Holy Spirit. In other words, every new born again saint becomes a new creature in Christ, and this saved person becomes a changed person from within, not just changed by the keeping of a system of rules or laws. I would like to emphasize right here that this is why I believe that prison ministries are so important. We can call our prison departments "Departments of Correction", but the truth is that no person can ever be just corrected or disciplined by punitive means. Instead, if a person is to be changed, he or she must be changed from within, which is called in the Bible regeneration. Reformation is never enough. There has to be a changed heart and a changed mind from within, done by the indwelling person and power of the Holy Spirit. And yet, I am sad to say, that here in America where our government is trying to remove God from almost everything, our prison departments have just about prohibited the preaching of the Gospel in the prisons because of the secular and worldly mentality of so many that call themselves experts, especially those who are promoting psychological means to change people who have gotten into crime. No person can ever be changed from bad to good until he or she has had a life-changing experience with our Lord Jesus Christ. The main problem that is causing so many people to go down the road to crime is that terrible emptiness in the hearts and lives of people who have never given their hearts to Christ and found that personal fulfillment in a living relationship with Christ. So, as we take a long look at these next three and one half chapters, let's learn how a new covenant relationship with Jesus Christ can and will change the lives of people everywhere, if they will only come to Christ by faith and through repentance of sin.

I. NOTICE THE COMMENDATION OF PAUL'S MINISTRY. vs. 3:1-3

A. Please notice the problem about this commendation. v. 1

I would like to start this discussion about our text by saying, "Poor Paul." As we start out here in **Chapter 3**, the first thing we see is that obviously, Paul is still having to defend himself with the professing Christians in Corinth. The problem was that there had to be people there that would just not accept the fact that this man, Paul, was truly an apostle of Jesus Christ and the true founder of the church there in Corinth. I must say that having written a commentary on **I Corinthians**, and then, finishing the first two chapters of **II Corinthians**, I just want to shout, "Enough, please!" Paul could not convince some in the church at Corinth that he was a true man of God. But of course, because Paul was probably in the city of Philippi when he wrote **II Corinthians**, it would stand to reason that the loud and wicked phonies in the church at Corinth were having a tremendous amount of negative influence on the members of the church. So, in Paul's exasperation, he just asked the people, "What else more do you want me to do? Do you want me to write myself another letter of recommendation, or do you want the good and truthful people in the church at Corinth to write another letter of commendation?" It is not clear what the people really wanted, but I am totally convinced that the false teachers in the church at Corinth were the ones behind this request. Let's look at what Dr. Oliver B. Greene said about this many years ago.

"In the beginning of this chapter, we will see that Paul did not commend himself in order to gain favor with his converts. He testified of God's goodness to him, but he did not give such testimony as a means of self-recommendation. Some of the false teachers who had come in among the Corinthian believers had brought with them letters of recommendation from the religionists in Jerusalem.

By contrast, Paul declared that he had no need for a written recommendation since the Corinthian Christians were his testimony, his epistles. They knew the success of his labors when he came to them and preached the Gospel with zeal, in sincerity and fidelity. He could plead his converts as proof of his qualification of the office God had bestowed upon him. Therefore, he did not need to boast or brag about his ministry. God's blessings on his labors testified to his sincerity and genuineness."⁴⁴

B. Please notice the proof of this commendation. v. 2

"Others might present letters of commendation, but Paul was fully aware that the existence of the church at Corinth was due to the blessings of God upon his ministry. That fact was sufficient recommendation and authentication of the genuineness of his ministry in Corinth. Then he explained it in **I Corinthians 9:1-2**. *"Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord."*

⁴⁴ The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc. pages 100-101.

The born again believers in the church at Corinth, born again because of Paul's faithful preaching of the grace of God and his untiring, faithful labors, were a better testimonial to his character and ministry than any letter could possibly be. Paul and his helpers went to the big wicked city of Corinth, preached the Gospel, and a great number of people were converted to Christianity."⁴⁵

So my friends, the only verification that Paul needed with the Corinthian church was the large number of people who genuinely got saved during his eighteen months of working there for Christ in establishing the church. The genuine converts were enough to give credibility to his ministry. And truthfully, the truest evidence that any one of us could ever have for the genuineness of our ministries lies within the number of converts that we have won to Christ. Oh yes, I have seen thousands come to Christ during my 53 years of ministry, but I still feel so embarrassed that I haven't won more, when we have access to so many means and methods of sharing the Gospel message.

C. Please notice the pen of this commendation v. 3

To be somewhat repetitious, let me tell you that in verse 3, Paul once more tells the Corinthians that the greatest epistle that could have ever been written to confirm Paul's apostleship was the genuinely saved people who had gotten saved through his ministry there in Corinth. He was saying that the best testimony of God's work in the city of Corinth could not be writings on a parchment, stones, or paper, but the best testimony was the change that people experienced by the Holy Spirit when He came to live within each person's heart at the moment of salvation. I sincerely believe that Paul could have been blunter and said, "You people don't need any more affirmation of my work in your midst than what you have already received when you got genuinely saved. So, what is all this confusion about?" Truthfully, Paul just "socked it to them" because I believe his patience had worn out. I must tell you that he was much more patient and tolerant of these Corinthian doubters than I would have ever been!

II. PLEASE NOTICE THE CONFIDENCE OF PAUL'S MINISTRY. vs. 3:4-5

A. This confidence included a confession of the Savior's worthiness. vs. 4; 5b

"Such trust have we through Christ to Godward." Paul's face was continually set toward God the Father through Christ the Son. Therefore, he knew that his ministry, tried by the laws of God's divine court, would stand approved and would be rewarded in the judgment of God.

Christians today must always keep the eye of the soul fixed unwaveringly on God. If we look at circumstances or conditions that surround us, we, like Peter, will begin to falter and fail (**Matthew 14:25-31**). But, if we keep our eyes on Him, we will be victorious. God is the source of confidence and strength, and it is through Jesus Christ alone that we possess the right to eternal life, life abundant, while we travel this pilgrim journey toward our heavenly home."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid, page 104.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pages 109-110.

In the last phrase of verse 5, Paul makes a tremendous statement when he says, **"...but our sufficiency is of God."** In this statement, Paul is once more reiterating what he said back in **Chapter 1**, when he told these same believers that God allows us to go through trials to reveal to us our own insufficiency, so that we will then depend upon God's sufficiency. My, how true this is! Yes, when we are in the midst of suffering and unjust criticism, it is difficult to understand why God is allowing us to go through these horrible circumstances. It is usually after we come out of this valley that He shows us our insufficiency and our need to depend upon His sufficiency. The bottom line to all of this is, God gets all the glory when we come through the valley of suffering and walk out on the other side victorious.

B. This confidence included a confession of the servant's weakness. v. 5a

We now seem to have the first part of verse 5 out of order with verse four and the latter part of this verse. But, it is not out of order at all. We can never, and probably will never, completely depend upon the Lord for our strength and sufficiency until we see our own weaknesses and insufficiencies. I am sorry to say that because of our pride and ego, we will not even admit our insufficiency until God allows us to go through some terrible trials. I so wish that this wasn't necessary, but I believe it is. I have had to deal with it in my own life. As long as we think we can handle everything and every problem in our lives by our own ingenuity and strength, we will never claim or appropriate the power and presence of God during our times of battle. Therefore, we need to concentrate on being willing to confess our own weaknesses, if we are to claim the strength and wisdom of God to get us through these dark valleys.

III. PLEASE NOTICE THE COVENANT OF PAUL'S MINISTRY. vs. 3:6-18

I have stated before in many of my writings that I am truly a student on the ministry of Paul the Apostle. I would not claim to be a scholar, but I would embrace the conclusion of many scholars that Paul was a very learned man when it came to the Law of Moses, which God gave to him on Mt. Sinai. Paul knew the Law extremely well, and most people believe he probably had been a Pharisee. Thus, Paul knew the legalism of the Law, but as I stated in the Introduction to this chapter, there is the letter of the Law, and then, there is the spirit of the Law. Therefore, in verse six, Paul states to the Corinthians that it was by the will and power of God that he had been made an able minister of the Gospel. But, Paul moves forward and tells the Corinthians that at that time a New Testament, or a New Covenant, had come from God in order to fulfill the Law that had been given to Moses on the Mount. The original Law was given to bring us to a cognizance of our sin, whereas, with the New Testament, we discover how to have our sins completely forgiven in and through the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus mentioned this in **Matthew 5:17**, when He said, **"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."** So, Jesus did, in fact, come to fulfill the law. When Jesus died on the cross, the full atonement for our sins was completed. And now, we are privileged to be recipients of the New Covenant between God and man. The Law is used to reveal and convict us of our sins, whereas, the New Covenant, has been given to show us the spirit of love and grace extended to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

A. This New Covenant was superior in its form. v. 6

In the last phrase of this verse, we find the difference between the Old Covenant of Law and the New Covenant of grace. The Old Law brings us knowledge of our sin and the death it will bring, whereas the New Testament brings us grace and forgiveness which results in eternal life. I don't know about you folks, but I am thrilled to know that there is liberty and life in our New Testament experience with Christ Jesus. I am extremely glad that we are under the grace of the New Covenant. Yes, we can say, "The New Testament is superior in form to the Old Covenant!"

B. This New Covenant was superior in its features. vs. 7-11

Once again, because of the difficulty of these next verses in the King James Bible, I want to give you the Amplified Translation for verses 7-11. Now, there might be some of you who are offended by another translation, but if you have ever used another man's commentary in your preaching preparation, then, you too have already tried to clarify and make a passage easier to understand. So, this is what I am trying to do here. Let's look at these verses in the Amplified Bible.

"Now if (the ministration of the Law,) the dispensation of death engraved in letters on stone, was inaugurated with such glory and splendor that the Israelites were not able to look steadily at the face of Moses because of its brilliance, (a glory) that was to fade and pass away, Why should not the dispensation of the Spirit (that is, this spiritual ministry whose task it is to cause men to obtain and be governed by the Holy Spirit) be attended with much greater and more splendid glory? For if the service that condemns, (the ministration of doom,) had glory, how infinitely more abounding in splendor and glory must be the service that makes righteous—the ministry that produces and fosters righteous living and right standing with God!

Indeed, in view of this fact, what once had splendor (the glory of the Law in the face of Moses) has come to have no splendor at all, because of the overwhelming glory that exceeds and excels it, (the glory of the Gospel in the face of Jesus Christ).

For if that which was but passing and fading away came with splendor, how much more must that abide in glory and splendor which remains and is permanent!" (II Corinthians 3:7-11)

"The new covenant is also superior to the old because it has better promises, the most significant of which is the promise of complete forgiveness and permanent cleansing from all sin. Jeremiah records God's new covenant promise, ***'I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'*** (Jeremiah 31:34) The old covenant could not provide cleansing from sin, ***'for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins'.*** (Hebrews 10:4) Forgiveness of sin comes only through the blood of Christ. The writer of Hebrews declares, ***'we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...He (Christ), having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God'*** (Hebrews 10:10,12)."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, By: John F. Macarthur, Moody Press, page 97.

"Hebrews 8:8-12 describes the seven characteristics of the new covenant.

First, the new covenant comes from God. In **Hebrews 8:8**, God declares, ***'I will effect a new covenant.'*** Its terms are based on His sovereign plan and purpose.

Second, the new covenant is different from the old covenant. It is not an upgrade, but something entirely new. The Greek word translated 'new' in **Hebrews 8:8** is *kainos*, which means new in the sense of different, not new in the sense of subsequence in time.

Third, the new covenant is made with ***'the house of Israel and with the house of Judah'*** (**Hebrews 8:8**), but that does not mean, of course, that Gentiles are excluded from it, because 'it is those who are of faith who are the sons of Abraham... And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.' (**Galatians 3:7, 29**) Gentiles enter into the blessings of the new covenant through faith in Jesus Christ. The Law given to Moses has always been applied to Gentiles, even those who never heard Moses, and violation of it will bring eternal judgment. So also, new covenant forgiveness has always been offered to Gentiles who have sought grace and forgiveness of God.

Fourth, the new covenant is gracious, not legalistic. In **Hebrews 8:9**, God said the new covenant is ***'not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them.'*** Israel's disobedience did not abrogate the old covenant, but caused the nation to forfeit its promised blessings. Though under the new covenant, God, as a loving Father, chastens His disobedient children (**Hebrews 12:5-11**), they will never forfeit its blessings of forgiveness (**Jeremiah 31:34**).

Fifth, the new covenant is internal, unlike the old covenant, which was written on tablets of stone (**II Corinthians 3:7; Exodus. 31:18**). **Hebrews 8:10** records God's promise under the new covenant to 'put (His) laws into (His people's) minds, and (to) write them on their hearts.' "⁴⁸

Sixth, the new covenant is personal. It will finally be fulfilled to Israel (**Romans 9:26-27**), but only when the Jews repent and believe the Gospel. Salvation comes only to individuals. The Jews, one day in the future, on new covenant terms through faith in Jesus Christ (**Zechariah 12:10**), ***'all will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest'*** (**Hebrews 8:11**).

Seventh, the new covenant brings complete forgiveness. As noted above, that is something the old covenant could not provide (**Hebrews 10:4**). It is the blood of Jesus Christ that provides the forgiveness of sin promised under the new covenant (**Matthew 26:28**).

In addition to the list given by the author of Hebrews, (whom I dogmatically believe was Paul the Apostle), Paul in this passage reveals eight distinctive qualities of the new covenant: It gives life, produces righteousness, is permanent, brings hope, is clear, is Christ centered, is energized by the Spirit, and is transforming."⁴⁹

So now, I have given you the superiority of the new covenant's features. These should remind us over and over again that the New Covenant we have in Christ is far superior to the one given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. But, because we have this New Covenant in and through Jesus Christ, we dare not try to do away with the Old Covenant, which is still working wonderfully well to bring mankind to a knowledge of his sin.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pages 97-98.

⁴⁹ Ibid, page 98

C. This New Covenant is superior in its fruit. vs. 12-18

1. This fruit includes courage. vs. 12-13

In these two verses, I love what Paul says about the fruit of courage, which is produced by the New Covenant. Paul stated that because we have such a tremendous hope in the New Covenant, this hope provides strength to defend the New Covenant before others with "plainness of speech", (the word plainness means boldness), and to offer the same hope to all others who will believe and accept the Lord Jesus Christ and the finished product of Calvary and the blessed resurrection. In other words, because it is God alone Who provides this fruit of courage, we should never be intimidated by those who are still trying to live their lives only by the Old Covenant of the Law. What I am talking about here is living by legalistic rules and regulations, but never actually establishing a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

2. This fruit includes comprehension. vs. 14-16

Paul the Apostle really gets candid with the Corinthians in verses 14-16, when he refers back to the veil that the Israelites discovered on the face of Moses when he came down from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments on stone. He had to wear the veil because he had experienced the glory of Almighty God on the Mount. Paul goes further to tell these professing believers that those who still just depend upon the Old Covenant are, in truth, still blinded to the truth of how we get saved and go to heaven. Once more, the Old Covenant of the Law can enlighten us to our sins, but it could not back there in Moses' day. It still cannot bring us to experience the radiance of Christ, which the New Covenant brings to pass. It is only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that the veil that separates us from the real glory of God can, in fact, be removed from our eyes. Truthfully, I believe that those who still believe that keeping the Old Covenant of Law is the only means of salvation are truthfully willfully blind. This would include the blinded Jews of today as well as those Gentiles who are deceived into believing that we can only go to heaven through our good works.

In verse 15, Paul tells the Corinthians that if there are those who still practice Old Covenant behavior, believing that this will take them to heaven, then, not only are their minds blinded, but also, they have blinded hearts. But please notice in verse 16 that the requirement for moving from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant is completely dependent upon a person's having his or her heart changed by Jesus Christ. The word "it" in this verse actually is the word "heart", and it reveals the necessity of a person having a transformed heart or soul, in order for that person to come out from under the darkness of the veil and begin to live with the comprehension and light of Jesus Christ. I will say that it is truly impossible for a person to pass from this darkness unless he or she gets saved through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. The point is, that when a person truly gets saved, the Holy Spirit then illuminates the heart and the mind of any individual that comes to Jesus. This is why that in **I Corinthians 2:14**, the Bible says, ***"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*** So, the second

wonderful fruit produced by the superiority of the New Covenant is a brand new experience of enlightenment, which comes with the salvation experience. It is only through this experience that the blinders can be removed to where the individual can truly see the face of Jesus experientially.

3. This fruit includes celebration. v. 17

I love verse 17. This verse tells us that another fruit of the New Covenant is that the saved individual can now experience the liberty of the Holy Spirit Who emancipates the person from the bondage of sin, and yes, from the condemnation of the Old Testament Law as well. So, this verse tells us that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there will always be liberty. But on the opposite side, where the Spirit of the Lord is not, there will be no liberty. I will tell you that I have experienced this liberty so many times in my preaching, teaching, and even in my witnessing. But, if the Holy Spirit, Who lives within us, doesn't show up, there will be no liberty for anything, especially for worship.

I will illustrate this by telling you that this very morning I went to record a radio broadcast in our radio room, and the last thing I prayed for before attempting to record the broadcasts was the liberty and power of the Holy Spirit. I am very happy to tell you that God did in fact show up with much liberty and power as I recorded the radio program for our Gateway International Radio Broadcast.

Therefore, if we rely on the Old Covenant of the Law, there will be no liberty, and there will be no reason to celebrate this freedom or liberty, because the Law condemns us and keeps us in bondage. But, the New Covenant brings about the freedom and liberty of the Holy Spirit in our lives, if we are truly saved.

4. This fruit includes cultivation. v. 18

To make this verse a little easier to understand, let me give you the Amplified Bible translation once more. ***"And all of us, as with unveiled face, (because we) continued to behold (in the Word of God) as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree to the glory of another; (for this comes) from the Lord Who is the Spirit."*** (II Corinthians 3:18) This verse is telling us that if we are truly changed by the Holy Spirit through the New Covenant of God, we will continue to grow with further enlightenment, and we will continue to experience the glory of God's radiance in our lives because we continue to get more truth from God's Word. In other words, this is talking about the ongoing progressive sanctification process, which God uses in the life of the child of God to really grow him or her in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the potential for this growth and increased enlightenment should encourage each of us to keep pushing on for Jesus, because the longer we serve Him, the greater the sanctification process and greater is the privilege to celebrate our growth and development.

Conclusion

We now come to the end of **Chapter 3**. This has been a longer than usual chapter, but it has covered so much about Paul's attempt to show the professing Corinthian believers the

difference between the Old Covenant, which was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai as the Ten Commandments, and the New Covenant which was given to every person on the earth through the sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul just really tried so hard to show the Corinthians that there is truly a huge difference between the Law of the Old Covenant and the grace of the New Covenant.

Also, in this **Chapter 3**, Paul once more had to defend his apostleship from the false apostles who were stirring up so much trouble in the Corinthian church. Paul just went on record telling the Corinthians that he had been chosen by God as the Apostle who would bring them the Gospel of the New Covenant, and their belief and salvation experiences were proof enough that he was indeed a real apostle of our wonderful Lord.

Paul wraps up the chapter by reminding the people that the Old Covenant Law was given to reveal the sin of every person in the world, and to bring these people under deep conviction so that they can be saved. However, there was no permanent salvation given under the Law of Moses. But, with the proclamation of the New Covenant, a brand new liberty comes to the heart of every person who will genuinely get saved by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and through personal repentance from sin. So, my friends, the Law brought bondage, but the New Covenant of Grace brings freedom and liberty to serve the Lord without strict legalism.

Now, in our next chapter, Chapter 4, we will take a more in-depth look at the character and circumstances of Paul's ministry which give evidence that he was truly the apostle of God. We will also see that he was the right man for the furtherance of Gospel starting with the Jews and then going on to the Gentiles. Let's look at the next chapter and see if we have some of these character traits found in Paul's life which brought him through so much suffering.

Chapter Four

"MINISTERS OF A NEW COVENANT"

Part II

Scripture: II Corinthians 4:1-18

Introduction

In our last chapter, we covered the verses pertaining to Paul's discussion of the difference between the Old Covenant of Law and the New Covenant of Grace. Paul carefully describes the difference between these two important topics in his discussion with the Corinthians. He is very explicit about the Law's not being able to save or forgive sin, but it can only reveal sin through conviction in one's life. In the book of Galatians, he called the Law God's schoolmaster to reveal the truth of one's sinfulness, and to bring him or her to a cognizance of his or her sin. This was the purpose of the Law originally, and it is still the purpose for us today.

Paul spent much time showing the superiority of the New Covenant and its purpose in bringing forgiveness of sin to everyone who will come to Christ. In other words, we can only be saved by grace through faith, and not by works of our own righteousness in trying to obey the Law. So, Paul was very precise in showing how the New Covenant is far better than the Old Covenant.

In the last chapter, we also saw Paul continuing to defend his apostleship because false teachers in Corinth were still causing problems, doubting and denying the apostleship of Paul. Yet, Paul reaffirms the call of God to bring him salvation, and also, the call of God to the ministry of sharing the Gospel as a servant of Christ. So now, in this chapter we are going to dig a little deeper and find some wonderful character traits of Paul and some of the terrible circumstances, which he had to go through because of his preaching of the Gospel. Hopefully, this chapter may provide some encouragement to a lot of readers who also may have been going through so much difficulty that you have just about given up hope for a better day. Let's now take a look at Paul's discussion with the corrupted Corinthians and see if we can find some good in the mess that Paul had to go through!

I. PLEASE NOTICE THE CHARACTER OF PAUL'S MINISTRY. vs. 4:1-7

Now, in these next verses in this study, we are going to discover some valuable information about the character principles of Paul's ministry. We are moving from a discussion of the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant to the revelation of how Paul lived and carried out his ministry, even when he was going through tremendous suffering. These next seven verses are not only going to show us how Paul conducted his ministry, but also how we too, as servants and ministers of God, should carry out our daily lives and ministries. Please pay close attention at the following truth, which God wants to give us from this passage.

A. Paul's ministry was characterized by persistency. v. 1

"Therefore, points back to Paul's discussion of the new covenant in **3:6-18**. Strength to endure trials comes from the unveiled look into the face of Christ, made possible under the new covenant. That look was also the source of strength for Paul's new covenant ministry. The apostle used the plural 'we' as a humbler way of referring to himself. By so doing, he softened the personal nature of his defense of himself and his ministry. The phrase 'we have this ministry' emphasizes Paul's humble acknowledgement that God had graciously granted him the privilege of being a new covenant minister. Paul's call to the ministry was based solely on God's mercy. God's mercy is His withholding of the judgment that sinners deserve— temporarily in the case of the unsaved to give opportunity for repentance and faith, and permanently in the case of the redeemed. In this context God's mercy means that instead of condemning Paul because he was a 'blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor' (**I Timothy 1:13**), God showed him mercy by 'putting him into service' (**v. 12**).

As he kept his eyes on Jesus, Paul was strengthened and did not lose heart. *Engkakeo* (lose heart) means to give into fear, lose courage, or to behave like a coward. Despite his suffering and the savage attacks on him by the false apostles, Paul had not surrendered. His courage came from confident knowledge of the God of glory, which he had perceived in the face of Jesus Christ. God's sovereign mercy saved him, made him a minister, and strengthened him to do the work of the ministry."⁵⁰

To briefly summarize what Paul is saying in verse one, he was just stating that he did not choose the ministry he was in, but instead God chose him initially by supernaturally saving him on the road to Damascus, and by so doing, He placed the New Covenant within his heart to tell the world about his discovery. And then, because of Paul's positive response to the Gospel message, the Lord went further and chose him to be used in the ministry. Both of these gifts from God, Paul said, were because of God's mercy. Because of this marvelous gift of mercy, Paul said that there was just no way that he could "faint" or give up. He had to go on for Jesus persistently because of God's persistent love and mercy to him.

B. Paul's ministry was characterized by purity. vs. 2-4

Because of God's mercy toward Paul in bringing him salvation and because of His merciful choice in choosing him for His ministry, the apostle made a big decision. That decision was to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, craftiness, and handling the Word of God deceitfully. Paul wanted his life to back up everything he preached with purity and integrity. He would not entertain any dishonesty or deception in his ministry. Paul wanted to have a spotless testimony so that he could manifest his life and ministry to all men with a clear conscience. He just didn't want to leave any opening for people to be able to criticize him or his ministry with any credibility.

Obviously, there were some skeptics in Corinth who were saying that some people just couldn't understand what Paul was talking about when he preached the truth of the Gospel. Paul responded by clarifying in verse 4, the reason they could not understand. He just told them that if they couldn't understand the truth he proclaimed, because it seemed to be hidden, then, the reason was that these professing Christians were, in fact, lost without Christ. Thus, they were still in darkness and had never been given the Holy Spirit's

⁵⁰ Ibid, page 125.

illumination, which only comes to every believer at the moment of salvation. So, the truth was now coming out. Many of the skeptics and naysayers in Corinth were truthfully unsaved and religious hypocrites, which we talked about earlier in this commentary. They were being blinded by the god of this world because they were yet unsaved. These unsaved phonies, in their religious hypocrisy, just could not see the glory of Christ because they had never had their spiritual eyes opened by the incoming of the radiant Holy Spirit. Paul was not only pure in body, in behavior, and in his handling of God's Word, but he also was pure in motive and ministry. There was no ulterior motive or purpose in anything that Paul did. He just did it because of his love for Jesus.

C. Paul's ministry was characterized by preeminence. vs. 5-6

Now, in the next two verses, 5-6, God really reveals to us the true purpose of Paul's ministry. That purpose was to make Jesus Christ preeminent in his life and ministry, wherever he went or whatever he did in service to our Lord. It wasn't about Paul, but it was about magnifying and glorifying Christ in everything he did. Paul stated in verse five that he wanted to preach nothing but the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul was not going to parade the flesh by drawing attention to himself, but his primary focus was on making Christ preeminent in his own life, and yes, in the lives of others as well. This great man of God had the heart of a true servant, and he didn't need the accolades and applause from others. He just wanted to get the Gospel message to scores of other people in gratitude for what Jesus had done in his own life.

Folks, there is a great message here for us in this 21st Century. That message is that we should do nothing in our Christian lives that will draw attention to ourselves, but rather, our goal should be to share the good news of Jesus Christ in such a way that others will get saved and that the way we do it should only bring glory to Jesus.

Please bear in mind that most of what we have talked about in Chapter Three and in this section of Chapter Four has been the difference between the Old Covenant of the Law and the New Covenant which was brought to us through the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 6, Paul tells the Corinthians that the God Who had created everything from nothing is the same One that brought light out of darkness, and He is the same One that brought light to his very own sin-darkened heart. In doing this for Paul, Christ was able to reveal His glory and radiance to Paul from within his own heart and soul. Whereas, under the Old Covenant, the people could not see the face of God and had to wear a veil. Once a person truly gets saved, the light of God reveals the face of Christ to every believer in a personal and spiritual way. This would not have been possible for sinful mankind if Jesus had not died on the cross for our sin. But, He did die to remove our sin, and thus we have been given the privilege of intimacy with the preeminent Christ down here on the earth as long as we shall live.

"The immeasurable privilege of proclaiming the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ might lead some to become proud and boastful. In fact, one of the slanderous accusations the false apostles made against Paul was that he preached with selfish motives. He was in the ministry, they claimed, for his own self-exaltation, self-promotion, self-aggrandizement, power, prestige, and prominence. Nothing could have been further from the truth. By declaring, we do not preach ourselves, Paul distinguished himself from the false apostles, who did, in fact, preach themselves. Later in this epistle he wrote, ***For we are not bold to***

class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves'—the false apostles, who foolishly' measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves,' demonstrating that 'they were without understanding' (10:12). Thus, Paul's disclaimer was both a denial of the false apostles' charge and an indictment of them."⁵¹

D. Paul's ministry was characterized by power. v. 7

As we look at verse 7, we see something implied in this verse that is not really revealed explicitly. That something is that it seems that Paul might be thinking about dying for the cause of Christ. I say this because of what comes next in this **Chapter Four of II Corinthians**. As we will see when we move a little further in this study, Paul truly had suffered for the cause of Christ. He really didn't know just when he might die and be taken on to heaven. Therefore, in verse 7, he stated that in this house of clay, our bodies made from the dust of the earth, we have the wonderful privilege of experiencing the treasure of having a personal relationship with Christ, and that the Holy Spirit who dwells within these vessels of clay, is in every believer to manifest His mighty power and glory. Therefore, if we accomplish anything for Jesus while down here on earth, our ministry has to be done through the indwelling Holy Spirit who is placed within every believer in order to help us know for sure that we are saved, and also, to empower us to carry out our ministries as servants of God. Paul states that there is no power in and of himself while living in this tabernacle. All the effective service that we will ever demonstrate has to be endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, or our efforts will be in vain.

II. PLEASE NOTICE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF PAUL'S MINISTRY. vs. 4:8-18

A. The circumstances of Paul's ministry included many hurts. vs. 8-12

I have been a student and teacher of Christian history for many years. I have read the stories of so many people's suffering for the cause of Christ, and then, dying as martyrs for the King's sake. But truthfully, I believe Paul probably went through more repetitious suffering for Jesus than any other devoted servant of God who ever lived, and then he was killed by Nero, in Rome, during his second imprisonment there. Therefore, for us to really learn how to deal with a lot of humiliating suffering for the cause of Christ, we certainly need to take a good look at Paul's great suffering and how he handled it. I know for sure that I have been encouraged many times by Paul's "stick-ability" and his spiritual fortitude. I hope you will be encouraged also during our study of the rest of this great book of **II Corinthians**. Let's look carefully at the hurtful circumstances found in Paul's ministry as he described it for the Corinthians and for us today.

1. Paul was imprisoned by pressure. v. 8a

To say that Paul the Apostle was constantly under pressure is almost an understatement. Truly he suffered constantly as a man of God for his faith, but he did not

⁵¹ Ibid, page 133.

give in or give up very easily. The word "troubled" in the text has the idea of being pressed like squeezing grapes until the juice runs out. What Paul was saying in this verse is that he was so pressured or troubled on every side until it just felt like the walls were coming in on him. In other words, he was in a prison of pressure and constant attacks. If anyone had a reason to quit, Paul did. But he did not become distressed. The word distressed here actually means compression until there seemed to be no way out. Yet, Paul stated that he didn't look at this pressure in such a way as to seem he wanted to give up. This kind of pressure must have been terrible, but yet, Paul did not give in to feeling sorry for himself. He just kept looking to the future to see what God might bring out of this pressure.

2. Paul was imprisoned by perplexity. v. 8b

In addition to being imprisoned by pressure, according to the second part of verse 8, Paul was imprisoned by perplexity. The word "perplexed" here means to be in a state of confusion about what was going on. It would be like any child of God having to go through a horrific sickness or other serious problem, but there just never seemed to be an answer for why? Why does God allow His children to go through so much suffering and heartache? The truth is, that while Paul was going through this terrible time of confusion and uncertainty, he never gave up or became completely despaired of life. The word "despaired" in the Greek actually means to remain in a state of uncertainty, indecisiveness, and without hope. If any child of God ever had reason to give up, and be completely despaired of life, Paul certainly did. But he did not because he just kept believing that there was a reason to hope and not give up totally. His hope was in the promises of Christ to never leave His children and in the fact that God had never forsaken any of His children. In fact, this is hard to accept, but God has never broken a promise to one of His children, even if the situation seems to be out of God's omnipresence and omniscience.

I must say right here that I am not sure that I could ever give the strong testimony that Paul gave under the circumstances of what he had to go through. Oh yes, my wife and I have been through some horrible suffering in our years of serving Christ, but we have surely felt like quitting many times; especially when we have been so hurt by those we have tried to help so much. It has often been that the people we thought we could count on with the greatest confidence have often turned out to do us the greatest harm and the greatest hurt. I might just say that when the harm and hurt comes from those whom we felt strongly were our closest friends, the severity of the pain is much greater. Yes, Paul was imprisoned by perplexity and confusion, which he could not explain at the moment, but he just kept trusting in God Who had never failed him. I just hope and pray that I can always have the same hopeful attitude that Paul had.

3. Paul was intimidated by persecution. v. 9a

When I think of the word persecution, I can't help but think about the harassment and castigation coming from those who are not really on the inside with us. Then of course, this is what Paul constantly faced from the false apostles in Corinth. They were not only constantly doubting his integrity and credibility as a true apostle of Jesus Christ, but it

was like they were constantly stalking him in order to bring more skepticism and doubt about this true man of God. It had to be terribly painful for Paul, but yes, it is still painful for any genuine servant of God who might be going through someone's trailing them in order to make even stronger accusations, one right after the other.

I am no Paul the Apostle by any means, but I can truly attest the strong harassment and crushing attacks of those who wanted to do me or my family much harm. O yes, I know this might sound somewhat accusatory, but it is the truth of how my wife and I have been persecuted by quite a few professing Christians down through our 54 plus years in the ministry. I can honestly say that I don't hate these people, but I must say once more, that it is truly hard to endure this kind of persecution by those who profess to know the same Christ that we know. I hate persecution, but I know that my Lord went through terrible persecution before they hung Him on the old rugged cross for our sins. He alone can really understand what His followers go through! It is very comforting to know that He does understand, and He wants to give us consolation and comfort as we are beaten down and bruised by the persecution we have to endure here on earth.

4. Paul was immobilized by pounding. v. 9b

The word "forsaken" here in this verse means to be totally abandoned and left alone. The words "cast down" mean to utterly knock down and to be left prostrate and ashamed before others. The word "destroyed" means to be totally obliterated or annihilated. Paul was telling the Corinthians that through persecution, he had been knocked down and humiliated, but he was not dead, and he was not destroyed by these false apostles who were his persecutors. The amazing thing that stands out to me in these verses is the optimistic attitude Paul kept, in spite of the fact that he had been so hurt and abused. The only place where he could have gotten this was through his faith and trust in the God of heaven and earth.

5. Paul was infiltrated by pain. vs. 10-12

"In verse 10, Paul summarizes and interprets the paradoxes in verses 8 and 9. They amounted to carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in his body. The word always indicates the unrelieved nature of Paul's suffering, as he wrote in **I Corinthians 15:31, 'I die daily' (Romans 8:36)**. Suffering was a way of life for him.

The truth that Paul was continually carrying about in his body the dying of Jesus was a powerful rebuttal to the allegations of the false apostles. They argued that Paul suffered because God was chastening him for his secret life of sin. But in reality, Paul suffered at the hands of evil men because of his identification with Jesus Christ. Those who hate the Lord persecute His people. Therefore, Paul's trials, far from being a sign of God's displeasure, were actually a badge of honor (**II Corinthians 1:5**)."⁵²

So, we can conclude that Paul had a terrible sickness that God had not healed, or we can conclude that every moment of every day Paul's life was in jeopardy because of those who hated him because of the Gospel message he preached. I am inclined to believe it

⁵² Ibid, page 144.

was probably both of these. We do know that Paul did have a thorn in the flesh, which he mentions in Chapter 12 of this book. We don't know for sure what that thorn in the flesh was, but we do know that he asked God to remove it. God didn't remove it, but He did give Paul the grace to deal with it. I am not sure what this thorn was, but I am led to believe it may have been a terrific problem with his eyesight.

Therefore, my friends, if Paul did have a terrible physical problem, we know he also was constantly in pain from the continual attacks and accusations from people that hated him because of his ministry for Christ. Paul suffered tremendous pain, but he saw this pain as a means to demonstrate the power of the resurrected Lord in dealing with the suffering. Let me give you some comments from Oliver B. Greene once more.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus...." Paul said, ***'I die daily.'*** (I Corinthians 15:31). Born again believers are daily delivered over to death. When we surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ, we say by that surrender, 'I am dying to the world and coming alive in Jesus, to walk in His steps, to share the cross with Him, to lose my life in His service.' In this manner the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is made manifest in our daily lives and we become epistles read of men. Humanity's masses will not read the Bible, but they will read your life and mine, and by what they see in our daily life and conduct, they will judge the Lord Jesus Christ."⁵³

"Also, we must consider that the same spirit of hostility toward righteousness, the spirit that dwelt in the hearts of the enemies of Jesus and demanded His death, is still with us today. That spirit of hostility is working overtime in the world, working against the true servants of God, against those who lift up the shed blood and saving grace of Jesus, minus man-made doctrines and traditions of men. The suffering of the apostles were therefore for Christ's sake, and the persecutions through which they passed day by day were a kind of slaying Christ anew."⁵⁴

Let me ask you to pay close attention to the following words from Ray Stedman's Commentary on **II Corinthians**. Please notice the practical application of the truth of these past few verses.

"Paul wants us to know that we are not shielded from the hard realities and suffering of life. I wish we were, but we are not. There are teachers and preachers who spread a false and unrealistic notion that if you are walking with the Lord or if you pray with enough faith, then God will keep you from all harm. If you are right with God, these preachers say, you won't even get sick. These dangerous doctrines are contradicted at every point by Scripture.

Faithful, obedient Christians sometimes get cancer. They sometimes suffer bankruptcy. Godly believers sometimes go through divorce or see their children rebel against them. They have car crashes. Some are afflicted with Alzheimer, Parkinson's, heart disease, ALS, or a stroke. No matter how loving, faithful, and obedient they are, Christians go through suffering. We are jars of human clay—but the power and light of God is released when these jars of human clay are broken."⁵⁵

⁵³ The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc. page 173.

⁵⁴ Ibid, page 174.

⁵⁵ Letters To a Troubled Church, II Corinthians, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 310.

B. The circumstances of Paul's ministry included much hope. vs. 13-18

It is very obvious when one reads these words of Paul the Apostle describing his suffering that he had a tremendous hope that kept him going, even when he felt as if he had reached his wits end. In verses 13-18, we are going to take a close look at the reasons for Paul's confident hope. Hopefully, we will be encouraged to just keep pushing on for the upcoming finish line, even when we are going through so much undeserved suffering.

1. Paul's hope was the result of his faith in a coming resurrection. vs. 13-14

I believe that if you the reader know anything about Paul's writings, you know that in **I Corinthians 15**, Paul wrote a tremendous amount about the coming resurrection of the church, the rapture, and of course, the kind of bodies that we will have. Because I just finished my commentary on **I Corinthians**, I know that one of the major thoughts that kept Paul pushing on in his ministry was indeed the resurrection of the dead in Christ, (Remember he wrote about this in **I Thessalonians 4.**), which of course will take place just before the church is raptured up into the air. In a daily life that was bombarded by accusations, trials, difficulties, and many other painful happenings, it was truly the thought that one day all of these painful things will be over when we get those brand new glorified bodies which will be just like the resurrected body of Jesus.

In these verses, 13-14, Paul tells the Corinthians that he had faith in the coming resurrection bodies, which he and the truly saved Corinthians would one day receive. Because of the hope that he had in the coming resurrection bodies for all true saints, he could go on pushing forward for Jesus, in spite of so much suffering.

Of course, Paul reaffirmed his belief in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and he contributed this to the action of God the Father. Therefore, just as God the Father resurrected Christ from the tomb in Jerusalem, He will one day provide those brand new resurrection bodies for every saint—those who die before the rapture, and yes, those who shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

2. Paul's hope was the result of his faith in a ceaseless restoration. v. 15

Let me give you a practical interpretation and application of verse 15. This is a hard verse, but one with much meaning.

"Paul quotes **Psalms 116:10**, where the Psalmist declares by faith that his trials and pressures will be used to bless the lives of others: ***'I believed; therefore I said, 'I am great afflicted.'*** The Psalmist didn't know how God would use his affliction, but he believed God and he knew it would come to pass. In the same way, Paul says, 'I believe with the same faith that was expressed by the Psalmist. I believe that God, who raised Jesus from the dead, will raise me—and He'll raise you in His presence. As a result, you will benefit—and the message of God's grace will go out to more and more people all around you. And the result will be that the praise and thanksgiving of many people will overflow—and God will be glorified even through our present sufferings.'⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Ibid, pages 311-312.

" 'All of this is for your benefit,' Paul writes, 'so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.' The power of God is unleashed when the people of God go through sorrow and sufferings while giving thanks and glory to Him. It's an amazing blessing to meet a believer who demonstrates joy, peace, and thanksgiving in the midst of the trials."⁵⁷

This ceaseless restoration is referring to the way God showers His people with abundant grace when they are going through trials and suffering. Because of this abundant grace, the person or persons enduring the suffering will be restored and the results of their restoration will bless scores of other people who will offer genuine praise to God on behalf of those who have been rescued and restored. The point is that when we handle the trials of life in the right way, with God's grace, then we will have a very positive influence on those around us. But, if we fail in the way we handle our trials, then the end result will be a very negative influence upon others.

3. Paul's hope was the result of his faith in constant renewal. v. 16

As I sit here today at my computer, I must tell you that I am probably one of the greatest examples of the truth found in this verse because of my constant battle with health issues. I need not go into all of my daily physical and emotional problems, but I have been sick for a long time, and every day I need renewal. In fact, this very morning before I started writing on this commentary, I had to make a large decision concerning our GIMI African ministry. My wife and I have been scheduled for a long time to return to Africa this coming fall and continue the great work there, which we have been doing for over 35 years. I dreamed big and meant well, but because of the weakness of my body and the emotional drain which I have had for a long time, I will not be able to make another trip. Of course, I have already made 70 trips to Africa. We were really looking forward to going again, but my weaknesses, physically and emotionally, are just too large to try to push on for this trip. So today, I have decided to cancel the fall trip. My heart was right about going, but I will have to be renewed and restored if I am ever able to go again. My faith will keep on believing and hoping for the day when we might be able to return to our beloved Africa again.

4. Paul's hope was the result of his faith in confident realization. v. 17

"The minister's afflictions are light when compared to the glory he shall receive in heaven. Note the phrase, 'weight of glory.' This picture should always be kept in mind by every minister. The picture is that of a set of scales sitting before the minister. He balances his afflictions on one end and the eternal glory he is to receive on the other end. The afflictions may be heavy and severe, but when he places the eternal glory he is to receive on the scales, the afflictions become light. It is as though they weigh nothing."⁵⁸ This explanation is a tremendous understanding of how true servants of God bear up

⁵⁷ Ibid, page 312.

⁵⁸ The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible, I and II Corinthians, Volume 8, page 280.

under the weight of their trials and how the hope they have in a future glory just keeps them pushing on or running forward in the final race.

5. Paul's hope was the result of his faith in a celestial reward. v. 18

Now as we come to the last verse in **Chapter 4**, we are going to learn how Paul kept pushing on for the cause of Christ, even when he was going through such terrible suffering. I don't suppose any of us will ever know just how much Paul suffered until we get to heaven and talk to him, but we do know that he was committed to finishing the race that he had started on the Damascus Road when he got gloriously saved. Let me give you another quote that might help to show all of us why Paul could keep pushing on to his celestial reward, even when he experienced so much persecution.

"The minister's eyes are not focused on the physical and the temporal, but on the spiritual and eternal. The word 'look' (*scopeo*) means to focus one's eyes and attention on a set goal or end. The goal, of course, is spending eternity with God in the new heavens and earth. The minister does not look at the things, which are seen (the physical and corruptible), but at things which are not seen (the spiritual and incorruptible).

The reason is strikingly clear: the things which are seen are temporal (brief, temporary, fading, passing, fleeting, transient; but the things which are not seen are eternal (lasting, endless, forever, permanent, immortal, glorious)." ⁵⁹

Conclusion

In this rather long chapter, we have taken a careful look at the characteristics and difficult circumstances of Paul's ministry as he tried so hard to show the difference to the Corinthian church concerning the Old Covenant of the Law and the New Covenant of God's Grace. The thing that stands out so much about Paul's ministry is that regardless of what suffering and pain he had to go through, he stayed faithful to Christ and kept his eyes on the day when we will receive our new resurrection bodies just like His. Going through so much suffering and pain is always very difficult, but if our vision is on eternity and heaven, we can and will stay faithful to Christ, regardless of what we have to go through. Yes, Paul was a man that had the right motives for everything he did, and the primary thing was his love for Christ and his desire to see others receive the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Did Paul ever get discouraged? Why, of course he did! This book of **II Corinthians** is all about his terrible struggles with sickness, emotional strain, and the attacks by those who were, in fact, the phony teachers in Corinth. But praise God, Paul kept his eyes on Jesus and kept pushing forward with the purpose for which he had been called. May we too learn great lessons from Paul's ministry, and may we too keep pushing forward, even when we are sick and under attack from false preachers and teachers! May God raise up a lot of new "Pauls" in this generation of time just before Jesus comes again!

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Five
"MINISTERS OF A NEW COVENANT"
Part III
Scripture: II Corinthians 5:1-6:10

Introduction

In the conclusion of our last chapter, I talked about Paul's determination to keep on preaching the Gospel, in spite of the constant pain and suffering he was going through as a result of some obvious health problems and because of the vicious attacks of the phony teachers in Corinth. I told you that the main reason Paul could push on in the midst of his terrible ordeal of suffering was his love for Jesus and his desire to keep preaching the Gospel so that others could hear the same Gospel message that had saved him.

Now, as we move forward into Chapters 5 and 6, I want us to really take a close look at Paul's motives for his service and to also be encouraged by the consistency of Paul's ministry, in spite of the terrible ordeals that he had gone through. Because Paul had the right motives, he refused to remain discouraged, and he refused to quit. He was consistent with all of the right motives, and he was consistent in the work that God had called him to do. I am sure that there were many days when Paul must have considered giving up, but if he did, he never revealed this to the Corinthians. He just kept on with his ministry of trying to win men and women to Christ. So now, let's look at Paul's life and ministry once again, and see how faithful he was in teaching about the New Covenant of Grace.

I. NOTICE THE COMPULSIONS (MOTIVES) OF PAUL'S MINISTRY. vs. 5:1-21

A. His first compulsion (motive) was the promise of eternal life. v. 1-9

Having been a pastor for so many years, I have seen a lot people claiming to be servants of God while it was very obvious that they did not have the right motives for what they were trying to do. Some are motivated by the desire for selfish achievement and positions of importance or power. Then there are those who are motivated by money or wealth while even pretending to be servants of God. They are guilty of merchandising the Gospel message. Also, there are scores of people, even today, who use the preaching or teaching of the Gospel to gain a following of people because of their insecurity or emptiness. They just want to be "somebody"!

Let me tell you that Paul the Apostle was not one of these charlatans! Paul had the right motives for everything he did. He loved Jesus. He also loved the work of God and the rescuing of souls from hell. In other words, Paul's motives were right, and his primary goal was to glorify Christ in all that he did. You might ask, "What was it that kept Paul moving forward in his ministry when he had to endure so much suffering and so many trials?" Well, that is what I want us to look at in these next nine verses.

1. Paul possessed a personal assurance of eternal life. v. 1

In verse one, Paul states emphatically that he knows if his earthly house (body) were dissolved, then he had an eternal house or dwelling place in heaven. There was no question in Paul's mind about this. He knew with certainty that he was a recipient of eternal life on the day he got saved, and he also knew that because of his personal relationship with Jesus, the best for him was yet to come. So in the midst of everything that Paul was suffering, it was the hope of a better life to come that helped keep him going forward for our Lord.

2. Paul possessed a powerful aspiration for eternal life. vs. 2-4

"The twice repeated phrase 'for indeed' expressed Paul's intense longing for heaven and the certainty that he would one day enter its glory. But in the meantime, for all believers, ***'in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.'*** Those who love the Lord Jesus yearn for the next life, ***'when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality (I Corinthians 15:54).'*** Paul was weary of the frustrations, disappointments, limitations, weaknesses, and sins of this present life and longed ***'for the revealing of the sons of God' (Romans 8:19).'*** The apostle passionately longed to be clothed with his dwelling from heaven. Paul's mixed metaphor (putting on a building as if it were clothing) refers to his resurrection body and the perfections of eternal life, which would replace forever the debilitating, sin-caused corruptions of life in this world and set him free from his fallen humanness."⁶⁰

"We that are in this tabernacle do groan....." In the use of the plural pronoun 'we' Paul speaks of all born again believers. In these bodies of dust, destined to return to dust, we 'groan.' Not even the most spiritual believer escapes the groaning that accompanies the pain and heartaches of this life. We do not sit and wish for death that we might be delivered from the groaning, but we do long for the day when we will put off this old, frail, faulty tabernacle and be clothed with that glorious body that will never know pain, sorrow, or disappointment.

'.....not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.....' Paul was not impatient. He was willing to be burdened for the Christ who bore so much for him. Dedicated children of God should not become impatient under trials and afflictions. As God wills, the true believer is willing. Paul's desire to depart this life and enter the celestial world was not simply that he might escape the persecutions and abuse that met him at every turn. Such desire pressed upon his heart because he longed to see the face of Jesus. He longed to be ***'clothed upon'*** with that ***'house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'***

'...that mortality might be swallowed up of life.' Believers long for the day when they will be with Jesus in heaven, clothed upon with immortality—not that we would escape the suffering and trials that come upon us in God's service, but because we long to be with Jesus, to partake of the glories, joys, and happiness in heaven. Paul expressed this clearly

⁶⁰ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, By: John F. MacArthur, Moody Press, page 165.

in **Philippians 1:23** where he said, *'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.'*"⁶¹

Because God never gives us dying grace until it is time to die, Paul was simply saying, in these three verses, that he aspired to the day when he would be out of his suffering and pain and receive his brand new glorified body. But even this was not the main thing he aspired to. The main thing he aspired to, was seeing Jesus Christ face to face, and in order to do this, he indeed, like every believer, would need that new glorified body. Of course, as we know from **Luke 16**, in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, if we die before Jesus comes for the rapture and resurrection, we will still be given a recognizable temporary body. The Rich Man was recognizable. Lazarus was recognizable. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah, whom they had never met. So, the conclusion is this, we should aspire to that great day when we get our final resurrection bodies, but if God calls us home before that, we will be given a temporary body which has recognizable characteristics just like we have here on this earth before we die.

3. Paul possessed a positive affirmation of eternal life. vs. 5-7

"The 'selfsame thing' means the thing to which Paul had just referred—namely, receiving his glorified body, the mortal giving way to the immortal. God 'wrought us for the selfsame thing.' That is, God formed or made man to the end that man might be glorified. God did not create man to suffer or burn in hell. He created man to love and bless. Man was created in God's own image, and he was intended to love and worship God. Adam sold out to the devil, thus putting the whole human race under sin. But God, by means of His own power, through the renewing of the Spirit and the creation of a new man within, will see to it that all believers receive a glorified body like unto the glorious body of Jesus. Only God can redeem, and it is through God's grace, God's power, and God's miracle that we receive the new nature and will eventually receive a new body.

'...who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.' 'Earnest' speaks, in general, of earnest-money deposited by a purchaser and forfeited if the purchase is not completed. We would speak of it as a 'down payment.' In our Scripture it is used with reference to that which is assured by God to believers. Thus, the Holy Spirit is the 'earnest' (God's divine pledge) of future blessedness."⁶²

In these verses, 5-7, we are told by Paul that because God gave him the down payment of eternal life in the indwelling Holy Spirit at the moment of his salvation, he is totally confident that the full blessings of heaven and all eternity are ahead for him and for all other believers as well. And then Paul says that he truly believes his heavenly future will indeed come to pass because he has claimed it by faith. We may not see the reality of our future home just yet, but by faith, we can believe that it has already come to pass, and we cannot lose it. Praise God!

4. Paul possessed a peaceful attitude about eternal life. vs. 8-9

⁶¹ The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 197-198.

⁶² Ibid, pages 199-200.

I believe it goes without saying that if a person has peace in the midst of all of his or her suffering, then that person will come through the horrible ordeals that life brings our way victoriously. Lasting peace is only something that God alone can bring to our hearts and minds. In verse 8, Paul stated the attitude of peacefulness that God was giving him, even when he was suffering with so many uncertain problems. Yet, Paul could move forward with a great hope and assurance because God had brought to his heart and mind the peace of God. I believe with much certainty that Paul had this peace because he kept his eyes on his eternal home, which he knew would come to pass if the day came when he would die or if Jesus would come and rapture the church, which would include this great servant of God. Well, almost two thousand years have come and gone since Paul gave these words to the Corinthians, but still we look with certain anticipation that the best is yet to come for every child of God; regardless of what he or she might be going through right now.

Now, in order to really get a clear message from verses 8-9, let me give you the Amplified Bible translation of these two verses. ***"We are as of good courage and confident hope, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore, whether we are at home on earth or away from home and with Him, it is our constant ambition to be pleasing to Him."***

In these two verses, Paul was basically saying to the Corinthians, regardless of my difficult circumstances, I am not afraid, because my primary goal is to bring pleasure to the heart of God, whether I live or die. Paul knew that everything was quite okay, because he had reconciled the fact that while living, he wanted to live in such a way that would please the Lord. He also knew that if God chose to take him through death, or even in the rapture, he would be at home with Christ, living in perfect peace and still bringing pleasure to God by his worship and praise.

My question to you the reader of this commentary is, "Do you have the kind of peace that Paul demonstrated to the Corinthians?" If you do, then praise the Lord. But, if you do not, maybe this would be a wonderful time for you to just place your faith in Christ and His plan for your life right now here on earth and in His finished plan for you when you get to heaven. You see folks, when we are truly saved, and we are doing our best to bring pleasure to the heart of our Savior, then, we don't need to fear now, and we don't need to fear the future, because, that is covered by our Lord as well.

B. His second compulsion (motive) was the prospect of exposing light. vs. 10-13

As we approach these next four verses, we need to remember that Paul had been undergoing terrible attacks from the false apostles in Corinth. They had doubted his credibility as a true apostle, and they had criticized and gossiped about him horribly. Yet, Paul knew that there was going to come a day when every true believer would stand before the Bema Seat of Christ and that each genuine child of God would truly give an account to Christ and have the radiance of Christ's light turned on every child of God. This exposé will divulge everything that is genuine, and also everything within the life of the believer that is not genuine. Of course, those false apostles in the church at Corinth will probably not be at the Judgment Seat of Christ, because only truly born again believers will be there. Those false teachers in Corinth, and every phony false teacher since that day, will have to stand before the Great White Throne Judgment, where there will be no mercy shown at all. These

people will hear the words of Jesus found in **Matthew 7:21-23**, where He said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* In other words, folks, those phony false teachers will be revealed at the Great White Throne Judgment, but those half-hearted, reluctant believers will be exposed at the Bema Seat of Christ.

My main point is this—we may get by with our hypocritical ways down here now without really being found out, but when we believers stand before the Lord at either the Judgment Seat of Christ or later, the lost stand before the Great White Throne, the light of Christ's radiance will truly reveal whether we have been the real deal or if we have been blatant religious pretenders.

1. First, notice the people of this exposé. v. 10a

Let me shout it from the housetop that the people described here who are going to stand before Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ, includes every born again believer. But, we will not stand there for Jesus to decide whether we are going to heaven or hell. That has already been determined by our personal salvation experience. But, I must tell you that this coming judgment for the children of God should be taken very seriously because of what is going to happen there.

For you see folks, every child of God is going to be there at the Bema Seat to give an account for our faithfulness as servants of God, or maybe I should add, our unfaithfulness as professing believers. Some of you readers may not take the coming judgment for believers very seriously, but I assure you that it will be a serious time. Why? Because it will be then that we will either receive great rewards, or we will lose great rewards because of how well we have served our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh yes, if we are saved, we are going to heaven. But, if we have not been faithful, then we will have the light turned on us to reveal to everyone around the throne whether we have been genuine servants of God, or will we just be saved as by fire because of the mercy and grace of God.

2. Second, notice the purpose of this exposé. v. 10b

In the second part of **verse 10**, we discover the purpose of the coming Judgment Seat of Christ for all believers. The purpose is for every child of God to give an account of the way he or she has served Christ since the day of his or her salvation. No one will be left out of this personal exposé because Christ is omniscient and very much aware of every person's deeds, and even their thoughts, while trying to serve the Lord. Why, even in the **Book of Malachi**, we are told in **3:16** that there is a book of remembrance wherein God is recording the deeds, and yes, even the thoughts that we have about the name of Jesus. Nothing will go unnoticed, and nothing will be forgotten. Let me give you this verse so that you can see the depths of this truth. *"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name."* You see folks, each child of God is definitely going to stand before the Judgment

Seat of Christ to give an account of every deed and thought he or she has had down here on earth in our service to Christ, and yes, even to others. In **Chapter 3 of I Corinthians**, Paul told the Christians in Corinth that at this same Judgment Seat, Christ will differentiate between the good works and the bad works which we have done. It will be exposed as to whether we have had quality works, like gold, silver, and precious stones, or if we have bad works of hay, wood, and stubble. In other words, the works of every believer will be tried by fire (probably the fiery eyes and radiance of Jesus) to determine if the works have been done with the right motive and with genuine love and compassion for the people we have served. No one will be able to hide anything from our Savior, and yes, I believe, from all believers who will be around the Judgment Seat. You see, there will be no longer a cover up for our phony hypocritical works, but all of these will be exposed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Third, notice the products of this exposé. vs. 11-13

Once more, let me give you these verses as translated in the Amplified Bible. I sincerely believe this translation will help us to get a better understanding of what Paul was telling the Corinthians.

"Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord and understand the importance of obedience and worship, we persuade people to be reconciled to Him. But we are plainly known to God (He knows everything about us); and I hope that we are plainly known also in your consciences (your God-given discernment. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but are giving you an occasion to be rightfully proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in outward appearances (the virtues they pretend to have) rather than what is actually in their heart. If we are out of our mind (just unstable fanatics as some critics say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for your benefit." (II Corinthians 5:11-13).

Now, let me give you two more points about these verses.

a. The first product will be a persuasive service. v. 11

"Fear evokes persuasion. Thus Paul begins this paragraph by saying, ***"Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others."*** (v. 11). It isn't that Paul was terrified or afraid, as we commonly use the words, but rather that he was awed by the thought of standing before a Being so holy, so morally superior, so removed from evil that in His presence all human boasting, all human pride, and all human arrogance would vanish as he stands in speechless humility before the One beyond understanding and with trembling lips gives full account of himself. This fear of the Lord drove Paul 'persuade others'—that is, to persuade the Corinthians of his Gospel and the integrity of his person as an apostle. In theological terms, eschatological fear motivated Paul to carry out his calling."⁶³

b. The second product will be a pure service. vs. 12-13

⁶³ II Corinthians, By: Kent Hughes, Crossway, page 112.

"What does Paul mean when he speaks of the fear of the Lord? Paul is not saying that he preaches fire-and-brimstone sermons in order to frighten people into the kingdom. The fear of the Lord is not a sense of terror; rather, it's the respect and awe we feel when we recognize that our God is a God of truth. We can't escape the truth about ourselves that He will reveal.

Paul is saying, in effect, 'I know that God will deal fairly with me at the judgment seat of Christ—but He will reveal the truth of my life. So I don't want to waste my life. When God unveils the truth about my life, I want it to be a truth that pleases Him, not a truth that makes me ashamed.'

He also says, in effect, 'I want you to be able to be proud of me. I want you to be able to answer the critics who have been attacking me. You know what my critics have been saying: Paul is out of his mind! How can you listen to anything he says? He claims Jesus spoke to him on the Damascus road! He claims that his teachings come straight from Jesus Himself!' Well, if I'm crazy, then I am crazy for God's sake. And if I behave sanely, then I'm sane for your sake. I'm crazy for God. I'm sane for you. But sane or insane, everything I do is motivated by love."⁶⁴

Paul just tried so hard to get across to the confused, and somewhat skeptical believers in Corinth, that what he had gone through and was still battling, would all be exposed and straightened out at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But, until that day arrived via the rapture of the church or through his home-going by death, Paul desired to live a life that would be considered honorable at the Judgment Seat. Paul just wanted to live a life that would really make a difference with Jesus and with the others he tried so hard to minister to while down here on earth.

C. His third compulsion (motive) was the presence of elegant love. vs. 14-21

Up to this point in this study of **Chapter 5**, we have covered two previous motives for Paul's resolute and determined ministry. Those two were his promise of eternal life and also the prospect of the coming Judgment Seat of Christ, where the truth would surely come out for all to see that Paul was indeed the real apostle of Christ. Now, let's look at the third motive of Paul's dedicated ministry. This third motive was the presence of elegant love in his daily life.

1. First, notice the revelation of this love. vs. 14-16.

Let us now take a close look at the next three verses. In these verses, Paul told the Corinthian believers that his greatest motivation for carrying on his ministry after all he had been through was the constraining love of Christ. The word "*constraineth*" here in the Greek means to bind together, which I believe, was that Paul was so overwhelmed by the love of Christ, which was demonstrated for him by Jesus' death on the cross, that he absolutely could have nothing else on his mind but loving Jesus in return and demonstrating this love to others. Let me share some more comments from Dr. Oliver B. Greene.

⁶⁴ Letters to a Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 324.

"Christ displayed His love for us when He gave His life for us, and He imparted this love to us. The Greek word translated, '*constraineth*' signifies 'to coop up, to keep within narrow bounds.' That is, believers possess the love of Christ, and that love in our hearts prevents our laboring except for Christ's glory. We serve God by witnessing, by giving out the good news of salvation, by helping our fellowmen (especially those of the household of faith), and thus do we bring honor and glory to the name of Jesus."⁶⁵

" '*...because we thus judge...*' This does not mean that judging is simply equivalent to thinking. Strictly applied, the term means to form an opinion upon sufficient evidence.

'*...that if one died for all, then were all dead.*' In this phrase, the Greek omits 'if'. There is no 'If' about it. We know that Christ died for all. **'God so loved the world'—All the world—that He gave His only begotten son to die for all, and the invitation to be saved is for 'whosoever will.'** When we, by faith, receive the finished work of Christ, we appropriate everything. He accomplished by means of His death. Actually, as Paul testified in **Galatians 2:20: 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live—yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'**"⁶⁶

While I have been quoting a lot of great men of God who prior to me wrote some great commentaries, I had to be careful with the translation of Dr. John MacArthur in this chapter when he tried to explain this verse about Christ's dying for all. Now, don't get me wrong. I have quoted Dr. MacArthur many times in this book, but John MacArthur is a strong Calvinist, and in his writing on this verse, he stated that when Paul told the Corinthians this, and yes, us also, he didn't mean that Jesus died for everyone in the entire world. Instead, he said that when this verse states that Jesus died for all, what he meant was that Jesus only died for those who would receive Him. May I say with all the respect I can muster for Dr. MacArthur, he is dead wrong on this passage of Scripture? I am not going to cover Calvinism in this book because I have covered it thoroughly in several of my other books. But, the truth is that in order to believe that the word, 'all' doesn't mean all, and that the word 'whosoever' in **John 3:16** doesn't mean that Jesus died for everyone in the world that would ever live is totally absurd and completely demonic. I say this because in a thousand years, no one could ever convince me that Jesus never died for every man or woman who has ever lived on this earth. I am sorry that John MacArthur has missed it so much, but we will cut him a little slack and just use his commentary when he is right and helps to expand the truth of a passage of Scripture.

"One sad, pathetic thing about any person's spending eternity in hell is the fact that Christ died for every person. **Romans 3:23** tells us, '*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*' But every man's salvation has been bought and paid for, and all anyone needs to do to stay out of hell is to receive, by faith, the finished work of Jesus. He died for all and His death provided salvation for all. There is grace to save all who will come to Jesus, and all who are lost and on the way to hell are so because of unbelief. What a tragedy! Salvation is free to all, yet not all will accept the free gift of God."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 265.

⁶⁶ Ibid, pages 265-266.

⁶⁷ Ibid, page 266

Paul the Apostle not only responded to Christ's love by showing love to others, but he also recognized that this constraining love caused him to want to die to himself and all of the selfish desires of the flesh. Paul believed that if Jesus was willing to die for the sins of all humanity, then the least thing all of saved humanity could do is to die to self and show their appreciation to Christ by telling others about His marvelous love. Pay attention to the next paragraph.

"This verse further explains the reason for Paul's conduct since he met Jesus on the Damascus Road. He had not lived for himself. His ambition was not to become wealthy, nor to enjoy pleasure, nor to make a great name for himself. Since his conversion he had lived a life of self-denial and hard labor."⁶⁸

We now come to **verse 16**, where Paul says, ***"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."*** Once more, let me give you the Amplified Translation. ***"So from now on we regard no one from a human point of view according to worldly standards and values. Though we have known Christ from a human point of view, now we no longer know Him in this way. "***

This **verse 16** is one of those verses that has been argued over and over about the true meaning. When Paul said, ***"...yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh..."***, the question always comes, "Is this talking about Paul's having met Christ at some time in the flesh?" Well, based upon the Amplified Translation, it would seem that Paul was talking about when before he got saved on the road to Damascus, he probably knew only about Christ from a worldly or secular viewpoint. Then, after he got saved, he no longer knew Christ from a fleshly viewpoint, but now he knew Him experientially. And, may I say that there is a world of difference between knowing about Christ with one's head and knowing Christ personally and experientially with one's heart.

However, there is another thought that maybe we should contemplate about this verse. Some scholars believe that when Paul was talking about knowing Christ from a worldly viewpoint, just maybe at some time before Paul got saved, he saw Jesus in Jerusalem and heard much discussion and criticism about Him from the "so-called devout religious Jews". I believe personally that this probably did indeed happen at some point. But my, what a difference there is in knowing or seeing Jesus from a worldly or secular viewpoint and in knowing Him personally after one comes to Christ and gets saved.

2. Notice the results of this love. v. 17

Now, as we enter into this verse trying to discover its true meaning, let me tell you that this is one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible. It is one that I have used thousands of times as I have shared the Gospel message from pulpits or doing door-to-door soul winning wherever I have gone. This verse is just truly the composite message of what really happens to a person when he or she gets genuinely saved. You see folks, it is because of the love which Jesus has demonstrated to all of us that we can become new creatures in Christ. We must understand that when a person is really saved, that person does, in fact, become a new creation in Christ spiritually. This doesn't mean that the old

⁶⁸ Ibid, page 267.

nature of sin and the flesh is eradicated, but it means that Christ's Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and transforms us into new creatures whereby He takes control of our lives as we daily submit to His authority and control. Now, let's look at another comment from Dr. Kent Hughes.

"Paul has urged on us the proper disregard that flows from the Gospel due to the Christian's death in Christ. Now he declares how we ought to regard those who have died in Christ. Here is Gospel regard: ***'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.'*** (v. 17). This is the biography of every Christian! It is my biography. Though I was just a boy, God's Word became so alive to me that I could never get enough of it. Truly, old things had passed away, and new things had come. My burden of sin was gone. My guilt was gone. My sense of alienation from God and loneliness were gone."⁶⁹

"Wondrous new things filled my life. New truths continued to rock my soul. I recall a year later, as a high school student, discovering **Romans 12:1-2**, ***"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*** The logics of that great text sunk into my soul, and I pursued them to the best of my ability. I read Harry Ironside on the text in an attempt to understand it better. I purchased a red Bible and carried it to classes on top of my books because I wanted everyone to know what I now knew."⁷⁰

Dear friends, the passage of Scripture that Kent Hughes mentioned in the above paragraph is the same passage that God has used in my life down through 54 years of ministry, and it is the text **(Romans 12:1-2)**, which I have preached from all over the world more than any other text I have ever read. God truly wants every one of His children to be transformed by His power and to live a sacrificial holy life every day that he or she lives. In order to live like this, there has to be a radical transformation and a discovery of God's amazing love which pushes us to try our best to follow the perfect will of God for the rest of our lives.

3. Notice the reconciliation of this love. vs. 18-19

The word reconciliation is a wonderful word. In the Greek here in verse 18, it actually means to restore a relationship or settle a disagreement over money. In this verse, Paul is telling the Corinthians that when a person becomes a new creature, as described in verse 17, then that person has a restored relationship with God the Father, which was broken or severed way back in the Garden of Eden. You see folks, when Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He paid the price of redemption for every person who would put his or her trust in the efficacy of the cross. Thus, when the price was paid for our redemption, the moment we appropriate this personal redemption, we are reconciled or restored to a relationship of fellowship with the God who cursed lost humanity when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden. Of course, the rebellion and defiance of Adam and Eve against God

⁶⁹ II Corinthians, By: Kent Hughes, Crossway, page 119.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

had truly broken humanity's relationship and fellowship with God the Father, but when God the Son died on the cross and the price was paid for mankind's sin, then reconciliation was made available to every child of God.

Now because a truly born again believer has genuinely been reconciled to God, this new creature in Christ has a God-given responsibility to act as God's agent in being a tool of reconciliation for other lost and separated people. In other words, when a person truly gets saved, that person then should become an instrument of reconciliation because of the love of Christ within him or her and because of his or her new love for others. This loving work of reconciliation would not be possible without the indwelling love of Christ like constrained Paul the Apostle.

In verse 19, we find a wonderful truth. When God the Father sent Jesus down from heaven to die on the cross for our sins, He did so in order to reconcile fallen humanity. When this price of reconciliation was finally paid on the cross, then the repentant sinner is set free from the guilt of sin. The word "imputing" here is a bookkeeping word. It means that when someone's debt is taken away, the recipient of this imputation is set free and will never have to repay his or her debt. Thus, when Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we were freed by Christ from the debt for our sins, and we were made guilt-free in our position with God. Therefore, because we have been delivered and set free from having to pay our sin debt, then we should want to tell others about the treasure we have found through our salvation. Because of our freedom in Christ from the moment of our personal salvation, we must be ready to take the word of reconciliation to others. What this means is that when we have been set free, we want to show our appreciation to God for what He has done for us by sharing His word about reconciliation with others. So, we move from the bondage of sin and separation from God to our new creature position in Christ, and because of our joy, we can't help but speak His Word to others so that they can be reconciled to God as well.

4. Notice the responsibility of this love. v. 20

Verse 20 is another one of my favorite verses in the Bible. In this verse Paul tells the Corinthians that because of what Christ did for us when He redeemed and reconciled us, we are now ambassadors for Him. What this means is that when God saves us and puts us into His family, He appoints us as His ambassadors or representatives for the Kingdom of God. Truly, this is a high calling and appointment from God. We must never take this ambassadorship lightly or for granted. There is no higher calling that any person on earth could ever be given than to represent the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and tell the rest of the entire world about our new position in Him. If we are truly new creatures in Christ, we will desire for others to become new creatures in Christ as well. To use a modern terminology, which is often used in the wrong way, our position as ambassadors in Christ is an "Awesome Position". It is my sincere prayer that not one of us who is genuinely redeemed and reconciled to Christ will ever get over the thrill of representing the Kingdom of God down here in this terribly sinful world. There is no other position any higher in all of the world than to be privileged to represent the Kingdom of God to a lost and dying world.

5. Notice the reality of this love. v. 21

The reality of this great love is found in the great sacrifice that Jesus made for each of us on the cross when He took our place and died for our sins. Of course, He Who knew no sin could only do this because He voluntarily became a sinner in order to pay the debt for our sin, and then reconcile us into the family of God. Had this wonderful act never occurred, there would be no redemption, no reconciliation, and no righteousness for any of us. But yet, because of Jesus' vicarious (substitutionary) death on the cross for each one of us, we have been given all of these gifts, plus eternal life. So, never has there ever been a greater display of love than was demonstrated on the cross of Calvary.

II. NOTICE THE CONSISTENCY OF PAUL'S MINISTRY. vs. 6:1-10

As we continue to move forward with this wonderful study, we move into **Chapter 6** in order to look at the consistency of Paul's ministry. We have already looked at the great motives which Paul demonstrated in his service to Christ and to others, and so now, we need to see what it was that just kept him going forward even when there were so many trials and tribulations. Paul was just a faithful servant of God, but he had much trouble in convincing the false teachers of this in the Corinthian church. So, let's look closely at Paul faithful consistency and see if we can follow his example in our Christian service.

A. Notice the priorities of his consistency. vs. 1-3

1. These priorities included utilizing allotted grace. v. 1

I don't think I have ever seen before in my entire ministry of over 53 years the point I want to make here about Paul. Paul was such a man that he just didn't want to waste any of the grace that God had extended to him. Paul simply said in verse one that he was concerned that the people might have received the grace of God in vain. Paul was truly concerned that the Corinthian believers, and may I add, all believers, should never fail to reach their potential in God's service. I have already talked about this earlier in this book, but let me just reiterate this one more time. We should never fail to reach the potential that God has for our service for any reason. We should be determined to discover God's will for our lives, develop our lives and ministry with the standards of God's Word, and be willing to take the step of faith and get out of the box and our comfort zones in order to reach that God-planned potential for our lives. It is my prayer that not one of us will die like Moses did upon Mount Sinai with just a glimpse of what could have been, just because we disobeyed God or failed to exercise enough faith to use the marvelous amazing grace, which God has given to us. Just remember, there is saving grace, living grace, serving grace, and yes ultimately, there will be dying grace. So here is my question to you, all of my readers. "Are you utilizing the grace God has given to you as one of His servants?" I pray that you are in order to accomplish what God has planned for you and so that you won't be embarrassed when you stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ one day out in the future!

2. These priorities included utilizing allotted time. v. 2

Paul the Apostle not only utilized the marvelous grace that God gave to him, but he also was extremely conscious about utilizing the time that God gave him to carry out his ministry. It was because of the false teachers in Corinth that valuable time that could have been utilized in winning people to Christ was being wasted on phony conversations about whether Paul was a true apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In order for Paul to defend the importance of not wasting time on unnecessary conversations and arguments, he quotes an Old Testament passage of Scripture found in **Isaiah 49:8**, where we find these words, ***"Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee:"*** What Isaiah was telling Israel was that when they had pleaded for deliverance or salvation, God had answered their prayers in a reasonable amount of time. So, this is what Paul was saying to the Corinthians. He was telling them that they didn't have time to waste arguing about who was genuine and who was not. What they needed to be doing was winning people to Christ, because today is the day of salvation and time is definitely running out for all men.

I surely wish that our church pastors and church leaders had this same time consciousness today. So many of our church leaders are engaged in a plethora of activities, and sad to say, evangelism and world missions are often put on the back burner of activities. This is not only the day for us to be trying to win people to Christ, but it is also the day when lost people should be coming to Christ. There is no promise of tomorrow for any of us, and so, if a person is not saved, today is his or her day to come to Christ. Regardless of what we might consider important, if we are saved, our main emphasis should be winning people to Christ NOW!

B. Notice the proof of his consistency. vs. 3-10

Well, we have now learned that Paul the Apostle was a man who consistently made sure that he didn't waste the grace of God, and he also made sure that he didn't waste the time that God had given him to win people to Christ. His main concern was not for those phony false teachers in Corinth who thought erroneously that they had it all together, but his main concern was trying to win the lost to Christ while there is still time. This was truly the proof of his consistency.

1. Notice the motive of his proof. v. 3

Obviously, about this time, Paul must have stopped and thought, "Well, maybe I am being just a little too strong with my remarks about these false teachers who want to waste the grace of God and the time God has provided for them." So, Paul tells them that he is willing to back off just a little because it was not his intention to offend anyone. He didn't want to bring reproach upon his ministry or any genuine preacher of the truth of the Gospel. Earlier in this book, we talked about Paul's having the right motives for whatever he did, and here is just another verification of this very thought. Paul wanted to win as many people to Christ as possible, but he did not want to offend people unnecessarily in the process.

2. Notice the manner of his proof. vs. 4-10

We now may say that Paul the Apostle proved his consistency by using the grace of God wisely and by using God's allotted time wisely as well. Now, we are going to be looking in these next verses at the manner of Paul's life, which gives proof to his consistency in the ministry of our Lord. I sincerely believe that one of these greatest testimonies that a believer could ever have is that he or she used their lives consistently for the cause of Jesus Christ. So, please pay much attention to the many points we are going to cover about Paul's difficult circumstances and his demonstrated characteristics, which gave proof of his consistency. I may not comment on all of these points, but we will at least list them so that we can understand all that Paul faced and the life he lived which proved he was indeed the real deal.

a. The way Paul dealt with his difficult circumstances proved his consistency. vs. 4-5

(1) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of diseases (afflictions). v. 4a

(2) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of deprivation (necessities). v. 4b

(3) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of distresses (worries). v. 4c

(4) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of degradation (stripes). v. 5a

(5) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of detention (imprisonments). v. 5b

(6) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of disorders (tumults). v. 5c

(7) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of duties (hard labors). v. 5d

(8) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of disturbances (watchings). v. 5e

(9) These difficult circumstances included patience in times of duress (fastings) (unfilled desires). v. 5f

Folks, can you see how dedicated and consistent Paul the Apostle really was? If most people would have had to go through what Paul had to endure, he or she would have quit a long time ago. But not Paul the Apostle! He went

through literally hell on earth, but yet he stayed a faithful and very consistent servant of God, in spite of his suffering and trials.

b. The way Paul demonstrated his characteristics proved his consistency. vs. 6-7

(1) Paul demonstrated a life of purity (pureness). v. 6a

(2) Paul demonstrated a life of perception (knowledge). v. 6b

(3) Paul demonstrated a life of patience (longsuffering). v. 6c

(4) Paul demonstrated a life of pity (kindness). v. 6d

(5) Paul demonstrated a life of personality (Holy Ghost). v. 6e

(6) Paul demonstrated a life of passion (love unfeigned). v. 6f

(7) Paul demonstrated a life of precision (Word of Truth). v. 7a

(8) Paul demonstrated a life of power (the power of God). v. 7b

(9) Paul demonstrated a life of protection (armor of righteousness).
v. 7c

c. The way Paul displayed his contrasts proved his consistency. (He possessed the following contrasts). vs. 8-10

(1) Dishonorable, yet honorable. v. 8a

(2) Disapproved, yet approved. v. 8b

(3) Deceiver, yet truthful. v. 8c

(4) Unknown, yet known. v. 9a

(5) Dying, yet living. v. 9b

(6) Chastened, yet not murdered. v. 9c

(7) Sorrowful, yet happy. v. 10a

(8) Poor, yet rich. v. 10b

(9) Empty, yet full. v. 10c

Conclusion

Well, we have now completed **Chapter 5** of our study, and if we have allowed God to teach us, then I believe we should have learned a lot. In this chapter, we have studied "The Ministers Of A New Covenant Part III". We have learned much about the circumstances of Paul's ministry, the compulsions or motives of Paul's ministry, and the tremendous consistency of Paul's ministry. Hopefully, we have learned some wonderful principles on how to present the Gospel message provided by Paul to the Corinthians and to us, about the New Covenant of Grace as opposed to the Old Covenant of the Law. Truly there is a world of difference between the New Covenant brought by the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Old Covenant which presented the truth of the Law of Moses. As I have already discussed in this book. God gave Israel the Law for the revelation of man's sinfulness, but because the Law could not take away the sins of mankind, there needed to be the death of Christ on Calvary in order for us to be recipients of God's amazing grace. So, the Old Testament Law disclosed our sin, while the New Testament of Grace has revealed to us the way our sins can be forgiven.

Now as we move on in our study, we are going to dig deeper into this great well of spiritual water to learn more and more about God's saving grace, His living grace, and yes, when needed, His dying grace, which will only be given when it is our time to die. Until the time for our home-going, we need to be busy living holy lives and sharing the Gospel with those who are yet bound by sin. The only hope that they have for being released from this bondage is through the sacrificial death, burial, and glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. So let's look expectantly at the next chapters of this marvelous **Book of II Corinthians**.

Chapter Six

"PAUL'S MESSAGE ON CHRISTIAN SEPARATION"

Scripture: II Corinthians 6:11-7:4

Introduction

Today as we move into **Chapter 6** of our study, we are going to be dealing with a subject that many modern Christians don't even want to talk about. That subject is living a separated life, which leads to holiness and continuing sanctification. In the previous chapter of the Bible, **Chapter 5**, Paul gave us the great text found in **II Corinthians 5:17**, where he said, ***"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*** In other words, when a person truly gets saved, a real transformation takes place in the heart and life of the newly saved person. The Holy Spirit baptizes the new believer into the body of Christ, and that same Holy Spirit comes to indwell the newly saved person. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, this newly saved person becomes a new creature with new desires, new priorities, and new spiritual discernment. This person also has the desire to become more and more like Jesus, by allowing the Holy Spirit to fill him or her and by following the perfect will of God for his or her life, as God reveals that will to each of them. The more surrendered and sold out to Christ the person becomes, the greater desire that person has to be spiritually different from the world, the flesh, and all of the enticements of Satan. You might say that this newly saved person passes from spiritual death into eternal life, and from this day forward, if the person really gets saved, the main thing in the life of this saved person will be to be like Jesus and to tell others about the salvation he or she has discovered in a personal relationship with Christ.

So folks, regardless of what this modern easy "believeism" world tells us, when we truly come to Christ in personal salvation, then from that day forward, we will not argue against living a holy and sanctified life. This will be one of the main desires of our hearts.

Now, before we move on with our verse-by-verse study, I want to say that while my wife and I were having our daily devotions this morning, we were reading in **Psalms 140**. In this Psalm, David talked about all of his enemies that came against him because of his faith in God. In his discouragement with these attacks, David even prayed for the destruction of his enemies. In our discussion about this passage, I just said to my wife that I just don't understand how David could pray this way, while we are taught in the New Testament to respond to criticism and ridicule with love and forgiveness. But yet, this is the way David prayed when he was under attack for the good things he did. This is the reason that my wife and I are hated by some people in our families, and yes, outside our families as well. They just hate us because of our commitment to Christ, which is because of our Biblical convictions and lifestyle standards from the Bible. They accuse us of being "holier-than-thou" professing Christians just simply because our desire to walk in holiness and in righteousness just makes these people feel so uncomfortable. But, this is just what Jesus told the disciples had happened to Him, and yes, would happen to them, in **John 15:18-21**, ***"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of this world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they***

have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." verse 25, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a cause."

My point is this: if we get serious about living a righteous life and making the Kingdom of God our main priority, then we are going to be brutally hated by those who are not really saved; although they may have been pretending to be so all of their lives. The biggest hurts that we will ever experience always come from those we have loved and ministered to the most! So now, let's dig deep once more into these next verses to discover genuine truth from Paul and our Lord about the seriousness of living separated lives as true believers.

I. NOTICE THE COMPASSION IN PAUL'S MESSAGE. vs. 6:11-13

Before I move on with interpreting these next few verses, I would like to give you some additional words from Dr. John MacArthur, who I believe really introduces this section of Scripture very well. I would remind you that I don't go along with Dr. MacArthur on his staunch Calvinistic beliefs, but he does make some great comments that I would like to share with you.

"The most difficult, painful experience for a faithful minister is to be misrepresented, to be falsely accused, and to have one's integrity unfairly attacked. Such assaults have the potential, by destroying people's trust and confidence in the minister, of devastating his ministry. Such slanderous attacks are hard to retrieve and correct, because those who make them are not interested in the truth. Nor are they motivated by virtue, love, or righteousness, but rather by hatred, revenge, bitterness, jealousy, and self-promotion. Purveyors of such falsehoods do not seek the unity and blessing of the church, the glory of the Lord, or the good of those they attack."⁷¹

"Throughout history, God's faithful servants have endured such slanderous false accusations. The whole early church was wrongly accused of atheism (because Christians rejected the Roman gods), cannibalism (based on a misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper), and immorality (based on a misunderstanding of the holy kiss) (**Romans 16:16**). The papal bull excommunicating Martin Luther said of him, 'This Luther favors the Bohemians and the Turks, deplores the punishment of heretics, spurns the writing of the holy doctors, the decrees of the ecumenical councils, and the ordinances of the Roman pontiffs, and gives credence to the opinions of none save himself alone; which no heretic before ever presumed to do.'⁷²

"Charles Spurgeon's unwavering defense of Biblical truth earned him many enemies. Speaking of the vicious attacks he endured, Spurgeon said, 'Scarce a day rolls over my head in which the most villainous abuse, the most fearful slander is not uttered against me both privately and by the public press; every engine is employed to put down God's minster—every lie that man can invent is hurled at me.'⁷³

⁷¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, II Corinthians, Moody Press, page 233.

⁷² Ibid, page 234.

⁷³ Ibid.

"But no one endured more vicious, relentless, and unjust attacks than the patriarch of ministerial pain, the Apostle Paul. The kingdom of darkness—Satan, the demons, and ungodly people—constantly assaulted him. At Corinth, as noted in previous chapters of this volume, that assault came from false apostles, who attacked his character and spread lies about him. They sought power, money, prominence, and the opportunity to supplant the truth with their demon doctrines. To accomplish those goals, they first had to destroy trust in Paul's character and teachings by falsely accusing him of being a lying, self-serving hypocrite. The confidence of many of the Corinthians was affected, and they were doubting Paul."⁷⁴

"Profoundly concerned, the apostle vigorously defended his integrity, not for his sake, but for the Corinthians'. He was the Lord's personally chosen channel through which divine truth flowed to them. To allow the false teachers' lies to go unchallenged would allow that flow of divine truth to be blocked. Worse, it would allow it to be replaced with false doctrine. Again, here, he reminded them of the integrity he had manifested during his long stay in their city (Acts 18:11), in this text defending his love for them."⁷⁵

Well now, I have quoted these paragraphs from Dr. MacArthur's commentary in order to hopefully get you to understand thoroughly once more that Paul had really gone through a difficult time with the accusers and haters there in the city of Corinth. He had suffered a tremendous amount of agony by these false teachers, but yet Paul had such a tremendous love for the Corinthians that he was willing to put up with a lot of the attacks. We will soon see, he was very candid once more with these people. So now, let's take a look at these individual verses and learn everything we can about why Paul was so emphatic about getting the Corinthians that were truly saved to live a genuinely holy and separated life.

A. It is personal compassion. v. 11a

Paul begins in this verse by calling the Corinthians by name, which he had not done very often before. But here, he wants them to understand that he does have a tremendous love for them personally, in spite of the fact that the church had allowed the false teachers to attack and malign him over and over again. True to his life and testimony, Paul refused to allow his hurt and suffering to squelch his love for the Corinthian people. He loved them with an agapé type love because of the Christ Who lived in his life and soul. Paul loved without expecting any reciprocation, but as we will see, he loved the people enough to tell them the unvarnished truth that they needed to know.

B. It is passionate compassion. v. 11b

In the second part of verse 11, Paul just opens his heart to the Corinthian people. He tells them passionately that he sincerely loves them, but he wants them to pay close attention to what he is about to say to them. Truthfully folks, I don't know how in the world Paul could have loved these Corinthians so much, except for the sweet presence of Christ in his life. Why do I say this? Because of the way he had been treated by the false teachers at Corinth. But, Paul was such a committed follower of Christ that he was not about to allow

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

the hurt and suffering he had been through to squelch his love for these people. Now, let's learn more about Paul's love for the Corinthians from Dr. Ray Stedman.

"Paul had a great affection for the people in Corinth, and he manifested his affection toward them in at least two ways. First, he said, 'We have spoken freely to you.' He communicated with them. He told them, candidly and transparently, what was taking place in his own life. He shared his feelings, his struggles, his failures, his pressures, and his problems."⁷⁶

"We take a chance whenever we open our lives to other people. Our openness can be abused, exploited, and used against us—but authentic Christ-like love is willing to take the risk. To love someone is to be vulnerable. To shut down communication is to withhold love.

This is a major problem in our churches today. Christians think it is right and healthy to be closed, private persons, unwilling to communicate who they are and how they feel and where they struggle in their lives. That's a worldly attitude. The world teaches us to be private and closed. In the body of Christ, we belong to one another and must learn to be open and vulnerable with one another."⁷⁷

"Paul loved the Corinthian believers. '***We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians,***' he says, '***and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you.***' Paul has opened himself to them; he has hidden nothing. Now he wants them to return his affection, not merely for his benefit, but for theirs.

When Paul says that he opened his heart wide to the Corinthians, he means he showed no favoritism. His heart took in everyone, the whole congregation—not just the nice people, but the difficult ones, the hard-to-get-along-with ones. He accepted them all—but they were not loving him in return."⁷⁸

"Love is attractive. The world is looking for love, and if there is one place that the worldlings should be able to find it, it's in the church, which proclaims the love of God. Congregations that are open, warm, and loving are exciting and attractive. They draw people in. That's what the Apostle Paul wants the Corinthian church to be. Love cannot increase in the church unless people respond to love with love. That means we must respond to God's love by loving God—and loving one another. Jesus said that these are the two greatest commandments in Scripture: '***Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.***' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '***Love your neighbor as yourself***' (Matthew 22:37-39)."⁷⁹

C. It is pointed compassion. v. 12

Now in verse 12, we come to a really difficult verse here in our text. Because of the word 'straitened', which is used twice in this verse, it is somewhat difficult for us to understand. The word in the Greek is "*stenochoreo*", which means to be in a narrow place, compressed, and cramped until distressed. I personally believe that what Paul is saying here is that if the Corinthians felt they were in a bind because of all of the confusion in the church at

⁷⁶ Letters to A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 340.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, pages 340-341.

⁷⁹ Ibid, page 341-342.

Corinth, it was not his fault. Instead, it was a tight spot of their own making because of their rejection of the truth he had given them and because they had entertained the phony teaching of the false teachers. In other words, their confusion and cramped feelings were not of Paul's making, but it was of their own unwillingness to believe the truth that he had taught them.

Then, Paul goes one step further when he tells them that they were bound or cramped by their own feelings or emotions. The word bowels here is a reference to the seat of emotions in the mind of Jewish people, and probably some of these vagabond Jews in the church at Corinth. Paul was just very candid with the people by telling them that their emotions had gotten in the way of truth, and that they were being bound or restricted by their own feelings.

May I tell you that this is the reason for many problems in the modern churches of today? People let their emotions get the best of them, and they act and react based upon the restrictions of these emotions. This was what the people in Corinth were doing. But Paul was making very sure that they didn't keep on blaming him for the bad choices they had made for themselves, which had gotten them into trouble. And folks, this is what we need to do today. We need to start holding people in our churches accountable for their bad choices, which lead to bad behavior. We must stop allowing these confused and misguided people to go on blaming others, when in fact, their problems and confusion are the results of their own bad decisions most of the time.

Then, there is something else about this verse that I would like to mention. Many years ago, I read an old preacher's commentary on this passage (I can't remember who this man was.), and he said that because the word 'bowels' referred to the seat of emotions, and in the most explicit way, he said that it is in the intestines where we are moved to the point of despair sometimes because of bad news, bad decisions, and bad advice. The word "bowels" here in the Greek is the word "*splagchnon*", and it usually means bowels, intestines, (the heart, lungs, liver, etc.). The bowels were regarded as the seat of the more violent passions, such as anger and love; but by the Hebrews as the seat of tender affections, esp. kindness, benevolence, compassion; hence our heart (tender mercies, affections, etc.,). But, we do need to remember that when we get bad news, we are usually affected in our bowels. Sometimes our stomachs get upset when we are truly moved with some tremendous passion or when we do get that bad news.

I sincerely believe that what Paul was telling the Corinthians in this short verse was if you are sick on your stomach and in your seat of emotions, it was not his fault, but it was their own fault because of their bad decision to let their emotional attachment to the false teachers restrict their lives, and thus, upset their stomachs. In other words, very vividly, I think Paul was telling these people that their irritable bowel syndrome was not his fault, but it was of their own making. As that old preacher said many years ago, "These people were not smelling like well Christians, but they were smelling like sick Christians would smell." In other words, Paul was telling these Corinthian people that they needed to start having the fragrance of mature believers and stop producing the bad odor of sick children. So, we must conclude that Paul was really quite pointed with these confused people who were pretending to be great believers.

D. It is paternal compassion. v. 13

Verse 13 is not as difficult as **verse 12** was. In this verse, Paul reminds the people that because he, as their mentor and founder of the church in Corinth, had opened up his "enlarged heart" to them, they too should open up their hearts and pay attention to what he was telling them. In other words, they needed to follow the pattern that Paul had set for them by loving them, even when they didn't deserve it. Paul just wanted them to reciprocate his love for them, even when he loved them and they were not acting like Christians. Paul was just frankly telling them that it was time for them to have enough respect for him that they would start following his example, which he set when he had listened to and loved them, when in fact, they did not deserve it.

II. NOTICE THE CAUTION IN PAUL'S MESSAGE. v. 14

Paul had just told the Corinthians that he was going to be very open and candid with them and that he prayed they would open their hearts to what he wanted to tell them. The truth was that because of the apostasy and false teachers in the church, they had to be warned of impending dire consequences if they allowed those corrupt false teachers to continue to lead them astray. So, in order to overcome the temptations to follow the wrong crowd, Paul told these professing believers that they needed to be cautious about three primary things in their lives. We will talk much about these three areas, which are revealed to us in **verse 14**. Let's glean much truth from this verse and make sure that we don't fall victim to the same temptations that the Corinthians were obviously succumbing to. Please take the truth of this verse seriously!

A. Paul cautions the Corinthians against unholy partnerships. v. 14a

In order to explain the first part of this verse, I want to share with you a verse of Scripture from **Deuteronomy 22:10**, "***Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass (donkey) together.***" The word "yoke" in this verse is talking about getting connected together with those in the world that don't know Jesus. Paul warns the people in Corinth to not become unequally (unevenly) yoked together with people who are lost without Christ.

"Paul writes here of becoming involved with unbelievers in such a way that these associations limit us, drag us down, and keep us from being what we ought to be in Christ. Paul says, '***Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.***'"

What is a yoke? In the culture of Paul's day, a yoke was a familiar implement of agriculture. It is a wooden frame or bar with loops at either end, fitted around the necks of two animals to tie them together and cause them to work as a team. That's what Paul speaks of here. He's thinking of a passage from the Old Testament Law that says, 'Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.' (**Deuteronomy 22:10**)."⁸⁰

"This may seem like a strange command, but God had good reason for instructing Israel not to tie together two animals of a different nature. I have never seen an ox and a donkey yoked together, but once, while I was traveling in the Middle East, I saw a farmer plowing his field with a camel and a donkey under the same yoke. It would have been comical if it hadn't been sad. The camel was much taller than the donkey, and his legs were longer.

⁸⁰ Ibid, pages 342-343.

Because the camel's stride was long, the little donkey had to run to keep up. The farmer let the camel set the pace, and he beat the donkey to force him to go faster. Both animals were miserable because they were unequally yoked."⁸¹

Folks, do you get the truth of what Paul told the Corinthians? If a saved man or woman is unequally yoked together in any way, then there is going to be misery, especially for the believer who knows that he or she should not be going in the direction with the world. The idea here of partnership is that the believer should not, in any serious way, be hooked up with an unbeliever.

Now, I want to mention what some scholars believe, considering this verse within the Corinthian culture and environment. Some good men believe that because of Corinth's infatuation with sexual immorality in view of the Grecian culture, these scholars think that maybe Paul was telling the Corinthians what he had told them back in **I Corinthians, Chapter 6**. In **I Corinthians 6:15-18**, Paul warned these same Corinthians about desecrating the temple (their bodies) of God by committing immoral sexual relationships such as fornication and other wicked relationships. He told them that they must remember that their bodies were not their own, but that after Christ purchased their redemption, their bodies were the temple where God dwells in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they must not desecrate God's temple by immoral behavior. In fact, Paul told these Corinthians that they needed to flee from or run away from this kind of sin. Paul will mention this again when we get to **verse 16**.

Folks, I am totally convinced that within the city of Corinth where there was the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of fertility, Paul did not want these professing Christians to go up to this pagan temple and join themselves to the prostitutes that were a part of this pagan worship. So, he just warned them about these unholy partnerships.

I also believe that they could have sinned in any kind of partnership with an unbeliever, whether it was sexually, socially, or even in a combined partnership in business. This was not right because a saved child of God must operate his or her life with different standards and convictions than an unsaved person. Now, I am not talking here about complete isolation from the lost, but I believe Paul is referring to immoral, societal, or business relationships that should never occur with a saved and an unsaved person. The genuinely born again child of God needs to live a separated life when it comes to regularly hanging out with unsaved people.

B. Paul cautions against unholy fellowships. v. 14b

In the middle part of this **verse 14**, we find another admonition from Paul to the Corinthian people. He tells them that they must not only stop having intimate fellowship with unsaved people, but they must also stop fellowshipping with those who are unsaved. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Paul is not encouraging the Corinthian believers to isolate themselves from the unsaved, but they are not to have close communion or intimacy with them. Why? Because righteousness cannot commune with unrighteousness. Once a person genuinely gets saved, that person becomes a new creature in Christ, and from that point on in his or her life, he or she is to live with those different standards and convictions from what he or she lived before they got saved.

⁸¹ Ibid, page 343.

When I think of the word fellowship, I not only think of a warm and kind relationship, but I think of intimacy where one person shares his or her heart with another. I think of concern and constant civility, along with compassion and empathy. So, the truth is, that we who have truly been saved have no business becoming intimate with unbelievers at all. We need to always keep the door open for communication in order to find a way to win these people to Christ, but we must never compromise our convictions or standards in order to get along closely with these people. My question to you the reader is, "Do you have any unholy fellowships that you need to stop immediately?" If you do, I would hope that these instructions from this chapter of God's Word might inspire you to stop your fellowship and intimate friendship with those who have a different value system than you do.

C. Paul cautions against unholy relationships. v. 14c

In the last part of this verse, Paul shows another impossible relationship, which cannot be allowed in a believer's life. That is the relationship between darkness and light. In **Matthew 5:14-16**, we find some tremendous words from our Savior about those who really do get genuinely saved. These words reveal the impossible fellowship and relationship between darkness and light. Let's look at these verses. ***"Ye are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*** These are wonderful verses revealing to us the difference our lives should be once we get truly saved. When we walk into a room, we should light up that room with the light of Jesus Christ. When we come in contact with any lost person, our lives should be so different that the lost person is influenced by the light. We are not to cover up our true light with the darkness of political correctness or our compromising with sin. We are to walk humbly, but yet with pride, because Christ lives within us. We want our lights to shine brightly in order to bring glory to God. So folks you see, we can't mix darkness with light, because if we are truly children of the light, our light of Jesus will dispel the darkness of sin all around us. Therefore, we must stop all unholy relationships immediately after we get saved. Oh yes, we might need to use some spiritual grace and tact to sever these relationships, but we must not try to co-exist with the lost world just to keep from offending them. We are to shine brightly every day that we live, and we are to do this without fear or favor. If we do this, we definitely will alienate some people, but maybe ultimately we can win them to Christ just because we refused to compromise the light of our Biblical principles and standards.

Now, I want to give you several paragraphs from another commentator about these words of separation. I pray you will pay close attention in order to get some inspiration to stop being used by the lost world and its system.

"Forty years ago liberal theologian Langdon Gilkey gave the assessment of his church in America, an assessment that could describe much of the evangelical church today:

All around us we see the church well acclimated to culture: successful, respected, wealthy, full, and growing. But are the transcendent and the holy there? In the area of belief we find widespread indifference to the Bible and ignorance of its contents—and strong resentment if a biblical word of judgment is brought to bear on the life of the congregation.

In worship we find notably lacking any sense of the holy presence of God and of what worship is for.....In ethics we find the cultural ideals of friendliness and fellowship more evident that the difficult standards of the New Testament or historic Christendom.

Hearing this today, who can deny that biblical ignorance, and absence of holiness in worship, and ethical accommodation have become widespread among evangelicals? As Joe Bayly, author and editor, wrote, 'The evangelical church is sick—so sick that people are crowding into join us. We're a big flock, big enough to permit remarriage of divorced people (beyond the exceptions of the Word of God), big enough to permit practicing homosexuals to pursue their lifestyle, big enough to tolerate almost anything pagans do. We're no longer narrow; it's a wide road of popular acceptance for us.' "⁸²

"Just as throughout history, the evangelical church's greatest danger is from within. And this where the opening command of our text intersects our lives: ***'Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.'*** The command is not (as is commonly thought) an injunction against marrying unbelievers or entering into contracted relationships with non-Christians (though both actions are un-Biblical), but rather a command not to be yoked together with those in the church who oppose the truth—unbelievers in the church.

The reason that we must understand 'unbelievers' as opponents within the church is that in Paul's long argument that precedes and follows this command, he repeatedly references his opponents in the Corinthian church as to their slanderous attacks on his apostleship as well as their bogus devotion in worshiping health and wealth and in preaching another kind of Jesus. In effect, they are unbelievers because they dis (belittle) the Gospel! Thus, those Corinthians who persist in siding with Paul's opponents will in effect renounce their own salvation, because it was through Paul that they received the message of grace and reconciliation. Therefore, to be yoked together in the unbelieving viewpoint of Paul's opponents is in effect to reject the Gospel of reconciliation and deny their own authenticity."⁸³

III. NOTICE THE CAUSE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE. vs. 15-16

So now, we go a step further and discover why Paul so frankly told the professing Christians, who were really unbelievers, in the church at Corinth that they should not be unequally yoked together with these phony false teaching unbelievers who were in the church at Corinth, always ready to attack Paul and his ministry. Therefore, let's move forward and find out why Paul was so adamant about the genuine Christians' coming out and being separate from these phonies, as we will see more fully soon in our study.

A. Paul's message was caused because of the impossibility of peace between the Savior and Satan. v. 15a

The first part of this verse is a very simple question. The question was and still is today, "When can there be concord (peace) between Christ and Belial (Satan)?" The answer is, "Never!" It is absolutely impossible for peace between Jesus and Satan, and this has been

⁸² II Corinthians, By: Kent Hughes, Crossway, page 140.

⁸³ Ibid.

going on since Satan was cast out of his role in heaven thousands of years ago. We are in a constant warfare with Satan, and when his cohorts come into our churches and pretend to be saints, there is nothing but conflict ahead with the true people of God. Therefore, what Paul is trying to tell the Corinthians is that if we are to avoid conflict with Satan and his followers, then we must decide up front to have no personal fellowship or communion with these devil servants. It is our choice, which we have to make, to separate ourselves from these people, even if we are considered self-righteous or egotistical. We are not trying to be holier than they are, but we are trying to be holy, which they cannot be as a command of our Lord.

Please notice once more what Dr. Kent Hughes says about this temptation to fellowship and hang out closely with those who are not really saved, but they are in the membership roll of the church.

"But in the context here, we are to disassociate ourselves from complicity with those who would attempt to propagate a false gospel within the church. Specifically, it means to sever the yoke with those who insinuate that reconciliation is not all of God and that we can make peace with God, that the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross in which God **'made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God' (5:21)** is not enough, but rather there are rituals and experiences and works that will make our salvation secure. Today it means to reject liberal, moralizing theories of the atonement. It means to reject a bootstrap sentimentality that if we do our best we will make it and that good people will find a way. And within the church, it demands that we never allow those who hold such doctrines to be yoked with us in ministry."⁸⁴

B. Paul's message was caused because of the impossibility of peace between the saint and the sinner. v. 15b

In **Romans 12:17-18**, Paul made the following statement, ***"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as in you, live peaceably with all men."*** In these two verses, Paul admonished the Christians in Rome not to allow their malice to build until they sought revenge toward those who had hurt them. But, Paul says, ***"...as much as it is possible, live peaceably with all men."*** Now, I have a difficult time understanding how in this text in **Romans**, Paul tells the believers not to fight back or seek revenge, and in our text in **II Corinthians**, Paul tells the Christians in Corinth to have nothing to do with those false people who have wronged them. My point is that sometimes we can do everything we possibly can to seek to have peace with others in the church, but then, these hypocritical people just refuse to reciprocate the kindness which has been shown to them. Therefore, we are admonished to just come out from these evil people and try our best to live apart from these folks without compromising our convictions or standards.

So, why does Paul teach that this is the way we should live with those false people in our church family? He does so because it is absolutely impossible for a true saint of God who loves Jesus, to have intimate fellowship with a lost person who loves the world. Trying to mix the saint with the sinner is like trying to mix oil and water. Therefore, we must be careful to keep the channels of communication open with those who are not saved, even

⁸⁴ Ibid, page141.

within the church, but we must not compromise our Biblical convictions and standards in order to fellowship with these lost people.

C. Paul's message was caused because of the impossibility of peace between the sanctuary and the symbols. v. 16

Earlier in this study, I discussed the fact that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, if we really have been saved. Therefore, whatever we do in these bodies should only be done if our deeds or actions are of a holy nature and if they bring honor and glory to God. We who are truly saved are the genuine temples of God, but those who are pretending to be saved, even if they are in the church, are mere replicas of the real temple of God. In fact, these phony people and false teachers are just mirages of the real thing. In other words, they are counterfeit Christians who are just going through the motion of being religious, but they don't know Christ. Thus, there can be no peace between the real temple of God and those who are pretending to be sanctuaries; places where God dwells. So, all that we can say is that religious pretenders, like those false teachers in the church in Corinth, are just mere symbols of the real thing. Therefore, we who are truly saved cannot dwell in complete peace with these phonies because we have nothing in common. So, it is mandatory that we stay away from these people when it comes to trying to have a close relationship.

IV. NOTICE THE COMMAND IN PAUL'S MESSAGE. v. 17

The command that Paul now gives the Corinthians is that they are to voluntarily and willfully separate themselves from those who are not genuinely saved and to have no conformity or complicity with those who teach false doctrine by their lives and by their instructions. We are to be different and live a clean pure life under the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not to compromise our convictions, our beliefs, or any of our righteous standards for any reason or excuse whatsoever. We are to be completely different from those who are still lost, even if they are pretending to be saved by overt religious practices.

A. It is a separating command. v. 17a

In the Greek, the word "*separate*" has two meanings. In a bad sense, it means to exclude those who are not saved as disreputable. In a good sense, it means to appoint or set apart for some good purpose. When I read this definition, the first thing I think about is what this same Paul said in **Romans 16:17-18**, when he told the Roman believers to avoid those who cause problems in the flock. Please read carefully these verses: ***"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."***

The truth that Paul really brings out here is that when there are false or phony teachers in the body of Christ, then, we are to avoid them at all costs. In fact, when it says to "mark" these people, it actually means to fix our eyes on these trouble makers and watch whatever they do, but the main thing is to walk on the other side of the street from them. In other

words, stay away from these people, and yet keep your eyes on them from a distance in order to make sure they don't do evil to the body of Christ. In other words, keep these people under surveillance, lest they continue to do much damage to the church—the body of Christ!

We are to separate ourselves from religious pretenders who really don't know Christ, and we are to keep avoiding them, except for the purpose of trying to lovingly lead them to Jesus. As I stated before, we are not to shun these people completely. We are to keep the door open for us to possibly win them to Jesus, but we are not to be close or intimate with these who know not Christ.

B. It is a Sovereign command. v. 17b

Because of the severity of this command to believers in Corinth, Paul told the professing believers that this was a direct command from the Sovereign Lord of the universe. Because of where this command comes from, the believers in Corinth, and yes, we Christians today, must obey this command without hesitation.

The command that Paul gave to the Corinthian believers in this verse was to “come out and be separate” from those in the world. Now, the next thing that is mentioned in this command given by our wonderful Lord is, ***“Touch not the unclean thing.”*** The word “touch” here in the Greek means much more than we in this generation would customarily think. The word actually means to not grasp hold of something or not even to become intimate with someone of the opposite sex who is not morally clean. The idea here is that we as God's children should abstain from becoming intimate or extremely close to any non-believer because of the danger to succumb to temptation and commit grave sin. This doesn't mean that we should not keep the door open for evangelism and witnessing, but it does mean that we should not hang out with people who are unsaved and have the tendency to negatively influence those who are truly children of God. We all know that when most people give in to wicked temptation, it is usually the negative influence of some evil person who might even pretend to be a believer, just like the false teachers in Corinth.

C. It is a sanctifying command. v. 17c

The last phrase of this verse says, if you separate from the world, those who are evil, then, our wonderful Lord will receive us as a proud Father graciously receives His children. I also like the thought that when we truly become set apart for Jesus with the determination to refrain from evil seduction, He will be proud to call us his children; and thus, we will bring pleasure to the heart of God. We must always remember that the sanctifying process begins at the moment of salvation, and then it will continue as we submit or surrender more of our lives to Christ. In other words, sanctification is a progressive process until the day we die or when Jesus comes to rapture the church. By the way, if we are truly devoted children of God, we will be committed to becoming more and more like Jesus until the day we die, and in the process, we will be more empowered to serve Him faithfully.

V. NOTICE THE COMMENDATION IN PAUL'S MESSAGE. vs. 17d-18

A. It is a pleasing commendation. v. 17d

"Finally, Paul tells, '***Come out from them and be separate,***' says the Lord. '***Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, say the Lord Almighty.***'

God is saying to us, 'I love you, I want to make you my royal son, my royal daughter. I want to be a Father to you—tender, loving Father. I can't do that while you are giving all your affection to my enemy. I can't lead you into my light while you choose the darkness. I can't lead you into my righteousness while you choose evil. I want to bless your life, but I can't do that while you choose to be yoked to everything that is opposed to me.'⁸⁵

B. It is a parental commendation. v. 18a

Well now, as we come to this last verse in this chapter, we see a reiteration of what Paul had already stated in **verse 17** about what God would say to a separated believer when He said, ***"...and I will receive you."*** This just simply stated means that God is very happy to call us His own when we live a separated sanctified life before the lost world. You see folks, Jesus knows that it is truly hard for a believer to live in a world of wickedness and viciousness and stay holy in this unholy world. Yet, it is a joy to know that Christ is truly taking knowledge of our dedication and holiness, and for sure, He is keeping a record of this until the day when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. So, it is just like we take pleasure in the obedience of our children and grandchildren when they obey us and follow our instructions, God the Father is extremely pleased when we follow His instructions and will for our lives.

C. It is a promising commendation. v. 18b

I like very much this portion of verse 18. In this section we are told that if we live separated and holy lives, God will be pleased to call us His children. But there is more to this than just bringing pleasure to the heart of God. You see folks, if we are truly sons and daughters of God the Father, then we have access to His complete inheritance for us. Please read the following promises from **Ephesians 1:10-12**, ***"That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth; even in Him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after His own will: That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."***

By the way, let me mention something here one more time. I am not a Calvinist, and I say that because this is one of those passages that is used to promote the false doctrine of Calvinism. In these verses, we are told that God has predestinated every child of God a great inheritance, which He will certainly fulfill to every child of God. The word here and in other places in the Bible never refers to lost people, but it always refers to God's predetermined purpose and will for His children. Therefore, it is totally wrong to ever believe or teach that before the foundation of the world, God predestinated some to be saved and others to go to hell. This is false doctrine just like the false doctrine that was being taught in the church

⁸⁵ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, pages 346-347.

in Corinth. This predestination is only revealing God's planned purpose and inheritance for the truly born again child of God.

D. It is a powerful commendation v. 18c

So my friends, we come to the end of verse 18, and here we find a tremendous reminder. That reminder is that this command for separation from those who are evil, in order that we can live a righteous life, has been given by our Almighty God. Thus, the command and the commendation come from God the Father because of His love for His own people when they bring pleasure to His heart by the way they live a holy lifestyle. Now, I want to give you some additional information from Dr. Chuck Swindoll's commentary on **II Corinthians**. Please pay close attention to these admonishing words.

"In a world as big and as busy as ours, coldness seems to rule the day. People on the street don't respond to polite greetings. Baristas at the coffee shop barely make eye contact. Even friends and family members sometimes respond to our attempts at engaging in meaningful conversation with 'Text me.' No matter how sunny it may seem outside, the world feels like a pretty icy place. And as warm-blooded beings, we all continue to crave the warmth of relationships like we crave the warmth of a fire after a day in the snow. When we don't get this kind of warmth and acceptance from our families, friends, and fellow believers, we will seek it elsewhere."⁸⁶

"This desire for acceptance and respect from others drives some young people to engage in sexual intimacy before marriage. It makes teens adopt dress styles and behaviors that identify them with a group or gang. It lures men away from their hectic families toward a responsibility-free adulterous relationship. Don't get me wrong: the need for acceptance and respect doesn't excuse these behaviors, but it does help us make sense of them. People long for someone to notice them, to drop what they're doing and pay attention, to care about them, to love them. They want authentic relationships more than anything on earth. All of us do.

As the 1980s country song goes, however, too many people are 'lookin' for love in the wrong places'. As a result, they find themselves in a pit of despair and distress out of which they can't seem to climb. Only when we find our acceptance in a reverent relationship with God will we discover a true respect for others that can develop into warm, growing, and healthy relationships. When that happens, we will have vertical and horizontal stability to find relief in the midst of distress."⁸⁷

VI. NOTICE THE CHALLENGE IN PAUL'S MESSAGE. v. 7:1

I believe most of us know that the Bible in its original form did not have chapter breaks or verses. This was included by others who translated the Book to make it easier to understand. Sometimes these translators probably stopped one chapter before they should have, and then sometimes they started prematurely, thus, causing some problems for future readers.

⁸⁶ Swindoll's Living Insights, New Testament Commentary, I and II Corinthians,
By: Chuck Swindoll, Tyndale, page 388.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

This is the problem we have here as we move from **Chapter 6** into **Chapter 7**. Verse one of this chapter begins referring back to the promises that Paul had written about in **Chapter 6**, which were given to true children of God who would clean up their lives and reach a point of holiness in the way they lived. Therefore, we pick up this story by realizing what Paul tells in verse one of this chapter is that truly saved people needed to get busy cleaning up their lives so that they could indeed receive the promises that God had made to them. So, let's look at verse one of this chapter and find the challenge that Paul has given to each of us as believers.

A. There is the challenge to personal housecleaning. v. 1a

The first part of this verse starts out with a warm greeting once more from Paul to the Corinthian believers. He calls these people "dearly beloved", which indicates Paul's true feelings for these people and how he considered them to be priceless as far as he was concerned. He truly loved them, and all that he wanted for their good was for their respect back toward him as he showed them his love and their responsibilities to clean up their lives.

1. There must be cleansing of our actions (deeds). v. 1a-1

Paul begins this first verse by reflecting back on the promises of God, and then, he immediately tells the believers in Corinth that they have the responsibility to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh. This filthiness actually means any defilement that one might have in his or her deeds. In other words, Paul was telling these believers that if they wanted to come out and be separate from the world, in order to receive the blessings of the Lord, then they needed to repent of any known sinful deed in their lives. You see folks, at the moment of our salvation, we have to repent of being a sinner by nature. But, after getting saved, every believer should repent regularly of the sins (plural) that we commit daily in our lives. This is why we find what John the Apostle said in **I John 1:9**. *"If we confess our sins [plural], He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Yes, I know that when we get saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, all of our sins are washed away. But, we do have the responsibility to keep our lives clean by appropriating the forgiveness God has placed in our spiritual bank account in order to go to bed every night confessed up to date. So, we have the responsibility to clean up our actions or deeds daily.

2. There must be cleansing of our attitudes (desires.) v. 1a-2

The next thing we see in verse one about our cleansing is that we must clean up our spirits. Personally, I believe this is referring to the sinful attitudes or desires that we regularly have because of the weakness of the flesh, and also, I believe because of the negligence in reading and studying God's Word. In **Psalms 119:11**, we find these words, *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* Therefore, if we are to have clean attitudes and desires, we must not only repent of our sins daily, but we must spend time in hiding the Word of God in our hearts and lives as a preventative medicine against the temptations of Satan. We must always remember that before we sin

with our deeds, we always sin with our desires and attitudes. So I would encourage every one of you reading this commentary to clean up your actions and your attitudes in order to be holy before Christ and to be able to claim His promises and power.

B. There is the challenge of perfecting holiness. v. 1b

So now, what does Paul mean when he tells the Corinthian believers that they need to work on perfecting holiness? Well, the truth here is that daily we have to work on completing the sanctification process that was begun at the moment of salvation. This process of sanctification starts at the moment of salvation when Jesus sets us apart for Himself. But then, every day after that salvation experience, we must continue to work on our holiness and purity before God, and yes, before others in this world as well. The best way I believe we should interpret this is that daily we are to grow in grace, get more of the sins out of our lives, and develop a lifestyle of moral purity and close fellowship with Jesus. I assure you that the more we have of Christ's presence and power in our lives, the more purity and holiness we will demonstrate before Him and others.

C. There is the challenge of providential hallowedness. v. 1c

In the very last phrase of this verse, we find these words, "***perfecting holiness in the fear of God***". Please notice the "fear of God" statement. What Paul is telling the Corinthians in this short phrase is that they should desire to clean up their actions and their attitudes because of their reverential fear of Almighty God. In other words, those Corinthians and all of us as believers today should love and respect the One Who died to save us enough that we will show our appreciation to Him by cleaning up our lives and by living every day in a Christ-honoring way. Our reverence should be of the highest nature, because there is no one anywhere in the universe as holy and almighty as our wonderful Lord. Truly, God through His providential plan for us, requires us to live a holy lifestyle in order to bring praise and glory to Him. Therefore, the only way this is going to happen is by our cleaning up our lives and living a life of progressive sanctification every day we live. And, may I say that this is the least that could be expected after all that Christ has done for us! We should count it all joy to live a radiant and righteous life for the King of kings and the Lord of lords!

VII. NOTICE THE CALL IN PAUL'S MESSAGE. v. 7:2

I think it is rather ironic that in verse one Paul appeals to the Corinthians to clean up their lives and live righteously, and then here in verse 2, he immediately begins to appeal to these professing believers in Corinth to receive him and accept him as an apostle of our Lord. As I was reading this, the thought came to me that if a person is not clean morally and in actions and deeds, there is no way that any person can look beyond someone's faults and mistakes and forgive them. So, I believe Paul used the latter part of **Chapter 6**, and the first verse in this chapter to appeal for these pretending righteous people to, in fact, start living righteously. Then, if this takes place, surely they will recognize the credibility of Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ and respond to him as a person by receiving him, and yes, paying attention to what he preaches and teaches. So, after giving the Corinthians a challenge to get right with God, he now gives them a call to open their hearts to him as God's servant, yes,

even when there were false teachers in that congregation. Holy people would be able to differentiate between holy authentic people and those who were unholy hypocritical religious pretenders.

A. So, there is the call for reception. v. 2a

"First, Paul states that he himself has a clear conscience: **'Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one.'** There has probably been murmured accusations about Paul, and he makes it clear that he has never done the things he's accused of."⁸⁸ So, he pleads with the professing believers to respect him, and yes, open their arms wide to him. Most assuredly, they should do this because he is the one that brought them the Gospel message. And, in spite of their horrible confusion, the one who told them about Jesus should be respected and received well.

B. So, there is the call for realization. v. 2b

1. Paul calls for the realization that he has damaged no man.
2. Paul calls for the realization that he has defiled no man.
3. Paul calls for the realization that he has defrauded (robbed) no man.

"If Paul is guilty of any wrongdoing, then that is where he should begin—with honest confession and repentance on his own part. But Paul has searched his own conscience, and it is clear. He has established the truth of the matter, and he states that he has wronged no man."⁸⁹

VIII. NOTICE THE COMFORT IN PAUL'S MESSAGE. vs. 7:3-4

A. There is comfort in Paul's dedication to the people. v. 3

"Paul states that he does not condemn the Corinthian believers. He writes, ***"I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you."*** The Apostle Paul is a great student of human nature. He knows that when calling someone to repentance, the worst thing you can do is lash out with condemnation. When people feel attacked, they naturally defend themselves. It is impossible to be repentant and defensive at the same time.

So Paul says, 'I'm so committed to you that I would willingly live or die with you.' That's an extravagant statement of affection. Who could feel attacked or condemned after hearing such words? Who could feel defensive? No one."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Letters To A Troubled Church, I and II Corinthians, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 349.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid, page 350.

"When we respect someone, we don't condemn them. Some of the Corinthians had done some pretty awful things. Many others had condoned them, and some even celebrated and encouraged them. Furthermore, many harbored negative attitudes toward Paul, and the faction of the Judaizers—Paul's arch-nemeses—still held sway over a part of the congregation. Paul could have shunned the Corinthians, saving himself time, energy, and expensive paper by simply writing them off until they repented. The 'silent treatment' would have been understandable in this situation. Yet, Paul respected the Corinthians enough to restrain himself from condemnatory words and actions that would have slammed the door shut on their relationship. Though he confronted them for their sin, Paul went to great lengths to couch his criticism in love and respect."⁹¹

B. There is comfort in Paul's defense of his preaching. v. 4a

In the first part of this verse, Paul tells the believers in Corinth that because of his love for them, he had used boldness of speech toward them in the hope that they would respond positively to what he was telling them. He said this because he still called them his glory in the ministry. We will address this a little more in the next point of our outlines.

C. There is the comfort in Paul's description of his pride. v. 4b

In the middle of this verse, Paul tells the believers that they are his glory because he has so much pride in them. May I tell you folks that I will never be able to discern the genuine love and affection that Paul had for the people he tried to minister to! Here was an ornery group of professing believers in Corinth that had given Paul more problems than any other group of people, unless it was the Jews, and Paul just loves them so much that he tells them how proud he was of them. In truth, they gave him a bit of a proud reason to glory in them. He felt this way in spite of the way they had abused him as God's servant. There is a great lesson here for all of us, but I don't know if I am ready to follow Paul's pattern at this time. I know I should, but it is just so hard to express love and thanksgiving for those who have hurt you so much. But, may we get some comfort from the way Paul handled these rebel rousers and maybe push on to a more loving and caring attitude and actions.

D. There is comfort in Paul's delight in the midst of the problems. v. 4c

In the very last phrase of this verse 4, Paul makes an astounding statement. He tells the Corinthians that in spite of all of his troubles and suffering, he still has found joy that has kept him going. The truth is, he even says that he had exceeding joy. Do you remember what Peter told the Jewish Christians in **I Peter**? This is what he said to them: ***"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: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."*** (**I Peter 1:8-9**). The people that Peter was writing to were also going through great trials of suffering and pain. But, like what He did for Paul, God turned the pain of the Jewish Christians into praise! Hallelujah!

⁹¹ Op. Cit., page 390.

"The Corinthians had made more than a few mistakes in their Christian walk. They had stumbled, fallen, gotten up, and stumbled again. How easy it would have been for Paul to diagnose the situation pessimistically and assign a bleak prognosis: Spiritually Terminal—Do Not Resuscitate!

Paul, however, treated his spiritual children with respect not for what they had done, but for what they could do; not for what they were, but for what they could become. Paul, being the greathearted man he was, believed in them, even when they failed. He stuck with them, encouraging them and spurring them toward greatness. He poured his life into them even when he saw no return on his investment knowing that they were worth every moment of time and every ounce of energy he spent on them. Thankfully, by the time he wrote II Corinthians, he had begun to see signs of renewal and repentance. His confidence had begun to pay off; he could even boast on their behalf."⁹²

Conclusion

We have now come to the end of **Chapter 6** in our Bible study. This has been another rather long chapter, just because of the enormous content, which God has given us through Paul the great Apostle. During this chapter, we have discovered that Paul sent a tremendous message to the Corinthian believers about the importance of separating themselves from the world in order to be a clean and holy people.

In the last part of **Chapter 6 of II Corinthians**, Paul asked the believers in Corinth to open their hearts and minds to him, as he had opened his heart and mind to them. Paul spoke to these Corinthians as a father would to his children, pleading with them to separate themselves from unholy partnerships, unholy fellowships, and also from unholy relationships. He goes on then, to explain that it is impossible for Godly saved people to be aligned with Satan and his followers because of the fact that they have nothing in common. And, if a saved person actually did align himself or herself with someone evil, then for sure this believer would have to compromise his or her convictions and standards. There can be no real peace between the Savior and Satan, between the saint and the sinner, and between the sanctuary or temple of God and a religious sanctuary or religious symbols.

Therefore, Paul pleads with the Christians in Corinth to come out and be different from the casual false religious people that were pretending to be believers in the church in Corinth. In order to do this, every child of God needs to clean up his or her life and make sure that he or she lives a holy life, in order for God the Father to receive and accept him or her with pleasure and spiritual pride. You see folks, the choice is for every believer to make the decision to be as much like Jesus as possible, and this can only happen when each child of God cleans up his or her actions and attitudes in order to follow Christ intimately. When there is this intimacy, then every believer will have a compassionate heart, which will lead to passionate activity or ministry toward others in the name of Jesus Christ and for His glory.

Also in this chapter, Paul challenged the believers in Corinth to receive him and his message with open arms and open hearts, because this is the way Paul had received them. Paul was just asking for reciprocal love and appreciation in response to the love and appreciation he had shown to the believers in Corinth. Paul truly appealed for the people's

⁹² Ibid, pages 390-392.

positive response to him and his message, because he wanted the people to be holy, live a righteous life, and also be recipients of God's manifold blessings upon their lives.

Finally in this chapter, Paul reminds the believers in Corinth that because of his love for the Corinthians, as he contemplated the potential they had, he sincerely was proud of them, even if they had given him a lot of trouble. And of course, there is probably no greater problematic church described in the New Testament than the one that Paul established in Corinth. And yet, because of his love for this church, Paul was able to rejoice in the midst of a lot of suffering and to even take joy in what God was doing in the lives of those in the church that were truly saved born again children of God.

So my dear friends, I do hope that you might have been challenged by this straight forward message to the church at Corinth, and I pray that you, like me, may have been brought under conviction about some things I need to change in my life. I hope you will respond to this powerful message as well. Truly, we need to come out and be separate people of God!

Chapter Seven

"PAUL'S JOY OVER RECONCILIATION WITH THE CORINTHIANS"

Scripture: II Corinthians 7:5-16

Introduction

Well, I have much to say in this introduction to this next chapter. But after reading from Dr. Chuck Swindoll's Commentary on **II Corinthians**, I just want you to read this great introduction to these next verses where Paul reveals his joy over his reconciliation with the Corinthian church. This is wonderful material, and we should glean much practical application from it as we move on into **Chapter 7** of my commentary. I can tell you that I really needed what Dr. Swindoll wrote here for us!

"In **II Corinthians 7:1-7**, we read Paul's account of going from moping on his rainy days (**7:5-6**) to singing in the rain (**7:4, 7**). How did he do it? We saw Paul had already established the essential ingredients for finding relief from his distress. He cultivated a reverent relationship with God, and he maintained a respectful relationship with others. By means of these things, the God of the universe, who promises to abide with His people, provided comfort through Paul's interpersonal relationships with Titus and the Corinthians (**7:5-7**). What a simple, yet significant prescription for relief!

Yet, between the lines of these verses, I see two more principles at work that can enable us to face discouraging days, like Paul did, and still find ourselves singing during the rainy days of our lives.

First, denying difficulties complicate our lives. I hear and see a lot of denial among Christians, as if honestly admitting our faults and frailty were sinful. But admission is health, and denial complicates things. If it's raining, it's raining. If you're cold, you're cold. If you're sad, you're sad. There's nothing spiritual about denying depression if you're depressed. Scripture never says we are not to grieve. It says we are not to grieve as those who have no hope (**I Thessalonians 4:13**). There is room for a lot of tears in that kind of grief, but they aren't hopeless tears. Denial of difficulties will complicate our problems. It prevents us from dealing with them, from bringing them to the Lord, and from being comforted by others around us."⁹³

"Are you harboring internal grief all alone? Deep-seated fear or worry, veils depression! Let it out! Bring it to your pastor, your spouse, your counselor, teacher, friend, or physician. If we deny the rain, we also deny the warmth and comfort that God wants to give us through others."⁹⁴

"Second, resenting the rain stunts our growth. James said, '*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.*' (**James. 1:2**). The storms of life can teach us lessons, exercise our patience, drive us to depend on God's strengthening grace, and deliver us from a wrong course of sin. When life rains cats and dogs, we should stop, look, and listen.

⁹³ Swindoll's Living Insights, I and II Corinthians, By: Chuck Swindoll, Tyndale, page 394.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

We should stop feeling sorry for ourselves or blaming someone else. It is noteworthy that the Apostle Paul blamed no one. We need to put our blame to bed and put our resentment to rest."⁹⁵

"Look for lessons to be learned in the rain. This can get tricky. Sometimes we won't know the lessons until it's sunny again. Sometimes we may never know exactly why God allowed a particularly difficult storm. We can look to God, however, and trust that His good and perfect will was accomplished throughout the difficulty. Looking for lessons in the rain can keep us from focusing only on the rain.

We also need to listen. In the noise of the rain, the Spirit of God sings silent lyrics with a distinct rhythm, discernible only to our souls through the ears of faith. I don't think we have any idea how many great songs were planted in the soil of pain and sorrow, how many great thoughts grew out of rainy days. Many of the great hymns were birthed from wombs of woe. Listen to what the Lord is teaching you about yourself, about life, about others, and about Him in the midst of the rain."⁹⁶

I. NOTICE THE NEWS OF THIS RECONCILIATION. vs. 5-8

The first thing we are going to look at in these next few verses is the way Paul the Apostle got the news about the changed attitude which the Corinthians had developed toward this dear man of God, and also, the message, which Titus the great friend of Paul, brought to him at Philippi from where he wrote this Epistle. **Verse 8** tells us that when Paul had written a previous letter to the Corinthians, his words had hurt some of the people. I suppose this was simply because of Paul's frustration with them, but also, just probably because his patience was wearing thin with these problematic people. But then we find that Paul told them that he learned from Titus that their hurt was only temporary, and this made Paul to feel much better. Now, let's look at three points about this news.

A. Notice the messenger who brought the news. vs. 5-6

When Paul first arrived in the province of Macedonia, it seems that Paul was really nervous about the hurt and damage he may have caused by one of his previous letters which he wrote to the Corinthian people. **Verse 5** tells us that when he arrived in Macedonia, he could not rest, but he was troubled on every side. On the outside, there were many fightings, and on the inside, he had many fears. Folks, if you can remember what Dr. Swindoll said in the Introduction to this chapter, then you know that Paul had been in a terrible state of mind, and he desired so much for reconciliation with the people in Corinth.

"There are few things in life more painful than broken relationships. Shattered marriages, wayward children, and disrupted friendships produce intense suffering and deep sorrow. When those broken relationships involve fellow believers, the pain is even more severe. Watching believers suffer the consequences of their sinful conduct compounds the grief from the breaking of the relationship.

Though richly rewarding in many ways, the ministry is arduous. To properly interpret the Word of God, understand theology, edify believers, and refute those in error requires

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, pages 394-395.

diligent, hard labor. Proving to be an example to the flock, developing and training leaders, admonishing the unruly, encouraging the fainthearted, and helping the weak (**I Thessalonians 5:14**) all take their toll. But the most painful aspect of ministry involves difficult relationships between the sheep and the shepherds. All pastors know the hurt that comes when those in whom they have invested the most return the least."⁹⁷

"As he penned this epistle, Paul nursed a broken heart over the church he loved and served. He was under severe external pressure, experiencing afflictions, (**1:4, 6:8**) and suffering (**1:5, 7**) to the point that 'he despaired even of life' (**1:8**), 'had the sentence of death within (himself)' (**1:9**), and needed to be delivered....from so great a peril of death' (**1:10**)."⁹⁸

"Paul's reason for writing this letter (**II Corinthians**) was his distress and anxiety for the Corinthians as he was waiting for Titus to return from Corinth. In **II Corinthians 2**, Paul tells us he was so restless in mind and spirit that he couldn't wait at Troas for Titus, but went to Macedonia to find him. There he located Titus and received good news from Corinth.

We don't know exactly what Paul means when he says, '*Conflicts on the outside, fears within.*' Perhaps there was some difficulty in Macedonia. He had been imprisoned once in Philippi; there may have been enemies there who made life difficult for him. In any event, Paul had many troubles in Macedonia. Life is frequently that way, isn't it? Troubles sometimes come in waves. Many things go wrong at once. We face eternal conflicts while battling internal anxieties. If you feel that way, you are treading where saints have trod."⁹⁹

Because I don't know all the particulars about Paul sending his stern letter to the Corinthians, I want to speculate here in a guarded way. I believe that while Paul was in Ephesus, he learned how the problems in the Corinthian church were getting worse and worse. So, he wrote a stern letter to them, trying to get them to get their house in order. Paul sent this very strong letter by Titus, who was supposed to have taken the letter to Corinth, and then meet Paul in Troas to tell Paul how the people received his strong letter. So, Titus went to Corinth, and Paul went down to Troas to wait for Titus. Much time went by, and Titus did not come to meet Paul. So, Paul got impatient and obviously worried, and so, he traveled on to Macedonia.

"When he came to Macedonia from Troas in search of Titus, his flesh had no rest. Nothing changed; he had no relief from his concern over the situation at Corinth. In fact, he had new concerns. What if the severe letter had made things worse? Was the breach with the Corinthians now irreparable? How would they treat Titus? Corinth, as Paul well knew, could be a hostile environment for a lonely preacher; would the church leave Titus to fend for himself? Lack of relief from the heavy burden of grief and concern Paul bore sapped the joy of his ministry. His experience reflected the truth of Proverbs 13:12, 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick.'"¹⁰⁰

B. Notice the message within the news. v. 7

⁹⁷ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, II Corinthians, By: John MacArthur, Moody Press, page 260.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, pages 350-351.

¹⁰⁰ Op. Cit., page 262.

It was just not enough that Paul was finally able to see Titus again, but it was the message that he brought which provided much comfort to Paul about the situation in Corinth. Titus just simply told Paul that the stern letter he had sent to the Corinthians not only confronted them about their sin, but God used it to bring true revival and reconciliation among the people. Let me share with you some more comments by Dr. Rod Mattoon, who has given to us some wonderful words about this verse.

"Not only did the arrival of Titus encourage Paul, but the news or report of the attitude of the Corinthians was such a blessing. Titus reported to Paul that there had been a change in attitude among the Christians in Corinth. He informed the apostle that they longed or had an earnest desire to see Paul again and shared with Paul that the Corinthians were sorry or mourning for what they did. The Corinthian Christians had a 'fervent mind' toward the apostle. This phrase is from the Greek word *zelos* which means 'zeal, excitement of mind, concern, or loyalty.' There was a total change for the good toward Paul. The apostle could not change their hearts, but God could and He did."¹⁰¹

Therefore, I believe that a lot of the anxiety in Paul's heart was removed, and he experienced the peace of God because his strong words to the church in Corinth had truly been used by God to bring about repentance in their hearts and lives.

C. Notice the manifestation about the news. v. 8

In verse 8, Paul tells the believers in Corinth that when he received the report from Titus about their repentance and change of heart and attitude, he really was comforted because he had experienced a lot of uncertainty just after he wrote the stern letter originally. As we have already discussed, Paul obviously had initially begged God to forgive him for writing such a stern letter, but after much prayer and consideration, God must have shown him that he had not made a mistake by telling the Corinthians the candid truth about the way the people were acting. Yes, it had brought sorrow to Paul's heart when he first heard that it brought sorrow to the hearts of the people initially, but now, he just felt that his temporary sorrow and the temporary sorrow of the people was indeed just what the people needed. So, Paul now felt much better about what he had done, just simply because the people had gotten right with God by his actions in sending the truth to the people by letter.

Just as we continue to move on with this wonderful study, I think we need to cover a little more from Dr. Chuck Swindoll about verse 8, and then see what he says about a few other verses. I quote these other men because I just want you to grasp the deep meaning of some of these wonderful verses that really speak loudly to some of the terrible problems that we are having in our Christian lives, and yes, even in our churches today. Truthfully, I would go so far to say that we might even have some churches where the problems are as bad, or even worse, than the Corinthian church. So, pay close attention.

"Paul refers to a letter he sent during the interval between I Corinthians and II Corinthians, one that has been lost. This missing epistle is sometimes referred to as the

¹⁰¹ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume One, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Lincoln Land Baptist Church, pages 271-272.

'severe letter' or the 'tearful letter' (**II Corinthians 2:1-5**), because in that tiny epistle he rebuked the Corinthians for tolerating a sinning member in their congregation, who I think was the same man mentioned in **I Corinthians 5:1-13**, because of his shameful and ongoing sexual immorality. After sending it, Paul had second thoughts about the pain it was sure to inflict—much like a person might wish to click an 'unsubscribe' button after sending a harsh email that could potentially backfire and lead to more anger rather than constructive communication. Thankfully, however, after delivering the severe letter, Titus returned to report the Corinthians' repentant spirit, which brought great relief to Paul. Paul's sharp note of rebuke, though painful even for him to write, led to a change of heart among the Corinthians."¹⁰²

II. NOTICE THE NATURE OF THE RECONCILIATION. vs. 9-11

A. There was the godly sorrow that led to repentance. vs. 9-10

In verses 9 and 10, Paul tells the Corinthians that it was not a pleasant thing for him to make the people sorrowful, but since they were sorrowful unto repentance, then that sorrow was truly worth the brief sting of suffering which it may have brought.

"The difference between sorrow inflicted by God and sorrow inflicted by the world is that one is purposeful while the other is pointless. Sorrow 'according to God' produces repentance; worldly sorrow produces death (**7:9-10**). From a spiritual perspective, the feeling of guilt, shame, and sadness that accompany a stern rebuke are not meant as a punishment, but as a call to repentance. By receiving the reproof, one opens the inner door of the soul to wisdom. By contrast, an angry reaction of resentment will bolt the door against an opportunity to learn from the experience."¹⁰³

"When Paul says that godly sorrow produces 'repentance' that leads to 'salvation' (**7:10**), we need to ask ourselves, 'What kind of salvation?' Not every instance of the work 'salvation' refers to the destiny of our souls when we die or where we'll spend eternity after our bodily resurrection. In **II Corinthians 7**, the 'salvation' Paul refers to relates to being rescued from the consequences of sin. When a person starts down a path of rebellion and refuses correction, they begin to experience the effects of alienation from God's people, God's principles, and God's power. The result? That person loses the safety of the church, the wisdom of God's Word, and the benefits of spiritual nourishment and inner strength. The final outcome of this can be actual physical death (**I John 5:16**)."¹⁰⁴

Now, I am going to jump off the bridge and add a little more thought to the idea of salvation, which Paul mentions to the Corinthian people. This may not be too persuasive for some of you, but because of the dire circumstances Paul had been dealing with in the church caused by false teachers, it seems to me that not only had Paul given the candid word for the people to help the believers get right with God and clean up their lives, but I just believe that some of those people in Corinth had never truly been saved. Thus, when Paul bluntly told them the truth about how believers should be acting, some of these

¹⁰² Swindoll's Living Insights, I and II Corinthians, By: Chuck Swindoll, Tyndale, pages 397-398.

¹⁰³ Ibid, page 398.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

hypocrites got truly saved. I say this because of the comparison that Paul makes between spiritual death and actual physical death. In the last phrase of verse 10, Paul says, "**.....but the sorrow of the world worketh death.**" I believe that he is truly concerned about those people in Corinth dying without Christ, and so, Paul's blunt message to them was used by God to open their eyes to true salvation, so that they wouldn't die and plunge into hell.

B. There was the godly sorrow that led to reflection. v. 11a

In order to really understand this verse much more clearly, I want you to read this verse 11 in the Amplified Bible.

"For [you can look back and] see what an earnestness *and* authentic concern this godly sorrow has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves [against charges that you tolerate sin], what indignation [at sin], what fear [of offending God], what longing [for righteousness and justice], what passion [to do what is right], what readiness to punish [those who sin and those who tolerate sin]! At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in the matter."

Did you notice the phrase "You can look back and see"? This is an admonition for the Corinthians to really reflect back on what God had done in their lives through all of the confusion and terrible problems that had occurred in the church and just discover the good that had come out of all of their problems when Paul showed them vividly what they needed to do and repent of their manifold sins. And may I say right here, that we rarely ever see the good that God is bringing to pass through our trials until one day when we have walked out of the valley of despair and looked back at what God did through all of the mass confusion and misunderstanding. Folks, there has to be a time of serious reflection when we come through our problems and trials, and yes, as hard as it is, when someone confronts our sins with truth from the Word of God.

C. There was godly sorrow that led to revival. v. 11b

It is very obvious to me that some of the phony Corinthians truly got saved as a result of Paul's forthright message in the small stern letter he sent to them. It is just as obvious that many of the believers in Corinth really experienced genuine revival because of their broken spirits and contrite hearts, which led to true repentance. I want you to look again at some wonderful words that Chuck Swindoll wrote about this genuine revival there in Corinth.

"How do we know a person has responded with God-given wisdom to the correction? Paul provides something like a 'checklist' to recognize true repentance (**II Corinthians 7:11**). He saw it in the lives of the Corinthians. Let's look at this list very carefully:

1. There is earnestness—a sincerity of heart.
2. There is Godly sorrow—an emotional response.
3. There is vindication—an external verification of internal reality.

4. There is indignation—a repugnant attitude toward the sin.
5. There is fear—a renewed reverence for God.
6. There is longing—a desire for righteousness.
7. There is zeal—an enthusiasm for doing right.
8. There is avenging of wrong—a payback for any damage or losses.

Paul had no doubts that the Corinthians' responses to this severe letter were genuine. Their words and actions demonstrated that they were 'innocent in the matter' (**7:11**). Paul reminds the Corinthians that their mistake had done more than just the obvious damage limited to the sexual immorality itself. It had also created a rift between them and Paul. Their repentance, however, had not only corrected the initial problem of the man's sexual relations with his father's wife (**I Corinthians 5:1-13**), but it had also healed their relationship with God and with Paul (**II Corinthians 7:12-13**)."¹⁰⁵

III. NOTICE THE NICETY OF THIS RECONCILIATION. vs. 12-16

It is always a precious thing when two individual Christians, or an individual and a group of other believers, decide that it is time to stop fighting each other and start fighting Satan with a unified effort. This is what happened when the people in Corinth responded to Paul's second epistle, which Titus delivered to them. The people acknowledged their sinfulness and responded positively to the words of God's man, and they repented and opened their hearts and arms to Paul once again. However, before things could be back to normal between Paul and the Corinthian church members, Paul had to explain one other thing, which he does in verse 12.

A. The nicety of reconciliation includes a revelation of Paul's compassion. v. 12

It is obvious to me from reading verse 12, that there were some people in the Corinthian church membership that truly believed that the only reason Paul wrote the stern letter to them was because of the man in the church who had committed fornication with his step-mother. You probably remember that in **Chapter 5**, of I Corinthians that Paul had rebuked the church for not dealing with this sinful man. They were so proud of their professed love, that they just thought it would be much better not to confront this man about having sexual relations with his father's wife. So, there in I Corinthians, Paul really chided the people for not handling this situation properly, and he demanded that they withdraw fellowship from the fornicator in order that he might get convicted of his sin, ultimately repent, and get right with God. When Paul told the people to put him out of the church, he did not do this for punitive reasons. He did it, hopefully, to correct the man and then restore him to the fellowship of believers.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pages 398-399.

So, what we find in verse 12, is Paul's telling them that he didn't just write the letter to solve that horrible problem, but he wrote it in order to show his love for the entire church body. Paul just so desired that the people not handicap their Christian growth by not dealing with this sin in the camp. He only wanted God's best for these Corinthians, which he knew would not happen if they didn't do some personal and collective church cleaning for themselves as individuals and as a body of believers. We might just say once more that Paul's motives were truly right!

B. The nicety of reconciliation includes a refreshing because of the people's commitment. vs. 13-14

"Adding a personal touch, Paul exults in the Corinthians' victory over sin. Not only did it save the congregation itself from their damaged relationship with God and others, but it restored the reputation far and wide. Paul had apparently shared with Titus the confidence he had in the Corinthians to do what was right—a confidence that could have easily turned to a shattering disappointment. When Titus returned from his visit to Corinth, having carried the 'severe letter' with its harsh rebuke, Paul's praise of the Corinthians proved to be well-placed."¹⁰⁶

"Recall the emotional roller coaster we've ridden with Paul over the last two chapters. The ups and downs of ministry can feel nauseating at times, can't they? Yet at the end of it all, Paul lands in a place of comfort, rejoicing, and refreshment (**7:13**). What a change from the tension that existed before! Sin, anger, and distrust clouded everything. Without the strong reproof and the wise response to correction, none of this would have been possible.

Remember where we started? If we want to be wise, we need to heed God's reproofs—especially when they come from friends who love us, who care about us enough to rebuke us in ways that may seem harsh at the time. From the other angle, if we are going to have a fruitful ministry, we need to be willing to call unrepentant sinners to repentance, not of spite, but out of love (**Ephesians 4:15**)."¹⁰⁷

Before moving on to verse 15, let me share something else with you about verse 14, which was written by Dr. John MacArthur. These other commentaries provide so much expanded truth that I just don't want you the reader to miss some of these things.

"As a result of their repentance, many of the Corinthians who had rebelled against Paul now submitted to him (**Hebrews 13:17**). He had been confident that they were genuine believers and would repent when confronted with their sin. Therefore, he had hopefully boasted to Titus before sending him to Corinth that the Corinthians would respond obediently. Paul, in a sense, staked his reputation as a man of discernment on the outcome, and he was not put to shame. Just as the apostle spoke all things to the Corinthians in truth, so also his boasting before Titus proved to be the truth. His truthfulness and discernment were vindicated by the Corinthians' obedient response. Paul rejoiced in seeing his conviction vindicated because it meant his integrity, and thus, his usefulness to them as a servant of God, remained intact."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, page 399.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, By: John MacArthur, Moody Press, page 269.

C. The nicety of reconciliation includes a respect because of the people's compliance.
v. 15

In this verse 15, Paul commends the Corinthians for being so receptive of Titus when he brought them the stern letter. He tells them that because of their positive response toward Titus and the letter that he had delivered, they revealed their willingness to obey what Paul had told them they should do. And because of their obedience and compliance with the truth Paul sent to them by Titus, they just displayed a tremendous reverence and respect for Titus, and for Paul also. May I say, probably the greatest way that any congregation can show respect and reverence for any man of God is for the people to respond positively to the message he preaches and teaches! Personally, I would much rather have Christian church members put into practice the truth I teach from God's Word than for someone to compliment a sermon or lesson I have delivered.

"The Corinthian's reception of Paul's representative, Titus, with fear and trembling was further evidence of their obedience. Their obedience had calmed Titus's fears and caused him to develop a strong affection for the Corinthian church. It also allowed both Titus and Paul to 'keep watch over their souls.....with joy and not with grief (**Hebrews 13:17**).

Their willing obedience to the Word of God proved the genuineness of the Corinthians' repentance. When people are truly repentant, they submit to the commands of the Scripture without reluctance, caveat, or qualification. To have a congregation of such obedient people brings great joy to their leaders."¹⁰⁹

D. The nicety of reconciliation includes a rejoicing because of Paul's confidence.
v. 16

"Paul's reaffirmation of his trust in the Corinthians brought closure to the issue. Confidence is from 'tharreo,' which means, 'to be courageous, to be bold, or to dare.' Paul had the courage to entrust himself to the Corinthians again and dare to believe they would not fail him.

The apostle's newly restored confidence is a fitting climax to the first section (**Chapters 1-7**) of this epistle. The Corinthians' repentance encouraged Paul to share with them a project that was dear to his heart, the collection for the needy believers in the Jerusalem church (**Chapters 8-9**). It also gave him the boldness to confront the last remaining pockets of resistance to this apostolic authority (**Chapters 10-13**)."¹¹⁰

Conclusion

"Clearly, the Corinthians were blessed to have a friend like Paul who didn't fear to wound them with the truth—a friend who loved them enough to point out their failings. **Proverbs 27:6** states, '*Faithful are the wounds of a friend.*' Most of us have friends with whom we can discuss spiritual things. But with how many of those friends do we really get personal? Ask yourself: If your close friend were going astray, would you feel comfortable stepping in

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pages 269-270.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, page 270.

to confront the sin? Or, would you regard it as a 'private matter' between your friend and God? On the other hand, do you have anybody in your life who would step on your toes or block your path to prevent you from heading toward death? Or, have you gathered around you a group of 'yes' friends, who tell you only what you want to hear?"¹¹¹

"It's not just for the believer's personal spiritual benefit, but for the good of the whole church body, that such quality relationships in which we can examine our integrity together prove indispensable. Although we like to think that our sins don't hurt anybody but ourselves, we're wrong. Sin causes collateral damage. We can easily forget about the emotional damage done to those who love and care about us. We can also overlook the damage done to the ministry. When one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers with it (**I Corinthians 12:26**). We even forget about the offense to God, who won't sit back and watch as His beloved children run headlong into destruction (**Hebrews 12:5-11**). God's discipline of His children can seem harsh, severe, and painful. But in the end, *'It yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness'* (**Hebrews 12:11**). "¹¹²

"In **II Corinthians 7**, Paul reminded the Corinthians that their mistake had done more than just the obvious damage limited to the sexual immorality itself. It had created a rift between them and Paul. But Paul faithfully called them to account, and their repentance healed their relationship with God and with Paul. Like Paul, faithful pastors must consistently engage in holding others accountable and giving biblical reproof as needed.

I will be honest. I wish that confrontation, reproof, and discipline were not a part of ministry, but they are. In fact, Paul said to Timothy, his pastor-in-training, *'All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.'* (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). A central part of Timothy's pastoral ministry in Ephesus included preaching the Word in such a way that he would reprove and rebuke, not just exhort and teach.

Conflict within a congregation leads to anxiety (**II Corinthians 2:4**). It can be demoralizing for ministers and destructive to ministries. Reproof that leads to repentance, however, can resolve conflict and bring peace. This will lead to a flood of blessings that will renew relationships and revitalize ministries. True and faithful shepherds do not hesitate to bring required rebukes or administer necessary reproofs. Hirelings do neither."¹¹³

¹¹¹ Swindoll's Living Insights, I and II Corinthians, By: Chuck Swindoll, Tyndale, page 400.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid, pages 400-401

Chapter Eight

"THE GRACE OF CHRISTIAN GIVING"

Part I

Scripture: II Corinthians 8:1-24

Introduction

Well today, we are going to continue to study this wonderful book of **II Corinthians**, but in order to do this, we must recognize a change in the information which Paul now discusses with the Corinthian believers. Whereas Paul had been discussing the false teachers in the church at Corinth and the many problems and much suffering which he had been going through. Paul now changes the subject matter to the importance of giving. In fact, he does this by describing giving as an act of graciousness by the saints of God. To illustrate this point, Paul uses the charitableness of the Christians in Macedonia to provide a great example for the Corinthian believers and every other Christian to follow when it comes to our giving to the work of the Lord.

Now, in order to describe what gracious giving really is, I need to share something with you once more about Biblical tithing. In this passage of **Chapter 8**, here in our text, the subject matter of tithing is not addressed. But, as I stated in my commentary on **I Corinthians**, tithing is truly a biblical principle. According to Genesis, **Chapter 14**, Abram paid tithes (ten percent) to Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem), a priest of the most High God, after Abram was blessed with bread and wine from Melchizedek. This act of tithing is the first example of this divine principle in the Bible. Therefore, the divine principle of tithing was not given under the Law of Moses as many people believe, but it was given along with other divine principles that never change in any age or generation. Some of the other principles that never change are the government, the family unit, and capital punishment. If we decide to do away with tithing, then we have to do away with the other divine principles, which I have given you. Oh yes, under the Mosaic Law, the tithe was almost 33% instead of the ten percent, and I don't believe we should expect God's people to give this large percentage in this day of grace. But, the tithe (10%) is holy unto the Lord and expected from God's people. However, in our study in this **Chapter 8**, we are going to see an example of God's people giving graciously to invest in other Christians who were suffering in Jerusalem. I think I should mention here that the people (the Macedonians), which Paul used as an example of gracious givers were people who had also suffered loss, and they had gone through much suffering. Therefore, let's move ahead with our study in **Chapter 8** and learn all we can about the joy of giving.

Before moving on to the outline of these verses, I want to give you a description of the situation in the Jerusalem church which prompted Paul to take up a love offering for the suffering people back in Jerusalem. Please pay close attention to what Dr. Chuck Swindoll gives us about the extreme problems in the mother church.

"The church in Jerusalem was in serious trouble, its very existence in doubt. By the time Paul wrote II Corinthians, the Jewish church in Jerusalem had already passed its twentieth birthday. During those two decades, the Jewish believers in Jesus had been increasing ostracized, persecuted, arrested, tried, and shunned. Some were even boycotted, exiled, and

executed. Their own countrymen, family members, and friends had turned against them. The prophecy Jesus had uttered prior to His death and resurrection was coming to pass before their very eyes: ***"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against their mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. (Matthew 10:34-36)"***¹¹⁴

"In Jerusalem and Judea, most of the same Jewish authorities and institutions that had sent Jesus of Nazareth to the cross still held power. To be a follower of Jesus under that regime had moved from uncomfortable to excruciating. As a result of the persecution, many Jewish Christians had no work. Who would hire or purchase goods from a 'heretic' Christian? Without work, they had no money. Without money, they had no food. And considering the church in Jerusalem had burgeoned considerably in its early years (**Acts 2:41; 4:4**), they had reached the brink of financial ruin. One commentator puts it this way: 'They must have become, in consequence of their conversion, the victims of social and economic ostracism.....Their business enterprises must in most cases have collapsed in ruins and family bonds been heart-breakingly severed.' "¹¹⁵

"The Jerusalem church was hurting, and it broke Paul's heart to think that the church where it all began could be facing its end. At that point God gave him a seed thought: 'As you travel through these areas, take up a collection for the needs of that church in Jerusalem.' Paul mentions this 'collections for the saints' of Jerusalem in **I Corinthians 16:1**, where he provided some general instructions how the collection should be managed."¹¹⁶

Now, let's take a close look at some tremendous information concerning Christian giving.

I. PLEASE NOTICE THE PRINCIPLES FOR GIVING. vs. 1-6

A. Giving is evidence of Divine favor. v. 1

As Paul starts out this **Chapter 8**, he reminds the Corinthians about how God had shown so much favor or grace to the people there in Macedonia. He wanted the people in Corinth not to forget how good God had been to their brothers and sisters in Macedonia. We need to remember that the province of Macedonia included Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

B. Giving is evidence of dedicated faithfulness. vs. 2-3

Now as we get into verses 2-3 of this wonderful text, we discover some tremendous truth about the Macedonian Christians. They were believers that had been going through great persecution and poverty as the result of their devotion and dedication to Christ. Of course, their circumstances were similar to the believers back in Jerusalem, but they still had a spirit of gracious giving right in the midst of their hurt and deprivation. You may say, "Well, how could they still have such a spirit of giving?" The answer is that they had an overflow of joy in their lives because of Jesus in their hearts. They were so filled with the love and power of Jesus that they had other people on their hearts, just like Jesus did.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, page 405.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, page 406.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

So, because of their over-abundance of joy, they literally begged Paul to let them participate in the love offering for the Jerusalem saints. In verse 3, Paul said that he would attest the genuine desire and concern that the Macedonian believers had for the saints back in Jerusalem. Therefore, as Paul addressed the Corinthians, he was telling them that they too needed to give with a gracious heart just like the folks in Macedonia. By the way, the Corinthians were living in a rich city where there was much commercial business and mercantile trade, which produced the wealth of the people. Yet, these professing Christians had to be reminded and admonished to give the offering that they had promised to give over one year before.

I don't want to infuriate some of you readers, but when I look at the attitude of these Corinthians toward giving, I can't help but think about the hundreds of people I have pastored for over half a century who just never learned the joy of giving. Today, most all of us know that in every evangelical church in America, only 25% of the people give 100% of the tithes and offerings, while the other 75% just never get around to giving in any consistent manner. And truthfully, as I have stated so many times down through the years of my ministry, I believe that 75% of church members are lost today in our modern churches. I say this because if the suffering people in the province of Macedonia could beg for the opportunity to give to the suffering saints in Jerusalem, why is it so hard to get church folks to give their tithes and offerings through their local churches so that these churches can take the Gospel to the lost world? I just believe that this large percentage of people just may have never been truly saved.

Therefore, my dear friends, could I ask you if you are faithfully dedicated when it comes to giving your tithes and offerings? If not, this would be a good time for you to make a brand new commitment to do so.

Let me give you some other comments by Kent Hughes about these verses. "And Paul went on to expand his thought: 'For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints'. They gave 'beyond' (literally, 'contrary' to their ability). St. Chrysostom marveled, 'They did the begging, not Paul.' The sense is that Paul, seeing their extreme poverty, was reticent to take their gifts because he knew it would deepen their deprivation and plight. But they wouldn't be denied. 'Paul, we entreat you, don't deny us this honor.' "¹¹⁷

C. Giving is evidence of desired fellowship. v. 4

In verse 4, we discover, as has already been mentioned, that Paul must have been very reluctant to receive the gifts of the Macedonians because he felt that by their giving, the people would be in worse shape with their poverty. I recognize the feeling that Paul had here, but it seems that at this moment, Paul must have forgotten that **"when we give, it is given back unto us."** (Luke 6:38) But, it is obvious that the people in Macedonia were not about to be forbidden to participate in the love offering for the saints in Jerusalem. May I say that this is the kind of attitude that every child of God should have. Because we are all members of the body of Christ if we have truly been saved, then our desire should be to share in the outreach ministry to others that need our help. When we do this, then we are

¹¹⁷ II Corinthians Commentary, By: Kent Hughes, Crossway, page 158.

being loyal to our fellowship of believers. May we never forget that God didn't just save us for ourselves, but He saved us to glorify Him by reaching out to others! I don't know if you remember, but this was one of the surest signs of salvation for the people in Jerusalem just after Pentecost. Just as soon as they got saved, they began to look for others to share the love of Christ with, by meeting both their physical and spiritual needs. The early church did not want to see anyone suffering, if they had the wherewithal to help. But yet, the wealthy people in Corinth just had to be given a great example of genuine Christian giving because they had not honored their promise to give an offering to the suffering saints in Jerusalem.

D. Giving is evidence of devoted feeling. vs. 5-6

If you ever would desire to see an example of devoted believers, the example that Paul has given us in this great text is one we should cherish. Truly, these Macedonians were genuine sacrificial Christians.

"The Macedonians weren't giving spare change. They were scraping together what little they had and pooling it to produce rich generosity. They could have said to Paul, 'don't talk to us about the saints in Jerusalem. Don't pass the collection plate here. We're already starving!' But they had been touched by the grace of God. Paul says that their affliction and poverty motivated them to give. They didn't just give according to their means; they gave beyond their means. 'For I testify,' Paul says, 'that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.' "¹¹⁸

I believe this would be a good time for me to mention one reason why I believe the Corinthians did not want to give. Remember that I told you that the city of Corinth was very well off, and thus, the people there didn't know much about deprivation or doing without. Therefore, so often when we have not been through what others have gone through in life, we just simply can't relate to their needs in any situation. Thus, the Corinthians didn't know anything about poverty, so they didn't feel for those who were in poverty. Pay attention to the following verse, which should help us tremendously in understanding the principle of feeling for others. **Hebrews 13:3—*"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them, which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."***

Folks, do you get the meaning of this verse? The truth here is that we will never be able to relate to those who are suffering in prison or in adversity unless we put ourselves mentally into the same shoes these suffering people are walking in. In other words, there will never be any feelings of love and compassion until we have suffered the same things that others have suffered.

Then in verse 6, I want to close this point by mentioning what Paul said about Titus. "Paul has been sharing with the Corinthians the attitude of the generosity of the Macedonian believers. He told the Corinthians of the generosity of the Macedonian churches, how they begged to be a blessing, and how they had given themselves to the Lord. Titus encouraged the Corinthian Christians to give to the Jerusalem believers. Paul urged Titus to return to the Corinthians to finish their ministry of grace giving and what they had

¹¹⁸ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 360.

previously planned to do in their area of sending a love offering to Jerusalem. He was to encourage them to finish what they started or planned."¹¹⁹

II. PLEASE NOTICE THE PURPOSES FOR GIVING. vs. 7-15

I suppose that there are many reasons and many purposes that cause people to give. Yet, I am not sure that most people even have genuine reasons or purposes for their giving. Some probably give to be seen of men, like the Pharisees Jesus mentioned. Others give to appease their consciences for some horrible deed they might have done in the past. But friends, we need to give for the right reasons and with the right purposes. Therefore, let's look closely at verses 7-15 and learn some real reasons or purposes why we should give graciously.

A. The first purpose is to bring productivity to one's life. v. 7

Let me begin the explanation of this verse by asking you a personal question. "Do you have a fruitful and productive life?" Well if you don't, it could very well be because you have never learned the joy of giving. In verse 7, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that they already excelled in many areas of the Christian life, but there was one area where they were not excelling. That area was the area of giving!

Paul complimented the Corinthians for their excellence in faith, in witnessing, in knowledge, in diligence, and yes, most assuredly, in their love for Paul himself. But, Paul told these people that they were lacking in fruitfulness in the area of giving.

As a pastor of eleven churches down through the years of my ministry, I can probably say the same thing about many church members. I have seen church folks excel in using their talents, in teaching, in leading, in Biblical knowledge, and even in divine wisdom. I have seen church members play instruments, sing in the choir, teach Sunday School, help clean the church facilities, and even help spruce up the grounds around the church on work day. But yet, I have seen many of these people literally steal from God and the work of the Lord because they didn't give tithes and offerings. The point I believe Paul is making to the Corinthians, and to us as well, is that we might excel in most every area of our lives as believers, but yet, if we don't learn the joy of giving to God's work and ministering to others, we will never be productive and fruitful believers.

Please pay attention to the following information about how the Macedonians turned their poverty into productivity and their barrenness into benevolence.

"The Macedonian Christians were a great blessing to Paul and other believers because they were benevolent in spite of their barrenness. Two centuries before Paul came to Macedonia, gold mines in that province generously provided a measure of wealth for its population. However, during the first century of the Christian era, the economy had deteriorated, and the province was brought to the depths of economic ruin. Wars, barbarian invasions, Roman settlement, high taxes, slavery, persecution, and the restructuring of the province had contributed to a condition that rivaled the crash of the stock market in America in the early 1900's."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Lincoln Land Baptist Church, page 22.

¹²⁰ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Lincoln Land Baptist Church,

"Not only was the countryside affected by poverty, but also the urban centers, including the Romanized cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. In stark contrasts, the city of Corinth flourished financially due to the volume of trade generated by its two harbors, Cenchrea and Lechaeum. There was a distinct difference between Macedonia and Corinth in economic terms.

In spite of their financial weakness, the Macedonian believers were begging to be a blessing. They gave to others in spite of their own deep poverty. The picture that Paul is painting here of their financial condition is very dire. The word 'deep' translates the phrase 'kata bathos' which literally means 'according to the depth.' It forms our English word 'bathysphere,' a ship, which is used to probe the depths of the ocean. The corresponding English expression would be 'extremely deep; the pits, or rock-bottom.' "¹²¹

Folks, the main point I am trying to make here is that if you never learn the joy of giving to others, your life will never be fruitful and productive as God planned it. My wife, Jo Anne, and I have discovered this over and over. Those who give graciously will receive more favor and grace from God our wonderful Father!

B. The second purpose is to bring proof of one's love. v. 8

Have you ever heard someone say, "Don't just tell me that you love me, but show it or prove it!" Well, that is exactly what Paul told the Corinthian believers. He told them that they should not just speak about loving others, but they should learn from the giving of the Macedonians and prove their love by giving generously to those in Jerusalem who were suffering so much. In this verse, Paul tells the Corinthians that he was not commanding or demanding that the people in the church in Corinth should give to the love offering for the people in Jerusalem. But, he was telling them that the people in Macedonia were showing their love to prove their genuineness or sincerity as believers. I will say once more emphatically, there is no way on earth that a true child of God can prove or show true love to others by any better way than by giving generously to those who are in need. We must never forget that Jesus Christ gave up the riches of heaven to come down to this earth and purchase our salvation through His death, burial, and resurrection. He did this to demonstrate His agapé love for us, so that we too might demonstrate that love to others by giving out of a heart of love.

C. The third purpose is to bring pursuit of one's Lord. v. 9

This verse 9 is one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible. I say this because it is a revelation of the tremendous sacrifice that Jesus Christ made when He gave up the riches of heaven to temporarily come down to this earth and become poor, and then die on the cross for our sins, but also to rise from the dead to provide eternal life to everyone that will receive it. Now, just think about what Paul is trying to get across to the Corinthians. He is telling them that the Macedonia Christians were so sacrificial that they were willing to give everything they could to the deprived Jerusalem believers in order to pursue the pattern that Jesus had given them when He died voluntarily on the cross for our sins.

page 6.

¹²¹ Ibid, page 7.

Paul was telling the Corinthians that if they wanted to be like Jesus, they needed to follow the example of the believers in Macedonia by giving graciously to others in need. Of course, everything that Jesus gave up for us in order to die on the cross for our sins was for the purpose of making us rich in and through Him. Therefore, I believe that no child of God is more like Christ than when he or she gives the Gospel message for the salvation of lost sinners and when he or she ministers to the suffering around them; especially the suffering saints in the body of Christ.

"The Macedonians had not been induced into giving by gimmicks or fear. Rather it was the heavenly example of giving ('the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ') that brought about the grace of giving in their lives. The Lord Jesus Christ was and is the great example and motivation for giving. Paul reaches for the highest example and the ultimate motivation for giving in order to challenge the Corinthians. The apostle is using the example of the Lord Jesus to teach the importance of grace-giving and being unselfish. He is also confirming the fact that the Lord finished what He started."¹²²

D. The fourth purpose is to bring practicality to one's living. vs. 10-11

In verses 10-11 Paul really gets down to the nitty-gritty in confronting the Corinthians about their negligence in keeping their promise to participate in the love offering for the Jerusalem saints. He tells the believers in Corinth that it is extremely important that they be people of integrity and fulfill the promise they made to give to the saints in Jerusalem. Paul even gave the date of their promise, which was one year ago. But up to this point, these wealthy Corinthians had truly reneged on their promise to help with the love offering. And may I say that I have seen well-meaning believers make emotional promises to the Kingdom of God, only to renege on these promises. I could not tell you how many weeping people I have seen at the altar during invitations who have supposedly given Jesus everything, only to be absent from church the very next Sunday. I want to affirm emphatically that when we make God or others a promise, then we need to fulfill that promise in a practical way. In other words, practice what you preach!

In verse 11 "Paul is saying here that the believers in Corinth should finish what they had started, accomplish that which they purposed in their hearts. In other words, 'Do not suppose that the intention is sufficient; do not suppose that you are relieved from your obligation. You are not released. You must finish that which the Spirit directed you to begin.' It is true that a full year had gone by, but the necessity of the saints at Jerusalem was just as great then as it had been a year previously.

The sentiment here is this: If we have felt that it is our duty to give unto those who are in need, and if we have started that offering and have been interrupted through something we could not prevent, this does not excuse us from our obligation. Even though we may have been interrupted and we did not finish what we started at that particular time, at the first opportune time we should finish that which we purposed to do. We must leave nothing unfinished in which the Spirit of God directed us in the beginning."¹²³

¹²² Ibid, page 29.

¹²³ The Second Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 409.

E. The fifth purpose is to bring pleasure to one's life. v. 12

Let's look at this wonderful verse, which promises a lot of pleasure and joy to everyone that honors their commitment to give for the right reason.

"Paul tells the Corinthians that whatever they give is acceptable if they give it willingly and eagerly. They were to give, based on their ability to do so. The gift was to be based on what they had, not what they lacked. The apostle did not want them to put themselves in a position of hardship. Their own families were not to be neglected. Sacrificial giving must be responsible. Paul wanted believers to give generously, but not to the extent that those who depended upon the givers must go without having their basic needs met. Give until it hurts, but don't give so that it hurts your family and/or relatives who need your financial support"¹²⁴

Paul was telling the Corinthian believers that when they gave responsibly, they would receive great joy and pleasure; not in order to parade the flesh or to look for accolades. They were to give to honor their commitments, but not to give just because they might feel guilty if they didn't give! So, in order to give properly, we always need to give out of a willing heart with the motive of sharing the love of Christ by helping to meet the needs of those who are suffering. This is truly the only way to give in order to bring pleasure to one's heart. Giving should be done willingly and graciously in order show appreciation to God for what He has done for us at the moment of our eternal salvation.

F. The sixth purpose is to bring parity to one's laborers. vs. 13-15

In verses 13-15, we now come to a very important reminder, which Paul gave to the Corinthians. The point he wanted to make was that there should be parity or equality in our giving. What he means by this is that when God blesses us abundantly, we should have a heart for giving to others who are in need because there may come a day in which we are in terrific need, and others should be ready to help us. In other words, the idea is that we should give generously above our 10% tithe to the local church by investing in other credible ministries, especially for those who are serving in poverty.

In verse 13, Paul told the Corinthians that he was not trying to put a heavy burden on them for giving, but when they have been blessed abundantly, they should be ready to give to those who were in dire need, and if the time came that the Corinthians are in a state of desperation or need, then, those they have helped in the past should be ready to return the benevolence.

I believe this would be a good time for me to mention something here that most interpreters don't say much about. On the surface of what Paul was telling the Corinthians about being benevolent to help others in order to be recipients from those whom we may have given to, this is not a form of Communism, which some people try to explain and promote. Communism tries to promote equality among the people by giving them a little of the same things, while the government lives in luxury well above the level of the people. Nowhere does the Bible encourage the people to be run by the government, but God does encourage us to be respectful of those in authority, even if we disagree with the way they are conducting the government. I know this is truly hard during these days in America,

¹²⁴ Op. Cit., page 34.

when we have so much corruption in our government. We have liars, deceivers, swindlers, phony hypocrites, and on and on I could go. But, the truth is that **Romans 13** tells us to submit to the higher powers over us. This is very hard, but it had to be hard for the believers during the days when Rome was in control of their known world, too.

So, if the equality in our giving is correct, what is Paul talking about here when he tells the believers to give now to help others, so that in time if you have a need, these blessed people who have received your help will be able to help you? The point Paul is making here is that the local church body of believers is responsible for helping to take care of its suffering people when they are in need. It is not the place of the government to provide welfare and other things for Christians, but because of the negligence of the church, people in the church have to turn to the government for their help. Shame on any church members who don't reach out to help others in their congregation who are in great need!

In verse 15, Paul makes a very strong statement. In this verse he tells the Corinthians, and us today, that there is no place for hoarding the abundance of what God gives to us if there are others who are doing without. Let me emphatically say, "It is sinful wickedness for those in the church who have been blessed so much, to hoard God's blessings and never look out for others to help." And, may I tell you that I strongly believe that those whom God has richly endowed should be the first to step forward and invest in world missions. We are learning these days that the average Christian in all so-called Evangelical Churches gives just one penny per day to world missions. My friend, that is only a total of \$3.65 per year to missions! This is completely and viciously wicked! May God have mercy on these stingy souls!

Now, I want to share with you some more comments on these verses from Dr. Rod Mattoon. Please pay serious attention to what these comments say, some of which I used before in this chapter, but I want to use them again just to drive on the point that Dr. Mattoon has tried so hard to get across to us.

"Paul tells the Corinthians that whatever they give is acceptable if they give it willingly and eagerly. They were to give, based on their ability to do so. The gift was to be based on what they had, not what they lacked. The apostle did not want them to put themselves in a position of hardship. Their own families, were not to be neglected. Sacrificial giving must be responsible. Paul wants believers to give generously, but not to the extent that those who depend on the givers must go without having their basic needs met. Give until it hurts, but don't give so that it hurts your family and/or relatives who need your financial support.

It was Paul's desire to ease the burden the believers in Jerusalem were facing. The bounty of the believers in Corinth would help to balance out the burdens and the poverty the Christians in Jerusalem were facing. It would help to ease their trials and the needs they had in their lives. This is the principle the Jews lived by when they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. If too much manna was gathered by a family, then it was shared with those who did not gather enough on that particular day. The surplus of one family was used to balance out the shallow amount of another."¹²⁵

III. PLEASE NOTICE THE POLICIES FOR GIVING. vs. 16-24

¹²⁵ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume 2, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Land Of Lincoln Baptist Church, page 34-35.

We now come to a section of Scripture that deals with the policies for our giving. In other words, when we give to the cause of Christ, it must always be above board and without any questions concerning where the money is going and how it will be used. I have learned this especially during my 35 years of working in Africa, and particularly for the past 20 years since my wife and I have overseen the work of Gateway International Missions, Inc. It is not easy to keep raising money year after year to help win people to Christ in Africa and to help alleviate the suffering of these poor people. It has always been our policy that everything be done above board and with special sunlight rules on everything we spend.

So, this is what we are going to see in these next several verses. Because the offering that Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to give for the suffering believers in Jerusalem would have to be taken by a responsible trustworthy man. That man is described as Titus. Titus was sent to Corinth by Paul to deliver this letter, and it was there that Titus really demonstrated great love and compassion for the people. Titus was a very trustworthy and credible man, and because he knew that Paul would hold him accountable for what he did in Corinth, he literally excelled as a loving pastor to these troubled people. Therefore, when it came time for the offering to be taken, and later carried on to Jerusalem, Titus was the man to do so. Of course, as we will see in these next several verses, there would be two more well-respected servants of God that would accompany Titus to Jerusalem.

Now, let's look at the true policies that every child of God should follow when they are investing their money in the work of God. These are really tremendous guidelines for every child of God to follow when giving to the cause of Christ. I hope you will learn these and never forget them, if you want to honor God with your giving.

A. We should give through caring leaders. v. 16

As we take a look at verse 16, we discover the first policy for how we should give to the work of the Lord and to benevolence for those who are in such need. In this verse, Paul tells the Corinthian church that it is a wonderful thing that Titus had come there to Corinth to not only bring a letter from Paul, but also, to show care and compassion for those who needed help. Therefore, Titus would be the man of integrity who would lead in taking the love offering to the needy people in Jerusalem. Titus was a caring leader, one who could really be trusted.

"What did the Lord furnish or give to Titus? It was 'earnest care' for the Corinthians. The words 'earnest care' are from the word "spoude", which means haste, diligence, carefulness, or earnestness in accomplishing. Titus had a passion to be a blessing to the Corinthians and also to the believers in Jerusalem. Titus, who knew them so well and loved them so dearly, was wholeheartedly committed to the relief effort for the Jerusalem saints. That God had united the hearts of Paul and Titus, further confirmed that the collection was His will. Nor could the anti-Paul faction accuse Titus of having a Jewish bias, since he was a Gentile."¹²⁶

"Titus had the same attitude as Paul, for the Lord had knitted their hearts together. This is what He does with Christians. He knits the hearts of believers together in unity to do the will of God. We are like different pieces of a puzzle that fit together to form a beautiful

¹²⁶ Ibid, page 38.

picture. Paul spoke of this in his letter to Ephesus. ***'Ephesians 2:21, In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord.'***¹²⁷

B. We should give through committed leaders. v. 17

"We continue to see the passion of Titus in the fact that he accepted Paul's appeal. The word 'accepted' is an interesting word. It is derived from the Greek word *dechomai*, which means to take with the hand; to embrace or make something your own.' This word was used of a family that would adopt a child into their family to rear and educate. Titus embraced the burden of Paul and the burden and the needs of the Jerusalem believers as his own burden. The burden fired his passion to do something about the need. The same pattern works for us. When you get concerned about a need, and embrace it as your own, then you are motivated to get involved to meet the need. The burden moves you to action. It does no one any good to be stirred about a problem or cause, but not moved to do anything about it."¹²⁸

So, I believe we can conclude that Titus was truly a committed leader, whom the people could trust wholeheartedly. Why? Because of his burning passion to not only minister to the Corinthians, but also, to minister to the suffer members of the church in Jerusalem. Truly, Titus was a committed leader with a burning passion to tell others about Jesus and to minister to those who were suffering. Thus, because of his burning passion to help others, the people could trust him to carry their money to Jerusalem and help meet the need of the people there.

I think this would be a good time for me to mention something about our giving with confidence to our local church, or even to other organizations which are carrying on the work of the Lord. It is extremely important that we give to churches or other ministries where the leadership of these churches and ministries are good stewards of what God provides, and beyond this, they should be people who will always keep the financial records open to those who really need to know, if they have a valid reason for knowing. The records should not be opened to those who desire to do the church or ministry harm.

C. We should give through concerned leaders. v. 18

May I say that a good reputation is so important? Here in this verse, Paul mentions another brother who has been sent with Titus to visit the Corinthians and to help receive the offering, which would be transported back to Jerusalem. There is speculation about who this man may have been, but nobody knows for sure. But, there is one thing we do know, and that is that this brother was highly respected by all of the churches. Without a doubt, just like Titus, he was a genuinely concerned man for the spiritual and physical welfare of the people in Corinth, but also in Jerusalem as well.

"An unnamed man is chosen to assist Titus in his trip to Corinth because of his testimony for Jesus Christ in spreading the Gospel. A variety of guesses have been offered at his identity, but they are speculations. We do know, however, that he had a good name or

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, page 39.

testimony. His faithfulness and love for Christ gave people confidence that he could be entrusted with the important task of helping Titus with the love offering.

We are reminded here of the importance of having a good name and the loving favor of people. Solomon stated that this is more valuable than gold or riches. ***'Proverbs 22:1, A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.'***¹²⁹

"If the goal of your life is to have a good name for Christ, then your attitude will help you to live above the boards. You will be motivated to not do anything that will hurt your testimony or other people. What do people think, when they hear your name? Do they have thoughts of graciousness, goodness, kindness, and faithfulness? Is your name sweet to their ears and thoughts? Do they crave your company or do they hope to avoid you? Is your name a bitter thought? Does your name trigger thoughts of a person characterized by harshness, selfishness, stubbornness, moodiness, or a lack of discretion?"¹³⁰

Therefore, when we give our tithes and offerings to our church, there needs to be leaders who have genuine concern for those in their churches, in their communities, and yes, in the entire world. I would never give one dollar to a church that didn't have a love for lost souls and to one that didn't minister to hurting people. This might sound a little abrasive, but when we give a tithe to God, and even our offerings, these funds should be given through leaders who have genuine love for people and who are extremely reputable in how they handle God's money!

D. We should give through chosen leaders. v. 19

In this verse 19, we discover some definite organization in how the offerings of money should be handled. It is very obvious in this verse that all the churches applauded this chosen vessel to help with security and ultimate distribution of the funds when they would reach Jerusalem.

"This second man is described as being famous among the churches for his service to the Gospel—that is, for his preaching and teaching. From these clues, many scholars deduce that this man was Luke, the beloved physician, a traveling companion of Paul's and the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts."¹³¹

We can't be sure that this was Luke the beloved physician, but we do know that he was truly a highly respected servant of God, chosen by many of the churches without question.

"Here we find an important principle: Giving requires that the control of donated funds be vested in several individuals, not just one. Paul had the churches appoint other men to go with Titus to Corinth to take up the collection for Jerusalem. Paul is careful to see that this fund not be controlled by any single person. Instead, several people of proven integrity should bear this responsibility."¹³²

E. We should give through conscientious leaders. vs. 20-21

¹²⁹ Ibid, page 44

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, DHP, page 364.

¹³² Ibid.

In verse 20, we have a strongly implied truth that we must not overlook. That truth is that when we select men or women to help look after the funds that are given to the work of the Lord and to minister to hurting people, we had better choose conscientious leaders. Let me give you some of Webster's Dictionary words for conscientious. The word means diligent, meticulous, trustworthy, and reliable. Therefore, we must be sure that the people we put into place to be the treasurers of our churches or the people to go and distribute the offerings and funds to minister to others **MUST BE RELIABLE AND CONSCIENTIOUS PEOPLE!**

In verse 21, we find a very simple truth stated this time and not implied. This truth is that when we select leaders to take care of God's money in our offerings and in the distribution of God's money, then we need to choose those with a testimony of complete honesty. People who are honest are people who demonstrate integrity, even for years, as many of the people in the Bible did. Let me give you an example of a true man of integrity from the Old Testament. His name is Caleb.

"The person with integrity fulfills his word or promises no matter how much time has elapsed. In Joshua 14:6-12, God made a promise to Caleb to give him land that he wanted in the Promised Land. Over forty years later, the Lord fulfilled His promise to Caleb because God's Word is reliable. Let me ask at this point, 'Is your word reliable? Would you honor a promise over forty years old?' We should honor our word, especially the promise or vow we made to our spouse. If you promise to love and cherish your spouse till death-do-you-part, then keep it no matter what length of time has elapsed. Integrity provokes discipline in doing what is right."¹³³

F. We should give through capable leaders. vs. 22-23

In verse 22, we once more see Paul telling the Corinthian believers that he had sent another very capable brother to Corinth to help Titus and the previously unnamed other servant of God, in order to take the offering for the suffering Christians to Jerusalem. Paul goes on further to tell the people that this second unnamed servant had proved himself many times, and therefore, he could be trusted. But then, Paul adds something in this verse. He tells the people in Corinth, that not only was this dear brother, who was coming to Corinth to help with the receiving of the offering, a diligent man who could be trusted, but one that would even be more trustworthy and reputable once he had the privilege of working with the Christians in Corinth.

"The apostle revealed in this verse the godly persistence of this man by the fact that he had proved to be a diligent person in many things. What does Paul mean by the word, 'proved?' It is from the Greek word 'dokimazo,' which means 'to test, examine, prove, to scrutinize to see whether a thing is genuine or not, such as metals, to recognize as genuine after examination.' This brother in Christ was trusted because he proved to be the 'Real McCoy.' His life was scrutinized and tested and he was found to be a trusted man of God."¹³⁴

In verse 23, Paul just reiterates his affirmation for Titus and the other two unnamed servants of God. Paul tells the Corinthians one more time that Titus had been a faithful

¹³³ Op. Cit., page 55.

¹³⁴ Ibid, page 61.

brother to help him in his ministry, and that he truly had a heart for the Corinthians and had given them his service because he loved them. Therefore, they need to recognize what a great trustworthy person Titus was. Also, Paul remind the Corinthians that the other two brothers were faithful servants of God who had given themselves as servants to the other churches, and whatever they did, they did it for the glory of God. These men were truly capable leaders of God!

G. We should give through credible leaders. v. 24

Well, we have finally come to the final verse in this great chapter on giving. Paul tells the Corinthians that is now time for them to demonstrate their love and support for all three of these dear brethren to all of the churches in and around Corinth. They needed to be the pattern for showing an example to all of the other churches, showing just how much they believed Paul's recommendation of these men and giving testimony to all of the churches about how trustworthy these three men were. If the Corinthians would do this, then the other churches would not be afraid to trust them to take the offerings they had given back to the suffering believers in Jerusalem. The main point here is, these three servants were very credible, and the Corinthians needed to pass the word on so that other churches would feel secure in sending their gifts by these men to the hurting people in the mother church in Jerusalem.

There is a great lesson here for us today. When we receive tithes and offerings, there should always be more than one credible leader that we put in place to protect and distribute the funds where the church members collectively agree the funds should go. Never should any one person be given the sole responsibility for taking care of God's offerings and gifts. And friends, after over half a century of ministry, if I had the time, I could tell you many sad stories about churches and mission organizations which have suffered tremendously because the responsibility for the money was allotted to one man or woman.

Conclusion

We have now come to the end of this long chapter on how Paul taught the Corinthians that they needed to honor their year old commitment to help provide a special love offering for the suffering people in the Jerusalem church. Paul instructed these people to be faithful to their promise to give, and then he shared with them some wonderful principles for giving and the purposes for giving. He finalized his instructions by giving the Corinthians the policies they should follow with their giving. In covering all three of these special rules for giving to our Lord in order to minister to others, Paul gave words that God placed in his infallible book called the Bible for us to follow even in this modern generation. Truthfully, there is no reason for any pastor or any church to have to debate the importance of tithing and the giving of offerings in every church age. The first ten percent belongs to God as it is given through the local church, and then, we must give above a tithe as God provides for us. As we have already discussed, we don't have to give until it hurts our families. But, we are to give sacrificially to those in need because the day will probably come when we will need others to help us out. Never, never should any believer argue with God or overtly rebel against this great truth we have learned about the "Grace of Christian Giving". In this chapter, we have covered part one of this study, and now we will move on to **Chapter 9**, and see what

else God wants to teach us about the grace of Christian giving. So now, let's get ready to learn some more wonderful truth for us to glean and then put into action with our planned weekly giving. Let's move on to see what greater truths we might learn.

Chapter Nine

"THE GRACE OF CHRISTIAN GIVING"

Part II

Scripture: II Corinthians 9:1-15

Introduction

Well, we now move forward with our study of "The Grace of Christian Giving" as described in **Chapter 8** of this book of II Corinthians, and now as we learn some further wonderful instruction from God through Paul the Apostle. Giving has always seemingly been difficult for most Christians, but I seriously don't understand why. You see folks, one of the greatest joys that my wife and I have ever experienced in our Christian walk with Jesus has been in the area of giving. When God calls us home to heaven, we may not have much treasure left here on this earth for our children to worry over, but truly I believe that we will have much treasure in glory where we will be able to enjoy forever because of the principle of Christian giving of ourselves and our substance down here through all of our years of serving Him.

In this upcoming study of **Chapter 9**, we are going to take a careful look at some precautions about giving and also a detailed look at some promises God has made to His children who have become generous givers in and for the Kingdom of God while they serve Him here on earth. I hope you will join me in trying to learn everything you possibly can about the joy of Christian giving because truthfully, giving to Christ and His kingdom work is more of an eternal investment that will bear fruit forever and forever.

I would now like to give you some precious words on this text from Dr. Rod Mattoon, whom we have quoted many times in this book. I believe these words will be as good of an introduction to this **Chapter 9** as could possibly be given.

"Have you ever been in a situation where you got egg on your face? In other words, you stated that something was true, or something would happen, and it turned out not to be true or take place. Perhaps, you made a commitment that a task would be done and it wasn't. People were counting on you and you let them down. When you get egg on your face, you feel embarrassed and somewhat foolish. I felt that way when I invited a pastor friend and his wife to go with me and Linda to a Texas Ranger Baseball game at Arlington Stadium about 20 years ago. We drove 40 minutes to get to this brand new stadium, beautiful stadium.

When we got there, however, things were quiet. There were no crowds and the gates were locked because the Rangers were playing out of town. I somehow, read the wrong dates and showed up to watch a baseball game with no players. Boy, I felt stupid! I not only had egg on my face, I had bacon and hash browns too. Thank God, John and Tina were good friends and we had a good laugh. I still felt embarrassed."¹³⁵

"In this section of 2 Corinthians, we find Paul was trying to avoid the embarrassment of having egg on his face. The Corinthians had promised to give a love offering to the Jerusalem Christians and he takes steps to make sure they follow through on their pledge. He has boasted of their enthusiasm to the Macedonian believers, who gave sacrificially to this need. Now it is near the time to receive this gift. Before he arrives in Corinth, Paul very graciously

¹³⁵ Ibid, page 64

and tenderly makes sure that the collection of this offering is organized, accomplished, and done without pressure and constraint on these believers. He also reveals very important principles about the right and the wrong way to give to the Lord and others."¹³⁶

I. PLEASE NOTICE THE PRECAUTIONS ABOUT GIVING. vs. 1-5

We will now take a close look at three very important precautions about our giving. We should look at these closely, so that we won't fail in our giving. These are simple truths, but truths with great warnings to God's children. We need to glean everything we can from these precautions.

A. The first precaution is to always honor your commitments in giving. vs. 1-2

Paul begins this chapter in verse 1, by using the word superfluous in describing how foolish it seemed to him that he would even have to remind these people of this truth. The word superfluous actually means more than necessary, needless, non-essential, and more than extreme for him to have to even tell the Corinthians what they should already remember.

In verse 2, Paul tells the Corinthians that he still remembers the zeal that they had shown one year before about taking this offering, and thus, why should he have to remind them again. In fact, Paul tells these delinquent believers that their excitement about taking this offering one year before was so passionate that Paul used the story of their zeal to encourage the other churches in Macedonia and the entire area of Achaia to follow the promised action of the Corinthian believers.

So my friends, why did the Corinthians not follow through with taking the offering they had promised to do one year ago? I will tell you what I believe! They were too busy fussing and fighting over every little problem, and yes, of course, some larger problems, like following the false teachers that had come into their church. This always happens! When a body of believers gets to fighting among themselves, they get their eyes off of the lost world and the Great Commission, and the church develops a maintenance mentality, which literally kills the outreach evangelism and foreign missions endeavors. Fighting among ourselves always puts the emphasis upon what we as selfish individuals want for ourselves, and we are then prone to forget about the lost world which is going to hell at the rate of 84,000 people per day, according to "About Missions.Org." Folks, just like the Corinthians who got so wrapped up in their own arguments to the point that they forgot to move ahead with receiving the offering as they had promised, we too are guilty of forgetting the main thing, and that is winning people to Christ!

B. The second precaution is to always help your companions in giving. vs. 3-4

All of us in the modern church know very well that people in the church don't want the Preacher to preach on giving, or even for other church members to discuss giving with them. Of course, the reason is that people are not even beginning to give anything like they should, so thus, they get angry when they feel they have been confronted over their negligence.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Yet, in verse 3, Paul told the Corinthians that he had sent Titus and the other brethren there to encourage or help the Corinthians follow through with what they had promised. Paul told these delinquent believers that if they didn't honor their commitment to take up this offering, then all of his bragging on them to the other churches would have been in total vanity. Of course, the word vanity means chasing the wind, emptiness, or just plain worthless. Paul was really being firm with the Corinthians. And may I say as a preacher with the gift of prophecy (crying out against sin), there are many people in our churches that are robbing from God and His kingdom, plus robbing those who are severely suffering that we should be helping through our compassion and generosity. May I say as an American that I really get upset with so many people here in our churches in our country who whine and complain all the time, but yet, I don't see so much whining and complaining by those in Africa where I have worked so long. These people live on less than \$2.00 per day, and yet, they rarely complain. Truthfully, in most of our 10 African countries where we work, probably 70% of the people can't get jobs. Yet, when we attend one of the African churches and it comes time for the offering, they give from their poverty, even if means bringing beans, potatoes, rice, or other items. They have a spirit of generosity.

Let me give you a personal illustration of this kind of generosity. A few years back in our main country of Uganda, our Country Director, borrowed enough money to build two much needed bedrooms onto his house for his growing family. But then, some people in the area had some great needs for food, housing, and other much needed assistance. When this happened, our Country Director went to the bank where he had borrowed the money to build the bedrooms, and he convinced the banker to allow him to put his building project on hold while he used the borrowed money to help those who were suffering and in need. Of course, our American banks would not do this, but that one in Africa did. Could I please ask you the reader this question? Do you as a believer have this sacrificial attitude when it comes to helping others? If you don't, I pray that God might use this commentary on II Corinthians to inspire you to help others give generously by your example of cheerful giving.

In verse 4, Paul now tells the Corinthians that if they don't honor the commitment they made one year before to take up the offering for the Christians in Jerusalem, they would be embarrassed when the other churches in Macedonia, where Paul had bragged on the Corinthians for their zeal in wanting to give, found out about their negligence. Maybe I should ask you the reader another question. "Do you know of someone who has been influenced not to give by your negligence in giving?" I surely hope this isn't true! Would you let me brag a little bit as an old preacher? Thank you! Several years ago, the IRS tax people here in America, investigated me and my wife because they didn't believe people with such a low income would be able to give as much as we did to the work of the Lord. Oh, I would much rather be investigated by the horrible IRS tax people down here on earth because they couldn't believe we gave so much, than I would to be embarrassed at the Judgment Seat of Christ one day out in the future after Jesus comes again because I gave too little! What about you?

C. The third precaution is to always hold your covetousness in giving. v. 5

In verse 5, of this text, Paul continues to exhort the Corinthians to do the right thing when it came to their honoring the commitment they had made to participate in the love offering for the Judean believers. Please read carefully the following thoughts.

"Paul thought it necessary to urge the brethren (Titus and the two unnamed brothers) that they would go on ahead to Corinth to arrange beforehand the Corinthians' previously promised, bountiful, gift for the Jerusalem saints. Evidently, they had promised a large amount, and Paul wanted to make certain they had it ready when he arrived.

The word 'bounty' is from the Greek word *eulogia*, which means 'blessing or praise to God.' It forms our English word *eulogy*. The Corinthians' gift would be a blessing to the Judeans. It would be an occasion for the Jerusalem Christians to bless or thank God for their gift. The word also implies a sizable blessing. Paul assumed that his readers would collect a substantial sum of money, and that generosity, rather than covetousness, would motivate them."¹³⁷

"Paul sent Titus and his companions to ready this gift because he wanted no impression that these funds should be wrung out of the saints as by extortion, intimidation, or high-pressure tactics, but that this love offering should be a manifestation of their willing, voluntary, generosity and sacrifice. This love offering was to be a blessing, a thank-offering to the Lord, not a burden or source of despair. The gifts were to come from yielded, grateful hearts to the Lord, not hearts that were bitter and resentful about this offering."¹³⁸

"Paul addresses one of the key reasons why God's people do not give to the Lord. It is the problem with covetousness. This word 'covetousness' is from the Greek word *pleonexia*, which means 'the greedy desire to have more, avarice, covetousness, or greed which leads a person to defraud other people.' Paul warned that this problem could be the one sin that could keep the Corinthians from meeting their commitment. He was right."¹³⁹

II. NOTICE THE PROMISES FOR US WHEN GIVING. vs. 6-15

A. There is the promise of an equitable harvest. v. 6

May I say that this verse 6 is one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible? In this verse, Paul is reminding the Corinthians of the Law of the Harvest. If a person sows grain sparingly in the field, he or she can only expect to reap a modest crop. But if the person sows bountifully, he or she can expect to reap a tremendous harvest of grain, fruits, or vegetables.

The Law of the Harvest is the only law on earth that cannot be broken. All other laws can be broken, but this law can never be broken. So, we need to understand that if we sow sparingly in our giving to God and to others, we need not expect a bountiful return in our harvest. But once more, we need to realize that cheerful sacrificial giving to our Lord and to others will always bring us a bountiful harvest here on earth, and yes, I believe strongly also when we get to heaven. God truly keeps a record of all of our motives for giving, and He most assuredly knows and records the record of our giving. Therefore, we must understand that we cannot expect a great harvest if we only sow sparingly. This is why that

¹³⁷ Ibid, pages 70-71

¹³⁸ Ibid, page 71.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

for the past 54 years of ministry, my wife and I have tried so hard to sow bountifully in everything we have tried to do in the work of our Lord. Oh yes, we have been blessed abundantly here on earth, but I just can't wait to see the bountiful harvest on the other side.

B. There is the promise of an eternal happiness. v. 7

As we begin to study this verse, let me ask you this question, "Do you give cheerfully when you give your tithes and offerings to the Kingdom of God?" Or, do you begrudge what you are giving, and do you give it with reluctance or reservation? Also, do you give with a purpose when you give? May I tell you as a senior pastor who has pastored both small and large churches for over half a century, I have seen multitudes of people in these churches who give reluctantly and many give with complete reservation. A multitude of people doesn't give with a purposeful heart. What Paul is not saying here is that we should give whatever we purpose or choose to give. That would be totally ridiculous. But, what Paul is saying is that when we give, we should first prayerfully consider what we will give, what motive should be used for our giving, and how the offering will be used. Why don't professing believers give with a purpose and give cheerfully the way they should?

Well, the reasons for this are many. First, they don't understand the price that was paid for their salvation. Secondly, they have the wrong priorities in their lives. Thirdly, they don't have a compassion for the lost and the suffering people who need their help. When they don't have this compassion, it is because they usually are truly covetous for more things for themselves. I must say that I have seen hundreds of people who have striven to get and keep all of the money they can, and these selfish people are some of the most miserable people on earth.

In verse 7, Paul tells the Corinthians that if they give joyfully, and not of necessity, they will receive the blessing of God's happiness every day of their lives. Folks, I don't know about you, but I want to give cheerfully and see every gift as an investment for eternity. Truthfully, because we are going to leave all of our treasure here on this earth, we better be laying up treasure in heaven where it cannot be stolen, corrupted, or misused in any way. This is the way I want to give every time I give, and I pray that this is your desire as well. My question again is, "Are you happy about your present giving?" I pray that you are! But, if you aren't, maybe you ought to go to Jesus and confess your wrong giving, and ask Him to change your attitude about giving to the Lord and to others who are in need of our care and compassion.

C. There is the promise of an extra helping. vs. 8-9

"God demonstrates His love for cheerful givers by giving them more grace and more opportunity to give. Here we have a promise that, if a person really wants to be generous, God will see that he is given the opportunity. Grace is used here as a synonym for resources. God is able to supply us with resources so that we will not only have sufficiency ourselves, but so we will be able to share what we have with others, and thus, have an abundance for every good work. He generously provides all that we need and helps us to be content with what we have. This is the meaning of the word 'sufficiency.'

It comes from the Greek word 'autarkeia'. This was a favorite Stoic word. It does not describe the sufficiency of the man who possesses all kind of things in abundance. It means 'independence.' It describes the state of the man who has directed his life, not to amassing

possessions, but to eliminating needs. It describes the man who has taught himself to be content with very little. It is obvious that such a man will be able to give far more to others because he wants so little for himself. It is so often true that we want so much for ourselves that there is nothing left to give to others. The man who has 'sufficiency' is a contented man. Contentment produces a sense of satisfaction and sufficiency."¹⁴⁰

D. There is the promise of an extended hand. v. 10

In **I Timothy 6:6-10**, this same Paul, who wrote II Corinthians, also told young Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus, to make sure that he should live his life in such a way as to be content with what God provides, because we brought nothing into this world, and for sure, we are not going to take anything with us when God calls us home. Therefore, when God provides the basic needs of our lives, then we should learn to be content with what He gives us. Then if God chooses to provide more than our basic needs, we should use the extra to invest in the lives of others who are in need. In other words, we will never be able to extend a helping hand to the lost and suffering in the world, unless we learn to be content with what God provides for us. And truthfully, when we extend a helping hand to others, God always multiplies what He gives to us so that we can even help more people. We must come to realize that God has not given us a formula for giving by which we receive from God just so we can hoard up more down here on earth. The principle Paul was trying to teach the Corinthians in verse 10 was that if we invest by sowing in the lives of lost and hurting people, God will provide even more so that we can help many others.

E. There is the promise of an enriched heart. v. 11

"The reason God gives back to those who give is not, as prosperity teachers falsely imply and exemplify, so people can consume it on their own desires with bigger cars, homes, and jewels. God supplies them so that they will have an abundance for every good deed. The Lord will fully supply cheerful givers with what they need to use for what is good work to the honor of the Lord. He constantly replenishes what they expend so the cycle of giving and ministering to others can continue. Generous givers are the people whose lives are most full of righteous deeds."¹⁴¹

Probably most of you reading this commentary know that as the writer of this new book, my wife and I have worked in Africa for the past 35 years. During these years, with the help of Jesus and many others, we have had the privilege of investing millions of dollars in lost souls and the suffering multitudes in Africa. Because of this privilege, we have been blessed and enriched beyond my ability to describe it. I will just say that if God had given to us these millions of dollars for our own selfish selves, we would never have been so fulfilled and blessed. But, because God gave us the spirit of giving years and years ago, we have been fulfilled thousands of times over. I will add, we could never have been given a greater privilege than the one He has given to us in giving constantly to others. But yet, all of what we have given to help the suffering is only a means whereby we may have been able to

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pages 79-80.

¹⁴¹ The MacArthur's New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, By: John F. MacArthur, page 316.

share the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with lost people. The main thing is to see suffering lost people come to Christ, and the provision of their needs physically cannot compare to the joy of seeing them come to Christ.

Folks, let me further add that if we give to others with the right motives, then, God so honors what we have done by urging the recipients of what we have given to offer thanksgiving unto God for what we have done. May I tell you that this is the kind of thanksgiving I hope to cause others to offer! In other words, if we give to others as God has provided and given us the opportunities, then those to whom we have given will offer thanksgiving to God, and yes, God alone will get the glory!

F. There is the promise of an effective harvest. vs. 12-15

Let's take a look at verse 12 and see the great truth God has given us through Paul the Apostle.

"Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to realize the deep spiritual significance of the contributions they were receiving for the poor saints in Judaea. The relieving of the physical needs (the hunger and the lack of clothing) of the poor saints of Judaea, however excellent, was not the chief value of the offering. The spiritual results were uppermost in the mind of the apostle."¹⁴²

In verse 13, we find some more very important truth about our giving. Let's look at it closely.

"Because of this liberal collection, Paul tells the Corinthians that their Jewish brethren will 'glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ....' The Greek reads literally, 'which praise God for your obedience in acknowledging the Gospel of Christ.' In the heart of the majority of the believers in Corinth there was a real definite dedication to the obedience of the Holy Spirit. There was a real and genuine submission to the Gospel of the grace of God preached to them by the Apostle Paul. This was manifested by their liberal gift to supply the needs of their brethren in Judaea. (I realize that giving is not the outstanding proof of genuine salvation, but certainly liberal giving and the willingness to give to the work of the Lord and to relieve the oppressed is definitely a fruit of salvation.)"¹⁴³

Let me add that having been a pastor for so long, I do know that some people who are not genuinely saved may still give some large gifts to a particular church, hoping to better his or her relationship with God. But, the truth is that we don't win our way to heaven by our good deeds or good works. On the other hand, if a person gets genuinely saved, his or her attitude will change about money and wealth, and he or she will demonstrate the attitude and mind of Christ. When this happens, then, there will be a change in this saved person until he or she will gladly and cheerfully invest in the lives of others. This will be done for the main purpose of winning lost souls, but it will be done to help alleviate the suffering of people who need to be loved and cared for just like Jesus loves and cares for people.

¹⁴² The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 457-458.

¹⁴³ Ibid, pages 458-459.

May I tell you that I dearly love verse 14? In this verse Paul tells the Corinthian believers that if they give liberally and invest in the lives of others, they will be rewarded by the recipients' prayers to God on their behalf. This next phrase reveals true Christianity. Paul tells these professing Christians in Corinth that if they give to help others, then the people they have helped will desire to get the same gracious kindness that God had given the generous givers. These recipients of God's blessings will not only pray for those who give, but they will desire to hang out with these generous people in order to learn how to become givers like those who have graciously given.

Finally, in verse 15, Paul reminds the Corinthians that if any person desires to become a giver to others, this can only happen if they experience the unspeakable gift of the true Gospel message. In other words, as the Book of James tell us, we are not to be only hearers of the Word, but we are to be doers of the Word in order to demonstrate to others the change that has come to our lives since we got saved. Phony professing believers rarely ever try to minister to others because they are so ego-centric and selfish in almost all of their behavior.

Well now, verse 6-15 has been quite a very long passage of Scripture, but it is filled with Biblical truth and principles. I want you to really read and glean from these great truths, which God has given to me as I have dug deeply into this precious passage of Scripture. So now, let's look at these precious principles:

1. We must learn to give bountifully, for if we don't, our harvest will be sparse. v. 6
2. We must learn to give bountifully with a Godly purpose in mind. v. 7a
3. We must learn to give cheerfully, because God loves a cheerful giver. v. 7b
4. We must learn to give to others, because God will give more grace when grace has been shown to others. v. 8a
5. We must learn to completely depend upon the graciousness of God in meeting our every need, so that in turn, we may do good work in ministering to others. v. 8b
6. We must learn to give to the poor, because this righteous deed will never be forgotten by our Lord. v. 9
7. We must learn to trust God to provide our food, and we demonstrate this trust when we sow good seed by investing in others who are in need.
v. 10
8. We must learn that when we give bountifully by investing in those who are poor and suffering, then others will offer thanksgiving to God because of what we have done in His name. v. 11

9. We must learn that when we give offerings to minister to those in need, like those in the Jerusalem church for which the Corinthians were receiving an offering, then those to whom we have given will offer much thanksgiving to God for our ministry to them. v. 12

10. We must learn that when we give offerings to help those in need, we are displaying that we are genuine believers who are truly sharing liberally because of our relationship with Christ. v. 13

11. We must learn that when we minister to the suffering, then they are prone to offer fervent prayers on our behalf. v. 14a

12. We must learn that when we minister to the suffering, then, the recipients of our ministry will prayerfully long for the type of graciousness we have demonstrated to them. v. 14b

13. We must learn that the greatest way to offer true thanksgiving is to demonstrate help to alleviate the suffering of those who are hurting, who in turn will thank God for the unspeakable gift of the Gospel message. v. 15

Now, what is the summation of all of these Biblical principles, which Paul gave to the Corinthian church, and to us as well? The summation is that when we, as God's people, learn the joy of giving cheerfully to those who are in need of the Gospel or are in tremendous poverty, then we have demonstrated the true Gospel message. Thus those who give cheerfully will be offering thanksgiving for the privilege to give, and then, those who receive from their kind generosity will also offer tremendous praise and thanksgiving to God for touching their hearts to lead them to give! In other words, there will be Thanksgiving all around!

Conclusion

Right now, I just want to say WOW about our study in **Chapter 9**. Truthfully, if every child of God would just stop long enough to study this chapter with an open mind, then many wonderful things would begin to happen in the realm of ministering to others. The truth that Paul gave the Corinthian believers by admonishing them to give a special love offering, to help the suffering believers back in Jerusalem, is truly a lesson that every genuinely saved Christian needs to learn. Every child of God should come to understand that when God blesses us with much, then we are to use His blessings to help other people who need the love of Christ and the true Gospel message.

In our study of **Chapter 9**, we have dealt with some precautions that Paul gave to the Corinthians about their giving. These precautions need to be followed by every believer. Giving is vital to the growth and spiritual welfare of every child of God. If those who are saved don't give the way they should, then the Great Commission and world missions will never be fulfilled.

Another subject, which we covered in this study, is the promises that God has made to those who give according to His plan and with the right attitude and motives about giving. Paul was very explicit in this passage about giving from obligation and not from kind generosity. God does indeed require us to give 10% of our personal income as a tithe to our local church, but then give far beyond this 10%, when God gives us more and more, then, we are to give to others more and more. We must all learn to live by the old statement, "You just can't out give God." Therefore, if we expect to lay up treasures in heaven, then we need to invest in the only thing that is going there, and that is the souls of men, women, boys, and girls.

So my dear friends, let me give you the verse that I shared with you before in this commentary. ***"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."*** (Luke 6:38)

Chapter Ten

"THE MOTIVES OF PAUL'S MINISTRY"

Scripture: II Corinthians 10:1-18

Introduction

I have not used another writer's introduction in any of my other chapters, but there is such a change in the tone of **the Book of II Corinthians, from 10-13**, that I just want a clear presentation of why this change has taken place. So, I am going to give you the introduction to these remaining chapters of **II Corinthians**, which was written by Dr. Rod Mattoon. Please pay close attention to this introduction in order to get the change in the tone of this Epistle.

"**The Tenth Chapter of II Corinthians** marks a shift in the tone of this letter. The first seven chapters of this book were focused on Paul's restored fellowship with the Corinthian believers. Because there had been reconciliation, Paul felt it was proper to address the issue of their previous promise to send a love offering to the poverty-stricken Jerusalem church. He shares important principles about giving in chapters eight and nine of this book. The tone of the first nine chapters was basically tender, gentle and gracious. In the final four chapters **(10-13)** Paul's tone makes a sharp change and he becomes very firm, confrontational, and authoritative."¹⁴⁴

"Why is there a change? What happened to trigger this drastic change and firmness? The answer is Paul is battling for the minds of these believers. What has brought about this battle? When you look at the book of Acts, you will find that Paul started this church and pastored it for over 1½ years **(Acts 18)**. When the apostle left Corinth to spread the Gospel in other cities, he was notified that serious complications had developed at Corinth after his departure. One of the serious problems was the invasion of false teachers into the church that attacked the ministry, the character, and the apostolic authority of Paul. They were battling for reputation so that they could set themselves up as teachers of authority. If they could discredit Paul, they could discredit his message, and in turn, spread their lies to these folks."¹⁴⁵

So then, in **Chapter 10**, we are going to see a revelation of Paul's character and his motives for ministry. Thus, we will discover that Paul was truly the real deal, and that the besmirching of Paul's name and authority was nothing but the attack of Satan through wicked people. I must tell you that this is still going on today. If someone would have told me many years ago when I started as a minister of the Gospel that I would be criticized and castigated as I have many times, including in the past year, I would have either said these people were lying, or I may have even quit the ministry before I really got started. Folks, the meanest people I have ever dealt with are those in the church who professed to be saved and told you that they were your friends. Even as I type this commentary, I hurt severely because of the lies that have been told by supposedly good people. Then there are those who want to be the "big guys" because they were so filled with pride and narcissism. Some of these people could not make one home visit to try and win souls without coming back to the church

¹⁴⁴ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Land of Lincoln Baptist Church, page 82.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, pages 82-83.

insisting that they be given time to tell everyone about their soul winning visit. So, this is the type of thing Paul was dealing with in the Corinthian church, and I believe as we enter the study of these last four chapters, we will discover that Paul once again said, "Enough is enough." He digs deeply to uproot and reveal the evil in those who were teaching false doctrine in the church. And folks, this is the time in our American churches for some tough loving pastors to take a stand against the false teaching that is going on in the churches. I must say that right now here in America, I constantly see such wicked false doctrine that honestly, sometimes I just lose it and get mad because so many people are being hurt by this false teaching.

Now, let's go verse by verse through **Chapter 10**, to discover the real motives by which Paul carried on his ministry, and these motives should be in our hearts and ministries as well.

I. PLEASE NOTICE THAT PAUL WAS MOTIVATED BY HIS DESIRED COMPLIANCE.

vs. 1-6

Let me begin the study of **Chapter 10** by saying that as a long-time minister of the Gospel, I am truly appalled by the scores and scores of professing believers who show no desire or intention of getting in God's perfect will for their lives. It is as if these people just made a hopeful profession of faith in Christ to keep them out of hell, but to find God's will for their lives and live in daily obedience to Christ, there just seems to be no interest, or at least very little interest, among the huge majority of church members today. I have asked many times in scores of churches across America if the people knew how to discover God's perfect will for their lives, and it absolutely embarrassed me time after time because almost no church members have a clue to discovering God's perfect will for their lives.

Therefore, the question I have is, "Did these people get genuinely saved, or is their motive totally wrong for what little service they pretend to do?" We are truly in a mess because we have multitudes of people going around in circles in our churches with absolutely no clue about what God's will is for their lives. So let's take a look at Paul's desire to obey the will of God, and of course here in **Chapter 10**, we need to come to understand Paul's true motives for service. When we discover what motives he lived by in his service to Christ, then we need to follow those motives and activate them in our own personal lives.

A. Notice the manner of Paul's compliance. vs. 1-2

"The enemies of the Apostle Paul put a negative spin on his compassion, scornfully condemning it as cowardly weakness. They accused Paul of being meek, timid, or cowardly when face to face with them, but bold toward them when absent! When confronted face to face, his adversaries insinuated that Paul was a weakling or in today's terminology, he was a sissy. They were saying that Paul was real bold in his instructions, or he rebuked the church when he was writing to them and not standing eyeball to eyeball, but he was a coward when it came to speaking face to face with them. His detractors were woefully wrong in imagining that he was a cringing little man who could only be bold when he was far away penning his paper bullets.

The Apostle Paul was not timid and humble because he was a coward, but because Jesus Christ demonstrated how people are to be handled, even people who are evil and in error.

Our Lord confronted people in meekness and gentleness when He was battling for their mind or heart. This is why Paul was meek and gentle. If you are having conflicts with people, there may be a time that you have to get firm with them. Before you do this, battle for their heart or mind by trying to be gentle with them. Solomon spoke about this in Proverbs."¹⁴⁶

Proverbs 15:1 – “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” “Proverbs 25:15- “By long forbearing is a prince persuade, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.”

"But before beginning his assault on the false apostles and their followers, the apostle expressed his unwillingness to engage in combat. Good soldiers take no pleasure in using deadly force and so only with great reluctance. Surveying the carnage at the battle of Fredericksburg, Robert E. Lee said soberly, 'It is well that war is so terrible—we should grow too fond of it. (James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, the Oxford History of the United States, page 572.) A noble warrior's power is constrained by his compassion and exercised only when there is no option. That is the spirit in which Paul introduced this forceful section of his epistle."¹⁴⁷

"Up to this point, Paul has addressed himself primarily to the members of the church who were spiritually minded, but from this point on he addresses himself to those who had sought to lower his dignity and weaken his authority by declaring him to be a weak person, without personal influence. They also declared that he was weak physically and inconsistent in purpose in spite of the fact that he was courageous and full of self-commendation in his letters. He now addresses this group instead of the true believers who believed in him and were willing to support him."¹⁴⁸

Verse 2 in our text is a very difficult verse to interpret. Let me give you Dr. John Philip's interpretation of this difficult verse. "The Corinthians should remember, too, that when Paul arrived at Corinth, the first time, his back was hardly healed from the beating he had received at Philippi and his soul was still sore from the scoffing he had encountered at Athens (**Acts 15:23; 17:32**). No, indeed, Paul was not afraid of his Corinthian critics. He was just patient and forbearing. But, let them not provoke him too far.

Suddenly, he shows his courage. He dares his critics (**II Corinthians 10:2**.) 'Don't forget,' he says, 'I am coming in person': "But I beseech you, that I may not have to be bold when I am present with you (**II Corinthians 2a**). He adds, 'I am coming in power': 'with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh' (**II Corinthians 2b**)."¹⁴⁹

As I have already mentioned, beginning here in **Chapter 10**, Paul's tone in his letter to the Corinthians really changes. Obviously there were false teachers still in the church causing problems for the Corinthians. They were probably trying to convince the Corinthians that Paul was a phony and could not be trusted. Therefore, Paul really gets strong with these Corinthian skeptics. He tells these professing believers that they are

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, page 87.

¹⁴⁷ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, By: John MacArthur, Moody Press, pages 323-324.

¹⁴⁸ The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., page 477.

¹⁴⁹ Exploring Second Corinthians, By: John Philips, Kregel, page 228.

making it hard for him not to be firm with them because of their negative conduct. So, Paul just tells them that if they desire for him to come back to Corinth and be very blunt when he gets there, they just needed to keep up their foolish skepticism. Once more let me state that I believe the people had accused Paul of writing confrontationally, but then, they accused him of not being courageous enough to confront them with the truth when he was in Corinth. Truthfully these false people in Corinth were demonic, and they didn't want to give up their attack on Paul the great apostle.

B. Notice the methods of Paul's compliance. vs. 3-4

In verses 3-4, Paul tells the Corinthians that he is not going to lower himself to get into a fleshly warfare with the false teachers in Corinth. Paul tells the people that he might walk and live in the flesh, but he doesn't use fleshly methods to war against the enemies who were under the power of Satan. So, what he is doing is telling the believers that if he battles with them in Corinth, it will not be a vindictive fleshly warfare with them. Instead, Paul just tells the people that his weapons of warfare as a believer are spiritual and not fleshly. He goes on to tell them that as he wages spiritual warfare with these evil people who were trying to deceive the church in Corinth, he would only do it through the mighty spiritual power of God Who would destroy every stronghold of Satan.

"Paul is right. We are in a war and we face spiritual and sometimes physical battles every day. The battle with your flesh and the battle for your minds is on-going and never ends. The struggle of our will vs. God's will is constant. This is why we are to put on our spiritual armor that is described in Ephesians 6: truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer. We not only have to battle our own desires and temptations, we also fight against forces of darkness that are seen and also unseen. Such battles require spiritual weapons.

When battling for the minds of people, we are not only to have courage and compassion, we must be spiritually prepared for conflicts and struggles. If Paul's adversaries underestimated his leadership or courage, they were in for a shock. Paul warned his accusers that he was armed with a spiritual arsenal and was prepared for battle."¹⁵⁰

Yes, Paul was human and frail like anyone else. He walked in the flesh, but his weapons were not carnal weapons like knives, clubs, spears, or swords. His weapons were spiritual and mighty, powerful enough to pull down the strongholds, fortresses, or castles of the heart and mind. The Corinthians could relate to Paul's use of this word 'stronghold.' Corinth, like most major cities in Greece, had an acropolis, which was a fortified section of the elevated part of a city. Located on a mountain near the city, the acropolis was a fortified place into which the inhabitants could retreat when attacked. Every fortified city had strongholds, bulwarks that were particularly impregnable. Paul uses this word 'stronghold' as a reference to central arguments that fortify his opponents' message. In spite of these fortresses of false reasoning, Paul's Gospel has 'divine power' to demolish impregnable arguments."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Land of Lincoln Baptist Church, page 90.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, pages 90-91.

C. Notice the motives of Paul's compliance. vs. 5-6

Let me start this section of our study on verses 5-6, by asking you the reader a very blunt question. "What is your motive for trying to obey the commands of Christ?" It is very clear when we read these verses that Paul was still going through much difficulty just trying so hard to be of encouragement to the Corinthians. But, because of the false teachers who were sticking around, criticizing, and defaming Paul, he finally decided to just be very blunt with them. His primary reason for this bluntness was simply because he was tired of trying to be gentle with these hell-raisers, and so, he had simply had enough, as I mentioned earlier in this book. Paul's primary motive for being faithful and obeying the commands of Christ was simply to get these weird phonies at Corinth to bring every thought in their minds to the obedience of Christ. Paul not only wanted the people in the church at Corinth to bring every thought of the mind under obedience to Christ, but he desired strongly to bring every thought under the complete Lordship of Jesus Christ himself.

Now, as we move on in the study of these two strong verses, let me give you some of the strongest interpretations that I have been able to find on these verses. Please pay much attention because these verses are going to cover more than just spiritual warfare as it pertains to fighting with Satan.

"If you love the Lord, if you have a desire to please and honor Him with your life, then you do understand that you are in a battle. You battle to keep yourself spiritually in line with God's Word, and you battle for the minds of others as you endeavor to reach them for Christ and teach them truth. Believers who are backslidden or don't care about being dedicated to the Lord have removed themselves from spiritual warfare because they have surrendered to their fleshly desires and have succumbed to apathy and indifference concerning the plight of the lost. They are right where Satan wants them, on the sidelines doing nothing, collecting dust, and wasting their lives away.

Paul gives two key specifics of the battle for the mind and what is involved in the altercations of the dedicated believer. He speaks of casting down and capturing thoughts."¹⁵²

"What is the meaning of this phrase, 'casting down imaginations?' The words 'casting down' are derived from the word *kathaireo*, which means 'to pull or throw down; to refute.' In your battle for the minds of people, you will find that many times you must refute the errors before they will accept the truth. Imaginations must be refuted or destroyed.

In ancient warfare, when strongholds were captured and towers pulled down, the defenders were taken into captivity. Commanders had a good view of the battlefield from these high positions. It was from these towers that commanders communicated their defense plans in battle to those fighting on the walls when an enemy was attacking. If the towers could be destroyed, then the defense of the enemy was greatly weakened. This is why the towers were targeted first."¹⁵³

"In the same manner, if the defenses of men could be destroyed, then their minds could be reached. Like high towers, imaginations come from the head, the top of the body. What are 'imaginations?' What is Paul talking about here? This words is from the word *logismos*, which means 'reckonings, conclusions, reasoning, thought.' It is a general word referring

¹⁵² Ibid, page 93.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

to any and all human or demonic thoughts, opinions, philosophies, theories, psychologies, perspectives, viewpoints, and religions.

Beloved, spiritual warfare is not a battle with demons as some wrongly conclude. It is a battle for the minds of people who are captive to lies that are exalted in opposition to Scripture. Christians who verbally confront demons waste energy and demonstrate ignorance of the real war."¹⁵⁴

"We are not called to convert demons, but sinners, by tearing down conclusions, thoughts, or reasonings that are anti-Christ and self-exalting. Such thoughts are like castles or barriers that men have erected in their minds to resist, and keep out the truth and knowledge of God and His Word. The arsenal of the Almighty is the only thing that is powerful enough to penetrate the walls of man's unbelief and rebellion and change his attitude and way of thinking about the Lord and sin."¹⁵⁵

"Paul's goal in battling for the minds of people was to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. If they were obedient to Christ, they would trust in Him for their salvation. The objective of our warfare is to change how people think, to battle for their mind, taking every thought they have and making it no longer captive to a damning ideology, but captive to the obedience of Christ. This is what spiritual warfare is all about. It is reaching men with the truth of the Gospel, seeing them then saved and growing spiritually in Christ."¹⁵⁶

II. PAUL WAS MOTIVATED BY HIS DIVINE COMMISSION. vs. 7-18

I believe that any Christian who has studied the life of Paul the Apostle knows that the primary motive for Paul's entire ministry was the fulfillment of his divine call from God, which he fulfilled by obeying the Great Commission. It is very obvious that everywhere Paul went his desire was to preach the Gospel and to get those who got saved to follow his example as they grew in God's amazing grace. Paul had no other desire than to use his life to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

But Paul had a major problem in the church in Corinth. That problem was the constant harassment of false teachers, who not only tried to deceive the people with false doctrine, but they were constantly trying to discredit Paul as a true servant of God. This opposition had become so bad that it was time for Paul to strongly confront this constant attack by professing religious people who knew nothing of genuine salvation. So, what we have in **Chapter 10**, once more, is Paul trying to defend his integrity and credibility by telling the people in Corinth that the only reason he lived was to obey the commands of Christ and to carry out the Divine Commission which was imbedded in his heart and soul. Therefore, as we take a deeper look into this **Chapter 10**, let's learn everything we possibly can about having the right motives when we serve Jesus as our Savior and Lord!

A. Notice the basis of Paul's commission. v. 7

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, page 94.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

As we look at verse 7, we discover that Paul the Apostle is still trying to defend his credibility as a servant of God. Those false teachers in Corinth were continuing to brag about how they were true followers of Christ, while they tried to criticize and run Paul down. Paul told the believers in Corinth that if those other teachers were truly followers of Christ, then they would acknowledge for sure that Paul was the real deal. Paul said this because the basis of Paul's commission as a man of God was his personal relationship with Christ, Who had truly saved him, and yes, had also called him to preach. Truly, Paul's Divine commission was based upon his genuine conversion which had taken place on the Damascus Road.

"In his defense, Paul is challenging these believers to look at the obvious facts or appearance. Those folks who were claiming to belong to the Lord needed to recognize the obvious facts that Paul was a dedicated believer. Just as they were confident in their salvation, Paul was confident too. Isn't it great that we can have confidence in our salvation and now we have eternal life? God's promises give us assurance of salvation. If the Christian is asked if he knows he is going to Heaven, he does not have to say, 'I hope so. I think so. The odds are with me or maybe.' Thank God the believer can say, 'I know so.' "¹⁵⁷

"The best way to avoid being taken in by a counterfeit is to study what is genuine. Thus Paul defended his authenticity in these verses by giving the marks of a true man of God. In our day, Christianity is awash in a flood of deceitful false teachers, Paul provides desperately needed instruction in discernment. Believers must be able to pick out the voice of the Good Shepherd and His genuine under-shepherds amidst the howls of Satan's wolves (John 10:27). A true man of God can be recognized by his relationship to Jesus Christ, his impact on the church, his compassion for people, his disdain for fleshly methods, his integrity, and his humility."¹⁵⁸

B. Notice the boasting of Paul's commission. v. 8

"The apostle was being condemned for making a big deal about his apostolic authority given to him by the Lord. Paul, however, was not ashamed of his authority given by God or the way he used it, because it was for the purpose of building up believers, and that is what he did with it. He did not use his authority to tear them down. He was not anything like the false apostles that were abusive, harsh, and destructive in the way they treated other people. False teachers bring discord, division, disunity, and destruction into a church. Paul, on the other hand, used his authority to reach people for Christ, establish churches, train leaders, and disciple the converts. The result was spiritual growth in the churches."¹⁵⁹

Paul had no reason to use his God-given authority to harm even the false teachers, although the thought must have come to him. He could have been abusive of those who had abused him, but he chose not to do so. Paul was emphatic in telling the people in Corinth that his call and commission were directly from God, but he would follow the leadership of Jesus, and only use his authority to build up or edify those within the Corinthian church, as

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, page 106.

¹⁵⁸ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, By: John F. MacArthur, Moody Press, page 338.

¹⁵⁹ Op Cit. page 108.

he would in every church. Then Paul tells the Corinthians that he would not be ashamed of how he had used the authority Christ had given him.

There is a very practical lesson here for every child of God. If God calls us to be a part of carrying out His Great Commission, and with this call, He gives us Divine authority, we are never to use this authority and this commission to be destructive to others, even when we had been hurt tremendously. May I tell you that this is probably one of the hardest things we as God's called men will ever have to deal with? That is when others hurt us by attacking the authenticity of our God-given authority, it is extremely hard not to want to fight back. But, if we would use our authority to hurt those who have hurt us, then we would be no better than those who are counterfeit teachers, who use their false profession to harangue those who are genuinely called by God. I would even ask you readers to pray for this writer because after serving Jesus for over 54 years, I am terribly tired of the criticism, the castigation, the false attacks, and the mal-treatments which have so often come my way. The truth is that almost every time I get this abuse, it is when I have tried the hardest to do good and help others. The deepest hurt I have ever received has come from those whom my wife and I have loved and helped the most that we ever could possibly have done. May God even help me to not dwell upon this as I write this commentary!

C. Notice the boldness of Paul's commission. vs. 9-11

Now, in verses 9-11, we are going to see the boldness of Paul surface in a tremendous way. The false teachers in Corinth had done enough damage to Paul's reputation and testimony, and it was now time for him to step forward and let these evil people have it. In these three verses, this is just exactly what Paul does. Please pay attention to these next few paragraphs.

"The cauldron of Condemnation for Paul was hot and personal. It is not easy when people launch personal attacks against you that are unfounded, untrue, or unchangeable. He was condemned for trying to terrify and intimidate the Corinthian believers into obeying and submitting to him, no doubt, because of the stern letter he wrote to the church. These very accusations were the traits of false teachers themselves. Yet, they had the gall to condemn him. Paul assured these people that he was not trying to scare them, but bring them to repentance so they could enjoy the full blessings that God had for them."¹⁶⁰

"Paul's critics did not stop with his letters, but shot their arrows of arrogance at his abilities and appearance. The apostle was considered weak and without backbone. He was being accused of hypocrisy by scolding the believers in his letters but being a sissy when he was face-to-face with them. They were critical of his appearance and speaking abilities too. They felt that Paul lacked charm and charisma to be a good leader and command respect. His speaking was considered contemptible, which means he lacked a polished, oratorical skills, which were highly prized in the Greek culture. These folks were comparing him to other preachers they had heard and felt that others were more powerful speakers. They mistakenly believed that 'speaking ability' is the prerequisite to being a good leader. Let me say, there is more to being a good leader than just his speaking ability."¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, page 110.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

In verse 11, of this wonderful passage, we see the strong response of Paul to these continuing actions by the false teachers in Corinth. Once more, Paul had had enough of this phony righteousness and defiant rebuttal to this great man of God. Paul tells these people that they had better not misjudge him by accusing him of being strong in his letters, but he would be a weakling when the Corinthians saw him in person the next time. Paul tells these wicked opponents that they will find out just what kind of man he is the next time he comes to see them. Please notice the next couple of paragraphs about this verse.

"Paul challenged any person who would accuse him of inconsistency to consider this, that what he was in word by his letters when absent, he would be in deed when present. Later in this epistle Paul warned the rebels in Corinth not to underestimate his ability and willingness to deal sternly with them.

'I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past, and to all the rest as well, that if I come again I will not spare anyone, since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you' (II Corinthians 13:2-3).'

The apostle's life was totally consistent; he was the same person in deed when present as he was in the letters he wrote when absent. He was no hypocrite; his integrity was unimpeachable.

Paul's life and ministry bore the stamp of divine approval. To the Thessalonians he wrote, ***'But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts' (I Thessalonians 2:4).*** But in contrast to true men of God, false teachers are often quite different in private from the public image they project. The numerous scandals that have rocked their ministries over the years bear sad testimony to that reality."¹⁶²

D. Notice the boundaries of Paul's commission. vs. 12-16

In verses 12-13, of our text, Paul emphatically tells the confused Corinthians that he is not going to try to even compare himself and his ministry with those wicked false teachers. In fact, I think Paul was just saying, "I am not going to waste any more of my time with this group of phonies." So, he tells the church at Corinth that he is not going to measure himself or his ministry by others, because they who do this are not wise. Why were they not wise? Because one day they would have to give an account to Jesus for their phony false actions and false teachings. They would not be judged by others, but they would be measured by the Lord Jesus and his expectations for all of his servants. And obviously, when that time would come, these phony hypocrites would be exposed for their phoniness.

Folks, there is a tremendous lesson here for us today. We had better make sure that our service in the work of the Lord is with the right motives and for the right reasons. Our work should be done for Jesus alone. We should not try to measure ourselves to others or try to out-do others in this wonderful work. God truly knows our hearts, and he certainly knows the motives in our hearts. Just like Paul, we need to be working faithfully for our Lord just

¹⁶² The MacArthur's New Testament Commentary, II Corinthians, Moody Press, pages 343-344.

simply because Christ has gloriously saved us and given us this wonderful opportunity. And may I say, after over half a century of full-time ministry, it is truly a marvelous privilege to have been a part of God's plan to try to bring the lost world to Him.

Now, in verses 14-16, please notice the following enlightening words. "The false teachers boasted about themselves, their abilities, and their accomplishments. Paul, however, refused to say anything about himself or his ministry that was not true or accurate. He said he would not boast about matters outside the limits, sphere, or measure of his ministry. By the word 'measure' mentioned here, it seems as if the apostle meant the commission he received from God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. It was a measure or district that extended through all Asia Minor and Greece, down to Achaia, where Corinth was situated.

The apostle tells them they must remember that he came to them first. He was the first one to bring the Gospel to them, and he had traveled a long way from home to do that. He tells them that his method was not to come and be a pastor of a church. He had been called to be a missionary. After he would begin a work, he would travel on to another place. He was always moving out to the frontier. He never built on another man's foundation."¹⁶³

"Paul was never one to rest on his laurels. His restless spirit drove him over onward to preach the Gospel where it had never been proclaimed. In Acts 19:21 he expressed his desire to preach the Gospel in Rome, but he did not mean to stop there. He planned, with the Roman believers' aid, to reach Spain (**Romans 15:24, 28**). When the Corinthians became strong enough in their faith, the apostle wanted them to launch him to the next mission field. But no matter where he went, Paul always wanted to stay within the sphere of ministry God had sovereignly designed for him. He humbly refused to follow in the footsteps of other men of God and take credit for their labors."¹⁶⁴

Before we move on to the final verses of this chapter, I would like to insert another special thought found in verse 15 about the way Paul conducted his missionary ministry. In this verse, he tells the Corinthians that although he had been extra good to them by staying in Corinth for so long, he typically carried on his ministry by the rule that God had given to all of the earlier preachers. Pay attention to what Paul said to the Corinthians.

"Rule might be translated Canon. Canon Law is the law or rule by which churches are governed. Paul seems to say, 'This is the canon that God has given me, a measure to reach even unto you, and that is, that we should preach the Gospel in the regions beyond.' He says, 'My rule as a missionary is not to be occupied so much with churches already established, and certainly not to go where other men have labored, and then add my little to it. I do not want to build on another man's foundation. But my business is to preach the Gospel where Christ is not named.' "¹⁶⁵

Folks, let me say right here that Paul's rule of ministry was somewhat like the one I have followed for many years. Yes, I have been the pastor of established churches, but my greatest work has been in church planting. The churches that Jo Anne and I have planted have been so blessed of God, but we seemed to struggle with the old established churches. I think this was because most of these churches were not interested in working hard to win

¹⁶³ Op Cit, page 117.

¹⁶⁴ Op Cit. page 348.

¹⁶⁵ Second Epistle To The Corinthians, By: H.A. Ironside, Loizeaux Brothers, page 222.

people to Christ or to be involved heavily in world missions. My heavy burden through all of the years of my ministry has been to reach the lost and bring them to Christ. I have been blessed to do this through local evangelism, church planting, evangelistic crusades, local church revivals, and then of course, world missions. Now I know that God doesn't call every preacher to be an evangelist, church planter, or missionary. But, He does call every preacher to try to win souls to Christ starting at home and then continue to take the message of Christ to the rest of the world to fulfill the Great Commission.

E. Notice the burden of Paul's commission. v. 17

In this verse 17, we find the entire motive for Paul's ministry. Paul wanted to bring glory to God in everything he did. He was not looking for accolades or applause. Because God had been so good to save Paul's soul and change his wicked life, he wanted everything he did to bring glory and honor to Jesus.

We must also see that Paul wanted the Corinthians to live and serve Christ in order to bring glory to His name. He had had enough of the false teachers in Corinth trying to demonstrate their greatness. Paul was telling the Corinthian believers that it was time to move on from these false phony teachers and serve Christ with the one desire of bringing glory to His name. Paul was saying, as he always did, "Please follow the example I have set for you. For, if you do this, you will bring glory to Christ in all you do for Jesus in and through the church."

There is a great lesson here for all of us to learn. That lesson is to follow the tremendous pattern of Paul's service and do everything for the glory of Jesus Christ. Because if this happens, there will never be arguments about who is the greatest teacher or preacher! Paul's emphatic burden was to bring glory to Christ in everything he did; even when others were tearing him to pieces. As the writer of this commentary, I must tell you that this has been one of the most difficult areas of my 54 years of ministry. I truly have a difficult time trying to overlook or forgive those who have hurt me so much; especially when my wife and I have given them so much of our lives. Even right now while I am writing, there are at least 40 people that have hurt Jo Anne and me unmercifully because we resigned after giving them four years of pastoral ministry for absolutely no charge. We did it because we loved them so much. But, when we had to close the church due to my health problems, these people became vicious, and almost one year later, we have had no calls or contact from these people, even to check on my deteriorating health. But yet, my motives have been good, and my burden has been to make sure that Jesus will be glorified in everything I do for Jesus!

F. Notice the blessing of Paul's commission. v. 18

As we move forward in this wonderful study, I must tell you that it has probably been about two months since I last wrote on this commentary. The reason for this is that I have been going through another very difficult time, both physically and emotionally. I say this because I have recently had more problems with my heart, many more tremendous problems with my diabetes, including my terrible neuropathy in my feet. Also, just four weeks ago, I had to have two polyps removed from my nose near my eye and one lesion removed from the corner of my eye. Then, just yesterday, I had to return to my surgeon,

only to discover that my incision was not healing well. Now I have to almost start all over again with the healing process.

In addition, this past week, the ENT doctor discovered that one of my vocal cords is paralyzed. I knew something has been wrong, but I surely didn't know how serious this problem was. So now, a God-called preacher, that has preached over ten thousand sermons in 54 years, can no longer preach with complete clarity. Like Paul the Apostle writing to the Corinthians trying to deal with the false teachers in addition to suffering tremendous struggles, I might just say that I just don't understand why God allows His servants to suffer so much sickness and suffering here on this earth, while they are just simply trying to get out the Gospel message. Yet, in this verse 18, Paul says the main reason he did what he did for the Kingdom of God was to simply win Christ's approval or to bring pleasure to His heart by the way he carried out the Lord's ministry.

And, my dear friends, more than anything else in the entire world, this is what my wife and I desire to do. I love what Paul told the Roman believers in **Romans 12:1-2**. Please pay attention to these two verses. These verses have been probably the greatest verses of my entire ministry. Here they are! ***"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."***

Twice in these two verses, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that if they serve Christ in His perfect will, then their works will be acceptable or find the favor of God, if they will remain devoted and dedicated to Christ. This is what Paul obviously desired, and this is truly what I desire after over half an entire century in the work of God!

Conclusion

So now, as we come to the end of our study of **Chapter 10** of Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, I believe we can attest that Paul was motivated by the desire to be compliant with the perfect will and the perfect plan of God for his life. As he faithfully served God, he desired more than anything to carry out the Great Commission in obedience to the command of Christ, with the proper unselfish motives so as to bring honor and pleasure to the heart of God. I sincerely believe this should be our motive for carrying out God's perfect will and perfect plan for our lives.

So, we come to the end of **Chapter 10**, but as we will see distinctly in the beginning of **Chapter 11**, Paul has to continue on with some stern words for the false teachers in the church at Corinth and for those who have been so easily inclined to follow these soothsayers. In fact, when we get into **Chapter 11**, we will discover Paul telling these easily deceived Corinthians that if anyone had ever had to experience suffering for his faith, then, he was the one. Paul did not hold back one iota when it came to describing the horrible suffering he had experienced because of his desire to see the people in Corinth come to Christ and also to see them grow by sound doctrine and not be torn down by the lying hypocrites who were falsely teaching some damnable doctrine to the easily deceived young believers in Corinth. Therefore, let us continue our journey into **Chapter 11**, in our next two chapters of study in this commentary. We will evidently learn some tough love from Paul as he continues to address the false teachers, who tried to tear him down and destroy his influence.

Chapter Eleven

"A STINGING REMINDER FOR THE CORINTHIANS"

Scripture: II Corinthians 11:1-15

Introduction

As we continue this wonderful commentary on II Corinthians into **Chapter 11**, we need to just stop and re-evaluate the terrible problems that Paul was having to deal with in the Corinthian church. Paul had established the church in Corinth on the simplicity of the Word of God, and many of the people had come to Christ. But always, as we know so very well, Satan comes along with false doctrine through false teachers and attempts to deceive and confuse the new believers. These false teachers always have ulterior motives to try and win over the support of these easily deceivable new converts. Sometimes these ulterior motives include gaining power, castigating the true teachers, or maybe even, just trying to get a following in order to profit financially from their evil efforts. We see this so often today in the work of so many cults that come in under the disguise of Christianity, but in fact, turn out to be Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, Mormons, and many other false teachers. It is sad to say, that because of the diabolical expertise of these evil teachers, many new converts are led astray before genuine teachers like Paul can rescue them from this damnable doctrine being taught by phony religious people.

Thus in this next chapter (**Chapter 11**), we are going to take a look at Paul's stinging reminder for the Corinthians concerning these false teachers and the terrible damage that they will cause, unless they are stopped. Then we will take an additional look in **Chapter 12** at some more of Paul's tremendous suffering and how he came do deal with it. I ask every one of you, our readers, to pay close attention to how Paul got tough with the Corinthians, and also with the false teachers in Corinth. Additionally, he was so transparent about so much suffering that he had to endure for the proclamation of the true Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I. FIRST, PAUL REMINDS THEM OF HIS FOCUS. vs. 1-2

As we dig deeper into this precious Book of II Corinthians, we need to really see the horrendous castigation and opposition which Paul continued to go through. It had become so bad, that Paul felt that it was just very truthfully foolishness for him to continue to talk about it. The reason he felt this way was that while he was spending all this time trying to vindicate his apostleship to the Corinthians, multitudes of people were dying lost in their sins. In other words, Paul wanted to get back to his main focus, and that was winning people to Jesus and helping them grow in grace. But yet, if the false teachers in Corinth continued to oppose him, then Paul would just have to continue to defend his ministry. And folks, the most ridiculous thing I see in this terrible story in II Corinthians is that this same Paul, who the people were doubting, was the same servant of God who had established the church there in Corinth. Truly, it is always such a foolish thing for any man of God to have to deal with these foolish and frivolous matters, when there are so many souls that need to me reached with the Gospel message.

Let me mention to you that this very morning when I came to write more on this Biblical commentary, I am presently dealing with a ridiculous small issue in our African ministry in Uganda, just because one of our leaders will not admit any wrong he has done, nor even admit a little mistake. His arrogance, egocentric attitude, and pride are causing him to blame me and others for the terrible mess he has made in a little matter that could easily have been solved very quickly, if he would have just been totally honest and confess that he made the mistakes. But yet, this is one of the main reasons that the work of God was hindered for Paul in Corinth, and it is still being hindered today by people who have grown older physically, but have never grown up spiritually. Therefore, we will now look at these verses in **Chapter 11** and see what we can learn from Paul's stinging reminder to the people in Corinth. As I read and study these words, which were written by Paul, I just want to say, "Go to it Paul and give them what they deserve." Now, if you think I am bitter, I really am not. But I am just tired of dealing with so many foolish things that happen because of childish behavior among the professing children of God.

A. His focus was one of personal concern. vs. 1-2a

In verse 1 and in the first part of verse 2, we discover something about Paul that really stands out. Paul had a genuine personal concern for the Corinthians, and he just wanted the Corinthians to understand that although there might have been false teachers in the church teaching damnable doctrine and ridiculing him, he still had a tremendous love for the people, and he considered them his children in the faith. Paul was not attempting to defend his apostleship because of his desire to prove the false teachers wrong, but his desire was to show his love and concern for the people, and then, get their focus back on the primary reason for the church—that is to win people to Christ and then to help them grow in the grace of God.

In these two verses, Paul reminds the professing believers in Corinth, that he is jealous over them because they are his spiritual children. And seriously, their allegiance should not be to other teachers first and foremost, but their allegiance and respect should be for the man who first brought them the Gospel.

Now, let me give you what a great pastor/teacher, Dr. Rod Mattoon, says about these Corinthians who did not want to assume responsibility for their own behavior, but instead, they wanted to at least insinuate that the confusion in the church was because of Paul. However, Paul was probably in the city of Philippi, and there was no way that Paul could have caused their problem. So, the Corinthians did indeed deserve a stinging rebuke from Paul. He desired to rebuke them because of his love for them and because he wanted to get the mess in the church straightened out so that they could get their focus back on winning souls and developing new believers.

"People who take on the task of spiritual responsibility are willing to give sacrificially, be faithful, stand for Christ, face rejection and intimidation, risk being misunderstood, and endure mocking, scorn, and the belittling of others in order to get others saved. They are willing to take time to help Christians spiritually mature in Christ by sharing with them principles about how to grow in the Lord and walk with God or bring them to people who can teach them these things."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume Two, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Lincoln

So my dear friends, because of Paul's love and concern for the Corinthian people, he rebuked them for listening to the false teachers and for neglecting to assume responsibility for their own growth and spiritual development. He did this with passion because he loved the Corinthians as his own children. Paul took all of this time and demonstrated all of this effort to correct the Corinthians because he wanted them to get right with God and be ready when Christ would come again and gather them as a church to be His bride at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Thus, Paul asked the people to be patient with him, even if they considered what he was saying to be foolish, because he wanted the people to be ready when Christ comes again.

B. His focus was one of having a pure church. v. 2b

Beloved believers, I can't think of anything more embarrassing than for a bride on her wedding day to come to the service with dirt on her beautiful dress. I know this for sure, because on the day that my dear wife, Jo Anne, and I started to the church to get married back in 1965, I was driving a white 1957 Chevrolet car with the window open. In through the window flew a big grasshopper, which instantaneously spit black juice on my wife's wedding gown. We had to turn the car around and drive back to Jo Anne's house where her mother did her best to clean that beautiful wedding dress so that we could go on with the wedding. I must tell you that it was an uncertain and embarrassing time, but I did get to marry this wonderful young lady.

Well, this is what Paul was trying to do when he wrote II Corinthians, **Chapter 11**. He was trying to get the church at Corinth to get right with God and get into a pure condition so that one day they could be married to the Bridegroom, our precious Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was extremely interested in the church's being holy and chaste or pure for the coming of the Bridegroom. In this wicked day in which we are now living, when anything comes and goes in our churches, we need a true revival of repentance that will get the church purified and ready for the Lord's return.

Please notice the following verses from Hosea and see the promise God made to the nation of Israel and how this promise relates to our text here in II Corinthians.

"Hosea 2:19-20, '...And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.' Paul felt the same concern for the Corinthians that the Lord had for Israel. His jealousy was in that sense 'godly.' The apostle pictured himself like a father of a virgin bride. As their spiritual father, he had a personal interest for the welfare of the Christians at Corinth. He guarded them like a father who watches protectively over his daughter before she is given in marriage to her future husband. He spoke of this relationship as a spiritual father in his first letter to the Corinthians."¹⁶⁷

Let me remind you of what Paul said earlier in this Book of II Corinthians. **"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."** (II Corinthians 6:17-18)

Land Baptist Church, page 122.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, page 125.

These two verses remind us that God the Father will not claim us as His own, unless we have been made a child of His through His shed blood and unless we are living a holy life, which is characteristic of a true child of God. This is just another firm reminder that God wants His Church, the Bride of Christ, to be Holy and clean when it comes time for the wedding after the rapture of the church.

II. PAUL REMINDS THEM OF HIS FEAR. vs. 3-4

Now, let's continue the discussion of Paul's stinging reminder or rebuke to the Corinthians because of their alignment with false teachers and because they had believed the lies the phony teachers were telling about Paul. Paul didn't hold back anything that these negligent people needed to hopefully get them back to where they should have been in their respect and support of Paul's ministry.

A. He feared the perversion of the Corinthians. v. 3

"The person who takes on the task of spiritual responsibility is concerned, alarmed, fears or has perturbation about believers being led astray by the perversion of lies and false doctrine. Paul reflects this fear or perturbation in this verse. He was afraid that as Eve was deceived by the craftiness and deception of the serpent, the sincerity and devotion of the Corinthians would be corrupted and they would be led astray.

The critics of Paul were attempting to lead the people astray by their false doctrine and by calling his authority as an apostle into question. The Corinthians' sincere and pure devotion to Christ was being threatened. The apostle did not want the believers to lose their love for the Savior. Paul illustrated the seriousness of this seduction by comparing it with the events that took place in the Garden of Eden when Eve was deceived by the serpent."¹⁶⁸

Paul makes a tremendous statement in this verse when he says, **"...so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."** I believe what Paul was saying was that the Corinthians were being led astray by people who were saying that there was more to salvation than the simple message which Paul had given to the Corinthians about salvation. What the Corinthians were doing was believing the lie that we hear so much today in this generation. That lie is that surely there has to be more to getting saved than just a simple act of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and the repentance from sin, which results in a changed life. Of course, down through the years since the founding of the church in the Book of Acts, mankind has tried so very hard to add additional requirements to this simple act.

As all true believers and students of the Word know very well, the Catholic Church and many other false teachers have taught that in order to be completely saved, we must also be baptized, partake of communion regularly, pray the rosary through Mary, and ultimately, have a plan for friends or family members to pay and pray for indulgencies to get the departed love one out of purgatory, if by chance, he or she might go there when they die. Of course, this is false doctrine, which teaches works for complete salvation, and of

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, page 129.

course, there is no such place as purgatory. So, the Corinthian church was being led away from the simplicity of the Gospel message to a system of works for salvation.

B. He feared the permissiveness of the Corinthians. v. 4

Verse four is really a slap in the face to the Corinthians. Paul tells these people that if a false teacher came to them with false doctrine, then they were being more tolerant and permissive with these false teachers than they were with Paul himself, in spite of the fact that he had brought them the message of salvation. They were just being deceived by these hirelings and yet, the Corinthian church believed these weird teachers more than they did Paul the apostle.

Paul told the Corinthians that if someone came to them with the message of another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit, they were much more ready to hear and believe these false teachers more than they were to believe and obey the teachings of Paul, the man who had brought them the true Gospel message.

"Paul was concerned about the gullibility of the Corinthian believers. The problem was the people were very trusting in any message. If false teachers would come to them and preach about a different Jesus, a different spirit than the Holy Spirit, or a different way of salvation, they would happily accept whatever anyone would tell them. The interlopers wanted to give the Corinthians a worldly spirit in place of the Holy Spirit, but a worldly spirit enslaves people and fills their hearts with fear. Such a spirit is empty of power, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

These believers were in danger of accepting a different gospel. When you take spiritual responsibility, you are concerned about people being led astray by false teaching. Paul dealt with this problem in the letter to the Galatians."¹⁶⁹

Let me now give you some additional words from Dr. Ray Stedman, who stated the following words. "Now a threat has arisen that threatens the spiritual virginity of the Corinthian bride. Paul says 'I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.' Simplicity and purity! There is nothing more vital than maintaining the simplicity that is in Christ.

Over the years, I've noticed that when religion becomes complicated it has drifted away from the simple realities and centralities of faith. The Jewish religion of Jesus' day was a complex maze of rituals and rules that made no sense. For example, a man could not spit in the dust on the Sabbath, because spittle and dust together made mud, which could make bricks for building houses—so spitting in the dust was working on the Sabbath! A man had to be careful to spit only on a stone during the Sabbath. This was one of hundreds of complex rules that oppressed the people in Jesus' day.

God is the Spirit of simplicity. The faith that Jesus brought us is a simple faith. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who ministered at Westminster Chapel in London and presided over Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in the United Kingdom, once observed:

'As life in general becomes more and more complex, so religion tends to be affected in the same way. It seems to be assumed that if the affairs of men are so difficult and complicated, the affairs of God should be still more complicated, because they are still greater.'

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, page 131.

Hence there comes a tendency to increase ceremony and ritual, and to multiply organizations and activities....As we get further away from God, life becomes more complicated and involved.'

Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that Christianity is not a creed, not a set of rules or doctrines, not a theological system or institutional structure. It is fellowship with Jesus. That's why, early in I Corinthians, Paul writes, **'God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.'** (I Corinthians 1:9). Christianity isn't a complex system of doctrines rituals, and observances. It is a relationship, pure and simple."¹⁷⁰

III. PAUL REMINDS THEM OF HIS FAITHFULNESS. vs. 5-9

In verses 5-9, we discover Paul continuing to talk to the Corinthians about his faithfulness as a man of God, even in the environment in Corinth where everything he had done was questioned or ridiculed. Paul was not trying to be arrogant or egotistical with the doubters in Corinth. He was just trying to be transparent, hoping that these weak believers, if they were even saved, would get the message that he was a genuine man of God sent to them by God.

Let me give you some words of instruction from Dr. Rod Mattoon about Paul's ongoing battle with the skeptics in Corinth, and then, we will deal with the exegesis of each of these verses.

"The Apostle Paul did not consider himself inferior to the 'chiefest' or 'super apostles.' This reference to 'chiefest apostles' is believed to be referring to the skeptical, phony critics of Paul who claimed to be apostles. They claimed to be 'super-apostles' but were far from it and were not better than Paul. They may have been more eloquent speakers, but they spoke lies and were servants of Satan.

The word 'rude' does not mean Paul was rude with people. It comes from the Greek word 'idiot.' It refers to 'an unlearned, unskilled, or illiterate man as opposed to one who was educated.' This word began by meaning a private individual who took technical training, what we would call a layman.

Remember, Paul is being barraged with condemnation and criticism about his appearance, character, and speaking abilities, yet, he remains confident in Christ. He acknowledges he may be rude or unskilled in his speaking abilities compared to those trained in the Greek oratory schools, but he was not lacking in his knowledge of the Lord. This was a priority of his life. He has made this clear to them in every possible way."¹⁷¹

A. Paul was faithful in spite of people's doubts. v. 5

Folks, I have been a fulltime preacher for a long time. During these 54 plus years, I have dealt with hundreds of people who were skeptics about the truth of the Bible, the plans that God had given me for the church I was trying to pastor, the direction that God was

¹⁷⁰ Letters To A Troubled Church, By: Ray Stedman, Discovery House Publishers, pages 381-382.

¹⁷¹ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume II, By: Rod Mattoon, Lincoln Land Baptist Church, Pages 134-135.

trying to show my congregations for world outreach and missions, and on and on I could go. The truth is that there is probably nothing that discourages a man of God as much as the doubts of his people, especially if he and his wife have planted a particular church. But, this is going to happen to every man of God as it happened to Paul, and as it has happened to me many times. As Dr. Mattoon already mentioned, it is an attack against not only our abilities, but it is an attack against our very character. So, I believe I see some sarcasm in verse 5, when Paul tells the Corinthians that he thought it probably was one of the chief apostles compared to the phony ones that were trying to lead the people astray. Paul was trying to get across to the people that he was going to remain faithful regardless of their doubts and skepticism. This should be the attitude of every man of God. I pray that God will help me to always keep this same devoted attitude, regardless of how severe the attacks.

B. Paul was faithful in spite of personal debility. v. 6

As Dr. Mattoon has already mentioned, the word "rude" in this verse really means a "simple person in speech". What Paul was trying to get across to the people was that he may not have been to the Greek School of Oratory and be able to speak like some of the phony teachers, but what he taught the Corinthians was the truth and far more important than how precise and articulate he may have been in his presentation.

This might be a good time for me to mention that many years ago when I started out in the ministry as an eighteen year old young man, I was led to believe that when a man stood in the pulpit to preach the Gospel that probably the most important thing was how well he may have spoken. But, I soon came to understand that the way one proclaimed the truth was not nearly as important as the truth he would proclaim. I say this because I had not been in the ministry very long before I began to see such a butchering of the truth by men who taught false doctrine, that I just could not believe it. I am very sad to say, that things are much worse today than they were over 50 years ago. Back then, we at least had Dr. Adrian Rogers, Dr. Homer Lindsay, Jr., Dr. E.J. Daniels, Dr. J. Harold Smith, Dr. Junior Hill, Dr. Bill Stafford, Dr. Stephen Olford, Dr. Jerry Falwell, and many others who would stand in the pulpits without fear or favor and preach the unsearchable truth of God's Word. But today, these kinds of true preachers are difficult to find.

Paul told the Corinthians that the false teachers in Corinth may have looked and spoken more presentably than he, yet his message was the true simple Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, Paul may have looked like a debilitated person to the people in Corinth, but up in heaven, he was a chief of the Apostles.

C. Paul was faithful in spite of personal deficiency. vs. 7-9

As we look at verse 7, I want to share some words from one of America's late great Evangelist, Oliver B. Greene. Please pay close attention.

"'Have I committed an offense in abasing myself...?' That is, 'Have I sinned in working for a living, laboring with my own hands, when I might have—and could—enjoyed what men regard as a dignified ease at the expense of the church?'

Here we have somewhat of an abrupt transition from the preceding verse. Paul is saying in understandable words, 'I confess to my inferiority in regard to my speech, but this does not interfere with my knowledge of the doctrines which I preach, nor does it interfere with

the other evidence which I have furnished that, beyond any shadow of doubt, I am God's apostle—called of God, anointed by God and sent by God to you. If this is true, then what is the ground for offense? What have I done? Where have I erred? Wherein have I sinned? Where have I shown that I am not qualified to be an apostle? Is it in the fact that I have not chosen to claim support from you, but preached the Gospel to you without charge?"¹⁷²

"It seems that the false teachers had accused Paul of not being an apostle because he had not accepted wages for preaching the Gospel. (See **I Corinthians 9:1-18**). The Corinthians heard the Gospel; they received the meat, the bread and the milk of the Word while others paid the bill. And now it seems his enemies were using this as part of their accusations to condemn Paul."¹⁷³

After Paul asks the Corinthians about how he could have offended them by not taking their money for the preaching he gave them, he moves on in verse 8 to let the confused people in Corinth really "have it". He tells them that he had taken money from other churches to take care of his living needs, just because he knew the kind of people he was dealing with in Corinth. Paul knew that if he had taken pay from the Corinthians, then they would have complained about his preaching for money. Then when he did not take any money from them, they still complained and said that he was not a genuine apostle of our Lord. This was one of those situations where Paul couldn't win for losing. When Paul used the word "robbed" here in this verse, he was using a term that was often used for stripping the armor off of a dead man's body. The idea was that it was a very hard thing for Paul to accept the generous gifts from other churches, and the poor Macedonian church, while taking nothing from the rich church at Corinth because he was afraid that he might be accused of preaching for money. Yet, he received the contributions from Macedonia and the additional churches because he didn't want anything to hinder his proclamation of the Gospel. I think it is worth noting that many of these professing Corinthian Christians were rich and "well to do". So rather than offending these confused and twisted Corinthians because he took pay from them, he offended them by not taking any of their money. Sounds like some of the ways churches are treating solid Bible preaching believers in this generation.

Now we move forward with verse 9, and once more Paul the Apostle reminds the Corinthians that while he was there in Corinth for eighteen months trying to establish the church, he never once depended upon these confused people to take care of his human needs. But instead, it was the precious people in the poor Macedonian church who constantly tried to take care of whatever need they might hear that Paul had. Truly, the Macedonian Church had a genuine compassion that the church at Corinth knew nothing about.

May I tell you that I truly understand what Paul the Apostle was going through with the Corinthian people? Here was a church that he established or founded, and they didn't see the need of ministering to the servant that God had sent to them, but instead, they questioned Paul's authenticity because he didn't charge them for the ministry that he gave them. Truly, these twisted and corrupted Corinthians needed to go back and remember where they had come from.

¹⁷² The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 535-536.

¹⁷³ Ibid, page 536.

The reason I can so identify with Paul's hurt from the people in Corinth is because way back in 1988, my wife and I moved back from Tampa, Florida to help lead 42 people who were trying to plant a new church. This small group was a splinter out of a church split, and they needed a new leader. So, after Jo Anne and I really prayed much about it, we brought our family back to North Carolina where I became the pastor of this little group of people. Over the next eight years, God gave us a glorious growth, whereby we went over 2,000 in church membership in just eight years. We had over 1,300 people saved during that time, and we baptized over 1,000 of these as new converts. God really gave us the increase and poured out His Spirit upon our efforts. During those eight years, we also founded a new Christian school with a large Daycare, which my dear wife directed. But, may I tell you that since those days of marvelous growth, that church has never welcomed us to come back to the church and share about our African ministry, and they have never given one dollar of mission support to this great work which God has grown on the continent of Africa! We have truly been "slapped in the face" and hurt tremendously, but with God's help, we have tried to go on! Yet, this is exactly what happened to Paul the Apostle. It is truly amazing how soon people forget where they have come from and who helped get them to where they are. I personally believe that there is no greater sin on earth than for God to give a congregation a great leader, and then, the younger generation treat that leader with disrespect!

IV. PAUL REMINDS THEM OF HIS FORCEFULNESS. vs. 10-15

I sincerely love the memory of Paul the Apostle. I could never be anything near the man of God that Paul was, but may I tell you that I truly cherish his style. May I say that he was a tough dude! He loved people enormously, but when he was being beaten upon, he always let the people know that the haranguing of castigation of the wicked crowd was not going to stop him from preaching the truth of the Gospel. Let me give you some more words from Dr. Rod Mattoon.

"Paul is determined that no one will rob him of his ground of boasting in the regions of Achaia, where Corinth is located. He is doubtless referring here to his critics who used his abstinence of receiving support from the Corinthians as an argument against him. Paul's critics believed he was not a true apostle, and that is why he did not insist on being supported by these Christians. In spite of the charges of these false teachers, he will continue to boast that he served the Corinthians without taking any money from them. He was not ashamed that the Gospel was offered freely to these people. He had great love for them."¹⁷⁴

A. Paul is forceful about continuing his policy of support. vs. 10-12

In verses 10-11, Paul once again tells the Corinthians that he is not going to stop boasting of his unwillingness to take money for his preaching from the Corinthian church. He is adamant about sticking by the stuff, and continuing to let everyone know that regardless of the criticism of false teachers about his authenticity as a true apostle, he is not going to be bullied into taking money from the church just to prove that he is a bona fide apostle of our Lord. Paul then asks the question, "Am I refusing to take your money

¹⁷⁴ Op. Cit., page 139.

because I don't love you?" God knows about my heart and my actions! Paul is truly emphatic about how he is going to carry on his ministry and also how he is going to receive gifts to take care of his needs. And once again, he is saying, "I will not be bullied by you confused and corrupted Corinthians, who claim to be genuine believers, but never show much validity to your profession!"

"It seems clear that the Judaizers expected, demanded, and received money from the Corinthians. Like most cultists, they would not have served unless it paid them financially. Paul was determined to continue his policy of not receiving money from the believers at Corinth. If the false teachers wanted to engage in a boasting match with him, let them follow his policy, but he knew they would never be able to boast of serving without monetary reward and to be able to claim that their work was the same as Paul's. Their work was totally different from Paul's."¹⁷⁵

"There is an important truth found in these verses. Spiritual responsibility requires persistence in doing what is right, even in the face of opposition. Paul made it clear that no man was going to stop him in the way he was conducting himself with the believers at Corinth. Paul was alienated, denigrated, and incarcerated at times, yet, he persisted to do what the Lord led him to do because he was spiritually responsible. He had no regrets about living for Christ. Do you have the same resolve?"¹⁷⁶

B. Paul is forceful about counteracting the propagators of slander. vs. 13-15.

In these three verses we discover the strength of Paul the Apostle as he confronts the troublemaking false teachers in the church in Corinth. Paul pulls no punches with these hypocritical charlatans who are claiming to be servants of God, while at the same time slandering Paul, the man who established the church there in Corinth.

In these verses, Paul accuses the hirelings of being false apostles and deceitful workers. He told them that they were evil people that had decided that they were great teachers. And please notice that Paul accused these evil people of following in the very footsteps of Satan, because he had claimed to be a good angel of light, which we know was a lie out of the pits of hell. And by the way, it is hell where Satan and his followers are going to spend eternity. **(Revelation 20:10)**

Let me interject something right here. If these events would have been happening in our day with so many false teachers and preachers, there would be those who would tell Paul, "Don't be so unkind and confrontational. Let's just all get along, even with these lost wicked false teachers!" Truly, the church in this modern world is even worse than the Corinthian church was during Paul's day.

Paul closes his words for these false teachers in verse 15 when he tells them that there will come a day out in the future when those who have been truly transformed by Christ, and those who are only phonies, will be revealed by Christ as to who is genuine and who is not! No phony false teachers will be able to deceive Christ at the judgment, and for sure, these evil pretenders shall be revealed and judged for their evil works.

I now want to give you some wonderful discussion of these three verses of Scripture written by Dr. Rod Mattoon. Please pay close attention to these paragraphs.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, page 140.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

"Observers tell us that in the spring of the year, the cuckoo bird can be seen mimicking the flight of the sparrow hawk. Flapping, gliding, and soaring like a natural predator, this imposter frightens songbirds and distracts them to the point that they leave their nests unattended. She then moves in and devours an unguarded egg, leaving one of her own in its place. A counterfeit egg has replaced the true egg of a songbird. This is a fitting illustration of how Satan works in the church among believers and the unsaved."¹⁷⁷

"Spiritual responsibility requires discernment in recognizing deceptive teachers or preachers when they surface and spread their message. The apostle warns us here not to underestimate their ability to trick people and camouflage their corruption. Paul says these guys are deceitful workers.

- *They lie about their love and loyalty to the Lord.

- *Their guile is motivated by their greed.

- *They cheat people by robbing them of God's candor and concepts for living.

This robs folks of God's blessings that come from obedience to His truth.

The apostle continues to warn us about those who can deceive us. He states that deceitful workers "transform" themselves into apostles of Christ. They disguised or masquerade themselves into something they were not. There was a change on the outside, but there was no change on the inside. Satan's workers, like Satan himself, never appear in their true character; they always wear a disguise and hide behind a mask. They are not the Lord's apostles."¹⁷⁸

"The worse a man is, the stronger the temptation he has to assume the forms of goodness. Were corrupt men to show the true state of their hearts to their contemporaries, people would recoil from them with horror and disgust, and they would be utterly unable to enjoy social interaction or transact their business affairs with them. As a rule, the worse a man is the more strenuous his efforts are to assume the traits of virtue that he does not possess. Selfishness clothes itself in the robes of benevolence, and error speaks in the language of truth without being truth."¹⁷⁹

Conclusion

As we conclude this chapter, I just want to emphasize one more time that Paul held nothing back as he confronted the evil false teachers usurping power in the church at Corinth, while slandering the Apostle himself. This horrible ordeal took place in spite of the fact that it was Paul who planted the church there in that wicked city. Almost everything Paul wrote in verses 1-15 of **Chapter 11** was stinging to those deceptive false teachers in Corinth.

May I tell you that there is a great lesson here in **Chapter 11** on how we should deal with the deceivers and troublemakers in any church today? We must not walk softly and try not to offend any of these troublemakers. What we need to realize is that if we tolerate these evil false people and do nothing to stop their evil ways, then we become enablers for them to continue their evil deception.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, page 141.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, pages 141-142.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, page 142.

Let me dig deeper here for just a moment. Having been a senior pastor for over 54 years, I cannot tell you just how many times I have seen false teachers and deceivers come into our churches and stir up division and heartache. Then, because they are never held accountable for their misbehavior, they will just probably move on after some while and go to another church, where they continue their destructive and evil behavior. Truthfully, one of the most neglected New Testament principles in the church is holding people accountable for their behavior. And may I tell you that this principle of accountability will one day in the future be exercised to the last degree because all of us as believers (if we really are saved) will be held accountable at the Bema Seat of Christ. So, where did we ever get the idea that as church leaders we should not be forthright with those who hurt the church with their false teaching and destructive behavior?

Chapter Twelve

"A VIVID RECOLLECTION OF PAUL'S SUFFERINGS"

II CORINTHIANS 11:16-33

Introduction

Chapter 11 of **II Corinthians** is a very long chapter. Therefore, I am giving it two chapters in this commentary to try and cover the content of this long passage of Scripture. In the last chapter of this commentary, **Chapter 11**, we discussed in detail Paul's Stinging Rebuke of the false teachers in the church who were daily deceiving the people in the Corinthian church. Paul did not hold back, but he was blunt with his rebuke of these evil people. He knew that to try and coddle these people, like coddling a child, would multiply their evil and continue to harm the fellowship of the people. So, Paul rebukes the guilty heretics, and he tries to warn the rest of the congregation of the ultimate damage if they did not confront and get rid of these evil and wicked teachers.

We do need to remember that in his attempt to rebuke these evil charlatans in the church, these corrupt people responded by getting angrier and continuing their verbal attack against Paul even more so. So, Paul rebuked these rotten and evil people, and then he warned the people not to buy into the false doctrine that was being taught to the people there in Corinth. Then, Paul began to remind the people that he did not have wrong motives for starting the church in Corinth, but instead, he only planted the church in order to get the people saved. Then, he wanted the new believers to have a church family where they could be encouraged and elevated in the Lord. But there seems to be evidence that the false teachers, and even the church members, did not want to pay much attention to solving their problems and dealing with this corruption in the church. Therefore, Paul moves away from confronting the people and false teachers, and then he begins to tell the people just how much he had suffered in order to get the Corinthian church and others established. The people needed to open their eyes and ears and pay attention to what Paul was telling them.

So my friends, we will now see that Paul begins giving a tremendous recollection of the sufferings he had gone through. It was not that Paul was feeling sorry for himself, but instead, he wanted the people to know that he would never have allowed himself to go through so much suffering if his motives were not right. Whatever evil accusations the people in Corinth made against this great man of God, they could be refuted by real evidence produced by the sufferings he had gone through. So now, let's take a good look at Paul's Recollection of His Sufferings.

I. PLEASE NOTICE THE SPIRIT OF PAUL'S RECOLLECTION. vs. 16-21

Before we move on to exegete each of these verses, we need to take a deep look at the spirit which Paul demonstrated as he continued to write to the Corinthians. You might say that in order to convince the Corinthians that he was the real deal, Paul asked if they might be patient with him long enough to pay attention to what he was saying. In other words, you might say that Paul was humble in spirit, but that he wanted to boast a little to the Corinthians from a humble heart. Why did he display a spirit of humility while boasting a little about who he was? I believe Paul did not want to come across like the false teachers

were with their braggadocios self-importance and false authority. So Paul asked the Corinthians to show him a little patience and allow him to defend himself against the terrible attacks from the phony teachers. Therefore, Paul demonstrated true humility in the face of so many personal accusations against him. Now, let's look at the spirit that Paul had as he began to rehearse the many trials that he had been through. Truly, if Paul had not been "the real deal", he would never have accepted the persecution and suffering that he had been going through.

A. Paul had a reluctant spirit. vs. 16-17

Paul starts out verse 16 by telling the Corinthians that he knew some of them thought he was a fool. But he begged them to pay attention to his spirit and his words as he tried to show that he was truly one of the chief apostles.

"When a person puts his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he makes a decision that will empower and enable him to face his life when it is not so fantastic, when the thorns of a rosy life begin to prick him with pain, pressure, persecution, and pessimism. In this portion of II Corinthians, we get a glimpse of the horrors that Paul face in his efforts to make his life count for the Christ. Being a Christian, who is determined, devoted, and dedicated to the Lord, is not an easy task at all. It is a life that is characterized by great joys and blessings that are accompanied by severe trials and troubles. Satan and his crowd do not like it when Christ is exalted and glorified. He rears up his ugly head to oppose what we are doing."¹⁸⁰

In verse 17, Paul tells the Corinthians that they might think he was still a fool by what he was requesting, but they needed to know that this request for the Corinthians to "cut him a little slack" and let him try to explain was of his own making, and not a commandment of God. In other words, Paul was telling the professing believers that God didn't tell him to approach the Corinthians this way, but that he felt personally like he needed to beg for a little tolerance. So, Paul said, please give me a little permission to boast just a little about what God had done through him, because if God had not worked through him, there would be no church at Corinth.

B. Paul had a reasonable spirit. v. 18

Here in verse 18, it just seems that Paul told the Corinthians that if the false teachers had reason to brag on themselves in the flesh, then most assuredly, he had some reason to boast because of what God had done through him. In other words, Paul was just saying that it would only be reasonable for the Corinthians to "cut him some slack" and let him defend himself with a humble heart, since they had capitulated to the false teachers and given them permission to brag on themselves.

Please pay attention to the words from Dr. Rod Mattoon again. "Beloved, if someone needs for you to hear them out, then sit down and let them explain what is going on in their heart. You may not agree with what is being said, but you can listen. Through the years I have found that many Christians have a problem with this. If conflicts arise, they would rather remain angry than resolve the problem or misunderstanding. Some Christians will not hear out a matter, because they have been misinformed and have already made up their

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, page 149.

minds. Others will not listen because the position they are taking is untruthful or unscriptural, they cannot defend it, and they don't want to be confronted about it.

Beloved, our unwillingness to listen to someone to resolve a problem is an indication that we have a problem, especially with pride and bitterness. When we fail to hear people out, we create thorns for their lives and also for our own. Our rosy life can become very thorny because our problems are not resolved. This was Solomon's warning. ***Proverbs 18:13—'He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.'**"¹⁸¹

C. Paul had a rebuking spirit. vs. 19-21

Well, Paul pleads with the Corinthians to "cut him some slack" and listen to what he had to write them about, with his humble spirit. But now, I am inclined to believe that Paul did not believe that the church in Corinth would be patient and pay attention to what he was writing to them. Instead, as we look into verse 19, Paul seems to turn sarcastic when he says to the people, "For ye suffer fools gladly, but what about me? You people in Corinth think that you are so wise that you can't listen to anything I try to tell you." Once more, the Corinthian church was arrogant. They thought they were more intelligent than Paul and that they were too smart to pay any attention to this great apostle. Yet, it was he that had planted the church in Corinth. Truly, if Paul had not gone to Corinth and spent 18 months of his life there, there may not have even been a church in Corinth. But, may I say right here that many people forget where they have come from, and they forget those who have helped them to get to where they are. This is especially true in this generation when so many young people forget those who have been good to them. They especially forget those who have invested in their lives, their ministries, their education, and many other things. Truly, we are living in the most ungrateful generation of people that I have ever seen in almost 73 years of my life.

Let me now be a little repetitious and say that Paul really rebuked the Corinthians in verses 19-20. Paul tells these professing believers that they thought themselves to be so wise and intelligent that they would allow the real fools, the false teachers, to deceive them to the point that they preferred the false teachers over the true apostle, beloved Paul. In the next verse, Paul really lets the Corinthians "have it" when he tells them, somewhat indirectly, that they had been brought into the bondage of deception by those false teachers and that the intent of the false phonies was to literally devour the believers and to take their money. While Paul was not receiving any funds from the church at Corinth for his sustenance, these false teachers obviously were stealing from the church under false pretenses. To put it more emphatically, Paul told the Corinthians that they were being ripped off and figuratively speaking, "slapped in the face" by the satanically inspired phonies who were deceiving and misleading the church. Of course, some commentators believe that maybe these false teachers did in fact slap some of the believers in the Corinthian church, just because the Corinthians refused to believe what they were teaching. Please notice the following words by the great Oliver B. Greene about what Paul told the Corinthians in these verses.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, pages 150-151.

"For ye suffer (or endure) if a man bring you into bondage...." That is, "You bear patiently with me who abuse you in every way—if a man make a slave out of you, if he lord it over you in the most arbitrary way and manner." It is astonishing to see how these false prophets were able to reduce their followers to slaves. The idea is probably that the false teachers set up such lordship over the Corinthians that they destroyed their freedom of opinion and made them slaves to their own wills."¹⁸²

"The Corinthians had not shown wisdom by their complete devotedness and respect to the false teachers, from whom they had endured outrageous treatment. They had allowed these teachers to confuse them, to devour their substance, and treat them with contempt and disdain. Seeing that the Corinthians—or some among them, at least—could easily bear so much from these false teachers and enemies of the Apostle Paul, it seemed only reasonable for Paul to desire and expect that they should bear with him a little."¹⁸³

Now, I want to try to explain verse 21 in a very simple way. I believe Paul just tells these errant believers in Corinth that if anybody had ever suffered reproach for the Gospel, he had! Oh yes, those who knew about Paul's suffering may have considered him weak, or they may have just attacked him with this accusation. Paul then told them that at the risk of sounding foolish, he wanted to emphatically tell them that he was weak because he had gone through so much suffering, but in fact, he was strong. His suffering had made him even bolder about telling the truth of the Gospel, even when so many were castigating him and criticizing him. Truly, Paul suffered great reproach, but it has not made him a weakling. Instead, it had made him bolder and more confident in the Lord! Let me phrase it this way, "Regardless of what the phony false teachers and the easily deceived church members thought about him, he knew that his struggles had made a man out of him, and he was not sissy!"

II. PLEASE NOTICE THE SUBSTANCE OF PAUL'S RECOLLECTION. vs. 22-33.

Moving ahead with this wonderful study of God's Word, I would like for us to take a sincere look at the humble boldness by which Paul continues to tell the Corinthians that if the false teachers there in Corinth want to brag about their success and suffering, then he has much more to boast about. In these following verses, Paul begins by simply telling the professing believers in Corinth that he has the credentials to brag about if necessary, and then, he informs them of the terrible suffering he has been through. So, I have called this point in our study, the substance of Paul's recollection. Or, we might say that he is giving the Corinthians the list of much of the suffering that he had gone through for the proclamation of the Gospel. Thus, Paul had nothing to fear about the braggadocios hirelings who were flaunting their brilliance and their authority. Here is a great thought for us to ponder. When men of integrity and authenticity speak, their words will negate anything said by false "wolves in sheep's clothing". Now, let's move forward verse by verse.

A. The substance of Paul's recollection included his pedigree. v. 22

¹⁸² The Second Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc. page 562.

¹⁸³ Ibid, page 563.

Paul begins this explicit revelation of who he was and what he had been through by telling them that the false professing Jewish Christians had nothing on him. If anyone had credible credentials as a Jewish Christian, then, most assuredly, he did. Paul emphasizes the truth that he was truly a Hebrew, definitely an Israelite, and without question, a genuine seed of Abraham. These false professing Christians filled with much baloney were misleading the believers in Corinth, and all Paul had to do was remind these deceived people of his true and legitimate resumé as a Jewish born man. So my friends, the easily deceived professing Christians in Corinth were so very much like millions of church members today. Why, some of these beloved church members might be a part of a growing dynamic church, and they may serve for many years. Until one day, here comes a false hypocrite who comes to the church, pretends to really be the “real deal”, but then later on this hypocrite leaves the church, taking some of the old church members along with him to start another church, begin a new Bible study, or lead a group of deceived people to another church in the area where this phony hypocrite becomes the “big man” and gets the attention he has always wanted. All the while, he is teaching damnable doctrine, which the easily deceived church members don’t have enough Bible knowledge to know the difference. This is happening all over America, and yes, in other countries as well. The sad thing is that like the Corinthian church, these false attention seeking teachers usually split the church, hurt the pastor who has shepherded the flock for many years, and go away to another church or group attempting to be much smarter, more refined, or a better teacher than the pastor or any other church leader in the church where they split or at least caused division. They go to a new place with a little group of people licking their boots until one day, and this usually happens, the deceived followers suddenly discover that they have been led astray! The sad thing is, that even if the deceived believers come to recognize how foolish they have been, the damage has already been done. These now broken deceived followers may return to the church where they left with their “tails dragging between their legs”, and they sit down in the church with no credibility. Most of the time, it takes years for these deceived believers to ever become active for Christ again. One reason is they have to deal with their shame, and then it might take years for the church to ever trust them again.

As a long time pastor, I have seen this happen so many times. Most recently my son, who is a senior pastor, had this to happen with two false teacher families in his church. The people were led astray, and now it is only a matter of time until these sinful disrespectful people, who left under the direction of the false teachers, will usually come home walking with their head bowed low and their shameful lives on display for everyone to see! Truly, Paul had much greater credentials and a greater pedigree than the hypocritical teachers, but we all know that Satan always leads people astray down the road of least resistance in order to follow the attention seeking charlatan!

B. The substance of Paul's recollection included his perils. vs. 23-26

The word peril in Webster's Dictionary is defined as having many difficult troubles and dangerous attacks. In verse 23, Paul told the Corinthians that if the false teachers were pretending to be ministers of Christ, having proven it by their suffering, their suffering would never be close to all that he had been through. The reason all these things befell Paul was because he was preaching the true Gospel. He stated it in **Galatians 4:16** where he

asked this question, ***"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"*** The truth is that Paul did not compromise with sin or with religion, and, as is the case with any true man of God who is courageous enough to tell people the truth, there is going to be a huge amount of persecution, hatred, and suffering. I can truly vouch for this statement because right now at the time of this writing I have extended family members and former so-called friends that hate me because I told them the truth from God's Word. In other words, if we have the courage to proclaim the truth, there will be much rebuttal and often times, evil vicious persecution. Paul surely endured this mess with class, much better than I could ever have done, but it was through his perils that he appropriated much credibility because of the way he handled it. What amazes me about this story of Paul is that the people that he had given the Gospel message and established the church for them were the most vile and vicious people he had to face.

Let me say once again that my wife and I can truly affirm what happened to Paul by what we have experienced as servants of God for over 54 years. Dr. Adrian Rogers used to say that the people he had given the most attention and helped the most were the ones that turned against him and his wife and hurt them the greatest. I say Amen to this because my wife's heart and my heart have been broken and hurt more grievously by the people we have literally given our love, our support, and our health more than any lost or evil person outside the family of God. I am sure this has happened to thousands of preachers and their families down through the years. And yes, it happened to the great Paul the Apostle as well! The only person who ever walked on this earth who suffered more than Paul was the precious son of God!

In the last part of verse 23 and in the remaining verses 24-26, Paul gives a tremendous litany of the horrible things that he had been through. He has worked so hard that he has been exhausted many times over. He had been in and out prisons over and over. He also had been beaten with stripes until he was incapacitated many times, and he constantly faced the possibility of death—all because of the New Gospel that he was preaching to the Jews and the Gentiles. Five times Paul was beaten by his Jewish brothers with 39 stripes. Three times Paul was beaten with rods, plus he had been stoned many times. He had also gone through shipwreck. Paul had to constantly be on guard and ready to flee to another town because of the constant persecution. Then, Paul tells the Corinthians that he had been robbed by robbers, he had been beaten by the Jews, and he had been beaten by the heathen Gentiles. Paul had just suffered so very much because of his faith and because of his desire to fulfill the Great Commission. So, if anybody had anything to boast about their suffering for righteousness sake, certainly Paul had more. But folks, the reason Paul was forced to give this long list of his sufferings was because of the lying false prophets in the Corinthian church who were attacking him before the congregation.

"Preaching the Gospel got Paul into trouble with those who opposed it. It seems he spent a lot of time in prisons, especially in Rome where he was imprisoned for two years. We never read of false apostles being imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. Imprisonment for Christ was one of the marks of a true servant of the Lord. In spite of the hardship of prison, God used Paul in his predicament. From the stench of prison cells came forth the sweetness of the books of Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. The seeds of the Gospel were planted in the hearts of guards and prisoners alike in the cells of the prisons."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume II, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Land of

"In serving the Lord, Paul also faced thorns from the dangers of crossing rivers, robbers, riots, the ruse of false or counterfeit believers, and the rigors of the wilderness with its cold, thirst, hunger, sleeplessness, and wild animals. The book of Acts records six Jewish plots against Paul and three perilous encounters with the Gentiles. No matter what circumstances Paul faced, no matter how thorny his life was at times, he learned to be content, and we should, too."¹⁸⁵

Now, after going through Paul's long list of difficulties and troubles which he went through during his ministry, I would like to tell you that although I have never had to face what Paul did, as an almost 73 year old preacher, I have gone through a huge amount of suffering through my almost 55 years of ministry. Before I give you my list, may I tell you that I would never have been able to get through my horrible list of suffering were it not for Jesus and my sweet wife, Jo Anne.

During all these years of ministry, I have traveled on land and in the air over five million miles. I have traveled to 33 states here in America to preach over 1,000 revival meetings. I have made 85 international trips, 70 of which have been to Africa. I have gone through the wear and tear of pastoring eleven churches, four of which my wife and I planted. During these years in the pastorate, I led seven major building projects, started a complete 13 grades Christian School and Daycare. Jo Anne directed the Daycare and did a fantastic job. Then, during my pastorate in Lynchburg, Virginia, one of our missionaries led a group of 60 out of the church, and we had to go through this horrible ordeal. He never one time admitted he had done anything wrong, and he never has asked for forgiveness.

In addition to all of this, I have been under probably the generational curse of many sicknesses. I have battled asthma, diabetes, neuropathy, diastolic heart failure, and open-heart surgery, which resulted in four artery stents and two by-passes. I also contracted an incurable lung disease called bronchiectasis in Togo, West Africa. For 18 months I was on oxygen at night just to be able to get my breath. But praise God, with the prayers of God's people this horrible disease was healed. I have had 14 total surgeries during my many years, two of which came from a terrible motor vehicle accident in Uganda, East Africa.

On Saturday morning, December 4, 1993, our Uganda Director was driving our small three person American team to the airport in Entebbe, Uganda. We had completed one week of intense preaching and evangelism in the prisons and schools of Uganda, and now we were on our way to fly on over to Kenya to do the same kind of ministry there. Just about one mile short of the Entebbe Airport on that December morning, just before noon, our vehicle ran off the left side of the road, and our driver jerked the vehicle back on to the road. But when he did, we ran all the way over to the right side of the road, and the car dropped off that side of the road. This time, when the driver jerked the vehicle back on to the road, our vehicle rolled over and over, five or six times, down the middle of the highway. Mr. Wayne Birkhead, our Outreach and Missions Pastor at our Tri-city Baptist Church in Conover, NC and I were thrown from the vehicle. Brother Wayne was killed. He died on a stretcher at a terrible B-Grade hospital while I ran along beside the stretcher trying to pump his chest. After this accident, I would never be the same ever again—physically, emotionally, and yes, spiritually. Brother Wayne was a tremendous man of God, and he went straight to heaven. But it was having to see him die, returning home with his body,

Lincoln Baptist Church, pages 154-155.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, page 160.

trying to comfort his heartbroken family, and then trying to pick up the pieces and continue on with ministry which literally changed my life forever. I have never been the same, and I don't think I will ever get over this horrible ordeal, just like Paul was bruised and scarred so much. Folks, do you know that just like Paul's sharing his troubled story, trying to defend himself against false accusers in Corinth, I too have had to defend myself from the attacks of so many hypocritical people down through the years who have hated me and resented my successes in the ministry. I try not to hate them, but truthfully, doing this is very hard at times. Therefore, I know that I haven't suffered persecution for preaching the Gospel to a lost world like Paul did, but my wife and I have endured some horrible hurtful things, a lot from those who call themselves believers, but in fact, are wearing the mask of pretention.

C. The substance of Paul's recollection included his pain. v. 27

In verse 27, Paul gets a little more specific telling the Corinthians about the hurt and pain he had gone through. He told them over and over just how weary he had been. In fact, according to the definition of the Greek word for pain, *mochthos*, this word literally means that Paul had labored so hard that he had reached a point of exhaustion and distress many times. He became so low that sometimes he may have considered quitting and giving up, but thank God, he didn't!

The next phrase we find here describing the pain that Paul endured is the words "watchings often". This means that Paul lost much sleep staying awake at night diligently praying for God's will to be done, and he also prayed that he might be vigilant and watch for the attacks of Satan. He knew they would continue to come, but he just didn't know when. We too know that these attacks will always come to us, but we just don't know when as well.

Another pain that Paul dealt with many times was physical hunger. You see folks, we have already seen that Paul did not take financial remuneration from the Corinthians because he knew that they would accuse him of preaching for money. So, other churches tried to help him, but obviously, there were many times he went without food and water, as is mentioned here as well. In other words, there were many times that Paul was forced to fast and do without food and water in order to keep proclaiming the Gospel. Then, in this last phrase we learn that Paul lived sometimes without the necessary clothing to keep him warm. In II Timothy 4:13, Paul told young Timothy to please bring him his cloke or coat to Rome, where he was in prison. Then in verse 21, the last thing Paul tells Timothy is to please come before winter, undoubtedly, because he knew that if Timothy didn't get there before winter with the cloak or shawl, or maybe even a larger covering, he would not be able to bear the cold. Folks, I have no doubt that prisoners in Rome never had any kind of covering and probably no blankets. I know this to be true because as my wife and I have worked in African prisons for over 35 years, we have seen thousands of prisoners do without necessary clothing and bedding to keep them warm. Truthfully, our GIMI ministry has purchased thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of blankets, clothing, shoes, and many other needed items. But, we know that Paul was in prison, not for a crime he had committed, but for the preaching of the Gospel. I doubt very seriously that we could ever understand just how much this great servant of God suffered in order to preach the Gospel and even to write the 14 books of the New Testament that he wrote.

D. The substance of Paul's recollection included his pressure. vs. 28-29.

As we move into verses 28-29, we discover that all of the persecution and trials from without could not compare to the tremendous burden Paul carried for all the churches he had established, but also, for every person within the churches, especially this one in Corinth, who were being hurt and brainwashed by false teachers. Paul's burning compassion for the Corinthians led to his burning passion to minister to those who were being deceived by phony teachers who were vying for the church's attention. Paul was daily under the pressure of so much need in the church at Corinth and the huge needs in other churches as well. I believe that Paul was overwhelmed by so much need, and as it has so happened to me with our ministry in Africa, there is just never enough. Why, even just now, my phone rang with a call from one of our preachers in Uganda. Do you know what he needed? He needed blankets for prisoners to sleep under in some Ugandan prisons. My point is that the care of all of the churches is a constant burden on my heart, just like it was for Paul the Apostle. No matter how much good Paul did, there were always the false accusers who attacked him and his credibility. Folks, I too go through this almost every day of my life. I have pastored eleven churches in my lifetime, and in addition to these, I have preached in hundreds of churches around the world. Thus, the burden on my heart is a heavy one, bringing much pressure to me.

I would like to make another point about verse 29. What Paul is saying to the Corinthians here is, "Do you have people in the church that are weak? Surely you do, but when they are weak, I can relate to their weakness because I have been extremely weak as well." Then, Paul told the Corinthians, "Have you been offended?" If so, he stated that he had been offended also many times, but he refused to allow the offenses to anger him with bitterness or hatred. In other words, just like Paul previously told the people in the church about the false teachers harassing them, he stated that he himself had gone through similar things. I do need to tell you that when we have gone through the many trials and persecutions like Paul did, God has allowed it to happen so that we can feel for the other hurting people, and so that we can comfort these suffering people with the comfort someone else may have given to us when we went through the same things. Of course, at the moment we are going through the many trials, it is not always easy for us to understand why God is allowing us to go through so much. But, when we deal with the hurts, persecutions, deprivations, and many other things, God is allowing us to suffer these things in order for us to comfort others who suffer the like things. And too, God is always trying to teach us some personal lessons for some spiritual growth.

E. The substance of Paul's recollection included his praise. vs. 30-31

We now move forward with verses 30-31. Let me give you the comments about these verses from Dr. Rod Mattoon.

"If Paul had to boast, he would much rather boast about his weaknesses. He assured them he was not lying and that the Lord was the witness of his heart's attitude. Because of his humility, Paul found the idea of boasting about himself to be absolutely detestable. Yet, that is exactly what he was forced to do in writing this letter. His fragrant, rosy life was pricked by the thorns of opposition.

The false teachers at Corinth were undermining Paul's character and credentials as an apostle. If they could succeed in doing this, they would undermine Paul's message which would lead to defeat and disaster in the Corinthian church. Some were being swayed by the lies about Paul. He had no choice but to present his case that he was a credible man of God with a credible message about an incredible God. He was much more comfortable speaking about his weaknesses than his accomplishments, but it was necessary in this circumstance to present his case that he was not a fool."¹⁸⁶

Too consummate these notes about these two verses, let me just say that Paul was not going to give himself glory for what he had done in his ministry at Corinth, but instead, Paul told the Corinthians that if he had anything to boast about, it was how God had brought him through all of his infirmities and the good that God had done through the servant's difficult circumstances. And then, Paul emphatically states that he was not lying about anything he had stated, but the truth was that those false teachers were the ones that were lying. These "wolves in sheep's clothing" were the liars in the house, and they were doing irreparable damage to the church and to Paul's ministry.

F. The substance of Paul's recollection included his plight. vs. 32-33

"Paul abruptly closes this section with the events that took place at Damascus where he barely escaped for his life. This circumstance is mentioned as an additional trial. It is evidently mentioned as an instance of peril, which had escaped his recollection in the rapid account of his dangers enumerated in the previous verses. It is designed to show what imminent danger he was in, and how narrowly he escaped with his life.

King Aretas, king of the Nabateans (Edomites) from 9B.C. to A.D. 40, had appointed a governor to oversee the Nabatean segment of the population in Damascus. Somehow the Jews in Damascus had been able to enlist the governor to help them try to capture Paul. Guards were kept for the purpose of capturing Paul, but he escaped by being lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall. (Acts 9:22-25)"¹⁸⁷

Conclusion To The Chapter

As we come to the conclusion of this chapter, I would remind you that during these last two chapters in this commentary, **Chapters 11 and 12**, we have covered **Chapter 11 of the Book of II Corinthians**. In Chapter 11 of this book, we dwelt with **II Corinthians 11:1-15**. In the first part of this chapter in our Bible, we studied the "Stinging Reminder", which Paul sent to the Corinthians. Now in the latter part of **Chapter 11 of II Corinthians**, we have taken a good look at the "Vivid Recollection Of Paul's Sufferings". Paul just wanted the confused professing believers in Corinth to know that if the false teachers there were convincing the Corinthian church that they were the real apostles by telling the people about their trials, surely to goodness these same people should believe that Paul was an even greater apostle because of the humongous amount of trials and sufferings which he had been through. Paul never sought the glory of the people for anything he had done for them, but he was convinced

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, page 162

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, pages 162-163.

that he had the right to share his recollection of the horrible things he had been through, not for any false teaching, but for the trials he experienced for proclaiming the true Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. As I stated earlier in this chapter, there has probably never been any man on earth who went through so much suffering as did Paul, except of course, our Lord Jesus Who died on the cross for our sins.

In this Chapter 12 of this book, we have discussed the Spirit of Paul's Recollection, and then we have discussed the Substance of Paul's Recollection. Most assuredly by now as we have continued this study, surely every one of us, as children of God, should be tremendously enlightened about just how much suffering Paul went through. We obviously should understand by now how God gloriously brought Paul through his suffering, but also, we should understand the great things that God did in Paul's life and in the Kingdom work because of the undeserved suffering that Paul experienced. There are many great lessons here, but the most wonderful lesson is just how Paul endured these trials without feeling sorry for himself and how he gave Jesus all the glory for what God had done in the midst of the trials and for bringing him through this terrible ordeal. My only great fear is that I might not be able to handle my trials the way Paul handled his, but I surely would desire to. The only problem is that I am not anywhere near the man of God that Paul was. Yet, with God's help, and hopefully the understanding of many other believers, I do want to give a good positive testimony while going through so much pain and suffering. Even right now, I am going through so many health problems. I don't want to quit the work for Jesus, but very honestly, I would like to not have to go through so much suffering and pain as I finish the course God has called me to travel. I trust that every one of you readers might feel the same away about what you might have to endure!

There is a positive note in the midst of this thought-to-be undeserved suffering which we might have to endure. This positive note is that just like God gave Paul extra strength and extra grace to deal with his suffering, He will give the same to us during our trials. We will talk much about God's sufficient strength and grace in **Chapter 13 of this Book of II Corinthians**.

Chapter Thirteen

"WHEN HUMILITY CONFRONTS BOASTING"

Scripture: II Corinthians 12:1-10

Introduction

As we now begin this **Chapter 12 in the Book of II Corinthians**, we will cover much more about the suffering of Paul the Apostle and how God brought him through this horrible suffering with much grace and strength. As we dig into the first ten verses of this chapter, we are going to take a deep look at how this great servant of God not only experienced horrible suffering, but also, how he endured this suffering with so much grit and grace.

I have used these terms grit and grace, not just because of the content of this **Chapter 12 in the Book of II Corinthians**, but also, because several years ago I read Dr. Chuck Swindoll's biography of Paul the Apostle. Dr. Swindoll entitled this book, "Paul: A Man of Grace and Grit." I would really recommend this biography of Paul, but also, all of the Biblical biographies that Dr. Swindoll has written, and yes, they are many.

But now, let me give you some tremendous words from the Introduction of the book, "Paul: A Man of Grace and Grit". These words come from a two page description of how God brought Paul from a killer of Christians to becoming a believer willing to be killed for Christ's sake. Chuck Swindoll wrote this section and entitled it, "No Insignificant Grace".

"In every great life, there are surprises, often jolting surprises. Who would have guessed that the one writer in the New Testament who has probably had the most significant impact on your Christian growth came from a world of such spiritual blindness and physical brutality? But he did. That's why he claimed the title 'chief of sinners.' Though you may be tempted to soften that, let it be. Leave him alone in that description. Saul wasn't attempting to sound modest. In his mind, he was the chief of sinners. He may very well have been.

First, no matter how you appear to others today, everyone has a dark side. You would be amazed if you knew the darkness lurking in the pasts of those people who have made a difference in your life. Seems unreal, doesn't it? We're all sinful by birth, by nature, and by choice. We remain totally and completely depraved deep within. We grope in darkness because of our spiritual blindness."¹⁸⁸

"Regardless of how we look, we all have a past that is neither pleasant nor encouraging. It's the life we lived before turning to the Savior. We're just not as vulnerable and open as Paul was in sharing with others what our life was like before we embraced the Cross. Nor do we need to be.

I appreciate that great old word in the hymn we sin, 'Amazing Grace.' The word is 'wretch.' 'Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.' Leave that word in there, don't replace it. Our existence before Christ was among the wretched. Let's never forget what life was like outside the boundaries of grace. Saul was there.....and so were we.' "¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Paul: A Man of Grace and Grit, By: Charles Swindoll, Word Publishing Group, page 13.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

"Second, regardless of what you have done, no one is beyond hope. That's the great hope of the Christian message. No amount or depths of sin in your past can trump the grace of God. If you question that, remember the brash Pharisee of Tarsus. When the Lord saved him, He didn't put him on probation. The other disciples did that. No, God gave Saul a new name, and in the process, made him a new creation. That's what makes grace so amazing.

Third, even though your past is soiled, anyone can find a new beginning with God. I've made the same statement throughout my ministry. "It's never too late to start doing what is right." When Saul knelt before the living God, he finally faced the reality of his sin. Deep within the man, Christ transformed his life and he started doing what was right. Grace provides that sort of new beginning.

Don't get stuck on where you were. Don't waste your time focusing on what you used to be. Remember, the hope we have in Christ means there's a brighter tomorrow. The sins are forgiven. The shame is cancelled out. We're no longer chained to a deep, dark pit of the past. Grace gives us wings to soar beyond it."¹⁹⁰

So folks, if God could transform Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle, surely He can change any person who will come to Him humbly and repent of his or her sin. God relishes the thought of taking nobodies and making them great servants of God, just like He did for Paul the Apostle. Thus, as we continue this great study of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, let's dig deeply into our text and discover how Paul used his God-given humility to confront the temptation to really boast.

I. NOTICE THE EXPERIENCE PAUL COULD HAVE BOASTED ABOUT. vs. 1-6

In the preceding chapter of this commentary, we studied carefully how Paul reminisced about how he had come through so much suffering with such dignity and even, as we will see in this chapter, how he took pleasure in the trials he endured. Paul did indeed go through horrible trials and suffering, but instead of making him bitter, his struggles made him better. He could readily boast with humility about his trials, but now, let's look at an experience Paul refers to. It could have made him arrogantly proud and boastful, but it didn't, because of his humility.

"In the previous message, we found Paul in an uncomfortable position of having to defend his credentials as an apostle. False teachers were accusing him of being a fake and fraud. Paul defended his ministry by revealing his successes and what the Lord had done through him. Being put in a position of having to boast about his accomplishments was not what Paul wanted to do. He would much rather share the Gospel with others than talk about himself because he felt that boasting about his ministry was unprofitable, yet, it was necessary. In fact, he felt it was foolish that he had to speak about himself, but he asked the Corinthians to give him an ear and hear

him out."¹⁹¹

"The apostle continues to share with the Corinthians some very interesting experiences that he has never revealed before to others. He shares with them a supernatural vision or

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, pages 13-14.

¹⁹¹ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume Two, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Land of Lincoln Baptist Church, page 164.

revelation that he received from the Lord. The word 'vision' is used in the Scriptures often, to denote the mode in which divine communications were usually made to men. This was done causing some scene to appear to pass before the mind as in a landscape, so that the individual seemed to see a representation of what was to occur in some future period. It was usually applied to prophecy, and is often used in the Old Testament. Before Paul reveals his vision, he makes it clear that this is not profitable, though it was necessary. This is important for us to note."¹⁹²

"In a day where some preachers place huge emphasis on dreams and visions claiming to have some new revelation from God, they would do well to consider Paul's downplay on visions and dreams and the fact they were not helpful. Paul concealed the vision that he spoke about in this chapter for fourteen years. If it would have been edifying for the church, he would have revealed it long ago. Visions do not benefit the church, they are not verifiable, and they tend to make a person proud if he is not controlled by the Holy Spirit. A preacher that stands up and says he has a new revelation from the Lord should send off sirens and red flags in your mind. Watch out! Watch out! Watch out for false teaching!"¹⁹³

Folks, the truth is that we don't need new dreams or visions in this dispensation, simply because we have the completed canon of Scripture. As I have taught down through my 55 years in ministry, we should never base our beliefs on our experiences. We must measure our experiences by the written Word of God. Therefore, it is obvious to me that if Paul had kept this vision hidden from the other believers, it scared him somewhat that it might cause confusion as we see right away in our study.

A. It was an unveiling experience. v. 1

In verse 1 of this great text, Paul tells the Corinthians that in addition to all the suffering he had already mentioned, he could reluctantly tell them about a vision he had some fourteen years before. In fact, when Paul used the word "expedient", he was simply telling the professing believers in Corinth that it would not have been profitable for them if he had shared it with them. Why? I believe the answer of the vision not being profitable for the people was because Paul thought that it was an out-of-the-body experience for him when he was stoned outside the walls of Lystra on his First Missionary journey with Barnabus. You can find this story in Acts 14, where we are told that Paul was stoned and left to die outside the walls of Lystra where the people got so mad at his preaching. We don't know for sure, and I don't even think Paul knew for sure, but it may be that Paul did die, and because God was nowhere nearly finished with him, God gave him back his life. It was not time for this great Apostle to go on to heaven. So, God spared his life and gave him back his life—an action that truly has blessed millions of believers down through the years.

I would like to comment on the statement that Paul was caught up to the third heaven. Most of you probably already know, but the Bible teaches that there are three heavens. First, there is the immediate atmosphere around us. Secondly, there is Outer Space where the sun, moon, and stars are located. Thirdly, there is the home of God, where God and His angels and all of the dead believers are now living. It would seem certain to me that Paul did die at Lystra, and God sent his spirit back to earth because the Father had great things

¹⁹² Ibid, pages 164-165.

¹⁹³ Ibid, page 165.

still in store for Paul's future. Folks, we need to be rejoicing because God did send Paul back to the earth in his bodily form. If God had not done this, we would not have 14 books of the New Testament, which I believe is very true. Some don't believe that Paul wrote Hebrews, but I surely do! And, I hope you do as well.

B. It was an unrealistic experience. vs. 2-3

I have already mentioned that Paul did not know for sure, but his experience seems that it was an out-of-the-body experience. Of course, seeming as it did, there is no other way to describe this experience other than to say it was truly an unreal experience for Paul. Thus, because Paul wasn't sure about this experience, for over 14 years he did not tell anyone about it. Of course, he may have told Barnabas because he was traveling with Paul. Then too, because he was so close to his newly converted son in the ministry, Timothy, he may have shared it with him. But, there had been no public discussion of this vision, which Paul had experienced.

C. It was an unspeakable experience. v. 4

In this verse, Paul tells the Corinthians that he had been caught up into paradise. On the cross Jesus told the repentant thief that"today thou shalt be with me in paradise." (**Luke 23:43**) Then again, in **Revelation 2:7**, we find these words, ***"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."*** This word is a great word, which literally means heaven, utopia, bliss, and many other word definitions. Personally, I believe until the resurrection took place outside the walls of Jerusalem, there was a place in the heart of the earth, which was called Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament. Within this place described in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament, there were two compartments within Sheol/Hades. One of these was called Paradise where the departed believers were being held until the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Then, when Christ became the First Fruit of the resurrection, this paradise in the heart of the earth was emptied, and as we have read many times in **Matthew 27**, many previously dead saints arose from their graves and walked the streets of Jerusalem. Then, I personally believe that when Jesus ascended back to heaven from Mt. Olive, that these saints previously housed in paradise arose to heaven with Christ with new spiritual bodies. They are there now in those same spiritual bodies waiting until the rapture of the church when they will be transformed and given their permanent glorified body when Jesus comes back for the departed saints.

Also, I want to tell you that according to Luke 16, in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, there was a place called hell or Gehenna, which was then the other compartment of Sheol or Hades. That hell, or Gehenna, is the place of torment where the Rich Fool went when he died. Of course, the beggar went to paradise, but he is now with Christ in the same spiritual body, while the Rich Man is still in this spiritual jail house waiting for the day when he will be cast into the permanent prison of the Lake of Fire with Satan, the False Prophet, and the Anti-Christ.

Therefore folks, I am convinced that the paradise which Paul is referring to here in verse 4 is in actuality the very heaven of heavens where Christ, all of the previously dead saints,

and the very angels now dwell. So, Paul was given a brief visit into the very presence of the Savior, but the things he saw were so sacred that he was not allowed to even discuss them.

I do want to mention that the words "caught up," here in our text are the same words for "rapture", which are mentioned in **I Thessalonians 4:17**, where Paul gives the description of how we are going to meet the Lord in the air at the time of the rapture. I would say that not only was Paul's experience unspeakable, our experience in the rapture will also be unspeakable. I must tell you that I, even this very day, long for Christ to come again and resurrect all of his dead saints and rapture those who are alive at His return. Maybe I am a little selfish talking like this, but with all of my suffering in this aging body, I long for that day when we will receive brand new bodies like it seems that Paul was given just a little taste of that which is to come.

D. It was an uncomfortable experience. vs. 5-6

As we move forward with our study of this text, we must come to understand that what Paul was trying to share with the professing Corinthian believers was that his earthly words were inadequate to describe what he had been permitted to temporarily see up in heaven about 14 years before he wrote this letter. Trying to describe his unbelievable experience made Paul very uncomfortable. Thus, he really didn't want to go into detail about his out-of-the-body experience. So, what Paul meant to say was that he could not attempt by words to do justice to what he had seen and heard. Now, I want to give you some tremendous words from Dr. Rod Mattoon's commentary once more.

"The late Harry Rimmer penned the following letter to Charles E. Fuller of the Old Fashioned Revival Hour, shortly before his death. 'Next Sunday you are to talk about Heaven. I am interested in that land because I have held a clear title to a bit of property there for over 50 years. I did not buy it. It was given to me without money and without price; but the Donor purchased it for me at a tremendous sacrifice.

I am not holding it for speculation. It is not a vacant lot. For more than half a century I have been sending materials, out of which the greatest Architect of the universe has been building a home for me, which will never need remodeling or repair, because it will suit me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old.

Termites can never undermine its foundation for it rests upon the Rock of Ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No lock or bolts will ever be placed upon the doors, for no vicious person can ever enter that land, where my dwelling stands, now almost completed and almost ready for me to enter in and abide in peace eternally, without fear of being rejected.

There is a valley of deep shadow between this place where I live, and that to which I shall journey in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that city without passing through that valley. But I am not afraid because the best Friend I ever had went through the same valley long, long ago and drove away all its gloom. He stuck with me through thick and thin since we first became acquainted 55 years ago, and I hold His promise in printed form, never to forsake me or leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and I shall not lose my way because He is with me.

I hope to hear your sermon on Heaven next Sunday, but I have no assurance I shall be able to do so. My ticket to Heaven has no date marked for the journey, no return coupon

and no permit for baggage. Yes, I am ready to go, and I may not be here while you are talking next Sunday evening, but I will meet you there some day."¹⁹⁴

After sharing these last few paragraphs with you, I must tell you that as I read the letter from Mr. Rimmer I literally cried as I thought about the wonderful place heaven is going to be when one day we get there to spend eternity with Jesus forever and forever. To be honest, I do somewhat dread the inevitable experience of death, but I know God doesn't give us dying grace until it is time for us to die. But truly, going to heaven is surely going to be a magnificent experience for every child of God—but especially for those who have laid up treasures there by winning the lost to Christ while we are here on this earth. I would just challenge every one of you readers to please make sure that your primary purpose for living is to win people to Jesus, thus bringing glory to Christ in and through bringing the lost to Him.

II. NOTICE THE ELEMENT PAUL WAS BUFFETED BY. vs. 7-9a

I think it goes without saying that not one of us really understands why God gave Paul the privilege of going through the out-of-body-experience up in the third heaven and the waking up down here on earth following this great revelation. Maybe it was just simply because God was not finished with Paul at that time, or maybe this revelation with the glorified Christ was God's way of encouraging Paul in the midst of the many trials he had been going through because of his ministry, especially with the Corinthian believers. But whatever the reason was, God took Paul to heaven and then sent him back to earth to keep preaching the Gospel. Of course, I think everyone of us might be able to understand that if either one of us had experienced what Paul experienced with the divine revelation, there would be a strong temptation to boast or brag about this experience. Therefore, we are now going to take a look at what God allowed to happen to Paul in order to keep him from being filled with pride and arrogance. I must tell you that it does seem quite unfair to me for God to allow the thorn in the flesh to befall Paul after the great ministry Paul had been carrying on for Jesus. We probably will never know why God allowed Paul to continue to suffer even more after he had this tremendous vision of heaven. But, we do know that God is truly sovereign, and He owes none of us any explanation for what He allows to come upon us. If He owed us an explanation for what He allows us to suffer, then He would not be the omniscient God of the universe. Therefore, let's try to understand that in spite of the suffering, which God allows to come our way, He is still in charge, and He will turn the bad into something good. Now, let's dig deeply into the following verses about the thorn in the flesh that Paul had to endure and see if we can learn to identify with Paul in learning how to deal with so much undeserved pain and suffering.

A. It was a humbling element. v. 7a

Well now, as we begin this verse 7, we suddenly see that Paul not only had experienced one revelation or vision, but the truth was that God had given an abundance of these revelations. Truthfully, we may not know just why God chose to do this for Paul, but we can understand why there might be a lot of temptation to boast or brag about these

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, pages 169-170.

supernatural experiences. I would remind you that at the time of this letter being written, the canon of Scripture had not been completed. Paul only had the Old Testament, therefore, God gave him several supernatural visions or revelations to better equip him to do a better job in his ministry. But, let me be quick to add that in this dispensation of time, we don't need supernatural visions to give us truth. Why? Because the written Word of God is completed, and there will be no more revelations. However, I will not negate the possibility that God might give some individuals a deeper understanding of His Word by revealing deep truth from the Word by the illumination of the indwelling Holy Spirit. My point is that God may have chosen to speak through dreams and visions in the past, but if we truly learn, believe, and practice the truth of God's Word, we should not need any more supernatural experiences to give validity to the truth of God's infallible, inerrant, and irrefutable Word.

So my friends, in the first part of verse 7, Paul tells the Corinthians that God had allowed him to suffer much in the flesh in order for him to stay humble. I will tell you right now that I sincerely don't understand why God allows us to suffer so much in the flesh, except, He is trying to keep us humble so that He alone receives all the glory for everything that is accomplished!

B. It was a hurtful element. v. 7b

Let me now ask a question. "Have you ever gotten angry with God because He allowed you, as a genuine believer, to go through so much suffering?" I don't know if you will confess that you have, but may I tell you that I have gotten angry with God, and still do some days, as I now go through so much suffering in the flesh as a result of so many health issues.

Truthfully, I must tell you that because I experience so much pain almost every day in my life that I just stop and cry out to God, "Why Lord do you allow me to hurt so much after I have tried to faithfully serve you for almost 55 years?" Now, this doesn't mean that I stay angry, and neither should you. But many days I am weak, and I just don't understand "why" God is allowing me to go through so much. However, when I settle down and begin to let the truth of God's Word dictate to my heart, then I come to realize that Satan is the originator of my suffering, and God is trying to get me to see just how well I am going to deal with this old wicked foe called the devil. Satan hates every true believer, and the more this believer does for Christ, the greater the attacks will be. We must always remember what we studied back in **Chapter 10 of II Corinthians. Verses 3-5** tell us the following: ***"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."*** In other words, we cannot fight Satan in the power of our flesh, but we must claim the power of God through the Holy Spirit to engage him. Satan has already been defeated at Calvary and through the resurrection of our living Lord. Therefore, we must appropriate the power of God in order to defeat Satan in every battle we face.

Whatever Paul's thorn in the flesh was, we know it was a tool of Satan to continually buffet him. The word buffet here in the Greek actually means "to give one a blow with the fist". Thus, as Paul was enduring so much suffering, it was because God was allowing Satan to beat Paul up. Again, we don't know for sure why Paul was suffering so much, unless it

was just to keep him humble and to keep him serving Christ with a humble spirit. Without this continuous suffering, Paul probably would have given into the temptation to take God's glory for whatever was accomplished through him. But, we do know that in all that we have studied about Paul in II Corinthians, and in all of the other books he wrote, there seems to be some capitulation to the temptation to be arrogant and proud. Thus, we must conclude that Paul was hurt so much just to keep him humble and genuinely sincere.

C. It was a horrible element. v. 7c

As we continue on in our study, let me give you the translation of verse 7 from the Amplified Bible. Pay close attention to these words, and then continue to study the remaining notes I have included in this study. ***"Because of the surpassing greatness and extraordinary nature of the revelations (which I received from God), for this reason, to keep me from thinking of myself as important, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, to torment and harass me—to keep me from exalting myself!"***

"Paul states that even though he enjoyed wonderful revelations from God, the Lord kept him from becoming proud by giving him a thorn in the flesh. One of the big questions of the Bible refers to this verse. What was Paul's thorn? We don't know for sure because the Bible doesn't tell us. The word 'thorn' is from the Greek word *skolops* which means 'a sharp stake or splinter.' Sometimes criminals were impaled upon a sharp stake. Paul's pain was like the pain of a sharp stake. This thorn indicates a savage pain and a picture of intense suffering. Many ideas have been offered to the identity of his thorn."¹⁹⁵

"Some have suggested that it was malaria, epilepsy, migraine headaches, chronic arthritis, or a disease of the eyes. Whatever the case, it was a chronic and debilitating problem, which at times kept him from working. This thorn was a hindrance to the ministry. Paul was a very self-sufficient person, so this thorn must have been difficult for him. It kept Paul humble, reminded him of his need for constant contact with God, and benefited those around him as they saw God at work in his life. This was a blessing from his buffeting. His thorn did not keep the apostle wholly from his service for Christ. Scholars believe the messenger of Satan is attributed to his pain, which smote him. Others, however, believe that it may refer to false teachers that tormented Paul."¹⁹⁶

"Beloved, you may be suffering from health problems right now and wondering why the Lord doesn't let you get well. Why did you get sick or hurt in the first place? You may wonder if you did something wrong? That's possible, but sometimes the Lord allows pain and suffering in your life for another reason. It is for the purpose of keeping you humble and dependent upon Him, and to give you the opportunity to glorify Him in your difficult circumstances. Christ is glorified when you praise Him in your pain, pressure, and problems."¹⁹⁷

I would like to add one more thought about Paul's thorn in the flesh. In the previous paragraphs, Dr. Rod Mattoon mentioned that maybe this thorn in the flesh was a disease of the eyes. I am inclined to agree with this interpretation about Paul's thorn in the flesh being some type of eye disease because of what Paul said in closing out his letter to the Galatians.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, page 176.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

In Galatians 6:11, Paul said, ***"Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand."*** In the Scofield Bible's note on this verse in Galatians, we find the following words. "The apostle was, it appears from many considerations, afflicted with ophthalmia, a common disease in the East, to the point almost of total blindness. Ordinarily, therefore, he dictated his letters. But now, having no amanuensis (secretary) at hand, but urged by the spiritual danger of his dear Galatians, he writes, we cannot know with what pain and difficulty, with his own hand, in the 'large letters' his darkened vision compelled him to use."¹⁹⁸

D. It was a habitual element. v. 8

As I try now to comment on verse 8, I can't help but feel so close to this text because of the habitual physical suffering that I am going through day and night. Right now I am battling diabetes, diastolic heart failure, neuropathy in my feet and vocal cord, constant arthritic pain in my hands, and constant pain in my torn rotator cuff in my right shoulder. Because of the constant pain I have a hard time walking, breathing, preaching, teaching, eating, and yes, sleeping. I am daily on much pain medicine, but more than this, like Paul the Apostle, I regularly ask God to deliver me from this horrible pain and suffering. Up until now, God has helped me in many ways, but for whatever reason, He has not chosen to rid me of all of these health problems. Of course, as we have already stated, I am sure that God has allowed this messenger of Satan to continually attack me. I don't know what God is trying to do in my life through all of this suffering, but I am asking Him for a stronger faith and for Him to give me sufficient grace to endure this deep valley. I need to also tell you that because of so much suffering physically, it is affecting me emotionally and spiritually. The hardest thing to deal with is the questionable doubt that comes my way when I try to understand why God has allowed this to happen to me. Habitual pain is not easy to endure!

E. It was a helped element. v. 9a

Please notice the first part of verse 9. Here we find these words from Jesus—***"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."*** In this phrase from Christ Himself, Paul is told in spite of the fact that God is not going to remove the thorn in the flesh, He has promised to give Paul sufficient grace and strength to deal with this terrible physical suffering. We need to notice the word "sufficient". This word in the Greek is "*arkeo*", and it means completely and totally adequate to provide enough grace to meet every need and bring peace to Paul's heart. Of course, the word grace means unmerited favor of God. And we all know from experience that when we don't understand why God is allowing things to happen to us, we have to know that God is providing grace and strength to get us through the daily painful ordeals. Please notice the following comments from Dr. John Phillips.

"And so it has often been God's way to bypass men of status and social position in this world, to use those often looked down on as nobodies. Luther was a miner's son, Calvin was a copper's son, Zwingli was a shepherd's son, Melancthon was an armorer's son, and John Knox was a burgess' son. D.L. Moody's spoken English was execrable—it was said of him

¹⁹⁸ The Scofield Study Bible, Oxford Press, page 1248.

that he was the only person who could pronounce the word 'Jerusalem' in two syllables! Billy Sunday was an orphan. William Carey was a cobbler."¹⁹⁹

"Paul learned that, while he did not have the power to overcome the incredible handicap of his thorn, God did. In fact, his very weakness and "yieldedness" enabled God to work as never before. Paul so overcame his affliction that it is virtually ignored altogether in the Bible. It did not hinder him from undertaking three tremendous missionary journeys. We follow him across Asia Minor, into Europe, and on to Rome and we never suspect he had a handicap at all. In fact, it would have been ignored by him altogether had not the Holy Spirit told him to write about it here. What a victory!"²⁰⁰

III. NOTICE THE ENJOYMENT PAUL WAS BLESSED WITH. vs. 9b-10

Obviously, by now all of us, as students of this book of II Corinthians, should know that Paul went through terrific suffering and pain. Truthfully, it would be almost impossible to explain in writing just how much suffering Paul did in fact experience in his body, and also mentally and spiritually, because of the attacks of Satan. May I phrase this in an unorthodox way, "Paul went through literally 'hell on earth' trying to keep people out of the eternal hell?" Yet, we do know that in spite of everything he had to encounter, God gave Paul the sufficient grace and strength to endure all of that terrible suffering he went through. The unbelievable thing about this was Paul's joy and pleasure that he enjoyed right in the in the midst of his "hell on earth". Let's now take a look at where Paul got this intrinsic joy right in the midst of trials and persecutions.

A. He received enjoyment from his power. v. 9b

How could Paul possibly endure his horrible suffering with joy? It was because of the indwelling power of God given to him by the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life. Paul even said that he could rejoice in his infirmities because the power of God rested upon him. In other words, it was because of God's sufficient grace and strength that Paul was able to contend with his horrific circumstances.

"Grace affects every area of our Christian life and without it we would be men most miserable. In fact, the reason why many people without Christ are miserable is because they do not know and have the grace of God in their life. What an awful way to live!

Grace affects our past, overcoming the guilt and gloom that our sins have produced. Grace affects our present, overpowering our grief, the grind, and glitches of our life. Grace also affects our future, overlooking our goals, our glimpse of the future, and giving us hope."²⁰¹

"We could not spiritually survive without the grace of God. To live the Christian life without the grace of God would be like trying to catch a feather in a hurricane. It would be

¹⁹⁹ Exploring II Corinthians, By: Dr. John Phillips, Kregel, page 293.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume Two, By: Rod Mattoon, Land of Lincoln Baptist Church, page 179.

impossible. Because of the awesomeness of God's grace, writers have painted their hearts in wonderful songs.

*It was John Newton who proclaimed, 'Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, now I'm found, was blind but now I see.

*Haldor Lillenas in splendor said, 'Wonderful grace of Jesus greater than all my sin. How shall my tongue describe it? Where shall its praise begin? Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free for the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.

*James Gray humbly expresses his heart, 'Only a sinner saved by grace, only a sinner saved by grace. This is my story, to God be the glory, I'm only a sinner, saved by grace.'²⁰²

"Some men go through their lives degrading, devaluing, discrediting, disgracing, and dishonoring God. Others make demands and expect God to do man's will. They feel God owes them something and He better shape up or they will ship God out of their lives. Their ultimatums for God show they lack understanding about who God is and who they are or are not! Beloved, God owes us nothing!!!! In grace, He gives to us. The nature or character of grace is giving. It is God's nature to give. He is a God of grace because He freely gives to us. God bestows His grace not because of what we DO, or what or who we ARE, but because of WHO GOD IS.....HE IS GOD!!!!²⁰³

B. He received enjoyment from his problems. v. 10a

We are now going to look at this final verse for this chapter of our commentary on **II Corinthians**. Truthfully folks, here we find an unthinkable declaration by Paul to the professing believers in Corinth. Paul again tells the Corinthians that regardless of what he has had to go through, he still takes pleasure in his infirmities, his reproaches, his going without his needs being met, his persecutions, and his distresses. In other words folks, Paul's stumbling blocks had become his steppingstones to greater things! His opposition became his opportunities, and his conflict became his challenges. Paul was just simply resolute in allowing God to turn his buffetings into blessings. Truthfully friends, one of the greatest books that has ever been written on II Corinthians is entitled, "Blessings Out Of Buffetings." The author of this book was the late great Alan Redpath, a dynamic former pastor in England and here in North America.

Paul the Apostle had come to understand that he would never become the mature believer that Christ desired for him to be until he knew how to crucify the flesh. As is the case in so many struggling Christians' lives, God had to use tremendous suffering and trials to buffet the flesh for Paul's true spiritual maturity to come forth from the fires of suffering. Oh yes, when we are going through our times of intense suffering, we may not be able to stay focused on God's goal and purpose for our lives. But if we can stay faithful and not quit during these terrible buffetings, we will come forth with God's blessings and maturity in our purposeful lives.

C. He received enjoyment from his paradox. v. 10b

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid, page 180.

It may very well be that when you read the word paradox in the C point of this outline that you may wonder what am I talking about? Well, the answer is found in the definition of paradox. One of the definitions of this word in Webster's Dictionary is "nonsense". In other words, this final statement in verse 10 seems extremely nonsensical. Paul says, "**...for when I am weak, then I am strong.**" What Paul is saying is that he would never have been able to claim the power and strength of God if he had not come to a point of absolute weakness produced by all of his severe suffering. So, he found extreme joy in seeing how God brought him through!

Conclusion

Paul the Apostle was a great man of God. But, he would never have become this wonderful preacher of the Gospel if God had not allowed him to go through so much persecution and suffering. Of course, looking beyond this letter of II Corinthians, where he talks so much about his willingness to take pleasure in his suffering, please remember that Paul was later beheaded in Rome sometime around A.D. 68. But before he was martyred, Paul was ready to give up everything because he had learned to crucify self and bear his cross of suffering. As unfair as it may seem, the only way we can become mature and complete growth-wise is to go through the suffering that Satan brings our way with the tolerance of our Lord. If there were no suffering, there would be boasting with ever success. But, because God does allow trials and tribulation, we are brought down to humility to where no one but God gets the glory for whatever we might accomplish as servants of God.

"The fact that God's power is displayed in weak people should give us courage. Though we recognize our limitations, we will not congratulate ourselves and rest at that. Instead, we will turn to God to seek pathways for effectiveness. We must rely on the Lord for our effectiveness rather than simply on our own energy, effort, and talent.

When we are strong in abilities or resources, we are tempted to do God's work on our own, and that can lead to pride. When we are weak, passive, or ineffective—life provides enough hindrances and setbacks without us creating them. When those obstacles come, we must depend on the Lord. Only His power will make us effective for Him and will help us do work that has lasting value.

Our weakness not only helps develop Christian character, it also deepens our worship, because in admitting our weakness, we affirm God's strength. The grace and power of God is perfected when we suffer from sickness or trial, because we rely upon Him so heavily. This is why Paul gladly gloried in his infirmities because he wanted the power of Christ to rest upon him."²⁰⁴

Now, let's get ready to continue this great study in our next chapter by learning how Paul continued to defend his apostleship before the church in Corinth and also to combat the false teachers who had tried to take over the church. We will once again see the strength of God revealed in and through Paul as he rightfully defended his call and his work before the church in Corinth.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, page 181.

Chapter Fourteen

"PAUL'S CONCLUDING DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP"

Scripture: II Corinthians 12:11-21

Introduction

As we continue our study in **Chapter 12 of II Corinthians**, we are going to move forward with Paul's letter to the Corinthians describing in detail all of the suffering he had been through. As we remember in the last chapter of this commentary, Paul was trying to deal with the issue of those braggadocios false teachers who were deceiving the Corinthian believers with their false doctrine, plus, they were attacking the credibility and motives of Paul the Apostle. So now, as we continue this tremendous study, we will see that instead of boasting about his own authenticity and credentials, Paul gets stronger in his self-defense of his apostleship. Paul defends himself by telling the Corinthians that this was the third time he had written to them, and he had tried to show love to them, but because of their obstinate wills, Paul now gets more adamant about who he truly is and how wrong these false teachers were when they attacked his apostleship. So, as I look at the rest of this great chapter, I see Paul stand up for himself and his ministry like a defense attorney would if he were defending a client being charged with a crime. Paul just tells them that if they couldn't believe his authenticity by his reaffirming letters, then when he returned to Corinth, he would not spare what he had to do to convince these doubters about his credibility. In other words, Paul knew that he had been faithful as a servant of God to the Corinthian church, and he was not going to tolerate the abuse of these hypocritical teachers.

Therefore, as we dig deeper into these remaining verses in Chapter 12, let's open our hearts to the spirit of Paul in dealing with these phony people. Then we will see some sarcasm Paul manifests for these religious idiots who were trying to take over the church at Corinth. We will also see the sacrifice that Paul had made to take the Gospel to Corinth. For them to doubt his credibility was "a slap in the face" after all of the sacrifices he had made to bring the Gospel to the church there in Corinth. Then, in this chapter we will see Paul's suspicion of the deceivers in the church and also the fear that Paul had for what he was going to find when he arrived in Corinth the next time. Paul sincerely feared that his heart would be broken over what he would find in the church when he arrived. Paul feared that when he got to Corinth that there would still be division in the church and that he would find that the people who were guilty of doubting his credibility would not have repented of their sins. Thus, my friends, let's take a careful look at verses 11-21 and discover some truth to help us lead our churches to not make the same mistakes and refuse to repent of their sins. Truly, the greatest need in all of our churches here in America, and in other parts of the world also, is a God-sent spiritual revival bringing church people on their knees before God in repentance.

I. NOTICE THE SPIRIT OF PAUL'S DEFENSE. vs. 11-12

There is one thing about Paul the Apostle that I will never be able to understand, and that is that he always tried to show compassion and humility in trying to deal with difficult circumstances. Paul always did his best to show love even for those who tried to hurt him the most. I can tell you that the only way he could have done this was for him to remember who he used to be before the Damascus Road experience. Paul always demonstrated love and compassion, and he only became blunt when the people he was trying to correct became defiant.

A. Paul's spirit was one of submissiveness. v. 11

As we take a look at verse 11, the first thing we see is that while telling the Corinthians the truth about himself in rebuttal of the false teachers, he did not claim to be anybody other than one of God's chief apostles. But, he was not going to claim this authoritative position because he considered himself nothing but a sinner saved by grace. Truly Paul continued to demonstrate his humble spirit, but yet he was reminding the people that because he was the man God sent to them with the Gospel message, he could have gloried in his accomplishments as God's servant. But he refused to do this, because Paul never forgot where he had come from.

"Paul was a man who did not like having to talk about himself or his deeds. He fully agreed with Solomon's wise counsel in Proverbs 27. Please notice this verse, ***'Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.'*** (Proverbs 27:20)

Because his credentials and credibility were under attack as an apostle, he was placed in a position where he was 'compelled' to speak up and defend his apostleship. The faithfulness of the Corinthian believers was at stake. The word 'compelled' is from the Greek word 'angkazo,' which means 'to force', to compel or necessitate.' Paul felt forced to boast about his ministry. Most of us don't like to be forced to do anything and Paul was no different, especially when it came to talking about himself. He felt this was so foolish to have to do this, but it was necessary that he did."²⁰⁵

"The Corinthians should have commended Paul. This is what they should have done. What does he mean by this? This word 'commend' is from the word '*sunistao*', which means 'to stand by or with someone; to uphold or support the authority of someone.' So the apostle is rebuking them and telling them that they should have stood by him when he was attacked instead of being passive spectators. The lack of loyalty for that which was right created mega-problems not only for Paul, but for the Corinthian church. When Christians do not stand by and support the authority of the Word of God, then Satan gains a foothold in their hearts, and they spend their lives foolishly, wasting it away."²⁰⁶

This would be a good place for me to get up on my soapbox and tell you something that is absolutely devastating the modern church today. This something is that most of the younger generation in the work of the Lord show very little respect for the true men of God who have faithfully proclaimed the truth of the Gospel. Instead, this younger generation of professing servants forget where they have come from and who has helped them succeed in their ministry. During my 55 years of fulltime ministry, I believe there have been over

²⁰⁵ Ibid, page 183.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, pages 184-185.

30 young preachers or servants of God who have been in my eleven churches where I have pastored. And truthfully, I have done everything I possibly could to help these young men get started well. But folks, right now there are only about two of these younger generation preachers who ever take the time to come by to see my wife and me. I rarely ever get a call from any of them, unless of course, they want something, or if their months and months of negligence causes them to begin to feel somewhat ashamed. When this happens, then they may briefly contact me, but usually only for a few moments in person or on the phone.

Just stop for a moment and think about what Paul was going through. He had gone to the wicked city of Corinth and there started a new church for Jesus. Many people truly got saved, while others only got religion. I know this because of how the church was so easily deceived by the false teachers. But the truth is that God used Paul to start the church, and it was there that he spent 18 months of ministry, the second longest stay at any church he planted. The only church where he stayed longer was in Ephesus, where he spent three years.

Even after God used Paul so mightily to plant the church, he was now having to defend his apostleship with these same people. How quickly people forget, especially in the younger generation. As I have written many times before, one way that you can see the lack of respect and appreciation for the older generation is simply to go into a restaurant and thank someone for some deed they did for you. When you tell them, "Thanks!", rather than saying "You are welcome.", the thing you hear is "No problem." Is it a problem that you have given a big tip to someone, or is it a problem that you have expressed sincere gratitude? This disrespectful attitude is exactly what Paul was dealing with here in the Scripture. People who have been given the plan by Paul to receive Christ and live in heaven for eternity show their appreciation by simply telling him that he really needs to show them again that he is the "real deal". Please pardon me, but I get righteously angry toward people who treat the servants of God this way. But, we do know that Jesus was treated even worse by the mob when in fact, He had never committed one sin.

"When Christians attack and undermine their spiritual leaders, they create an opportunity for Satan to gain ground in their personal lives and divide the church. I have observed since 1971, that people who try to destroy their spiritual leaders, their pastor, youth pastor, deacons, or teachers, they seriously weaken themselves in their spiritual growth. Many of the people I have seen do this, either get out of church and cool off spiritually, or they start attending churches that are not serious about Bible preaching and winning the lost to Christ. They become involved in entertainment ministries or social program churches. Let me say, 'It does make a difference what church you attend. Not all churches are the same.' Wherever you go or live, spend your life in a good, Bible-preaching, Christ-honoring church."²⁰⁷

B. Paul's spirit was one of satisfaction. v. 12

Moving into verse 12, we discover a great character trait in Paul's life, which every servant of God needs. This trait was that regardless of the difficulty of a present situation, he had a sweet spirit of peace or satisfaction. Paul knew that through him and his other few preacher friends, the Corinthian church had witnessed the apostolic signs, many miraculous wonders, and many mighty deeds. It was that regardless of the bad situation

²⁰⁷ Ibid, page 185.

that Paul faced, he could still remain with a peaceful, hopeful, and positive attitude. And folks, I must tell you that I often have difficulty keeping this same personal trait in my life. I always know that God will truly bring me through whatever thing I have to face, but honestly, sometimes I get very impatient. When things get very bad in dealing with hurtful people, I have to try and correct the problem because I can't live with peace until the problem is dealt with. Now, let me give you some more wonderful comments from Dr. Rod Mattoon.

"When we look at Paul, we find that he was not a 'Super Christian' with a big 'S' on his robe. He was an apostle. What does this really mean? The word 'apostle' is from the word 'apostolos' which means 'messenger, delegate, or ambassador.' The term is mainly used to refer to fourteen men, which include the twelve disciples, Matthias, and Paul. In New Testament times, the word 'apostle' referred to a person who acted with authority for another person. The apostles were ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were chosen by the Lord for their ministries. They were eye witnesses of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The Lord used several of them to write the canon or Scriptures."²⁰⁸

"The signs, wonders, or miracles that the apostles performed were evidence of their apostleship and that they were God's true messengers. 'Signs' were miracles with emphasis upon their significance. 'Wonders' were unusual events that engendered awe. 'Miracles' were wonder works resulting from supernatural power. What was God's purpose in these things? The answer is they drew attention to the apostle's message, that it was truly from God and that he was God's credible messenger. We also find that they introduced key times of God's revelation to men. There were three key periods of miracles that are recorded in the Bible:

1. The period during the lives of Moses and Joshua. The miracles attested the giving of the Law.
2. The period of Elijah and Elisha. The miracles authenticated the revelation of Old Testament Scripture and the ministry of the prophets.
3. The years of the ministry of Jesus Christ and His apostles. The miracles proved the deity of Jesus Christ and the ministry of the apostles."²⁰⁹

II. NOTICE THE SARCASM IN PAUL'S DEFENSE. v. 13

As we look at verse 13, let me quote the Amplified Bible to help us hopefully better understand the meaning of what Paul is saying here. ***"For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except (for the fact) that I did not burden you (with my financial support)? Forgive me for doing you this injustice!"*** There is no way that we can see the truth of this verse without seeing Paul's sarcasm vividly. He told these confused people in Corinth that if they were confused about his apostleship, the only reason they had for it was because he refused to take any financial remuneration for his services in Corinth. Thus, it seems that the people had been taught by the false teachers that Paul couldn't

²⁰⁸ Ibid, page 186.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

possibly be a true apostle because he would not take financial support from the church there in Corinth. May I tell you that if indeed these wicked people convinced the people that Paul was not a real apostle by this evil statement, then they were truly the most depraved hypocrites that ever lived!

Paul had known that if he took money from the Corinthians, then, they would have accused him of preaching for money. So, in this verse we find tremendous sarcasm in this verse.

A. This sarcasm was the result of misunderstood methods. v. 13a

Truly, the people in the church at Corinth were very immature believers if they could be so easily deceived about Paul's authenticity. "Paul's possible sarcasm is seen in this verse too. He addresses his remissness or failure to the Corinth church. How was this church treated differently than the other churches? How were they treated in an inferior way? Paul sarcastically says, 'I failed to be a financial burden to you. Please forgive me for this wrong of not letting you be equal to the other churches.' He was gently telling them it was their responsibility to help support him, but he did not give them that opportunity like he did all the other churches he started."²¹⁰

"Beloved, it is the privilege of believers to support the ministry of the Gospel, for in so doing, we reap God's promises and blessings on our own lives. He does keep His Word. Spreading the Gospel and supporting a ministry that does this is a great way to spend your life and the resources that God has given to you."²¹¹

****Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."***

B. This sarcasm was the result of misunderstood motives. v. 13b

The latter part of this verse 13 tells us explicitly that the people not only questioned Paul's methods, but they also attacked his motives for coming there to Corinth. Paul was so sarcastic that he told the people in Corinth, 'If you think my methods were wrong, and now, you question my motives, then I must have really wronged you.' So, sarcastically, he appeals to the Corinthians to please forgive his wrong. Of course, we can readily see the sarcasm in this statement. Paul had been hurt so many times that he had taken just about all he could take. So, he just confronted these wicked professing Christians about their foolishness. I believe that by now Paul's patience had worn thin. But yet, may I say that Paul took the low road against these evil professing believers.

III. NOTICE THE SACRIFICE IN PAUL'S DEFENSE. vs. 14-15

A. It was a sacrifice of substance. v. 14

²¹⁰ Ibid, pages 188-189.

²¹¹ Ibid, page 189.

In verse 14 of our text, Paul tells the Corinthians that he was ready to come to Corinth for his third visit, but that he would not be a burden to them by taking money from their church. Then he clarifies his motive for returning to the church. He tells the people that he doesn't want their money or substance, but that he only desires the growth and development of those who were genuinely saved in the church in Corinth. In other words, Paul was ready and willing to pay the price of doing without necessities if it would be necessary, just so that he could straighten out the problems in the church and help develop them into mature children of God.

Paul again tells the Corinthians that he had no desire for the financial things of the church, and he tells them that he looks at them as a parent would look at his or her children and lay up an inheritance for them so that they would have a good treasure at the end of his days. Paul was not talking about a physical inheritance, but he wanted to lay up spiritual treasures for the true Corinthian Christians.

I will once again be very personal as I comment on this verse. The only desire that I have ever had as a pastor or church planter has been to build a strong body of believers who would in turn grow up in their faith and then pass the legacy of this great work on to another generation. And yet, just like Paul, sometimes I have had lost church members or carnal believers question my motives as I have tried to seek God's best for His church. Let me give you some more great commentary by Dr. John Phillips.

"Paul, of course, had come to Corinth the first time to found the church. After writing his long letter (our **I Corinthians**) he received more gloomy news from Corinth, perhaps brought to him by Timothy, who, it seems, had been unable to quell the revolt against Paul's authority in the church. As a result, he made the flying second and stormy visit (mentioned in **II Corinthians 13:2**). At this time So-and-so surfaced as the leader of the rebellion. Paul left but was by no means through. He wrote the Corinthians a heated letter, now lost. Titus took this letter and came back with the news, both good and bad, which prompted the letter we now know as II Corinthians. Now Paul tells the Corinthians he is planning another visit, a third visit to them.

In spite of his tongue-in-cheek apology for not being a financial burden to the Corinthians in the past (**12:13**), he tells them that he still intends to pursue the same policy on his next visit. After all, he was their spiritual father and they were his spiritual children. Why, even in the natural course of events, children were not expected to devote their savings to supporting their parents! The opposite was true. Parents do that for their children."²¹²

B. It was a sacrifice of self. v. 15

I believe verse 15, is one of the strongest verses in the entire Bible. It is not a verse with a happy truth, but it is a verse where Paul tells the Corinthians that he would be willing to give everything he had—every ounce of energy, every dime he had, and every moment of time he had left—in order to give himself to the Corinthian church. Paul was promising that he was totally and compassionately committed to the Corinthians to help them grow and develop in the Lord. But yet, he makes a stern statement to the church in Corinth. He tells them that the more love he showed to them, the less they loved him. I truly believe this is

²¹² Exploring II Corinthians, By: Dr. John Phillips, Kregel, pages 299-300.

one of the worst rebukes that a preacher had to give to a body of believers, but it was true, and I am sad to say, that it is still going on even more vividly in this present generation of churches.

Let me give you a statement of the late great preacher Dr. Adrian Rogers, who used to pastor the wonderful Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, TN. Dr. Rogers was meeting with a large group of pastors trying to encourage and train them in a Leadership Seminar. During this meeting, some other preacher asked Dr. Rogers the following, "What is the hardest thing you have ever had to deal with during your many years of ministry?" Dr. Rogers told the group of pastors that the most difficult thing he ever had to deal with was the severe hurt that he and his wife, Joyce, had received from people in their churches whom they had given the most help and ministry to their families, and yet they would walk away from their churches without even a serious explanation for why they were leaving. Right here, I would love to shout a great big AMEN! My wife and I can readily attest to the same kind of hurt we have received from the people in our churches, which we have shown the greatest love and compassion. There is no better way to describe this kind of suffering than to repeat what Paul told these Corinthians. He said, "*....though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*" In other words, Paul's compassionate kindness to the Corinthians was rejected, and the response of the people was viciousness. ***I TRULY BELIEVE THIS IS ONE OF THE WORST THINGS THAT EVER GOES ON IN THE MINISTRY ANYWHERE!*** May God forgive these wicked church people who spew hatred toward the servants of God who have done the most for them! We see this today here in America at the time of this writing as people from all races show vicious hatred for our President, Donald J. Trump, after he has given almost four years of wonderful service to all people in America.

When Paul went to Corinth to plant the church, he went there out of a compulsion from his call by God to take the Gospel to the Gentiles and because he loved the people so much. Yet, they rejected his love and spewed hatred for this great man who gave so much to the church leaders and their families. May God divinely intervene and stop this horrible practice by unloving people. Paul was willing to give up everything to share the love of Christ with a lot of unlovely people. In order for me to do this, I have to beg for God's help! Why? Because I am tired of being hated and hurt by people who call themselves believers!

IV. NOTICE THE SUSPICION IN PAUL'S DEFENSE. vs. 16-18

As we now move on in this passage of Scripture, we once again see Paul using sarcasm and a cloaked rebuttal to expose the foolishness of the Corinthians. He did this because it seemed that these people not only doubted Paul's authenticity, but they were suspicious of his methods or actions. These idiotic people even distrusted the men that Paul had sent to them to try and help them when he could not go there. Truly, the false teachers in the Corinthian church had brainwashed the people against the Apostle, who had founded their church. All that I can say is that these people were complete fools, as is the case in many of our modern churches today.

In **II Thessalonians 2:11**, Paul told this church that during the days of the coming Great Tribulation, people would be more ready to believe a lie than the truth. This is exactly what this early Corinthian church was doing way back then. It is even worse today when we consider how corrupt and brainwashed so many people are because they so readily believe the lies that are being taught throughout America and in other parts of the world. We must

remember what Paul told young Timothy in **II Timothy 3:6**, when he said, ***"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."*** Folks, this is where we are today in our modern church age. We are hearing all of this damnable false doctrine being taught by charlatans, but people are believing these lies instead of believing the truth of God's Word.

So, we must conclude that the Corinthian church was not only suspicious of Paul, but they were also suspicious of any of Paul's friends. Let's look at these three verses.

A. The people were suspicious of Paul's methods. v. 16

Paul begins in verse 16 by telling the deceived people in Corinth once more that when he was with them, he did not take their money because he didn't want to be a burden to them. He then tells them that he was skillful and wise enough to see through their questioning about his receiving support from them and saw that they were just mimicking what the false teachers were telling them. These phonies were telling the church that Paul could not be the real deal because he would not take their money for his services. However, Paul then tells these people that he was wise enough to see how deceived they were. Please look again at the great comments of Dr. Rod Mattoon.

"The word 'guile' is from the Greek word *dolos* which literally means 'the bait that is used to catch fish.'

False teachers were accusing Paul of doing anything to lure and catch the Corinthians by deceitful schemes. Yet, Paul had taken nothing from these people. He had taken every step to avoid these accusations by bringing in others to collect the gift for the Jerusalem church. How did the false teachers respond or explain Paul's trickery when he had taken nothing? Their answer was he had not sprung his trap yet. He would keep the offering for Jerusalem for himself.

Let me stress again that Paul was being sarcastic when he spoke of being crafty and using guile. He was not saying that it was permissible to use deceit in order to serve a religious purpose. Such teaching is unscriptural and atrocious. Yet, religious scam artists try to justify their schemes by using this verse. Paul was not a scam artist, unlike some of the shysters that fleece gullible people out of their finances today to pay for their jets, boats, and castles."²¹³

B. The people were suspicious of Paul's men. vs. 17-18

These next two verses reveal a tremendous amount of truth about the wicked deception of the Corinthian church. In verse 17, it is implied that when Paul sent Titus and another faithful servant of God to Corinth, he did so to receive the love offering taken by the Corinthians for the struggling church back in Jerusalem. But obviously, these distrustful and vicious people must have suggested that since Paul had not received any income or support from them, he probably would steal from this special offering taken for the Christians in Jerusalem. Thus Paul, with his enormous wisdom, saw through these corrupt people and what they were trying to do. Therefore, he went ahead and sent Titus and another faithful servant of God to Corinth to get the love offering and take it safely to

²¹³ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume Two, By: Dr. Rod Mattoon, Land Of Lincoln Baptist church, pages 194-195.

Jerusalem. We must conclude that these wicked Corinthians must have been insinuating that Paul would wait till Titus and the other servant of God got out of town with the love offering, and then he would probably join this team and take the funds on the way to Jerusalem. But, they were implying that along the way to Jerusalem, Paul would reimburse himself with funds from the offering because he had not taken any financial remuneration from the Corinthian people while he was there for 18 months preaching for them. All that I can say today is that these deceived church people in Corinth were some of the most twisted and deceived people on earth at that time. They had completely closed their minds to the fact that Paul was a true servant of God and the man God had sent to them to plant the church in Corinth. I want to say that I have pastored eleven churches in my 55 years of ministry, but I would never want to pastor a church called Corinth Baptist Church anywhere in the world. I would never want to plant a church and call it the Corinthian Church, just because of the terrible example this first century church set for the rest of Christendom forever more.

However, I do want to tell you that I have preached in quite a few churches with the name Corinth, and I found out there were many good people in these Corinthian churches. But of course, we know that most of these people had nothing to do with naming the church, unless of course, it was recently founded.

In verse 18, Paul tells the Corinthians that in spite of the accusations toward his colleagues, he knew that they had the same spirit and that they followed in his steps of integrity. However, there is a good lesson for us to recognize here. This lesson is that we must understand that the people we hang out with will probably be evaluated by the kind of testimony we have.

IV. NOTICE THE SADNESS OF PAUL'S DEFENSE. vs. 19-21

It is very obvious through all of the verses we have covered from verse 11 until now, that the people in Corinth were some of the hardest people to believe the truth and to respect the true servant of God. In believing all of these lies from the false teachers, plus, doubting the genuineness and credibility of Paul, we must confess that the people had been deceived and that they seem to gloat in their twisted beliefs. Let's look at these next three verses and see the broken heart of Paul the Apostle because of the disrespect and disbelief of these wicked people in Corinth. I know of nothing any worse than for a preacher of the Gospel to be treated as Paul was treated by the Corinthian people. I mentioned this before, but my wife and I have been hurt more by those we have tried to minister to with much love more than any other people. And yes, a lot of this hurt has come from those who used to really be dedicated to Christ, but then, they backslid on God or fell away from their life of commitment. Even to this very day, we talk much about and pray much for those who did run well, but now are living in sin.

A. Paul is sad over the people's confession. v. 19

"Paul did not want the Corinthians to misinterpret his lengthy defense of his apostleship and integrity. He was not on trial before them, and they were not his judges. Still less was he making excuses for blemishes in his character and lapses in his conduct, as the false apostles insinuated.

Through all this time (through the entire epistle) they had been thinking that Paul was defending himself to them. Actually, Paul stood before a divine tribunal; it was in the sight of God that he had been speaking in Christ. God is the only audience the faithful preacher is concerned about."²¹⁴

The very last thing that Paul tells the Corinthians in this verse is that regardless of how they had attacked him about his credibility as an apostle, the only reason he was spending so much time in trying to straighten out the mess in the church was simply to try to edify the church body. Paul had no desire whatsoever to try to tear down the church, but instead, he wanted to build the church up.

The people had confessed publicly that Paul was not who he had claimed to be. This was a loathsome attack against the very founder of their church, but they just couldn't rethink how God had used Paul to bless them. Instead, they attacked him in every area, and these attacks were just to placate the false teachers. Thus, Paul started out trying to deal with all of this mess in a kind and gracious way. But now, it was time for a promising rebuke, and Paul was ready to give it!

B. Paul is sad over the people's crookedness. vs. 20-21.

Could I please start the exegesis of these final two verses in this chapter by simply stating that Paul was a much greater man of God than I am? I say this because of the offensive behavior and actions by the professing believers in Corinth. I don't know how many of the Corinthians were truly saved, but it seems to me that a very large number of them were just complete hypocrites, who were wearing the mask of religion. I say this because of the wicked behavior of these people and their easy deception by the false teachers. And as we look in these last two verses in this chapter, Paul is going to reveal some terrible sins that these professing believers were committing. It seems very much that either the people would not admit their wrong, or they were just trying to cover up how vile and wicked they were by their attacks against Paul.

At the time of this writing, September 2020, here in America, every day we are seeing the vileness of left-wing radical politics among some that even say they love God, when in reality, God is nowhere near them, unless it would be for His trying to get them to repent and get saved. Just before the upcoming national election, which is coming on November 3, 2020, people are accusing President Trump of the same wicked things that they are committing every day. Now I don't know if he is really saved, but I do know that he has an open heart toward Christianity and the people of God. But yet, the huge number of wicked people attacking our President are committing horrible sins of hatred and violent behavior, while at the same time trying to put the blame for their crookedness on the President. These are the same kind of phony people that Paul was confronting in the city of Corinth.

Truly, Paul's heart was broken over the prevailing condition of the people in the church in Corinth. So in verses 20-21, Paul strongly tells the people that when he returns to check on the church in Corinth, he is not going to be pleased with what he will find. In fact, he tells them that he is expecting to find arguments, division, jealousy, anger, strife, backbiting, complaining, and downright fights. He also tells them in verse 21, that he expects to find

²¹⁴ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, By: John F. MacArthur, Moody Press, page 429.

impurity, immorality, and sensuality, which they had been practicing. Now, look at some more comments from Dr. Rod Mattoon.

"This word fear (in verse 20) is from the Greek word *phobeo*. It not only means 'to fear,' but to be seized with alarm, to scare someone away, an intense, deep-seated anxiety. He is concerned about what is going on in this church. He feared that when he arrived, he would not like the spiritual condition in the church and they would not like his response to that condition. Paul did not want to have to go and reprimand these people again for sin in the church. He has already been through this once. He wanted his arrival to be a pleasant one, but he was not one to shirk from problems. If there was sin in the church, he would use his apostolic authority to deal with it again firmly. That would definitely be an unpleasant, but necessary response for the Corinthians. In a way, the apostle is giving them a gentle warning, of what he expects when he arrives and what they can expect from him. Nevertheless, he was restless about his arrival."²¹⁵

"Paul longed for the church to cleanup, straighten up, and remove all sin and crookedness from the members. When he should 'come again,' he did not want to find it necessary to use severe discipline on those to whom he had preached the Gospel and who were supposed to have been converted under his ministry. He had rejoiced in them as true born again children of God, counting them as believers through the preaching of the Gospel. Now when he arrives, if he is compelled to carry out harsh action against them, it will humble him exceedingly."²¹⁶

Conclusion

"The city of Corinth was noted among all other cities for its corruption—primarily fornication, lasciviousness, and such like. So we see that the church truly was in 'the city of sin,' and its people were exposed to all kinds of temptations. For this reason Paul feared for the people, for he knew the power of temptation. Also, he knew that many of the believers had sinned, and he was pleading for them to repent before he arrived to discipline them."²¹⁷ (Of course, many of these Corinthian church members were only religious and not truly saved.)

"In this chapter we have seen Paul's reluctance to speak about himself, his humble submission to God amid trials and suffering, and his loving concern for the Corinthian believers. We have also seen his fearless rebuke of sin in the church, while at the same time urging repentance and grieving over those who had refused to repent. May we who love God today be challenged to follow the example set for us here by this great apostle."²¹⁸

I would like to add here, in this conclusion, that truly we have learned about how Paul dealt with so much hurt and heartache, but we also have learned that when "push came to shove", he would not tolerate sin in the assembly of the saints, because of the horrible testimony this gives to a lost world. May God give us some preachers today who have the

²¹⁵ Op Cit., page 197-198.

²¹⁶ The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, By: Oliver B. Greene, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 636-637.

²¹⁷ Ibid, pages 637-638.

²¹⁸ Ibid, page 638.

spiritual fortitude to deal with sinful people in our churches, rather than to develop a non-accountable attitude with tolerance for mankind's depravity, especially when everybody in our churches that claim to be saved surely aren't! Now, let's get spiritually ready to complete this great study by exegeting **Chapter 13**, the last chapter in this **Book of II Corinthians**.

Chapter Fifteen

"PAUL'S FINAL WORDS TO THE CORINTHIANS"

Scripture: II Corinthians 13:1-14

Introduction

Well folks, we have now come to the last chapter in this **Book of II Corinthians** and also the last chapter in this commentary. We have discussed many things, which Paul wrote about to the Corinthian church. We have studied the comfort he tried to give the church, the need for being genuine and sincere in our walk with God, and the new covenant, which God had given to the New Testament saints. We spent much time commenting on Paul's message about Christian separation and separating ourselves from the world. We also have studied Paul's sincere desire to be reconciled with the Corinthian believers because of the many attacks that he had received from the people in Corinth because of the negative influence of false teachers. Also, we looked carefully at the principle of grace giving, and we have discovered that Paul truly rebuked the Corinthians because of the no-win accusations from the phony people in the Corinthian church. There were some that said he was not authentic because he did not accept any financial remuneration from the people. On the other hand there were those who would have accused him of preaching for money if he had accepted love gifts from the church.

These wicked hypocritical people questioned Paul's motives, his methods, and his credibility because he had been through so much. Therefore, Paul reiterated a list of the terrible trials, the horrible suffering, the constant persecution, and the terrible disdain that so many people had given him. Truthfully, Paul really rebukes these professing Corinthian believers, and he gives the Corinthians this stinging rebuke because in spite of how he tried to explain the reasons for his suffering, these hypocritical people just would not believe him. Rather, these Corinthians would believe the false teachers who had given them false doctrine contrary to the Word of God, and these church members would accept the lies the false teachers gave them, instead of believing the man of God who came to the wicked city of Corinth and planted the church there. There is one thing prominent throughout this book of the Bible, and that is how God turned so much of Paul's pain into praise from his lips and life. Truthfully friends, this is one of the hardest things I have ever had to deal with in the ministry. Even while I write on this introduction this very morning, I have gone through a tremendous amount of physical suffering due to so many health issues. And honestly, I just sometimes wonder why God allows His people, who love Him so much, to have to bear so much suffering and pain. But, with God's help, I will try to follow the example of Paul and turn my pain into much praise.

If you have paid close attention to this study, you know that one of the main lessons that Paul learned from all of his trials and sufferings was how to be humble and maintain a servant's spirit, rather than develop a terrible arrogance because of his successes in the ministry. I pray that I might learn this same lesson also, because whatever we might achieve down here on earth will die in insignificance when we get to heaven and receive the rewards that God has up there for what we have done for Him while we have been here on earth in His born again family trying to faithfully serve Him.

In Chapter 14 of this study, we spent much time studying Paul's final defense of his apostleship after being under constant attack from the false teachers in Corinth and their recently brainwashed church members who continued to doubt Paul's integrity and his authenticity as a true apostle of Christ. In summation of Chapter 14, we might just say that Paul's patience had worn thin with these hypocritical people, and he just tells them how disappointed he is in their hypocrisy. He had every right in the world to defend his true apostleship because it was God that supernaturally chose him to be the great apostle to the Gentiles, although he never saw himself as anything great. He saw himself as the chief of sinners and the lowest servant of God. As we have stated before, Paul surely could have boasted in what he had accomplished, but instead, he gave all the glory to Jesus.

Now, let's look at **Chapter 13 of II Corinthians**, and discover the final words of Paul to this confused and divided church. Truthfully, what we are going to discover in this final chapter is Paul's stern commitment to go back to Corinth, if possible, in order to help get the church right with God. Then Paul tells the Corinthians that they need to really examine themselves to see if they were genuinely saved. The reason he did this was because they weren't acting like saved people.

Paul also shares with the Corinthians his sincere craving for the Corinthians and what he really desired for them. Then Paul tells the Corinthians that he desires for them to solve the disunity problems, live in peace with one another, and then receive the blessings of God.

Thus, let's now get into these verses and see what God might be trying to show us as we come to the conclusion of this long and wonderful study from His Word!

I. PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S STERN COMMITMENT. vs. 1-4

As we begin digging into this last chapter of our study, let me give you some strong words of comment from Dr. Rod Matton once again.

"Paul writes to the church to inform them of his third arrival. The first time was his extended stay when he planted the church as is recorded in Acts 18. The second was the painful visit during which he was so taken back by brutal personal attacks that he thought it better to stay away for a while (2:14).

It was in response to the rejection and abuse of the second visit that Paul issued dire warnings to his offenders if they did not repent. Those who were teaching false doctrine, criticizing, and making false accusations against Paul would be confronted. It was high noon. He is coming to Corinth and this time there will be no more loose talk and reckless statements. Whatever is said will be witnessed and proofed once and for all."²¹⁹

"For over a year he had been putting up with the garbage of rumors, divisiveness, and false accusations from these rebels. Many had already repented, but there remained some who were entrenched in bitterness, jealousy, and rebellion. It was time to confront these people and put this mess to an end. The rebellion could not be allowed to fester and continue anymore, because it would ruin the spirit, growth, and effectiveness of the church."²²⁰

A. It was a commitment to get the truth. v. 1

²¹⁹ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume Two, By: Dr. Rod Matton, Land Of Lincoln Baptist Church, page 213.

²²⁰ Ibid.

In verse 1, Paul just tells the Corinthians that he is coming to Corinth for the third time, and this time he would be completely committed to getting to the bottom of the mess that had been going on in the church in Corinth. In fact, Paul was just telling them that enough false information and lies had been told. It was now time to get the truth out of these false teachers whatever it might take. What we see here is that Paul is about to hold these hirelings accountable for their wicked behavior. Honestly friends, I wish we had some Pauls in America who would be here to hold the phony government leaders in our country accountable for their vicious behavior. No one seems to want to do this—no Republican and no Democrat. It just seems that no one has the guts to stand up to the liars and false people in our government and yes, even in so many of our churches where there is so much teaching of diabolical doctrine contrary to the Word of God.

B. It was a commitment to get tough. vs. 2-4

What Paul tells these Corinthians is that they had now had their chance to tell all of their false lies and false teachings without any accountability. But now, the day of grace was over, and they were going to be confronted and held accountable. These words make me want to shout. Why? Because I am so tired of so many wicked people doing harm to pastors and teachers in our churches with no one holding them accountable. Then too, I am so tired of so many pastors and teachers preaching and teaching damnable doctrine in the churches of today with no one having the courage to face up to these phony charlatans who are getting rich by merchandising the Gospel. Paul told them that when he got there, whatever they told him had to be witnessed by two to three people, and every word had to be established. As a lot of the old western movies used to discuss, it was going to be a "High Noon" when Paul got there.

"High noon was coming. Those who would not repent would be confronted and they would get exactly what their sin demanded. The time for mercy would be over. There would be no more warnings, only firm confrontation of those who were sinful. This is so ironic. Paul's critics accused him of being weak, scared, and a sissy because of his gentleness and humility. They have put him in a position where he must act with authority, strength, and power. They end up getting more than they bargained for. High noon was at hand.

'High Noon' experiences are not fun at all, but they are necessary. You may face times in your life where you have no choice but to take the bull by the horns and confront people whether they are in your family, at work, at school, or in the church. With some people, ignoring the problem does not make the problem go away, it only gets worse. You have no choice but to meet the train at high noon and deal with the issue at hand.

We don't like 'High Noon' experiences, those times of confrontation, because they are distressful, difficult, discouraging, and depressing. Yet, ignoring the problem leaves us with same feelings. We have no choice but to go head-to-head, face-to-face with problem people."²²¹

I would like to tell you that the last word in verse 2 is spare. This word in the Greek is "pheidomai", and it means the sparing of someone's life on the field of battle. The word

²²¹ Ibid, page 214.

conveys the idea of showing mercy upon someone who is an enemy. Therefore, as I told you just a few paragraphs back, Paul was telling the people in Corinth that the time for showing mercy was over, and he would not spare or withhold judgment if the people didn't repent. May I tell you that Paul was truly a courageous man of God? Enough was enough, and it was time for no more tolerance of the people's evil.

In verses 3-4 we find Paul continuing to tell the Corinthians that he is coming to show strength toward them because they were saying he was a weak man. Paul emphasizes the fact that people thought Jesus was very weak when he died on the cross so graciously, but yet, when he arose from the dead the people in Jerusalem saw the power of God demonstrated when Jesus arose from the dead. The Corinthians had accused Paul of being weak since he wasn't in Corinth with them at that time. Therefore, Paul tells the people that he might be weak like Jesus was when he died on the cross, but shortly when he got back to Corinth, he was going to demonstrate the power of God working through him when he would confront the horrible unrepentant sinners there.

Folks, there is a message here for all of us. We have no strength in and of ourselves, but we do have access to the power of the resurrected Lord in and through the precious Holy Spirit Who lives within us. This is what Paul told the church at **Philippi in Chapter 3, Verses 10-11**, when he stated, ***"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."*** Paul truly knew that in and of himself he indeed was weak, but he also knew that he had access to God's mighty Holy Spirit's power.

Let me give you some more commentary by Dr. Rod Matton, which is so practical from these two verses of Scripture.

"Some of the Corinthians were seeking proof that the Lord spoke through Paul. He assured them, first of all, that the Lord truly lived within these believers and was not weak, but powerful. The Corinthians' understanding of Christ's power was confused and wrong. True power to them was evidenced by health, wealth, and demonstrations of miraculous power. Their views of power were Corinthian, not Christian.

God's power was at their disposal, giving them the ability to live for Christ. Jesus' crucifixion may have given the impression that He was weak, when in reality, it demonstrated His power to do His Father's will and to show the genuine power of His love for us. The crucifixion prepared the way to demonstrate His power over death in His resurrection. Only an all-powerful God could be strong enough to live out the weakness and suffering of the cross. In His power, He willingly died for us, taking our sins upon Himself, when He never did anything wrong at all. The Father rewarded His Son by sustaining Him with supernatural power in raising Him from the dead."²²²

"Similarly, Paul in submitting to God's will, had appeared weak to some in Corinth just as Jesus appeared weak. Paul acknowledged his weakness, yet, assured them that God's power was in his own life just as it was in the Lord's life. When he came to them again, the Lord would be alive in Him and would also empower him to do His will. The power of God would be evident in his life when he arrived and dealt with false teachers, critics, slanderers, and unrepentant sinners in the church.

²²² Ibid, page 216.

Let me say right here that every Christian has weaknesses and has made mistakes. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, however, that enables us to conquer our flesh, our faults, our failures, and our bad habits if we will rely on that power. Yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit who indwells us is vital in getting victory over our weakness."²²³

II. PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S STRONG COMMAND. v. 5

Throughout most of this great second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul is constantly having to defend his personal apostleship as a man of God. This seems so absolutely horrible in view of the fact that it was he who established the church at Corinth. Now, as we come to verse five, we find Paul turning the conversation to the people in Corinth who were not acting like true believers. In fact, they were acting like wicked people who had been brainwashed by the false teachers who had come to the church after Paul had left Corinth. As we stated earlier, for over one entire year this debate had gone on with these confused and pretentious people. So now, as we come to verse five, we are going to see Paul confronting these people with the truth about whether they were really even saved. Let's look at this verse and maybe even check out our own salvation as to whether we are genuinely saved or just have religion.

A. It was a command for self-examination. v. 5

Let me give you some comments from the Matthew Henry Commentary on this verse. "And therefore, as a proof to those among the Corinthians sought a proof of Christ's speaking in the apostle, he puts them upon proving their Christianity. By the words 'Examine yourselves,' Paul intimates that, if they could prove their own Christianity, this would be a proof of his apostleship; for if they were in the faith, if Jesus Christ was in them, this was a proof that Christ spoke in him, because it was by his ministry that they did believe. He had been not only an instructor, but a father to them. He had begotten them again by the Gospel of Christ. Now it could not be imagined that a divine power should go along with his ministrations if he had not his commission from on high. If therefore, they could prove themselves not to be reprobates, not to be rejected of Christ, he trusted they would know that he was not a reprobate."²²⁴

I have often, down through the many years of my pastoral ministry, used this verse along with I Corinthians 11:28, to encourage people to really examine their lives before partaking of the Lord's Supper. For if they partake of the Lord's Supper without really being saved, they are living a lie and are inviting spiritual chastisement or judgment upon their lives. My point is that it is about time for every professing child of God to know with absolute surety that he or she are genuinely saved and in the body of Christ. And yet, I am much afraid that many people are deceived with religion, just like the professing Christians were in Corinth. Paul was just simply telling these people that if they were genuinely saved, then, they needed to remember that he had brought them the Gospel message so that they could be saved. If they were really saved, how then could they possibly doubt his integrity as a genuine apostle of God?

²²³ Ibid, page 217.

²²⁴ Matthew Henry's Commentary, Volume 6, "Acts To Revelation," page 519.

B. It was a command for self-evaluation. v. 5b

In the last part of this verse, Paul tells the Corinthians that during their evaluation of their salvation, they should also evaluate themselves to see if there was the presence of God in their lives, because if there was no evidence of Christ in their lives, then they were reprobate. The reprobate here in the King James Dictionary means the following things. It means not of enduring proof or trial; not of standard purity or fineness; disallowed; rejected. It also may mean abandoned in sin; lost to virtue or grace. Two good verses to show the true meaning of reprobation are found in **II Timothy 3:8-9**, ***"Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also, resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as their's also was."*** Of course, we know that these two verses were written by the same Apostle Paul near the end of his life while in a Roman prison. Paul was just simply telling the young pastor, Timothy, that he should be aware that there would be phony religious pretenders who claimed to be saved, but truthfully, they were false pretenders, and God would ultimately expose them for the hypocrites they were.

So, I believe that these words reprobate actually mean that there can be some prominent pretenders who claim to be saved, but the truth is that their hearts have become so hard that they have no conviction about their sins. They don't see any wrong that they have done. Therefore, if they don't have conviction for their sins, and if they can see no wrong they are doing, then there is no hope for their salvation. Folks, may I tell you right here that it is truly a deadly decision for people to say no to the drawing of the Holy Spirit that they see no need for genuine repentance? These kinds of people are on their way to hell, and nothing can be done for them. So, Paul was pressing these religious pretenders in Corinth to really examine themselves to see if they were the "real deal". If they were surely the "real deal" with genuine salvation, then, they must recognize that he was the "real deal" also.

III. PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S SINCERE CRAVING. vs. 6-10

As we now look at these next verses, we discover that Paul just shares of the Corinthians the great burden he has for these people and how his heart craves three very special things for these professing believers. Just remember that Paul has just demanded that these people in Corinth examine themselves to see if they really are saved. He emphasizes to the church that if they really are truly saved, then they should readily know that Paul is indeed a true apostle sent to them by God who saved Saul, and then made Paul out of him, and called him to preach the Gospel to the lost Jews, but more so to the Gentile people. Therefore, the desires that Paul had for these Corinthians pressed upon him with a great burden. Thus, let us take a careful look at the desires or cravings that Paul had for these people.

A. Paul craved a special comprehension for the Corinthians. v. 6

In verse 5, Paul had told the Corinthians that they needed to know if they were really saved, because if they didn't know this for sure, then they might be in danger of becoming reprobates—people with hardened hearts and defiant wills. So then, in this verse 6, he further tells the people that if they are truly saved, then they should obviously know that Paul was a genuine saved servant of God and could not possibly be a man with a reprobate

mind. When he mentions the plural, "we", I believe he was referring to Titus, the other disciple, and possibly other servants of God that may have been with Paul in Philippi when he wrote this letter.

"Paul made it clear that he had genuine faith in Christ and was a true apostle. He did not fail the test of salvation or faith in the Lord. It was the apostle's wish, his desire, and his prayer that these folks would not make the mistake of refusing his correction and his authority, even though Paul may have failed to demonstrate his authority. It was his desire that they would do that, which was right because he wanted God's blessings on their lives. If they would obey Paul, he would never need to exert his authority. That would be a great blessing for both parties."²²⁵

Paul just wanted the Corinthian people to come to understand that he was a genuine apostle and that he had never been disowned as the word reprobate sometime refers to. Paul only desired God's best for these people, and all he wanted to do was to be able to help them grow in grace. But he knew that if these people believed these false teachers and denied his authenticity, he would never be able to help the church grow and develop.

B. Paul craved a special conduct by he Corinthians. vs. 7-9.

In these three verses, Paul goes on to tell the professing Corinthian believers that he is praying that the people in Corinth would not be involved in evil, even if they did doubt his integrity and authenticity. In other words, Paul told these people that the main thing he desired for them was a conduct that was pure and holy and that they do what was right, even if they still didn't believe that Paul was a true apostle. Paul even said, "even if you think that I am not a true apostle, and that my friends and I are just plain reprobates, you Corinthians need to do what is honest and just." This shows to all of us that, more than anything, Paul wanted these confused and easily deceived people to do what was right, regardless of what they ended up believing about him. Please notice the following comment from the late Dr. Oliver B. Greene.

"Paul admonished the Thessalonians earlier in **(1 Thessalonians 5:17)**, to pray without ceasing—and he practiced what he preached. He prayed earnestly and fervently for all the churches. And he tells the Corinthians here, "I pray to God that ye do no evil...." "Whatever may be thought in regard to himself and his apostolic office, he wants them above all else to do right and be right with God. Obviously it is continually in his heart that he must severely discipline them if they do not repent and get right with God. But this verse seems to indicate that Paul had a thousand times rather—yea, ten thousand times rather—they would repent, get right with God, and do no evil, in order that he would not find it necessary to prove through stern judgment that he had the authority of an apostle. I think it is clear that Paul had rather be looked upon as an impostor and bear the reproach of his enemies, than to be forced to resort to such severity."²²⁶

"Again, Paul impresses it upon the Corinthians that it is not his main object nor his desire at this time to clear up his claims to the apostolic office, but rather that they 'should do that which is honest,' that they live Godly, spiritual lives.

²²⁵ Op. Cit., page 224.

²²⁶ The Second Epistle of Paul To The Corinthians, By: Dr. Oliver B. Green, The Gospel Hour, Inc., pages 654-655.

Paul is saying to the Corinthians, 'I am willing to be looked upon as a reprobate—rejected, disapproved, worthless, like metal mixed with alloy that will not stand the fire test—provided you will repent of your sin, get right with God, and live a holy and righteous life.'²²⁷

"In verse 8, Paul tells the Corinthians, 'For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.' "Paul is saying here, 'If we are endured with any power from on high, it is not that we may exercise it on our own behalf and against the truth of God for we can do nothing against the truth. We can use it only for the purpose for which it was given to us—that is, for the glory of God, for the truth.

This verse confirms what Paul declared in the preceding verse. He would do right by the church regardless of what it might cost him personally or what they might think of him personally. With the Apostle Paul it was definitely a fixed principle to preach only the truth and to act only in accordance with the truth. He determined not to do anything except that which was right in the sight of God."²²⁸

Now let's look at verse 9 and learn the depths of what Paul said to these professing believers in Corinth. "I believe these words, which could come only from the heart of one completely surrendered and dedicated to God, are inspired of God. I do not believe there was ever a man more fully dedicated to God than the Apostle Paul, and he could say sincerely, 'WE ARE GLAD, when we are weak, and ye are strong...' He was willing to submit to self-denial, to infirmity, to trials and tribulations, if this would promote the spiritual growth and strength of the believers in Corinth. In the connection to which this stands, Paul again seems to be saying that he was content to appear weak if they would only do right and abstain from wrong. He had rather live under the shadow of reproach than to have occasion to punish then in order to prove that he was indeed a true apostleship.

Paul is saying, 'I desire this perfection in addition to your doing no evil.' He is not speaking here of sinless perfection as Jesus was sinless in thought, word and deed. The Greek word signifies the idea of restoring, putting in order, repairing, making perfect; that is something is completely restored to its proper place. Therefore, Paul is wishing for the Corinthians to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In his first epistle, he said that they were babes and still drinking milk, when they should be eating meat (**I Corinthians 3:1-2**). I believe this is the thing he has in mind here. Many of them were still babes. They should be growing; they should be advancing spiritually—but they were standing still. So the word 'perfection' here does not mean that he wants them to become sinless perfect."²²⁹

C. Paul craved a special construction of the Corinthians. v. 10

In this verse, Paul gives the Corinthians a final message about the conduct of these professing believers, who claimed to be saved but were rejecting Paul as a true apostle of God. So Paul says to these immature professing Christians that he is still not there with them, but he is ready to come to see them. And when he arrives, he has promised to be sharp or stern with these deceived people to try and get them right with God. I believe that

²²⁷ Ibid, page 655.

²²⁸ Ibid, page 656.

²²⁹ Ibid, pages 657-658.

Paul was truly more interested in the people being right with God than he was with them putting their approval upon his apostleship. Paul reiterates the truth that he is not coming in the power of the flesh, but in the power of the resurrected Lord in order to help edify (build up) the church there in Corinth. Paul's primary desire or craving was for the people to grow up in the Lord, if in fact, they really were saved. Paul emphatically tells these Corinthian people that he was not coming there to try and destroy them, but he was coming to help in the spiritual construction of these people. And folks, may I tell you that it really took a gracious man of God to tolerate, or even accept, the way Paul had been treated, and still, he wanted nothing detrimental for the Corinthians. I must confess that if I had been Paul, by this time, I would have wanted to run as far away from Corinth as I possibly could. These people treated Paul like dirt, and he treated them like they were precious jewels. Of course, I know they were precious to the Lord, if they had genuinely been born again and had become children of God.

Now, let me give you some additional comments on verse 10 by Dr. Oliver B. Greene. "Again Paul explains why he has written to the Corinthians as he has. He had reproved, exhorted, and threatened discipline if they did not repent. So he says, ***'I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness...'*** That is, 'I have written to you so that when I come to Corinth, I will not be forced to be harsh and sharp, I will not find it necessary to issue a stern personal rebuke.' ***'.....according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.'*** With these words Paul shows his desire to use the power and apostolic authority that God had bestowed upon him for the edification of the Corinthians—to build them up, and not to tear them down."²³⁰

IV. PLEASE NOTICE PAUL'S SENTIMENTAL CONCLUSION. vs. 11-14

In these last four verses, Paul gives a heart-felt farewell to these people to whom he had given his ministry and life. It seems to me that suddenly, Paul was tired of trying to write these people who had given him so much trouble. If it was not just because of his desire to stop trying to get these people to do right, something may have interrupted Paul from writing any more there in Philippi. So he closes this long epistle with some moving sentimental remarks. I will tell you that every church in the world would be blessed to implement the commands of Paul to the Corinthian church. Now, let's look at these final heart-moving remarks by Paul, and hopefully, we can begin to practice these things in our church. However, it is probably not a good time to greet one another with a "holy kiss," just because we are in this horrible coronavirus pandemic right now all over the world.

A. This conclusion included a desired behavior. v. 11a

"Paul gives some closing rapid-fire, commands that will help any church to be what God wants it to be and to have unity. When these qualities listed here are not present in the church family, there are problems that must be dealt with. These traits do not come to a church by glossing over problems, conflicts, and difficulties. They are not produced by neglect, denial, withdrawal, or bitterness. They are the by-products of the extremely hard work in solving problems. Just as Paul and the Corinthians had to hammer out difficulties

²³⁰ Ibid, page 659.

to bring peace, so we must apply the principles of God's Word and not just hear them. Paul states that if we will obey these commands, the God of love and peace will be with us. Without it, there will be no closeness with the Lord."²³¹

In the first part of this verse, Paul calls these people brethren because of his faith in the fact that they were saved. I believe this is more than a concluding good-bye. I believe Paul thought that if he would call them brethren, that maybe they would wake up to whether they were really saved or not.

Then, Paul tells the Corinthians good-bye, and he encourages them to become mature in the Lord when he says, "Be perfect." After this, he tries to comfort them, and he tells them to be in one mind or unified. Of course, this was so needed because the church in Corinth was so divided. Then he tells the people to live in peace. I must tell you that this is a true indictment of the church in Corinth, because if there ought to be peace anywhere in the world, it should be in the house of God.

B. This conclusion included a Divine blessing. v. 11b

For those of you who have studied the Bible for a long time, you should already know that during the days of the early church, the salutation of the letter was almost always given at the end in order to basically pray a blessing over the recipients of the letters. Of course, in our English letter writing style, the salutation usually is given at the beginning of a letter. So Paul was ending his letter with a prayer of blessing upon the people in Corinth. The gist of what Paul was telling the Corinthian church was that he prayed that the church would have the presence of God right in their midst. Because God is the center of love and peace, His presence should indeed bring peace and love to the body of professing believers. And folks, if the presence of God was preeminent in the church, Paul knew that the Divine blessings of God would rest upon it.

C. This conclusion included a dear benediction. vs. 12-14

"Paul's words here are quite similar to those found in his first letter to the Corinthians, in **Verse 20 of Chapter 16**. He also urged the believers at Rome and at Thessalonica to 'greet one another with an holy kiss.' (See **Romans 16:16** and **I Thessalonians 5:26**) Peter calls this salutation 'a kiss of charity (love)' (**I Peter 5:14**).

In the early days of the Church, the kiss was a common sign of affection among kinsmen and close friends; they kissed upon meeting and again upon parting. The practice was universal in the Christian assemblies in Paul's day, and it is still used in the Greek and oriental churches—especially when communion is observed. In the western world the 'holy kiss' has all but disappeared."²³²

I would say here that during these terrible coronavirus days, this holy kiss is impossible, but truthfully, with our society being so immoral, it could never work in the church today, but it was a kind custom during the first century.

²³¹ Treasures From 2 Corinthians, Volume Two, By: Dr. Rod Matton, Land of Lincoln Baptist Church, page 233.

²³² Op. Cit., page 662.

In verse 13, Paul just sends special greetings from all the saints in Philippi, where he was writing this letter. This kind of gesture was, and still is, a very respectful greeting from other saints who are in the body of Christ. Maybe I can just read something into this greeting. Maybe Paul was just giving a reminder that if the people were acting like saints in Philippi, then, the true church in Corinth should be conducting themselves like saints as well.

And finally after almost two years of working on this commentary, we come to the very last verse. This verse 14 is just another declaration from this great servant of God so as to pray and declare God's tremendous blessings up the church in Corinth. Paul knew just how much these divisive people needed the grace of God, and he wanted so much for the love of God to reign preeminently in the church so that they could have genuine communion with God and with one another. And finally, Paul states an emphatic, "Amen!" That is to say, "And so be it!" Paul's final words to the church at Corinth were finished. We will conclude our study in the Conclusion to this chapter and the final Conclusion to the entire book of **II Corinthians**.

Conclusion

Well friends, we have now concluded our final chapter in this long study of **II Corinthians**. These final words from Paul to the church in Corinth reveal some great truths for every child of God and for every true church of our Lord Jesus Christ. These words were basically directed to a much divided church where Paul had to command that they examine themselves to really see if they were even genuine saved. We might call this last chapter in the commentary some final concluding words from Paul to the church, but the truth is that this last study in this book is a final challenge to the church in Corinth to get right with God and to invite the presence of Christ to come indwell each of the believers. For if this happened, Paul knew that there would be unity, love, and peace among the true followers of Christ. And by now, through this long hard study, surely we have come to understand just how much he loved this church. Because of this love, he didn't want to see Satan destroy what he had worked so hard to build with the help of God.

Thus, I think it is proper for us to say that Paul not only gives this church a final salutation to the letter, but he also gives the people his prayers for them to become genuine, quit arguing over false doctrine, and become mature growing saints of God. His very last word to this church was that they experience very much of the grace of God, that they be so filled with the Holy Spirit that they could show genuine love for one another, and that they then might be able to fellowship in sweet communion with one another. This was the last time Paul ever wrote to this church, and in just about four years, Paul was killed as a martyr for his faith in Rome. To our knowledge, it is believed that Paul never got to see these people again. So, this last message was a tremendous document to these confused people, and I pray that it might have been successful in bringing many of the deceived church members to genuine or real salvation and that it may have inspired those who were saved to really grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is my desire that every one of you who have read this entire commentary on the **Book of the II Corinthians** may also grow from the truth you have studied in these pages.

Conclusion To The Book

It is truly hard to believe, but today I have come to the conclusion of this great study in **II Corinthians** after months and months of intense study in doing the reference work for this Bible commentary and also in trying to dig deeply into the Word of God to bring forth as much truth as I possible could in order to provide for you the readers truth from Paul under the inspiration of God to help you become all that God wants you to become for Him, even when you go through many trials and tribulations. It has truly been my desire and prayer that God might teach all of us how to take the pain that God allows to come our way because of our faithful service to Christ, and then turn this pain into abundant praise to God for the lessons we have learned in our dark hours of suffering. I must confess that my dear wife, Jo Anne, and I have gone through many dark hours of suffering down through our 54 plus years of full-time ministry. This suffering has come because of our strong belief in the infallible inerrant Word of God, and because of our staunch stand upon this truth. We have been castigated, criticized, lied on, distrusted, slammed on from our diabolical enemies which have come to hate us because of our strong faith, and because of the truth we have told our churches, our family members, some of our friends, and yes, some people that are just as lost as lost can be.

My wife has helped me get through so much suffering as the result of a terrible vehicle accident in Africa in 1993, whereby one of my best friends was killed and as the result of many other trials because of my failing health, clinical depression, and miles of disappointments because of the failure of so-called supporters and friends. I don't know how better to describe what we have borne down through these years other than at times it has truly been hell on earth. We have given our time, our gifts, our wisdom, our finances and many other things to hundreds and hundreds of people who have rarely thanked us or shown little gratitude. Many of these recipients of our love have become our enemies. This is exactly what Paul told the Corinthians in this book. In **II Corinthians, 12:15**, Paul said, ***"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; thought the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."*** In other words, just like what happened to Paul, the more love my wife and I have shown, the less we have been loved! I cannot tell you how many people down through our years of ministry that have gotten seriously angry with us when we told them Biblical truth. And yet, this is the same thing that happened to Paul. In **Galatians 4:16**, he said, ***"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"*** Folks, Jo Anne and I have many former friends and some present family members who used to love us until we told them the truth about immorality, religion, homosexuality, anger, hatred, and many other diabolical evil deeds which they were involved in. Now, just like the people who turned against Paul, even the Corinthians, many people hate us because of our strong love for Christ, His Word, His work, and the truth that He died for. It is not fun to be hated, but I would much rather have the people on earth hate me for what I have preached and said, than to have the God in heaven displeased with me because of my silence to placate and tolerate the evil of family members, friends, and many others.

Truly, in this wonderful study, we have come to see how God taught the Corinthians to comfort the hurting, how to be sincere people of integrity, and how to learn and live by the New Testament Covenant instead of the Old Testament Covenant alone. We spent much time in these pages studying the faithful consistency of Paul as he did his ministry, and we found

out that he was one of the most consistent servants of God that ever lived. In the study of Paul's life and ministry, we discovered how he was a separated believer and how he tried so hard to carry out a lifestyle of righteousness and holiness. Being right with God every day as a believer was one of Paul's greatest attributes.

Also, we must remember that Paul gave a tremendous amount of time in this study about how the Corinthians should honor their pledges to give offerings to help the suffering people in Jerusalem. Obviously, like in many invitations and church meetings today, the people in Corinth got their emotions stirred and made great promises to give, but they never fulfilled their promises. Therefore, Paul had to get on to them because of their lack of honest or integrity.

And beyond this, most of the rest of this study has been our dealing with Paul trying to be reconciled with the deceived Corinthians. Paul had established the church in Corinth, and for 18 months, he stayed there as their pastor. But just like always happens, after Paul left Corinth, the professing believers in the church were deceived by false teachers who brainwashed the Corinthians into believing that Paul was not a real apostle. Thereby they twisted the minds of the very gullible people, and they turned against their church founder. So in almost all of the rest of the book, Paul tries to reconcile with his friends in Corinth because they had turned against him, and they defied him in a strong way. Therefore, Paul wrote some very strong words trying to defend his apostleship and trying to get reconnected with these people whom he had given so much to in the church in Corinth.

During Paul's defense of his apostleship, he shared with them just how much suffering he had gone through after his conversion on the road to Damascus. He basically told them, "Do you think I would have gone through all that I have been through, if I weren't the real deal?" So, he, sometimes harshly and sometimes sarcastically, confronts these people and tries to get them to see the difference between his genuineness and the phoniness of the false teachers. But, as he tried over and over to get them to understand where he was coming from because he had already written two previous letters to these people, I believe he just finally gave up on trying to convince them of the truth because they had not given any indication by Titus and another brother that they were willing to repent and get right with God. So, it just seems that Paul gave up on trying to convince these people to get right with God and return in a state of reconciliation to Paul and respect his apostolic authority. Therefore, it just seems to me that Paul came to believe the only way he could ever get these people to really reconcile with him was by going to Corinth and seeing them in person again. But we do know that there is no evidence that he ever got to return to Corinth again. However, we do know that Paul surely gave these Corinthians a tremendous lesson on how turn their pain into praise if they would look at their suffering the right way. Truly, it is my prayer that all of us who have studied this epistle will have come to do the same in the midst of all of our trials and sufferings.

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