

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

SECOND CORINTHIANS

✠ II CORINTHIANS

An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Given O. Blakely

Lesson #3

COMMENTARY ON: 1:8-10

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

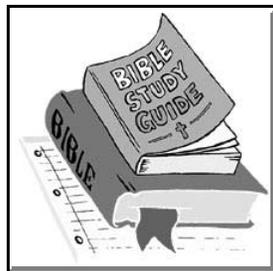
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

DIVINE DELIVERANCE

The life of faith brings us into the arena of suffering—suffering for righteousness sake. This is owing to the conflict that exists between this present evil world, and the heavenly places into which we have been raised, and in which we have been made to sit. These sufferings also play a valuable role in orienting us to "the world to come." Through them we become more aware of being strangers and pilgrims here, and consequently long the more to be forever with the Lord. However, our sufferings are also matched by a remarkable consolation that comes from above. That consolation causes the star of hope to shine all the brighter. The heart gains strength, and we are enabled to fight the good fight of faith with vigor.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 3



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG=Friberg Lexicon, UBS=UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA=Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT=Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER=Thayer's Greek Lexicon

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

DIVINE DELIVERANCE

“ 1:8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: ⁹ But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: ¹⁰ Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.” ^{KJV} (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)

INTRODUCTION

There is a refreshing openness that characterizes the communications of God's people with one another. It is not an openness after the manner of the flesh, but according to the Spirit. The objective of these communications is not the solicitation of carnal sympathy. Nor, indeed, are they designed to promote the self-interests that flow from pride. In Christ Jesus we have not been called to live for self, but for Him who died for us and rose again. As it is written, *“And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for*

them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). Let us be clear on this matter. **Newness of life cannot be expressed toward self, or “self” being primary.** It simply is not possible for the *“new man”* to be occupied with the things of this world, the flesh, or self will. Wherever these things are being promoted, *“the old man”* is sitting upon the throne of the heart.

The testimony that follows relates to the experiences Paul incurred in His labors for Christ. **This is not from a daily dairy of ordinary life lived out in this world, without specific**

regard to the Lord of glory. The only trouble worthy of any extended dialog is that which is the result of faith, kingdom labors, and strangership in this world. While we are not to be calloused toward, what I will call, *“ordinary troubles,”* they are not to shape our understanding of life in this world. Sin changed the face of nature as well as the character of men. Things no longer worked together for the good of men as they apparently did prior to the fall. **Now that sin has entered into the world, trouble and affliction have taken up their abode among men, and toil and hardship**

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are common. Calamity, sickness, disappointment, and death are common to all men, and are not to be the subject of our questions, or the theme of our dialog. **Men are not to spend their time speculating about why there are storms, famine, pestilence, disease, and sorrow. They are all cousins to death, and are the consequence of mortality.**

A SPECIAL TROUBLE

However, there is kind of trouble that is worthy of comment – a kind of trouble that we need to understand. Some disquietness comes upon us because we are Adam’s offspring, for **“man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward”** (Job 5:7), and **“all things are full of labor,”** or wearisome ^{NASB} (Ecl 1:8).

There is, however, an affliction

that is particularly associated with *“the righteous.”* As it is written, *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all”* (Psa 34:19). There is such a thing as suffering *“for righteousness’ sake”* (1 Pet 3:14) – a circumstance that moves men to *“hate you,” “separate you from their company,” “reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake”* (Luke 6:22). There is a kind of distress that is associated with one being a stranger and a pilgrim in this world (1 Pet 2:11), having a heavenly treasure in an frail tabernacle of clay (2 Cor 4:7), and being crucified to this world (Gal 6:14).

That is the kind of *“trouble”* covered in this text. For the saints of God, the gender, measure, and duration of this *“trouble”* may take different forms – but it is all experienced for the same reason. It is not the consequence of being Adam’s offspring, but of being the *“children of God.”* It is not simply the result of being in this world, but of being **not** of this world. It does not occur just because we are alive in this world, but because we are *“alive unto God.”*

COMPROMISERS ARE ROBBERS

Right here a word must be said about those who compromise their message and their lives in order to placate men. This is particularly true of those who promote such an approach to matters pertaining to life and godliness. **When we do not experience the opposition of the world we will not experience the comfort of God.** In such a case, the soul falls to sleep, for there is no longer an awareness that faith makes us misfits in this world and produces longings for

heaven, the place of our citizenship (Phil 3:20-21). Consequently, there will be few, if any, longings for the return of our Lord and our gathering together to Him.

The impact this has upon the individual is staggering. Under such circumstances, there is no perceived need for fellowship with Christ, His intercession, the intercession of the Spirit, or grace to help in the time of need. The work of the Lord is seen as largely applicable to someone else, and the thought of edifying one another is not even entertained. All of this gives the advantage to the devil. The Spirit is grieved and quenched, faith is not seen as critical, and *“righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”* are not perceived as integral to spiritual life (Rom 14:17).

CLARIFICATION

To those in the grip of the delusion just mentioned, the text before us is nothing more than a historical statement about the difficulties Paul endured. **However, to those who are walking in the Spirit, it serves to elucidate their own difficulties, and confirm to their hearts that they too are the children of God.** Paul will provide brief survey of a particular period during which he had trouble. He will then affirm it was a time in which he experienced deliverance.

All of this will serve to clarify your own trouble. This is what confirms the truth and profitability of whatever is said in the name of the Lord – **it edifies the hearers or readers.** No child of God can afford to be without such edification, as your own spirit will affirm.

WE WOULD NOT

^{1:8a} **For we would not . . .** ”

Other versions read, *“We do not want,”* ^{NKJV} and *“it is our desire.”* ^{BBE}

While this is rather a seemingly simplistic point, it is worth noting. **The will of the Apostle is involved in his writing.** He is not merely providing a sort of legal code to be imposed upon the people. Nor, indeed, is he furnishing

meaningless or irrelevant information about himself. There is substance and

profitability in what he writes, even when it is about himself.

However, to those who are walking in the Spirit, it serves to elucidate their own difficulties, and confirm to their hearts that they too are the children of God.

He desires that the Corinthians have no disadvantage when it comes to their fellowship with, and exposure to, himself. God has given him power, or authority, in order to the edification of the people. Therefore, he speaks of, “our authority, which the Lord hath given us **for edification**, and not for your destruction” (2 Cor 10:8). And again he refers to “the power which the Lord hath given me **to edification**, and not to destruction” (2 Cor 13:10).

It is never right to burden God’s people with mere talk, however innocent it might appear. Solemnly we are apprised concerning

speech: “Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. **For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power**” (1 Cor 4:18-20). Other versions read, “the kingdom of God does not **consist in words, but in power**,” NASB “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power,” NIV and “For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power.” NRSV That is, **the Kingdom of God is characterized by Divine power, not mere human speech or words.** That power is generally brought through words, but it is

the “power” that makes the difference.

The **human condition cannot be corrected or helped by speech alone.** Edification and encouragement are wrought through power. Therefore, it is essential that words be used that can be employed by the Holy Spirit. This is the reason for speaking “in words taught by the Holy Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words”^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:13). **As seen in this text, such words are driven, in part, by a sanctified will, and an understanding of the Scriptures.** These are words that will bring assistance and encouragement to those engaged in the good fight of faith.

BRETHREN

“^{1:8b} ... brethren ...”

The term “brethren,” or “brothers,”^{NIV} reflects the proper view of the people of God.

A COMMON FAMILY

It is most appropriate because all

“children” of the same family, we are “the sons of God” (1 John 3:1), thereby making us “brethren.” We have all been begotten by “One God and Father of all” (Eph 4:6). Although He is the “Father of spirits,” He is especially the Father of those whom He has “begotten” (1 John 5:18). All who have been “born of God” (1 John 3:9), are,

association with Jesus, we are actually **His “brethren.”** As it is written, “For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason **He is not ashamed to call them brethren**”^{NASB} (Heb 2:11). It is written that Jesus was made “like unto **His brethren**” (Heb 2:17). Again, it is written of His testimony to the children of God, “I will declare Thy name unto **My brethren**, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee” (Heb 2:12). **Anyone who is a brother to Jesus, is necessarily a brother to everyone else so identified.**

If it is originated by men, it is not foundational to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. To affirm otherwise is to leap into the vast chasm of confusion, from which there is no escape.

believers are members of “**the whole family** in heaven and earth, which is “named” after “our Lord Jesus Christ.” As it is written, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom **the whole family** in heaven and earth is named” (Eph 3:14-15). All of those within the “family” are necessarily related to one another – they are “brethren.” They are part of the same “house,” “household,” or “family.” **The saints are not “brethren” because they belong to the same denomination, but because they belong to the same “family.”**

From the standpoint of being

by virtue of that circumstance, “brethren.”

A COMMON FATHER

Our filial relationship to God as our common “Father” is confirmed because we “desire a better country, that is, an heavenly,” God “is not ashamed to be called” our “God.” All who share in this desire are, in fact, “brethren.” That longing, created by their faith, has constituted them “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13). Consequently, they are “brethren.”

A COMMON SAVIOR

From the vantage point of our

When Jesus, having completed His mission on earth, was preparing to return to the Father, He said to Mary, “but go to **My brethren**, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and **your Father**; and to My God, and **your God**” (John 20:17). When we are “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), this is the reality that makes us “brethren” to one another.

TRUE BROTHERHOOD

True “brotherhood” (1 Pet 2:17) cannot be traced to anything having its genesis with men or with the flesh. It has nothing whatsoever to do with specific religious organizations, particular movements, or cherished historic theological persuasions. There are some good things associated with all of these, but none of them are spiritually foundational. None of them are required

by God. None of them are hinged to Christ Jesus Himself. None of them are established as a Scriptural criterion for identity with the God of heaven. These are affirmations that are self evident, and require no further proof. **If it is originated by men, it is not foundational to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.** To affirm otherwise is to leap into the vast chasm of confusion, from which there is no escape.

Whatever is required to join us to the Lord necessarily makes us “brethren” with one another. Whatever moves the Father in heaven to not be ashamed to be called our God must move us rejoice in one another. Whatever constrains Jesus to not be ashamed to call us brethren, must move us to have the same attitude. It seems to me that this ought to be evident, even though I realize this is not the case among religious men.

HOW CRITICAL IS THIS VIEW?

Is it really all that important that we have a proper view of “the brethren,” or “the brotherhood” (1 Pet 2:17). Is it really of no consequence that men create their own borders of fellowship, and choose their own definitions of “brethren?”

John speaks so candidly on this matter that it is simply a marvel that is has been so summarily ignored by multitudes of professing believers. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him” (1 John 5:1). In the very next verse, those who are “begotten of Him” are referred to as “the children of God” (5:2). These are “the brethren” to whom John refers (1 John 2:7; 3:13,14,16), and individually are called “his brother” (1 John 2:9,10,11; 3:10,12,14,15,17; 4:20,21; 5:16).

The importance attached to our view and consideration of this people is underscored throughout the book of First John. A brief review of these things will shed light on why Paul speaks to the “brethren.”

- The person who says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is actually remaining in darkness (2:9).

- The one who loves his brother abides in the light, and provides no occasion for stumbling (2:10).

- He that hates his brother is in darkness, walks in darkness, and does not where he is going, for the

possible for a person who loves God to find his foes within his own household. Jesus said, “For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his

Whatever is required to join us to the Lord necessarily makes us “brethren” with one another. Whatever moves the Father in heaven to not be ashamed to be called our God must move us rejoice in one another. Whatever constrains Jesus to not be ashamed to call us brethren, must move us to have the same attitude.

dankness has blinded his eyes (2:11).

- Whoever does not love his brother is not of God (3:10).

- The love of the brethren is the confirming evidence that we have passed from death unto life (3:14a).

- Whoever does not love his brother is abiding in death (3:14b).

- Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and does not have eternal life (3:15).

- The love of God does not dwell in a person who sees his brother in need, yet does nothing about it (3:17).

- The person who says he loves God, yet hates his brother, is a liar (4:20).

- The person who loves God is commanded to love his brother also (4:21).

I hardly see how anything can be more clearly stated. There simply is no excuse for the slightest confusion in this area.

THE PREMIER RELATIONSHIP AMONG MEN

The closest of all relationships is **not** the domestic family – even though it is a cherished gift from God. **It is**

“*own household*” (Mat 10:36). No thinking person wants this to happen, or sets out to make it happen. This is the result of faith, and a choice to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. It is a blessing when our families go with us through the “*strait*” gate and down the “*narrow*” way (Matt 7:14). However, this circumstance makes it quite clear that the foundational relationship is not found in the earthly family.

We also long for our families to be united in Christ. Make no mistake about it: that is what we want, and we labor to that end. **Yet, if one’s family does not choose to join them in the quest for eternal life, they must pursue that quest anyway.** If they do not do so, they will forfeit eternal life. Jesus referred to this possible conflict when He said, “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:26).

Paul’s faith was evident in his preference for the people of God. They were his most cherished family – even though I know he did not despise his natural family. Yet, in Christ Jesus he obtained a deeper and more profound relationship with those who were also “*born of God.*” He referred to the mother of Rufus as his own “*mother*” also (Rom 16:13). He called Titus, “*mine own son*”

after the common faith” (Tit 1:4), and referred to Timothy as “my own son in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2). He also referred to Titus as “my brother” (2 Cor 2:13), as well as Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25). He called Phebe “our sister” (Rom 16:1), and the Philippians as “my dearly beloved

brethren” (Phil 4:1). As is apparent, this is family talk – the “whole family” in heaven and earth.

These were not mere formal designations. They were insightful confessions reflecting spiritual

understanding. What Paul has to say is family talk – a word for those who are in Jesus Christ, and are consequently brethren to one another. Therefore, his words are to be taken seriously, pondered, and thought upon with sobriety and faith. There is profit to be realized by them.

IGNORANCE

“^{1:8c} ... have you ignorant...”

Other versions read, “I do not want you to be unaware,”^{NASB} “do not want you to be uninformed,”^{NIV} and “desire that you may not be without knowledge.”^{BBE}

NO PLACE FOR IGNORANCE

Ignorance is antithetical to spiritual life. That is, it is opposite to the very nature of newness of life, and militates against that life. There is no place for it in Christ Jesus. **The whole**

we might KNOW the things that are freely given to us by God (1 Cor 2:12).

- Insightful prayers have been lifted up to God, that the people might receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the KNOWLEDGE of Him (Eph 1:17).
- The objective in salvation is for saints to “KNOW the love of Christ which passes all knowledge (Eph 3:19).

1:26), “comprehend” (Eph 3:18), “understand” (Eph 3:4; Heb 11:3), and “discern” (Heb 5:14). Within a framework like that, there is no place for ignorance – a lack of understanding concerning matters that have been made known, or revealed.

We are speaking about ignorance that exists where understanding can be possessed. Ignorance is remaining in the dark when the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, and it is the glorious DAY of salvation.

The whole fabric of life in Christ Jesus is interwoven with knowledge – personal and effective knowledge. We have not been called into an economy of mere feeling and periodic exhilaration. The things that are revealed are to be known!

It is no wonder Paul says “I would not have you ignorant.” Even in the matter he will not relate, ignorance has no place. Six times Paul wrote, “I would not have you ignorant” (Rom 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor 1:8; 1 Thess 4:13). Better to be informed than ignorant. Better to walk in the light than in the darkness. That is the manner of the kingdom.

fabric of life in Christ Jesus is interwoven with knowledge – personal and effective knowledge. We have not been called into an economy of mere feeling and periodic exhilaration. The things that are revealed are to be **known!**

- Eternal life is KNOWING God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20).
- In the New Covenant, all of the constituents KNOW the Lord (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11).
- Jesus is come in order that we might “KNOW” the Father (1 John 5:20).
- The Holy Spirit has been given that

- Spiritual gifts have been given to the church in order to contribute to believers coming into “the unity of the faith, and of the KNOWLEDGE of the Son of God” (Eph 4:13).
- Twenty-two times this Epistles affirm critical matters that may be KNOWN by the saints (Rom 3:19; 7:14; 8:22, 26,28; 1 Cor 8:1,4; 2 Cor 5:1; 1 Tim 1:8; Heb 10:30; 1 John 2:3,18; 3:2,14, 19,24; 5:2,15,18,19,20).

The salvation that is in Christ Jesus is an economy of knowledge – spiritual knowledge. It is a realm where there is revelation (Eph 1:17; Eph 3:5), enlightenment (Eph 1:18; Heb 6:4), and illumination (Heb 10:32). In Christ we are brought to “see” (Rom 7:23; 1 Cor

When Jesus walked with His disciples, it became clear that they were not comfortable with being ignorant in His presence. Once, after hearing one of His parables, they said, “Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field” (Matt 13:36). They did not want to remain ignorant. Another time they asked, “Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?” (Matt 13:10). They did not want to remain in the dark. Yet another time Peter requested, “Declare unto us this parable” (Matt 15:15). Mark relates that “His disciples” made this request also (Mk 7:17). At the last supper, Jesus spoke to His disciples about “a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.” Confused, the disciples said among themselves, “What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what

he saith.” When Jesus knew they were “desirous to ask Him,” He elaborated on the matter (John 16:18-19). **His teaching and manners had contributed to the disciples being discontent with ignorance.**

There is a disconcerting sign in the modern church that indicates where it **really** stands. It is the near-total lack of a quest for the knowledge of the things of God. People are content to remain ignorant, which only confirms they are not sitting at the table of the Lord. **Where ignorance is welcomed in the church, Jesus has been thrust out,**

all profession notwithstanding. He who is called “the wisdom of God” will not cohabit with those who remain “unlearned.”

SOMETHING THAT IS ASSUMED

Behind Paul’s desire lies the fact that there is profitability in knowing the affairs of those who labor for the Lord. God can be seen in such affairs. His purpose is clarified in such labors. **The nature of spiritual life is the more fully delineated in a life that is being lived by faith.** This is true because genuine faith (and there is no other kind), permeates the whole of life.

When the individual leans the weight of his soul upon the Lord, and labors heartily for Him, that life becomes profitable to the saints – the brethren. **Further, benefit is passed from one brother to the other at the point they contact one another** (Col 2:19).

This will become very apparent as we consider the words that follow. Because faith is a “common faith” (Tit 1:4), salvation is a “common salvation” (Jude 1:3), and our temptations are “common to man” (1 Cor 10:13), **we profit from the testimonies of faithful brethren.**

OUR TROUBLE

“^{1:8d} . . . of our trouble which came to us in Asia . . . ”

It is important for us to note how faith responds to difficulties and distractions. **The nation of Israel provided us with a example of inappropriate responses to hard times an difficult circumstances.** Their murmurings are placed before us as something to be avoided. As it is written, “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Cor 10:10). **If men respond to trouble as the Israelites did, it is only because they are walking in unbelief as the Israelites did.** Just as Joshua and Caleb were separate from the fearful and unbelieving of their day, so are we to be separate from such people in our day. One of the most remarkable displays of spiritual stupidity is the statement that those in Christ are “just like the Israelites.” That statement contradicts the “newness of life” (Rom 6:4), the “New Covenant” (Heb 8:13), and the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).

“**Trouble**” is an experience that separates the faithful from the unfaithful, and the confident from the fearful. The very circumstance that caused the ten unfaithful spies to draw back, caused Joshua and Caleb to be filled with confidence.

Now we will see that unusual

difficulty, elicited an unusually godly response from Paul.

OUR TROUBLE

“ . . . of our trouble . . . ” Other versions read, “our affliction,”^{NASB} “the hardship,”^{NIV} and “our tribulation.”^{YLT}

The word “trouble” comes from the Greek word θλιψεως (thlip-se-os). It means “a pressing together, pressure, oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, and straits.”^{THAYER} It refers to suffering “brought on by outward circumstances.”^{FRIBERG} It speaks of “hard circumstances.”^{UBS}

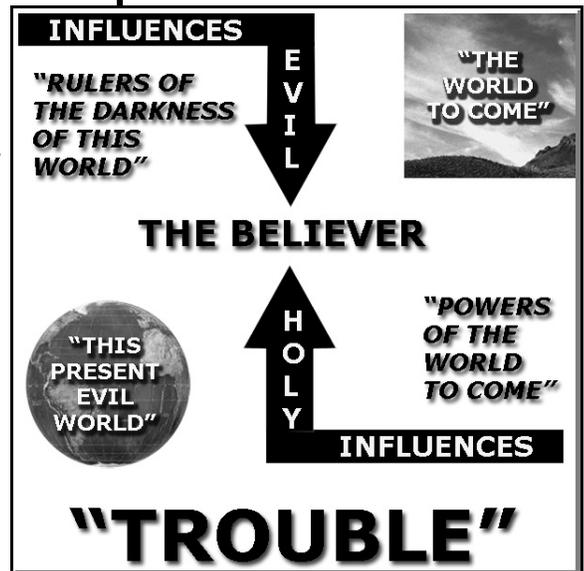
The picture portrayed by the word “trouble” is that of resisting and contrary forces pushing against one another, with the life of the believer caught in the middle. On the one hand, there heavenly influences – “the powers of the world to come” (Heb 6:5) – pushing us toward the prize of the heavenly calling. On the other hand, there are the forces of this present evil world, pushing us toward more extensive involvements with this world.

This circumstance is reduced to very real experiences in which all manner of effects are produced within. “Trouble” is never

pleasant, but it is profitable. It is never sought after, but it produces a stronger longing for our “long home” (Eccl 12:5), in which those in Christ hold citizenship. In “trouble,” it is as though we were caught between two contrary worlds, each one seeking to bring us into its own realm.

IT WAS PERSONAL

The “trouble” of which the Apostle speaks is personal: “OUR trouble.” It was caused by competing influences being brought to bear upon him personally. The powers of darkness, working through men and circumstance, were making every effort to turn him from his mission. The “powers of heaven” were driving him



forward toward the completion of the course that had been set before him. The mission was great, so the opposition was correspondingly great. **Many people who wear the name of Jesus do not experience much trouble because they are not doing anything that threatens the powers of darkness.** They are not engaged in the work of the Lord, so there is little, if anything, to be resisted. They are never caught within the competing influences of differing worlds.

“Trouble” can be caused by the entrance of evil among the people of God. Thus Achan was said to have brought “trouble” into the camp of Israel (Josh 6:18). This is the kind of trouble that can be put away from us, as Achan was removed from Israel (Josh 7:25).

affliction, agitation, and the likes that come to us simply because we are in a fallen world. **However, none of these represent the kind of trouble to which Paul now testifies.** This is a “trouble” known only to those who are engaged in the good fight of faith, are walking in the Spirit, and laboring together with God.

WHICH CAME TO US

“... which came to us...” Other versions read, “we suffered,”^{NIV} “we experienced,”^{NRSV} “which befell us,”^{ASV} “which happened to us,”^{DARBY} “we underwent,”^{NJB} and “went through.”^{NLT}

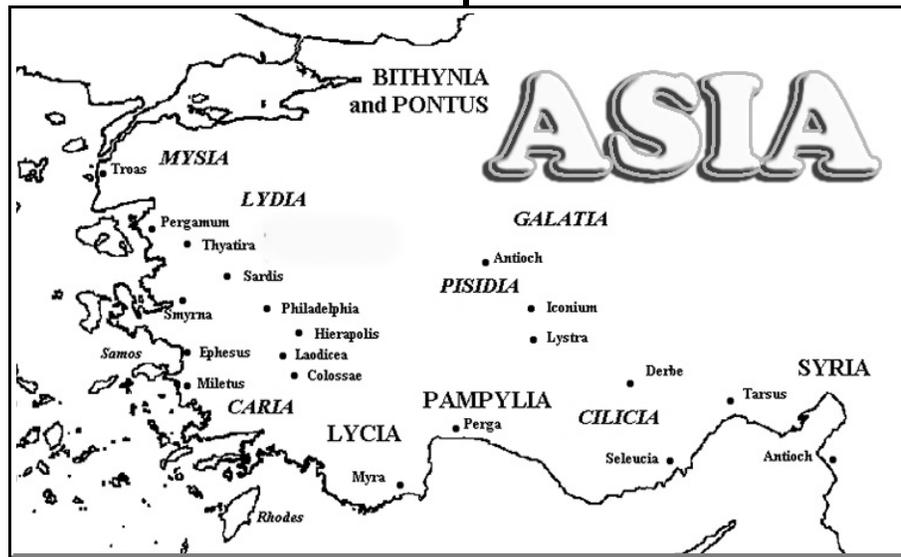
The word “came” is an especially strong and personal one. It comes from a word that means “to become, to come into

focused struggle **against** the work of the Apostle and his collaborators.

IN ASIA

“... in Asia...” In the Bible, “Asia” closely corresponds to Turkey of our day. It included Mysia, Lydia, Phrygia, and Caria. Cities in this region included Miletus (Acts 20:15), Colossae (Col 1:2), Laodicea (Col 2:1), Ephesus (Acts 18:19), Hierapolis (Col 4:13), Philadelphia (Rev 1:11), Smyrna (Rev 1:11), Sardis (Rev 1:11), Thyatira (Acts 16:14), Pergamum (Rev 1:11), Troas (Acts 20:5-6), Antioch (Acts 15:23), Iconium (Acts 16:2), Lystra (Acts 16:2), Derbe (Acts 16:1), Perga (Acts 13:13), and Seleucia (Acts 13:4). Regions included Syria (Acts 15:23), Cilicia (Acts 15:23), Pampylia (Acts 14:24), Pisidia (Acts 13:14), Galatia (Acts 18:23), Lycia (Acts 27:5), Mysia (Acts 16:7-8), Bithynia (Acts 16:7), and Pontus (Acts 18:2).

As you can see, there was a powerful spiritual invasion of this territory during the ministry of Paul. But it was not without fierce opposition. It is as though the rulers of the darkness of this region refused to give it up, fighting ferociously like the “prince of Persia” did against the angel sent with a word for Daniel (Dan 10:13). Initiatives were instigated against Paul which he now refers to as “trouble” that came to him in Asia. As he came into that region, “trouble” came out to meet him, like the demoniac of Gadara went out to meet Jesus (Mark 5:6-7).



There is also a trouble that comes from the hand of the Lord, when a wayward people are chastened and corrected. Thus the people in Nehemiah’s day confessed, “Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and **in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies**” (Neh 9:27).

Even in the normality of life, “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). There is difficulty,

existence, begin to be, receive being.”^{THAYER} Other lexical definitions include, “originate,”^{FRIEBERG} “be born or created,”^{UBS} and “to be formed, to come to exist.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Allow me to be particular about the meaning of this term. It is not that Paul and company went into an area that was troubled – like walking into a storm-tossed sea. **The trouble came to them, they did not come to the trouble! The idea is that the trouble was crafted especially for them.** It was the result of a wicked initiative to stop what they were doing. It can only be properly seen as resistance – an effort to withstand and prevent what Paul was doing. This was a

The experiences that came to Paul “in Asia” include the following.

- ☛ Stoned in Lystra (Acts 14:6,19,20).
- ☛ The Jews lying in wait for him in Macedonia (Acts 20:3).
- ☛ Serious disturbances in Ephesus (Acts 19).
- ☛ Beating and imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16).

I will proceed on the assumption that the experiences in Ephesus are the particular ones to which our text refers. They appear to be of a most unique nature. More will be said about that in the comments on the verses that follow.

PRESSED OUT OF MEASURE

^{1:8e} . . . *that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life.*

Those who imagine that “victory” and “triumph” means believers are never “cast down,” will have a difficult time with this text. Here we are dealing with real Kingdom experience – experience that requires faith and perseverance.

PRESSED

“ . . . that we were pressed . . . ”

Other versions read, “we were burdened,” NKJV “under great pressure,” NIV “crushed,” NRSV “weighed down exceedingly,” ASV “the weight of it was very great,” BBE “excessively pressed,” DARBY “utterly burdened,” ESV “utterly weighed down,” NAB and “under extraordinary pressure.” NJB

Whatever you may think of this expression, it is obvious that it speaks of a most unusual circumstance. **Life itself can be a burden, but this burden was an excessive one.** Believers daily experience pressure – but this was **extraordinary pressure.** It is as though the burden was made heavier by additional afflictions, and they came one after another. Being pressed is like having a massive weight relentlessly bear down upon you.

This is not the burden of the Law, as in Acts 15:9. Nor, indeed, is it the heavy weight of condemning conscience, as in Psalm 51:3-4. This is not the weight depicted as a making one “weary and heavy laden,” and coming initially to Jesus for rest, as in Matthew 11:28. Those are all very real weights, but they are not the subject of this text. **This is the weight of special trouble – trouble that comes because of one’s labor for the Lord.** This is trouble in which men wrestle with principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:12). There are times when such trouble becomes an exceedingly great weight. Behold how Paul speaks of it.

OUT OF MEASURE

“ . . . out of measure . . . ” Other

versions read, “beyond measure,” NKJV “beyond our strength,” NASB “far beyond our ability to endure,” NIV “unbearable crushed,” NRSV “beyond our power,” ASV “beyond our powers of endurance,” NJB and “completely overwhelmed.” NLT

The circumstance that is described is like a beast of burden being so weighed down with a great weight that it falls under the load – it is more than it is able to bear. It is like a ship of the sea sinking beneath the waves because it cannot bear the burden of the goods that have been

a person is “able” to do through God. Abraham, for example, dealt with matters that were far beyond his “ability.” He was to bring forth a son when he was impotent with age, and do it through a woman that was old and had been barren throughout her life. Where is the ability in that scenario? It is found in Abraham’s faith, that provided the escape from human limitations.

Paul is saying that the survival from what he endured in Asia could not be accomplished in

The circumstance that is described is like a beast of burden being so weighed down with a great weight that it falls under the load – it is more than it is able to bear. It is like a ship of the sea sinking beneath the waves because it cannot bear the burden of the goods that have been loaded upon it.

loaded upon it.

A Contradiction?

At this point, we must be delivered from overly simplistic theology. On the surface, this may appear to contradict one of the great promises of Scripture: “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*” (1 Cor 10:13). Our text has Paul affirming he was “under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure” NIV (2 Cor 1:8). How can these things be?

First, the text in First Corinthians does not say the temptation was removed, but that a “way of escape” was provided. **That is, without the “escape” the temptation was, in fact, above the individual’s ability.** The “ability” in question was not human ability, but what

natural strength. What he faced required faith, without which he would have surely succumbed.

What of the affirmation Paul boldly makes in Philippians 4:13: “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*”? Does that not contradict what he says here? Indeed not! The vista of revelation has a wider horizon than what seems to be true. He was not speaking of the capacity natural ability, but of the reservoir of Divine strength that is realized through Christ alone. It is one thing to be brought to the end of natural capacities and abilities. It is quite another to move into the area of Divine enablements.

ABOVE STRENGTH

“ . . . above strength . . . ” Other versions read, “beyond our strength,” NASB “far beyond our ability to endure,” NIV “beyond our power,” ASV “passing strength,” GENEVA and “completely overwhelmed.” NLT

This is a most remarkable statement, and we must be able to comprehend it to some measurable degree. There are two senses in which this text can be understood.

Above Natural Strength

First, what Paul experienced in Asia was a challenge that could not be confronted in the natural, whether strength of mind, body, or emotion. **There was nothing traceable to Adam that was equal to what he faced.** No school of learning could have prepared him for it. No discipline of life could have made him adequate for it. This appears to me to be very evident, and, at this point, requires no extensive explanation.

Above Present Spiritual Strength

Secondly, the strength he had at

automatic pilot, having life proceed along independently of personal involvement with God. We can no more be sustained by past experience than Israel could be nourished by old manna. This also is apparent. However, there is another aspect of spiritual life that is pertinent at this point.

Spiritual life involves growth (Eph 4:15), increased understanding and perception (Eph 1:17-20; 3:15-20), and a continual “change” from one stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). **In this advancement, there are times when believers are called up to higher plateaus,** even as John was challenged to “come up” higher (Rev 4:1; 11:12). There are times when we must come closer, entering into the “holiest” place (James 4:8; Heb 10:22). Just as surely as, on Mount Sinai, Moses knew there was more

himself was comforted by God.

It is a most blessed condition when the saints of God are brought to a point where they can be truthful about their trials, yet see in them the working of the Lord. It is at that point that they move from confusion to contentment, and weakness to power.

DESPAIED EVEN OF LIFE

“... *insomuch that we despaired even of life.*” Other versions read, “*we had no hope even of life itself,*”^{BBE} “*so as to despair even of living,*”^{DAREY} “*we were weary even of life,*”^{DOUAY} “*we altogether doubted, even of life,*”^{GENEVA} “*we gave up all hope, even of surviving,*”^{NJB} and “*we thought we would never live through it.*”^{NLT}

Here again it appears that the Apostle is contradicting what is said elsewhere. As it is written, “*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair*” (2 Cor 4:8). How is it, then, that he here says he **did** despair? Has he been brought to a point that negates what he has previously said about trouble?

First, Paul does not say he utterly despaired, but that he despaired “*of life*” – that is, he did not think he would live in the flesh through it. This is not the “*despair*” of Second Corinthians 4:8. To be brought to a point where one does not think he will live does not equate with absolutely hopelessness. Remember, “*to die is gain*” (Phil 1:21), and that hope was not taken from Paul, even in the trouble he had in Asia. His desire to be absent from the body and present with the Lord was not taken from him. The hope of glory was not taken from him. His anticipation of glory was still in place. **For Paul, the ultimate life was not life in the flesh, even though he was determined to glorify Christ in that life** (Phil 1:20).

There were threats to Paul’s life from which he rather easily escaped – as when he was let down over a wall in a basket (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor 11:33). However, there was no such escape from the trouble that came upon him in Asia. All escape routes seemed to be closed off, and life itself was no longer sure.

The meaning of this expression

From this view, when Paul was pressed beyond his strength, he was really being moved to a higher spiritual plateau where MORE strength, MORE grace, and MORE fellowship with Christ could be realized.

the time – even in Christ Jesus – was not adequate to the challenge. **It could not be addressed with the strength he had when beaten, or shipwrecked, or when he spent a day and a night in the deep, or when he was in constant perils** (2 Cor 11:24-27). The strength of Christ cannot be stored in escrow, as men do with money or some form of financial credits. Divine resources are like the manna in the wilderness, they cannot be warehoused, reserved for some future time. **There are challenges believers face for which even previous graces and strength are not adequate.** We rejoice that this is not a daily experience, but the time does come when what we have known of the Lord, and the faith we possess is not sufficient.

The reason for this circumstance is obvious. Spiritual life can only be possessed in **active** fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), and communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14). **At no point can the child of God switch to**

of God that was to be seen (Ex 33:13,18), even so those in Christ Jesus must know they have not yet seen the fulness of God or realized the fulness of His power.

The ultimate reason for the experiences realized by the children of God has to do with their growth, their advancement in grace, and their further conformity to the image of God’s Son. Just as surely as God was preparing Joseph through his varied and heart-wrenching experiences, so He was preparing Paul for his extensive ministry through his experiences. It is no different with you.

From this view, when Paul was pressed beyond his strength, he was really being moved to a higher spiritual plateau where MORE strength, MORE grace, and MORE fellowship with Christ could be realized. This was God’s way of bringing him to a point where he could comfort others with the comfort wherewith he

does not equate to being hopeless. It **does** mean that no practical avenue of escape could be seen. No amount of human wisdom could extricate him from the

dilemma in which he found himself. There was no apparent way in which his life in this world could continue. Every avenue of apparent deliverance was cut off. No

means of deliverance could be conceived. It is not necessary to say anything more on this at this point. Paul will continue to elaborate on the subject later.

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

^{9a} ***But we had the sentence of death in ourselves . . .*** ”

Paul now traces his trouble back to the purpose of God. Like Job, what was happening to him could only be considered in view of God. You will remember that job said, *“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD”* (Job 1:21). Paul will not speak of his trouble as though he was the center of the universe. He will rather speak of a high and holy purpose that was being served by this trouble – a trouble which pressed him beyond his strength, and took away all hope of continuing to live.

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH IN OURSELVES

“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves . . .” Other versions read, *“we had the sentence of death within ourselves,”*^{NASB} *“in our hearts we felt the sentence of death,”*^{NIV} *“we felt we had received the sentence of death,”*^{NRSV} *“we had accepted within ourselves the sentence of death,”*^{NAB} and *“we expected to die.”*^{NLT}

Some of the versions are very weak here – as the New Living Translation, which reads, *“we expected to die.”* There is too much flesh in such a word. The word “sentence” is translated from a Greek word that was literally a legal technical term – ἀπόκριμα (ap-ok-ree-

mah). It means “a judicial decision or sentence.”^{STRONG’S} Other lexical resources define it as “an answer, as given by a Roman sentence.”^{THAYER} “Official decision, sentence.”^{FRIEBERG} “An official decision, frequently involving a legal verdict ore decision.”^{LOUW-NIDA} “A judicial sentence.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Some, included some

his work, and therefore he could not escape from the Asian *“trouble.”*

His thinking was similar to that of Abraham when he was told to offer Isaac as a burnt offering to God. The patriarch reasoned that God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:19). Technically,

Paul will not speak of his trouble as though he was the center of the universe. He will rather speak of a high and holy purpose that was being served by this trouble – a trouble which pressed him beyond his strength, and took away all hope of continuing to live.

lexicographers, have concluded that Paul himself was the one who made this decision in question. While Paul is the one who had the thought, he was reasoning with God at the center of his thinking, and not the circumstance. He would not have viewed the decisions of men as final in the matter of death, for they are not. *“There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy”* (James 4:12). Ultimately, none but God can pass a sentence like this. Just as surely as Pilate could do nothing against Jesus except it was given him “from above” (John 19:11), so those aligned against Paul in Ephesus were limited by the higher will of God. It is unconscionably to say that Paul himself was not aware of this, and had simply concluded that men were going to kill him. He thought that God had concluded

Abraham was wrong, yet he had reasoned as a man of faith, and not as a mere man. Thus Paul reason reasoned in harmony with faith, considering that the time of his “appointed” death had come (Heb 9:27).

We also know from what follows, that Paul did not consider the *“sentence”* could not have originated with men. He will associate it with a Divine objective.

Paul elsewhere uses this kind of language, showing that God was at the heart of his reasoning. *“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men”* (1 Cor 4:9). Now Paul will share a truth than can only be seen while thinking in this manner.

THE REASON – TO HAVE PROPER TRUST

^{9b} ***. . . that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.*** ”

Paul now accounts for the unparalleled *“trouble”* that he had in Asia. From one standpoint, this is his

answer to “Why?” However, that is really a very low and uncomely view. The Apostle is really not responding to an

inquiry, whether from others or himself. Rather, he is testifying – sharing his insight into what he has experienced. It is this perception that enabled him to endure the great affliction that came to him in Asia.

NOT TRUSTING IN SELF

“ . . . that we should not trust in ourselves . . . ” Other versions read, “in order that we should not trust in ourselves,”^{NASB} “that we might not rely on ourselves,”^{NIV} “so that our hope might not be in ourselves,”^{BBE} and “that we should be forced to trust not in ourselves.”^{NJB}

Some versions read subjectively

The fact is that God does not work in an environment of man’s self-reliance, where individuals are confident of their own abilities. When men begin to imagine they are of themselves equal to any and every challenge, they have set themselves up for an inevitable fall.

instead of objectively: “*But as a result, we learned not to rely on ourselves.*”^{NLT} While this is no doubt what actually happened, it does not seem to me that this is the point Paul is making. He is speaking of PURPOSE for the trouble, not the RESULT of it. If it was not the purpose, this result could never have occurred. **Divine intention is the foundation for valid human experience.** If God had not **purposed** for His children NOT to trust in themselves, they would never be able to actually realize that experience.

The truth of the matter is that Paul’s circumstances were Divinely adjusted to remove any tendency to trust in self – and Paul saw it.

Elsewhere Paul affirms that his sufficiency was “of God” (2 Cor 3:5), not of himself. Among other things, he arrived at that conclusion through experiences like he had in Asia, where his own sufficiency dried up like a potsherd.

God’s Power Revealed

The superiority of God’s power is made known, among other things, through the miserable inferiority of our own power. Thus it is written, “*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*” (2 Cor 4:7). Later in this book, Paul will acknowledge that he received a “*thorn in the flesh*” to keep from being “*exalted due measure*” because of the nature and frequency of the many revelations given to him (2 Cor 12:7). He also said, “*my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Cor 12:9). That is, the strength of God can only be realized within the context of the a perception of our own weakness. The sufficiency of God is experienced when we comprehend our

personal insufficiency. This is the manner in which God works.

A Universal Conclusion

Following his own “*trouble*,” Job arrived at the same conclusion: “*Then will I also confess unto thee that **Thine own right hand can save thee***” (Job 40:14). Following his personal experience, David also concluded that self-strength is no strength at all. “*All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul*” (Psa 22:29). Solomon said, “*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool*” (Prov 28:26). Through Jeremiah, the Lord exhorted the strong man not to trust in his strength (Jer 9:23-24). Ezekiel warned the righteous man who was prone to “*trust in his own righteousness*” (Ezek 33:13). Jesus delivered a parable to those who “*trusted in themselves*” (Lk 18:9).

The fact is that God does not work in an environment of man’s self-reliance, where individuals are confident of their own abilities.

When men begin to imagine they are of themselves equal to any and every challenge, they have set themselves up for an inevitable fall. This is true because man is not sufficient in himself – that is, he does not possess the required ability and power within his own person. It only takes a good dose of trouble to confirm this is the case.

Calling Upon the Name of the Lord

The promise is, “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Rom 10:13). Such a call postulates a keen awareness of the poverty of self-strength. No one “*calls upon the name of the Lord*” who feels they can accomplish the required deliverance themselves. **A cry to the Lord for help and deliverance is itself evidence that “self” is seen as powerless and insufficient.** “Self” is to be crucified (Gal 2:20), denied (Matt 16:24), and subdued (1 Cor 9:27), not trusted.

The Error of Self-Help Philosophies

The religious world of our day is stuffed with “self-help” advocates, programs, and literature. It is, in fact, a business of gargantuan proportions. All manner of disciplines and habits are being hawked among the people of God, teaching them “*how-to*” succeed, “*how-to*” improve their self-image, and even “*how-to*” to grieve. It is all – every bit of it – an exercise in vanity. There is too little, if indeed there is any, God in it. It does not need a Savior, Intercessor, or gift of the Holy Spirit. The wisdom that undergirds it comes “*from beneath*,” not “*from above*” (John 8:23; James 3:17).

While God is working to uproot men from self-confidence and reliance upon natural resources, these charlatans are working to promote such imaginations. Who do you suppose will be the victor in these conflicting manners? I will tell you that the shift of emphasis from heaven to earth and from Jesus to self is not an innocent one, and it should not be so regarded. It is the ultimate of absurdities to suppose God will support an effort that does not require Him.

It only takes one good dose of “*trouble*” – the kind of trouble mentioned in this text – to render every self-help

teacher and book obsolete, and suitable only to be classified as trash. The hard experiences of life fairly shout to people about the vanity of the flesh. Yet, because the church has been overrun with the worldly-wise self-help and self-esteem are being readily received by the very people who need a Savior and an Intercessor. Yet, because of the stultifying effects of such teaching, the people cannot see how it contradicts both the foundation and the structure of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

It is time for men to turn from the nonsense of a "purpose driven church" to the glory of "Spirit driven" one. Jesus was "driven by the Spirit" (Mark 1:12), and the Scriptures expound a mind that is "controlled by the Spirit" (Rom 8:6). "Purpose driven," "positive thinking," and the likes are psychological jargon. They do not space enough within them for faith to operate. They rely too much upon human resources, and too little upon Divine ones. The intellect looms larger than the heart, and disciplines are more significant than a purged conscience. They are a futile attempt to enable an inconsistent church to become consistent, and a lethargic people to be zealous. After all is said and done, our trust must be in God who raises the dead!

Additionally, God who runs the affairs of men, and seeks the betterment of His people, will ensure that "doses" of trouble are realized – "doses" that dry up every natural resource leaving the individual completely and solely reliant upon Him. **He who cares for our soul will not allow the imagination that we are sufficient of ourselves to go untested and unexposed.** He will work to bring us to the conclusion that "there is no help" in man, whether he be a prince or a commoner (Psa 146:3).

An approach to *Christianity* that does not lead men to this conclusion is nothing more than a "corrupt tree" (Matt 7:17). There is no possible way to sanctify it, or successfully salvage it. If it is not overthrown with the spiritual weaponry that is given to us by God (2 Cor 10:4-5), it will overthrow the one who embraces it.

BUT IN GOD

"... but in God which raiseth the dead." Other versions read, "God who is

able to give life to the dead,"^{BBE} "who can raise the dead,"^{NLT} and "who is raising the dead."^{YLT}

The New Living Translation is too weak and insipid on this verse. The Basic Bible English versions is also weak very feeble, saying that God is ABLE to raise the dead. While there are places that declare God's ability, that is not the focus of this text. The Spirit is not saying that God CAN or is ABLE raise the dead, but

have complete confidence in,"^{LOUW-NIDA} "trust, confidence, boldness."^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} The root of this word is *πεῖθω* (*pei-tho*), which means to "prevail upon, win over, or persuade."^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

This rather cumbersome etymology does not enhance Paul's testimony, but only serves to confirm what is evident to faith. **Paul's completely debilitating trouble came to him to convince, or persuade, him that only God could remedy the**

Paul's completely debilitating trouble came to him to convince, or persuade, him that only God could remedy the situation.

that He **DOES** raise them.

Paul is confirming that the trouble that came to him rendered him "dead" so far as strength or ability was concerned. In this trouble, he was like Abraham in respect to begetting Isaac – "as good as dead" (Heb 11:12). **Now, that is a condition with which God works!** If ever a person can get "dead," God will raise him! That is what He does. Paul saw this death as a Divine objective – "the sentence of death." In His counsel, God has decreed that everything connected with Adam will die – nothing and no one is excluded. For those who trust the Lord, that proves to be a beginning, not an end.

Trouble so dries up the flesh that it can only be described as "dead." Thus, our own strength becomes like Sarah's womb – "dead" – so that nothing can come from it (Rom 4:19). All of this orchestrated by God in order that He might raise the dead, bringing life out of death, hope from hopelessness, and strength from weakness.

All of this is experienced at the point we trust "in God which raiseth the dead." The word "trust" comes from the Greek word *πεποιθότες* (*pep-oi-tho-tes*), which means "trust, confidence, reliance,"^{THAYER} "reliance on God, assurance,"^{FRIEBERG} "depend on, to

situation. Men are, indeed, expected to use the resources God has given them, whether they intellectual, emotional, of within the provinces of their will. However, our confidence is not to rest in them, for they have a terminal point, beyond which they cannot proceed. There are things that are, in every sense of the word, "impossible with men" (Luke 18:27; Matt 19:26; Mark 10:27).

Anything or any one that cannot do everything under all circumstances and at all times is NOT to be trusted. While that is straightforward, and should be abundantly evident to us, God does not leave it to the power of the intellect or our memory to maintain this view of things. We must be brought to actually rely upon God rather than ourselves. Among other things, great trouble has this essential ministry – to persuade us that God alone is to be trusted, for God alone can raise the dead! There is such a thing as being "fully persuaded" (Rom 4:21; 14:5), having "strong confidence" (Prov 14:26) and "full assurance" (Col 2:2; Heb 6:11; 10:22), and believing with "nothing doubting" (Acts 11:12). Trouble assists in bringing these Kingdom realities within our grasp. That circumstance is by Divine purpose, not happenstance. Paul knew this, and therefore drew comfort from it.

THE SCOPE OF DELIVERANCE

“¹⁰ Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.”

Anything originating with or within man has extremely limited boundaries. At their very best state, such things are temporal, yielding no eternal benefits. As those with faith know, this is not the case with things of Divine origin. What comes from God partakes of His nature, having Divine qualities. Therefore we read of certain things integral to salvation – realities that have their sole origin in God.

The Only Valid Source

- ☛ *“The righteousness of God”* (Rom 1:17).
- ☛ *“The love of God”* (Rom 5:5). “
- ☛ *“The word of God”* (Rom 10:17).
- ☛ *“The goodness of God”* (Rom 11:22).

- ☛ *“The peace of God”* (Phil 4:7).
- ☛ *“The increase of God”* (Col 2:19).

This is not to mention the many things that are expressly said to come to us *“from God.”* There is a perceptive emphasis on all of these things – an emphasis that will assist us in learning to think correctly without being constantly directed to do so. It is possible to have a frame of mind that begins with these considerations.

The Giving God

- ☛ Grace and peace from God (Rom 1:7).
- ☛ Love with faith from God (Eph 6:23).
- ☛ Grace, mercy, and peace from God (2 John 1:3).
- ☛ Every good and perfect gift from the Father of lights (James 1:17).

Whatever does not come from God

affirmations confirm that God is active throughout the entirety of salvation. In Christ, we are not called to an absent or inactive God. Jesus is bringing us to a God that is constantly guiding, giving, directing, listening, and working. The exalted Christ is sitting with God in His throne. As it is written, *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”* (Rev 3:21). Among other things, that means that God the Father is still active in our salvation. **He has not ceased to work, or set in motion a sort of spiritual process that is driven solely by men.** The Kingdom has been placed into the hands of Jesus, who is its Administrator. However, this by no means implies inactivity on the Father’s part.

All of this may appear very elementary. Yet, there are approaches to Scripture, the responsibilities of the church, and the life of faith that do not require a living and active God.

God the Father is presently at work throughout all the earth – especially among those who being brought to Him by the reigning Christ. All of that is involved in several glorious declarations having to do with various activities and benefits in the Kingdom of God’s dear Son. Here are four of the better known ones.

- ☛ *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”* NASB (Rom 8:28).
- ☛ *“And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all”* (1 Cor 12:6).
- ☛ *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”* (Phil 2:13).
- ☛ *“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the*

Anything originating with or within man has extremely limited boundaries. At their very best state, such things are temporal, yielding no eternal benefits. As those with faith know, this is not the case with things of Divine origin.

- ☛ *“The gifts of God”* (Rom 11:19).
- ☛ *“The mercies of God”* (Rom 12:1).
- ☛ *“The grace of God”* (1 Cor 1:4).
- ☛ *“The wisdom of God”* (1 Cor 2:5).
- ☛ *“The will of God”* (2 Cor 1:1).
- ☛ *“The promises of God”* (2 Cor 1:20).
- ☛ *“The gift of God”* (Eph 2:8).
- ☛ *“The whole armor of God”* (Eph 6:11).

is not essential to salvation, nor does it contribute a single mote to its effectiveness. **The salvation of God is initiated, sustained, and culminated by what comes from Him.** It is one thing, of course, to say these things. It is quite another to perceive them. Once the eyes of our understanding are opened this reality, the great majority of contemporary Christianity is seen to be but mere chaff and refuse. It simply has too much of man in it. That is why it cannot produce mature working believers.

**The Working God
These, and other,**

savor of his knowledge by us in every place” (2 Cor 2:14).

God the Father works through the Lord Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, and through the means of our faith – but it is He that is working. **If God is not working, nothing of any real consequence is being done!** That is why no man of God has ever traced effectiveness to an institution, a procedure concocted by men, academic achievements, linguistic expertise, or the likes.

When “the day of salvation” was inaugurated, the summation of the message that was declared was “the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11). The gladness of the sweet Psalmist was found in his perception of what “the Lord hath done” (Psa 126:2-3). Isaiah spoke of the people of God seeing, knowing, considering, and understanding “that the hand of the Lord hath done this” (Isa 41:20). Even the heavens are exhorted, “Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it” (Isa 44:23). After Jesus had healed the wild man from Gadara, He told him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19).

Ah, in this day of India rubber theology, and religious thinking that is like a spider walking on water, such things are rarely heard. There is altogether too much talk about what men have done – the institutions they have built, and the procedures they have developed. If such talk was to be eliminated from many of the religious conventions of the day, they would have to cut the time of the whole affair down to a few minutes.

Although praising men has become quite popular in our time, there is a total absence of it in the Scriptures. It is as though the Holy Spirit took great care to exclude such vanities from the sacred writings. Care is taken to confirm to our hearts that if man is ever exalted and praised, it can only come from God AFTER ones tenure in this world has been completed. As it is written, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and

reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God”^{NKJV} (1 Cor 4:5). And again, “Let no man glory in men” (1 Cor 3:21).

Paul will now justify God by tracing all deliverance to Him. He will assess the past, present, and future, affirming that Divine deliverance is found in each period.

DELIVERED US

“Who delivered us from so great a

working. The means through which men are delivered must be seen as an arrow pointing to the Living God.

It would have been inappropriate for the blind man to give a glowing testimony about the “clay” with which Jesus anointed his eyes (John 9:6). When asked to account for his sight, this unnamed man testified, “A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the



death . . . ” Other versions read, “who delivered us from so great a peril of death,”^{NASB} “who delivered us from such a deadly peril,”^{NIV} “who rescued us from so deadly a peril,”^{NRSV} “who gave us salvation from so great a death,”^{BBE} and “who has delivered us . . . out of so great dangers.”^{DOUAY}

Paul is testifying of Divine activity – activity that falls under the category of God raising the dead: “that we should not trust in ourselves, but **IN GOD WHICH RAISETH THE DEAD.**” He is not merely relating how things “turned out,” as men are wont to say. He is not testifying to the means God may have used, such as being comforted by the coming of Titus (1 Cor 7:6), a message from an angel (Acts 27:23), or disciples letting him down over a wall in a basket (Acts 9:25). **He is declaring the Source, not the means!** That is a critical distinction that, it appears, cannot be made by many professing believers. However, if ever God is to be praised, men must be able to see that it is He that is

pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight” (John 9:11). He traced things back to Jesus, the Source. The power was not in the procedure of going to the pool and washing. The power was in the Person who told the man, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” Jesus did not tell the man he would see as a result of doing this. Its effectiveness was not in the clay, and it was not in the water. It was in the One who gave the command. That poor blind man could have made clay exactly like Jesus did, anointed a fellow blind man, and told him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. But it would all have been to no avail, for the power was not in the procedure but in the Lord Himself.

This, at this point, Paul will testify of clay and pools, or of friendly soldiers (Acts 27:3), a beloved physician (Col 4:14), or a faithful brother who sought him out when he was in prison (2 Tim 1:16-17). He will not bear witness so that other believers might be encouraged to seek out “Julius, a centurion of

Augustus' band" (Acts 27:1,3), doctor Luke, or the kind "*barbarians*" of Melita (Acts 28:2). His purpose is not to build a sort of brotherhood network of interdependence, or place an iron-clad procedure for protection in place. **This is what man of our day are doing, but it is not what men of God are doing, or ever have done.** The testimony of Paul is designed to encourage us to **trust God** – the God who "*raises the dead.*"

Delivered

The word "*delivered*" comes from a word that means "to draw to oneself, to rescue, to deliver." THAYER Other lexical resources define it as "bringing someone out of severe and acute danger, save, deliver, rescue" FRIBERG "to rescue from danger with the implication that the danger in question is severe and acute," LOUW-NIDA and "to draw to oneself, i.e. draw out of danger, to rescue, save, deliver." LIDDELL-SCOTT

In the New Testament Scriptures, this word always references the work of God, never the work of men. This is the word used

the deliverances and rescues of men. Although God is to be seen in the lower kind of reference (like Obadiah hiding one hundred prophets from the raging Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:4), Paul is speaking of an even higher form of deliverance.

There is no possible way to account for the deliverance of reference apart from "*God, who raises the dead.*" This is not like concerned brethren letting him over a wall in a basket (2 Cor 11:33), or hustling Paul out of Thessalonica (Acts 17:12-13). Men may very well have looked at deliverance of that sort and concluded they were wrought by men – even though they were all orchestrated by God.

There is a deliverance that cannot be accounted for by any form of human logic. It is pictured in Israel crossing the Red Sea (Josh 2:10), the three Hebrew children being delivered IN a fiery furnace (Dan 3:26), and Daniel IN a lion's den (Dan 6:22). It is like Peter walking out of prison after being chained to two guards (Acts 12:7-9), or Paul

and is an inhibition to hope. **We must be brought to the point where we can trust in the God who raises the dead – and death is the ultimate disadvantage.**

Several surface matters are evident from the Spirit's use of this word.

- The deliverance of reference was TO God as well as FROM "*so great a death.*"
- In the sense the Spirit uses this word, we would not be delivered from some minor illness, mere inconvenience, or something that was not life-threatening.
- The deliverance was like a brand plucked out of the burning (Zech 3:2) – extracted from certain death by the hand of the Lord.

So great

Paul's deliverance was not from something ordinary. It was from "*so great a death.*" This is the Spirit's way of saying "utterly hopeless." **There are troubles and circumstances that are greater than any human capacity of either wisdom or power.** There is a class of trouble in which human ingenuity withers and dies. There is a type of hardship that causes the sun to set on all human ability. If you have not experienced such trouble, do not imagine such a thing is not possible. And, should you be called to pass through such fire and water, it will be a miserable comfort to hear some religious bigot say God doesn't work miracles any longer. That is a theology born in placid fields where nothing significant ever happens – whether good or evil.

There are measures of human experience that are "*great,*" exceeding the norm. There can be a "*very great plague*" (Num 11:33) There are also "*great*" circumstances and environments that are separate from all normality. It is possible to go through a "*great and terrible wilderness*" (Deut 1:19).

The saints of God must avoid any tendency to murmur or complain when they experience, what we might call, "ordinary troubles" – difficulties that tend to be more common among men. Such troubles are "*footmen,*" and are occasions

There are troubles and circumstances that are greater than any human capacity of either wisdom or power. There is a class of trouble in which human ingenuity withers and dies. There is a type of hardship that causes the sun to set on all human ability.

to describe the Savior Himself: "*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer,* and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom 11:26).

David referred to God as "*my Deliverer*" (2 Sam 22:2; Psa 18:2; 40:17; 70:5; 144:2). The word he used, whether in the noun or verb form, **always** applies to God Himself, and never to men. In Judges, when the Lord is said to have raised up judged who "*delivered*" the people, another word used (the Hebrew words "*naw-than*" [for men] VS "*Palat*" [for God]). Even without this rather rudimentary distinction in language, it should be apparent to us that **Divine deliverance stands apart from all**

standing up after having been stoned, and going into the city to preach (Acts 14:19-20).

God, who raises the dead, can enable an afflicted man to raise a withered hand (Matt 12:13), an impotent man to take up his bed and walk (Matt 9:6-7), and a woman with an issue of blood to be instantly and thoroughly healed (Luke 8:43-44).

This is the kind of God that faith must have if it is to flourish. Let us have done with an approach to theology that affirms God no longer works in ways transcendent to nature. Such an imagination not only cannot be support by Divine affirmation, it is contrary to faith

in which we must learn to be content. **Should these lesser experiences tend to overthrow us, all hope of standing in “the evil day,” when a greater test is endured, will wither and die.** Thus it is written, *“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”* (Jer 12:5).

Solomon said, *“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small”*

(Prov 24:10). It is totally inappropriate for those who are in Christ Jesus to be stumbling about during times of adversity. This is the day when we can be *“strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man”* (Eph 3:16). It is the day when we can be equipped to *“withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand”* (Eph 6:13).

Paul is now giving an account of how withstood the evil day. He is providing a testimony of what it takes to fight a good fight, keep the faith, and finish the course that is set before us (2

Tim 4:7).

Death

Paul was not merely delivered from “death,” but from *“so great a death.”* This, in my judgment, cannot be mere parabolic language. Rather, it appears that Paul was brought to the very threshold of death – to a point where he was about to be removed from this world in a most unusual and cruel way.

Paul does not specifically identify the occasion – if, indeed, he is referring to a particular trial. It was most unusual, and an unusual deliverance was wrought.

Paul’s Experience in Ephesus

Elsewhere Paul alludes to an experience he had in Asia which seems to fit the description of *“so great a death.”* There are few details provided concerning this occasion, but enough for us to see its unusual nature.

“If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die” (1 Cor 15:32). Other versions read, *“If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts,”* ^{NKJV} *“If, from human motives, I fought with wild beasts,”* ^{NASB} *“If (according to men) I fought with beasts,”* ^{DOUAY} and *“If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons.”* ^{NIV}

There is all manner of speculation about this passage, with some betraying their propensity to unbelief. Some consider this passage to refer to Paul’s contentions with men, doing battle with words like men fight with wild animals. However, such views do not at all blend with this text. In First Corinthians, Paul is expounding the resurrection of the dead. This has little to do with contentions with men – even though such contentions could very well arouse in his enemies the desire to kill him. Such a death, however, could scarcely be called *“so great death.”* When being threatened with death by his enemies, Paul said before Festus, *“For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar”* (Acts 25:11). I cannot bring myself to accept the

HISTORICAL QUOTATION

“If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.” (1 Cor 15:32)

“The barbarous custom of making men combat with wild beasts has prevailed in the East down to the most modern times. Jurgen Andersen, who visited the states of the Great Mogul in 1646, gives an account in his Travels of such a combat with animals, which he witnessed at Agra, the residence of the Great Mogul. His description affords a lively image of those bloody spectacles in which ancient Rome took so much pleasure, and to which the above words of the apostle refer. Alumar-dan-cha-n, the governor of Cashmire, who sat among the chans, stood up, and exclaimed, ‘It is the will and desire of the great mogul, Schah Choram, that if there are any valiant heroes who will show their bravery by combating with wild beasts, armed with shield and sword, let them come forward; if they conquer, the mogul will load them with great favor, and clothe their countenance with gladness.’ Upon this three persons advanced, and offered to undertake the combat. Alamardan-charn again cried aloud, ‘None should have any other weapon than a shield and a sword; and whosoever has any breastplate under his clothes should lay it aside, and fight honorably.’ Hereupon a powerful lion was let into the garden, and one of the three men above mentioned advanced against him; the lion, upon seeing his enemy, ran violently up to him; the man, however, defended himself bravely, and kept off the lion for a good while, until his arms grew tired; the lion then seized the shield with one paw, and with the other his antagonist’s right arm, so that he was not able to use his weapon; the latter, seeing his life in danger, took with his left hand his Indian dagger, which he had sticking in his girdle, and thrust it as far as possible into the lion’s mouth; the lion then let him go; the man, however, was not idle, but cut the lion almost through with one stroke, and after that entirely to pieces. Upon this victory the common people began to shout, and call out, ‘Thank God, he has conquered.’ But the mogul said, smiling, to this conqueror, ‘Thou art a brave warrior, and hast fought admirably! But did I not command to fight honorably only with shield and sword? But, like a thief, thou hast stolen the life of the lion with thy dagger.’ And immediately he ordered two men to rip up his belly, and to place him upon an elephant, and, as an example to others, to lead him about, which was done on the spot. Soon after, a tiger was set loose; against which a tall, powerful man advanced with an air of defiance, as if he would cut the tiger up. The tiger, however, was far too sagacious and active, for, in the first attack, he seized the combatant by the neck, tore his throat, and then his whole body in pieces. This enraged another good fellow, but little, and of ordinary appearance, from whom one would not have expected it: he rushed forward like one mad, and the tiger on his part undauntedly flew at his enemy; but the man at the first attack cut off his two fore paws; so that he fell, and the man cut his body to pieces. Upon this the king cried, ‘What is your name?’ He answered, ‘My name is Geyby.’ Soon after one of the king’s servants came and brought him a piece of gold brocade, and said, ‘Geyby, receive the robe of honor with which the mogul presents you.’ He took the garment with great reverence, kissed it three times, pressing it each time to his eyes and breast, then held it up, and in silence put up a prayer for the health of the mogul; and when he concluded it, he cried, ‘May God let him become as great as Tamerlane, from whom he is descended. May he live 700 years, and his house continue to eternity!’ Upon this he was summoned by a chamberlain to go from the garden up to the king; and when he came to the entrance, he was received by two chans, who conducted him between them to kiss the mogul’s feet. And when he was going to retire, the king said to him, ‘Praised be thou, Geybychan, for thy valiant deeds, and this name shalt thou keep to eternity. I am your gracious master, and thou art my slave”

— BUSH’S ILLUSTRATION, BARNES’ NOTES

postulate that such a death could be described as “so great death.”

However a person may choose to view this passage, the death of reference was not figurative. Paul argues that he would not have “fought with beasts” if the dead really did not rise. That means whatever is involved was designed to terminate one’s life in this world. If the dead really do not rise at all, Paul is affirming he would never have subjected himself to mortal danger. He would have lived his life in self gratification and indulgence, and simply as other men do.

I am taking the position that the “so great death” to which Paul refers was, in fact, a circumstance in which all human hope was dissolved. I am also going to assume this could not be said of any polemic contest with men, a trial before men, or threats by men. Paul had experienced deliverance from such conflicts many times. This deliverance, however, was of a special order. In my judgment he is referring to a practice of the times that was unique. In it, men were not thrown to the beasts, as was often the case with martyrs. Rather, they were given a shield and sword, and sentenced to do battle with ferocious beasts as a sort of entertainment. Rewards were also offered as incentives to engage in such contests.

Looking upon his past, Paul could see how God had delivered him from “so great a death.” He had delivered him from wicked men and their intentions, and from fears within as well. He was delivered from the malicious effects of slander and reproach, to which he was subjected. How blessed are the deliverances of God!

Something to be Understood

It is to be understood that deliverance from greater troubles infers there has also been deliverance from lesser troubles. **That is, “deliverance” of all sorts only wrought by the God who “raises the dead.”** Whether it was deliverance from an angry mob (Acts 19:34-41), forty men who had taken an oath to kill him (Acts 23:21-23), or from a threatening storm (Acts 27:22-25) – it is the Lord who delivers.

The saints must be able to look

upon the past and proclaim “*God delivered us!*” He “*commands deliverances*” (Psa 44:4) FOR His people. He delivered Moses “*from the sword of Pharaoh*” (Ex 18:4), David “*from his strong enemy*” (2 Sam 22:18), and “*from the strivings of the people*” (2 Sam 22:44). He has delivered his saints “*from the violent man*” (2 Sam 22:49), and “*from all their fears*” (Psa 34:4).

It is imperative that we become spiritual experts in assessing our past, beholding the hand of the Lord in delivering us. We receive strength and encourage when we are able to properly view our past. If there are milestone deliverances in our lives, we must trace them back to God. It is He, and He alone, who delivered us.

Lest we forget, this is a point at which Israel failed miserably. Although it was God Almighty who delivered them from Egypt, they shouted otherwise at the foot of the holy mount. Cavorting around

was still delivering him.

This is the language of faith – it is how one speaks who is living by faith and walking in the Spirit. The idea is that Divine deliverance is not confined to the past – either our personal past, or the historical past. **Deliverance continues in the now – in our current circumstances.** Faith reckons on this, moving the believer to say, “*Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not*” (2 Cor 4:1).

An Example of Faith

On one occasion, while Paul was in “*bonds*,” and noted for his prison “*chain*,” he wrote to the Philippians concerning his expectation. His words were an articulation of the kind of faith revealed in our text. He knew God was working all things together for his good. Thus he wrote of his circumstance, “*For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance*” ^{NKJV} (Phil 1:19). He knew this because he was acquainted with the manner of the

It is imperative that we become spiritual experts in assessing our past, beholding the hand of the Lord in delivering us. We receive strength and encourage when we are able to properly view our past.

a golden calf they cried, “*These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*” (Ex 32:8). How subtle is the old serpent!

DOTH DELIVER

“*. . . and doth deliver . . .*” Other versions read, “*does deliver us*,” ^{NKJV} “*will deliver us*,” ^{NASB/NIV} and “*will continue to rescue us*,” ^{NRSV}

Later Paul will tell us that he faced perils everywhere he went: “*in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren*” (2 Cor 11:26). This was part and parcel of his ministry, but it did not cause him to cease his labors. **He looked trouble squarely in the face and affirmed that God**

Kingdom. He knew that God “*doth deliver*,” and thus spoke confidently of about his situation.

This is speaking about deliverance from where you are, not where you will be. God’s people are to be encouraged to bring God into the scenario of life by means of their faith. They are to count on God being a Deliverer! He has not cease to deliver, He DOES deliver. This is not an obsolete activity, He DOES deliver. O, the blessedness of reckoning on this fact! It is what enabled Paul and Silas to sing praises at the midnight hour. They knew their God delivered. To put it another way, this is knowing that God is, in fact, working all things together for the “*good*” of those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).

Present deliverance is no doubt very wide in scope. We all are being delivered from unseen dangers and snares laid by the wicked one. Many of us are being delivered from the damaging errors of our time – errors that have overthrown the faith of some. And who can forget the daily deliverances from “another law”

some timely way, deliver him. He may be delivered by live, or by death – but God will surely deliver him.

It is possible for fear to so grip the heart of a person that they never venture upon the sea of Divine service. They spend an inordinate amount of time pondering what might happen to them, rather than

A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

There is yet another perspective that must be seen here. Paul’s deliverance from circumstance perfectly paralleled the deliverance realized in salvation. This is by no means a mere coincidence. **In the heavenly economy, the standard is set by the superior, and reflected in the inferior.** That is, the lesser is impacted by the superior, and not vice versa.

The real point Paul is making relates to the salvation of God, in which God **has** delivered, **does** deliver, and **will** yet deliver. That is what sets the tone for the experiences of those who walk by faith.

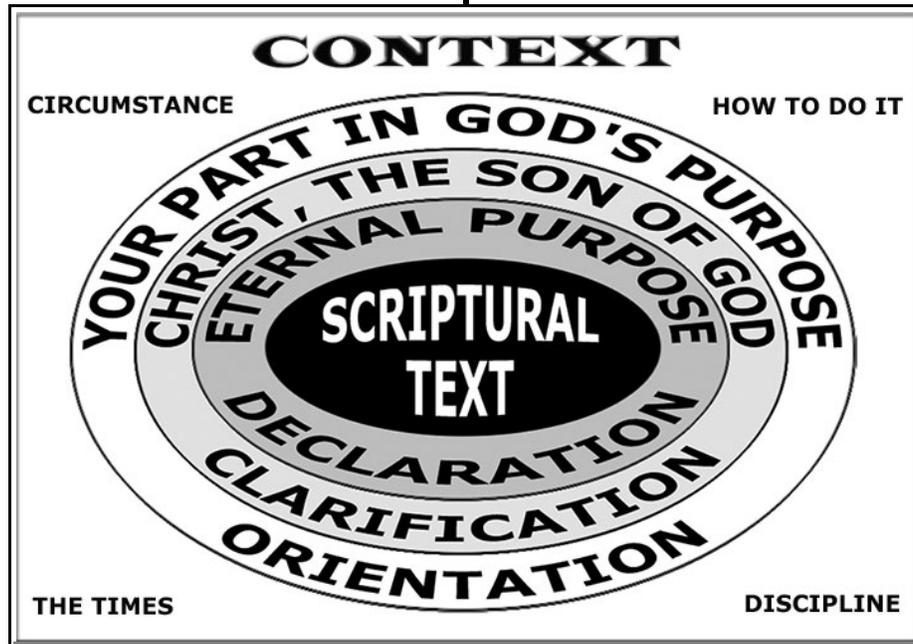
Among other things, this confirms that the whole of salvation has not yet been received. If the process of salvation has not yet been completed, it is folly to speculate about whether or not one can “fail of the grace of God” (Heb 12:15). It is this circumstance that I now seek to confirm.

Is This A Proper Approach to Scripture?

Those who are prone to a contextual consideration of the words of Scripture may question the validity of this approach to our text. They might reason something like this: “Paul did not make this ‘application,’ and neither can we.” Such an argument sounds good on the surface, but only so. There are some things it does not take into consideration.

When speaking of his own expressions – which were a sort of Kingdom standard – Paul said, “*These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” (1 Cor 2:13). Other versions read, “*combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words,*”^{NASB} and “*expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.*”^{NIV} In referring to such “words,” Paul admonished Timothy, “*Hold fast the form of sound words,*”^{KJV} or “*standard of sound words*”^{NASB} (2 Tim 1:13). **That is, there is a Divine nomenclature – terminology that has been developed by the Holy Spirit for the conveyance of the truth of God.**

The words of Scripture provide a framework for valid concepts and



that lurks in our members (Rom 7:23), seeking to turn us from the way that leads to life. The delivering power of God has not only reached into our past, but is also reaching into the present.

WILL YET DELIVER

“... in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.” Other versions read, “He will still deliver us,”^{NKJV} “He will continue to deliver us,”^{NIV} “He will rescue us again,”^{NRSV} “He will still go on to give us salvation,”^{BBE} and “hereafter He will deliver us.”^{GENEVA}

These are not merely three points of sound doctrine. **Rather, this is the reasoning of faith.** Looking upon the past, Paul sees that the Lord has delivered him. Therefore, he concludes that he will also be delivered from his present circumstances. Now his faith peers into the unknown future, and concludes that Divine deliverance will take place there also. **No trouble will come upon him from which the Lord will not, in**

reckoning upon the deliverance of God.

Just as faith reaches into the past and sees an active God, so hope reaches into the future, and sees the same. God has not asked us to traverse a realm He Himself does not occupy, and in which He does not work. He remains “*the Breaker*” (Mic 2:13) who goes before us, preparing the way, then managing the affairs of His children when they get there.

It is ever true, “*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations*” (2 Pet 2:9). Faith reckons on this, compelling David to go against Goliath (1 Sam 17:48), Jonathan against the Philistines (1 Sam 14:8-10), and Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh 2:17). **None of these men had any experience in the areas they confronted, yet they knew that God would deliver them.** I want to underscore that this is the manner in which faith reasons.

teaching. For example, under the Old Covenant the Lord introduced a way of speaking about things related to coming to God. An inspired nomenclature was thus developed through which things relating to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus can be better understood. A few examples will suffice to establish this point.

- The priests did **eat** some of the offerings from the **altar**. “*And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh*” (Deu 12:27). This language is used to describe our participation in the sacrifice of Christ: “*We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle*” (Heb 13:10). Again, “*Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are **partakers with the altar**? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel*” (1 Cor 9:14).

- God called Israel out of Egypt, fulfilling that great call in the well known exodus: “*When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and **called my son out of Egypt***” (Hosea 11:1). The Spirit says this expression was fulfilled in the child Jesus coming out of Egypt: “*When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **Out of Egypt have I called my son***” (Mat 2:14-15).

- Under the Law, the ox who was treading out the corn was not to be muzzled: “*Thou **shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn***” (Deu 25:4). This language is used to justify honoring and supporting those who labor in the word and doctrine: “*For it is written in the law of Moses, **Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it***

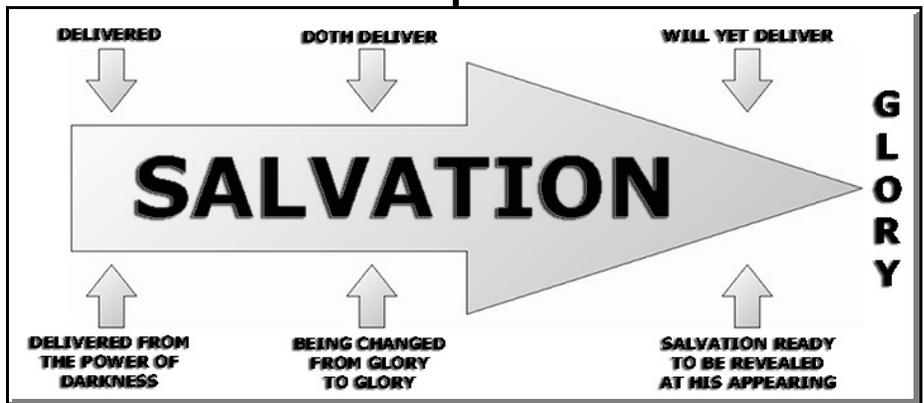
altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” (1 Cor 9:10-11). And again, “*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, **Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward***” (1 Tim 5:18).

deliverances that Paul experienced in the body were a perfect depiction of the greater deliverance we realize in Christ Jesus. The terminology can be used to precisely describe our life and expectation in Christ Jesus. Just as the deliverance of which Paul speaks had three phases, so our deliverance in Christ Jesus is threefold – past, present, and future.

Hath Delivered

There is a sense in which those in Christ have **already been delivered**.

- “*But now we are **delivered** from the law*” (Rom 7:6).



In these three cases, texts were technically taken out of their literary context, and used to support particular practices, or show the Divine intervention in a certain event. The original statement of the text did not carry the meaning given to the words by the Apostolic writers. Thus, the “application” may appear to be “out of context.”

However, there is a context that transcends the text itself. Scripture has been written with Jesus Himself in mind (John 5:39; 1 Pet 1:11; Rev 19:10). It has been placed within the greater context of God’s “*eternal purpose*,” which was “*purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*” before the world began (Eph 3:11; 2 Tim 1:9). Thus the “*Lamb*” of the Passover is an introduction to Jesus, “*the Lamb of God*” (1 Cor 5:7). The “*Temple*” of Solomon is an introduction to the church (Eph 2:21). The cities of refuge are a figure of Jesus Christ, to whom we have “*fled for refuge*” (Heb 6:18).

Now we will find that the very

- “*Who hath **delivered** us from the power of darkness*” (Col 1:13).

This deliverance is effective now. The condemning Law has no more control over us, for we have been delivered from it. The power of darkness which once dominated us, can no longer do so. We have been delivered from it.

Doth Deliver

There is also a sense in which, in the domain of time, we are **now being delivered**.

- “*And the Lord shall **deliver me from every evil work**, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen*” (2 Tim 4:18).

- “*The Lord knoweth how to **deliver the godly out of temptations**, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished*” (2 Pet 2:9).

- “*And lead us not into temptation, but **deliver us** from evil: For thine is the*

kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Matt 6:13).

The child of God lives with the awareness that deliverance is still continuing. God “doth deliver.” Jesus taught us to pray for this deliverance, and the Spirit affirms that God knows how to effectively do it. Deliverance is a fact upon which believers are to reckon.

Will Yet Deliver

There is also a sense in which we will be **delivered in the future**.

- “O wretched man that I am! who **shall deliver me from the body of this death?**” (Rom 7:24).
- “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which **delivered us from the wrath to come**” (1 Thess 1:10).

Whatever circumstances face us in the future, we have this confidence, that He who has delivered us, and is delivering us, will deliver us then.

Applicable to Salvation

This type of language is applied to

with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim 1:9).

- “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy **He saved us**, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

This is the perspective of salvation that is seen in the affirmations of us presently being “justified” (Rom 5:1,9), “reconciled” (2 Cor 5:18; Col 1:21), and “sanctified” (1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 2:11). It is seen in the fact that we have been “washed from our sins” (1 Cor 6:11; Heb 10:22; Rev 1:5), “have peace with God” (Rom 5:1), and have been “**made accepted in the Beloved**” (Eph 1:6).

Because of this circumstance, we can KNOW we have “passed from death unto life” (1 John 3:14). We can “know” God is working all things together for our good (Rom 8:28). We can “know” we have a “building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1). All of this postulates the present

Cor 1:18).

- “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who **are being saved** and among those who are perishing”^{NKJV} (2 Cor 2:15).

This view of salvation accentuates us being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29) – a process that is not complete as long as we remain in this world. This is the perspective of salvation that is conveyed in the revelation that the Spirit is presently changing us from one degree into another (2 Cor 3:18). It is the view that finds us working out our own salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:11).

We WILL BE Saved

Additionally, there is a sense in which we will yet be saved.

- “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we **shall be saved from wrath through Him**” (Rom 5:9).
- “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, **we shall be saved by His life**” [intercessory life] (Rom 5:10).
- “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself **shall be saved**; yet so as by fire” (1 Cor 3:15).
- “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit **may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus**” (1 Cor 5:5).

We are not in glory yet! The work has not yet been completed. We are not to be presumptuous because we are presently saved and being saved, but rather heed the ancient words: “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1 Kgs 20:11). In words addressed to those who are in Christ Jesus, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). Again it is written, “Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear” (Rom 11:20).

THE REASONING

The child of God lives with the awareness that deliverance is still continuing. God “doth deliver.” Jesus taught us to pray for this deliverance, and the Spirit affirms that God knows how to effectively do it.

salvation itself – that is, there are senses in which we are already saved, are being saved, and will yet be saved.

We ARE Saved

There is a very real sense in which we have already been saved.

- “Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace **you have been saved**)”^{NKJV} (Eph 2:5).
- “For by grace are ye **saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).
- “Who **hath saved us**, and called us

experience of salvation, else this marvelous knowledge would not be possible.

We Are BEING Saved

There is also a very real sense in which we are in the process of being saved.

- “For we **are saved by hope**: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom 8:24).
- “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who **are being saved** it is the power of God”^{NKJV} (1

Because Paul had **already been delivered**, he could not reason that there was no more danger, no more jeopardy, and no more need for the Lord to work in his behalf. Neither, indeed, was it appropriate for him – in view of the fact that he was **being** delivered – to move about among the Jews and the heathen as though he had been insulated against all danger. Also, knowing that God would yet deliver him did not mean Paul could fold his hands, bury his stewardship in the ground, and conduct his life without regard to the commission Christ had given to him (Acts 26:18).

If those in Christ Jesus were once and for all secured, with no possibility of coming short of the goal, there would be no need for wrestling (Eph 6:12), running (Heb 12:2), fighting (1 Tim 6:12), resisting (James 4:7), striving (Phil 1:27), and looking (Heb 12:2). Faithfulness (Rev 2:10), holiness (Heb 12:14), diligence (Heb 6:11), purity (1 Tim 5:22), and watchfulness (1 Thess 5:6) would be nothing more than novelties. There could in such a case, be no such things as quenching the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19), grieving the Spirit (Eph 4:30), or resisting the Spirit (Acts 7:51). It would be sheer folly to speak about falling away (2 Thess 2:3; Heb 6:6), coming short of the promise (Heb 4:1), or becoming a “*castaway*” (1 Cor 9:27). There would be no real need for prayers for perfection and completeness (Col 4:12), revelation (Eph 1:17-20), or being strengthened with might by God’s Spirit in the inner man (Eph 3:15-17).

All of these things presume the work is not yet complete **in us** – work that is essential to us being “*forever with*

Trouble is a facet of life that is under Divine management, and it has a sanctified purpose. God is in the process of uprooting confidence in men and the flesh. He is lifting us above the wisdom of this world and its ways. “Trouble” assists in bringing these things to pass.

the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17).

The perception of this circumstance would significantly alter the religious landscape of our land. Weekly gatherings would change in form, content, and frequency. It would change what and how professing believers sing. Preachers would preach differently, and teachers would change the content and presentation of their teaching. Christians would look at the Scriptures differently. They would have a brand-new perspective of the assembly and what went on at that time. Professed Christian education would obtain a different face, go about a different work, and establish a different standard.

This perspective – that we have been delivered, are being delivered, and shall yet be delivered – is almost totally absent in the nominal church. A vast segment of Christendom presumes that once men are saved, they always are saved – then live as though that was not the case at all. Another segment of Christendom

dogmatically denies that erroneous postulate, affirming that men can, indeed, fall away – then they live as though falling away was not possible at all, being noted for spiritually sloven manners.

Why is it that these conditions exist? It is because the truth of the Gospel, together with its revealed implications, are not being preached. **A gospel is being preached, and an agenda is being adopted, that allows for erroneous and potentially damning ideas to be embraced.** The fruit that we are seeing is coming from a religious tree that has been planted by men without spiritual understanding – and that is stating the case mildly.

Nothing in Scripture will support spiritual mediocrity – nothing! The Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit will not contribute to such a state. **If it is found, neither Jesus nor the Spirit had anything to do with it.** Where fervency, consistency, and Kingdom “*labor*” are missing, Jesus has been sent away – or possible never did come.

CONCLUSION

The times in which we live are perilous, as the Spirit says they would be. **This condition exists because of the mediocrity and powerlessness of contemporary religion.** It is appropriately described as form without power (2 Tim 3:5). The absence of Divine power is not owing to ignorance, but to its rejection: “*denying the power*,” refusing and contradicting it. This is the result of people NOT having fellowship with Christ

(1 Cor 1:9), and the Word of Christ NOT dwelling in them richly (Col 3:16). **It is not an innocent state, for there is not a particle of the salvation of God that remotely suggests the acceptability of such a condition.**

In fact, the entirety of God’s “*great salvation*” accentuates the necessity of fervency, consistency, growth, and faithfulness. Every facet of salvation

contributes to the development and maintenance of these virtues.

Stealthily creeping in unawares “*while men slept*,” the devil has sown tares among the wheat, and they have nearly taken over the field! With this influx of non-fruit-bearing seed, a flood of psychologists and those giving honor to the wisdom of this world have filled the churches. They have been given the chief

seats, and are shaping the minds of their constituents to think like the world.

These have brought in new “ministries” – at least that is what they

deceivingly gaudy, dress. **A religious structure has been adopted that compels people to deal with trouble according to the flesh, rather than in the Spirit.** Consequently, you do not

assists in bringing these things to pass. It confirms to the hearts of believers that “*this present evil world*” is not our home, and that we are appropriately called “*pilgrims and strangers in it.*” From the standpoint of its citizenry, the world does not love the saints (John 15:19). From the consideration of what comprises the world, everything that is “*of the world*” is “*not of the Father,*” and consequently militates against our faith (1 John 2:16). The “*wisdom of this world*” is “*foolishness with God*” (1 Cor 3:19), and its “*fashion*” is passing away (1 Cor 7:31).

Further, one of the premier accomplishments of the Lord Jesus was our deliverance “*from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father*” (Gal 1:4). That very circumstance forbids any form of alliance with the world, wherein we are strangers.

Solemnly, we are admonished to NOT be “*conformed*” to “*this world*” (Rom 12:2). Satan himself is called “*the god of this world*” (2 Cor 4:4). Our former lives, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, were spent walking “*according to the course of this world*” – a time when we were “*the children of wrath*” (Eph 2:2-3). We are wrestling against “*the rulers of the darkness of this world*” (Eph 6:12). We are reminded that “*we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*” (1 Tim 6:7). It has already been determined, and will surely come to pass in the fullest and most extensive sense of the word: “*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever*” (Rev 11:15).

“*Trouble*” – particularly debilitating trouble like that mentioned in our text – confirms these things to be true. Properly received, it promoted trust in the God who raises the dead! **If ever we can willingly and knowingly be “dead,” God will raise us from the dead.** That is true of the trouble we endure in the flesh. It is ultimately to be experienced in the resurrection of the dead, when “*mortality is swallowed up of life*” (2 Cor 5:4). May your troubles result in your preparation for that occasion. Until then, ponder how you have been are being delivered **by God.**

We are not in glory yet! The work has not yet been completed. We are not to be presumptuous because we are presently saved and being saved, but rather heed the ancient words: “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.”

call them. They have a lot to do with meeting people “where they are,” providing them with the latest problem-solving techniques, and helping them to “solve their problems” so they may become capable contributors to, and workers for, the institution. They have brought in new songs, and new ways to sing them. **The “church staff” is shaped around what THEY have to offer, and now the people are the focus of the church rather than the Lord Jesus.** The “*ministers*” are no longer called a “*minister of God*” (1 Thess 3:2), “*minister of Jesus Christ*” (Rom 15:16), or “*minister of Christ*” (Col 1:7). Now we have the “Youth Minister,” “Family Minister,” “Minister of Education,” “Worship Minister,” etc.

I am keenly aware that it is not acceptable to question the validity of this swarm of spiritual novices and their programs. However, the fruit that is growing on their organizational tree casts the shadow of suspicion on the acceptability of their efforts.

All of this has produced an environment in which our text has absolutely no relevance. Its approach to “*trouble*” simply does not fit into the new way of thinking – which is really the old way of thinking clothed in a new, but

often hear “church” people talking of their trouble as Paul did of his. Imagine someone introducing a conversation with “*I do not want you to be uninformed about the hardships we suffered in . . .*”^{NIV} You can almost be assured they will not speak of having received a sentence of death in themselves that they might learn to “*trust in God who raiseth the dead.*” It is also highly unlikely that they would speak about God having delivered them, being in the process of delivering them, and who would yet deliver them. Such testimonies are not altogether extinct, but they are surely on the “endangered” list.

The truth of the matter is that, in this text, we have been exposed to a heavenly view of trouble – YOUR trouble, as well as that of Paul. **Trouble is a facet of life that is under Divine management, and it has a sanctified purpose.** God is in the process of uprooting confidence in men and the flesh. He is uprooting His children from it because it is temporal and competes with His eternal purpose. **No person can become interested in the wisdom of this world without becoming disinterested in God and His great salvation.**

He is lifting us above the wisdom of this world and its ways. “*Trouble*”

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 6/25/2004. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The fourth lesson will cover verses eleven through fourteen of the first chapter: HELP AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT.” Those who walk by faith acknowledge both their need of help, and its comforting presence. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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