

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 #8

COMMENTARY ON: 2:1-11

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."

HOW TO REACT TO A CORRECTED PROBLEM

A serious moral problem had erupted in Corinth. It involved sin that was so contemptuous that even those who did not know God refused to indulge in it. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul addressed this difficulty in a straightforward manner. We now learn that the brethren had did as he had said. Now Paul reveals the proper manner in which they were to respond to the repentance of the offending party. Once again, the nature of the kingdom of heaven is made known. The grace of God is highlighted, as well as its necessity. If we are to gain the victory over our adversary, it will be by the grace of God.

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"



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The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 8



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard 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), Webster=The Webster Bible 1833, 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 -----

HOW TO REACT TO A CORRECTED PROBLEM

“^{2:1} But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. ² For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? ³ And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. ⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. ⁵ But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. ⁶ Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. ⁷ So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. ⁸ Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. ⁹ For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. ¹⁰ To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; ¹¹ Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”^{KJV} (2 Cor 2:1-11)

INTRODUCTION

In Christ Jesus, no provision has been made for continuance in sin. There is a sort of line of demarcation that is crossed when we come into “the newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Sin cannot extend beyond that line. Sin has never been acceptable before God, and has always separated men from Him. As it is written, “But your iniquities have

separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa 59:2).

DIVINE FORBEARANCE

Prior to Christ’s enthronement, the Lord “winked” at the transgressions of humanity. This Divine tolerance was owing to the dominance of man’s

ignorance concerning God Himself (Acts 17:30). It was also extended toward humanity in the prospect of the coming Christ who would assume the liabilities of the human race that were caused by sin. Thus Isaiah prophesied of the coming Savior, “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and

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afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:4-5). The anticipation of the time when His anointed Servant would take away sin moved God to be longsuffering toward a rapidly declining and wayward world.

THE ABRASIVENESS OF SIN

Even then, however, sin caused Divine forbearance, with whole generations, to come to an abrupt end.

- ☛ The punishment of Cain (Gen 4:12-13).

- ☛ The global flood of Noah’s day (Gen 7:21).
- ☛ The fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:28-29).
- ☛ The scattering of the builders of the tower or Babel (Gen 11:8).
- ☛ The destruction of seven heathen nations who dwelt in the land promised to Abraham and his seed, defiling it with their iniquity (Deut 9:4-5).
- ☛ On one occasion the proud boasts of Sennacherib against Israel resulted in an angel of God slaying 185,000 soldiers (2 Kgs 19:35).
- ☛ For his prideful boast concerning the building of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was stripped of his mind and made to eat grass as a wild beast in the open fields (Dan 4:32-33).
- ☛ The overthrow of Babylon when Belshazzar dared to indulge his appetite for wine by drinking from the vessels dedicated to the Temple of God (Dan 5:23-28).

These stand as examples of the abrasiveness of sin to the living God. Keep in mind that the Divine nature is unchangeable! God has not become more tolerant of sin.

There were also numerous judgments leveled against Israel because of their obstinance and excessive transgression.

THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL

- ☛ 3,000 died in the judgment at Sinai, following the giving of the Law (Ex 32:28).
- ☛ 14,700 died in the gainsaying of Korah (Num 16:33,49).

- ☛ 24,000 died in the judgment against Israel when they sinned with the Midianites (Num 25:9).
- ☛ *“Much people”* died by a Divinely imposed plague of poisonous serpents, because they murmured (Num 21:6).
- ☛ Over 600,000 men died in the wilderness because they chose to believe the faithless spies who said it was not possible for the people to take the land of Canaan (Num 1:46; Josh 5:6).
- ☛ 70,000 men died in a pestilence sent by the Lord after David numbered Israel (2 Sam 24:15).

Let no person imagine for a single moment that sin has had no effect upon the God of heaven! The Gentiles, who did not know God, and the Jews, who had been exposed to Him, both suffered because of their transgressions.

The rest of humanity did not suffer such destruction, not because their sin was more bearable, but because of Divine forbearance and the anticipation of a coming sin-Bearer.

JESUS HAS COME

However, Jesus has now come, in whom all the *“fulness of the Godhead”* dwells bodily. The whole situation has changed, because He has taken away the sin of the world (John 1:29; Heb 9:26). Through His death, He *has “destroyed the devil”* (Heb 2:14), plundering *“principalities and powers”* in His cross (Col 2:15). He has liquidated the massive debt created by sin (Col 2:14), reconciled the world to God (2 Cor 5:18-20), and *“made peace through the blood of His cross”* (Col 1:20).

Now, having *“put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”* (Heb 9:26), He is expounding the Father to those who

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believe the Gospel, (John 1:18), giving men an understanding of God in order that they might know Him (1 John 5:20). The Gospel of Christ is now the “*power of God unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16) – the means through which men are liberated from the tyranny of sin and the ensnarements of the devil. **There simply is no excuse for any person remaining in sin, dominated by its power, and thus alienated from a holy God.** There are no satisfactory explanations for any person in Christ continuing in sin – none at all!

PONDER THE PROVISIONS

Within the framework of the New Covenant, which is a “*better covenant,*”

John 2:1).

- A “*new man*” has been given to us that is “*renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*” (Col 3:10).
- The living word of Christ has been given to us, that can dwell in us “*richly,*” impacting upon the entirety of our lives (Col 3:16).
- The Holy Spirit has been sent into our hearts to lead us in mortifying “*the deeds of the body*” (Rom 8:13,14).
- In areas of particular ignorance, the

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“*established upon better promises*” (Heb 8:6), men are equipped to overcome sin, being no longer dominated by it. **While every honest soul still contends with sin, and not one of them can say they have not sinned, yet advantages belong to those in Christ that liberate them from slavery to sin.**

- In Christ, we become a “*new creation,*” with old things passing away, and all things becoming new (2 Cor 5:17).
- Provision has been made for the forgiveness of sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).
- An Advocate with the Father has been provided “*IF any man sin*” (1

Holy Spirit “*makes intercession for us according to the will of God,*” so that we need not be handicapped by natural deficiencies (Rom 8:26-27).

- We have access to the grace of God (Rom 5:2), which brings rich adequacy to us.
- Through the grace of God we are taught to “*deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,*” while living “*soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*” (Tit 2:11-12).
- Every believer is placed within the body of Christ, which is “*the fulness*” of Christ (Eph 1:22-23), and in which Divine resources are appropriated (Eph 4:15-16).

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

Our text will deal with a serious transgression that occurred among the Corinthian brethren. By the grace of God, and owing to the instruction of Paul, they had dealt properly with that sin. However, all of this has very little meaning to a person who entertains casual attitude toward sin, or is not easily offended by iniquity.

We are living in a culture that has grown accustomed to iniquity, and it is not easily offended by it. It is not at all difficult for some professing believers to think nothing of lukewarmness, even though it is highly offensive to Jesus (Rev 3:16). Although there are reprehensible indulgent deeds that Jesus actually hates (Rev 2:6), those same deeds are not so offensive to many souls who claim identity with Him. Some of the very doctrines that Jesus hates (Rev 2:15) have somehow become tolerable within His church, and He has duly noted it.

A sort of spiritual stupor has settled upon Western Christianity that allows *Christians* to entertain tolerant views of things for which men will be damned (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5; Rev 21:8).

A “*holy*” church is not even fashionable in the *Christian* world in which we find ourselves. Those who insist on separating themselves from sin are viewed as radical, or perhaps as more advanced than others. However, they are not viewed as the Kingdom standard.

Thus, it has been necessary to point out the offensiveness of sin, and the necessity of ridding ourselves of it. All of the resources required for this are supplied in Christ Jesus. That is precisely why the Apostles’ doctrine speaks with such clarity on the matter.

I DETERMINED THIS WITH MYSELF

“ 2:1a **But I determined this with myself . . .**” Other versions read, “*determined within myself,*” ^{NKJV}

“*determined this for my own sake,*” ^{NASB} “*I made up my mind,*” ^{NIV} “*it was my decision for myself,*” ^{BBE} and “*I have*

judged this within myself.” ^{DARBY}

Previously, Paul affirmed that he

had not come to them because he wanted to spare them the abrasiveness that would be required by confronting them face to face (1:23). He refused to conduct himself as though he had dominion over their faith, choosing rather to help their joy, in order that they might continue to stand by faith (1:24). Now the Apostle explains how he arrived at this decision. He was not forced into it by difficult circumstances.

A RATIONAL KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God is a rational one. By that I mean it is permeated with reasoning, thought, and purpose. **It is not a Kingdom of coercion or force – although Jesus will eventually openly subdue all of His enemies in this way.** The Lord revealed to Ezekiel the role of “*cause*” in His workings: “*and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD*” (Ezek 14:23).

- ☛ God raised up Pharaoh for a purpose, or cause (Ex 9:16).
- ☛ The breaking of the Assyrian in God’s land was according to purpose (Isa 14:25-26).
- ☛ Divine chastening is according to purpose (Jer 26:3; 36:3).
- ☛ The punishment of wicked nations was according to purpose (Jer 49:20; 50:45).
- ☛ Saul of Tarsus was called into the Apostleship according to God’s “*purpose*” (Acts 26:16).
- ☛ Men are called to Christ according to “*purpose*” (Rom 8:28).
- ☛ The objective of our salvation – the obtaining of “*an inheritance*,” is according to the “*purpose*” of God, “*who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*” (Eph 1:11).
- ☛ Presently, God is displaying His “*manifold wisdom*” to principalities and powers in heavenly places, in strict accordance with His “*eternal purpose, which He purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Eph 3:11).
- ☛ God has called us with a holy calling

“*according to His own purpose*” (Eph 3:11).

- ☛ The Lord Jesus was “*manifested*” for “*this purpose*,” that He might “*destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8).

When people are “*saved*,” they are inducted into a spiritual environment that is driven by purpose, reason, and cause. They are not brought into a place where their own experience is the primary thing. While salvation is, indeed, an experience, it is more precisely the fulfillment of Divine purpose and intention. That is the kind of Kingdom over which the Lord Jesus is presiding. He is not merely responding to

well as himself. **It was a decision that best served the revealed objectives of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** It was in harmony with the work of the Holy Spirit, who would work through the very words Paul was sending to the brethren.

Paul did not depend upon some strange and uninterpretable stirring from within to come to this particular decision. He was not driven along by emotion or feeling – something that could not be rationally explained. Rather, he “*determined*” this course of action within himself.

The word “*determined*” comes from a word that means “to separate, pick out,

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this crisis and that dilemma. His aim is not to make us comfortable, or to bring to us things that promote our satisfaction alone. **He is carrying out the will of God – the intentional and purposed will of God.**

It ought not to surprise us, therefore, to find those who have been joined to Christ to be a thoughtful and purposeful people. In fact, **spiritual life necessarily engages both heart and mind.** Determination and purpose are integral to living by faith. Such things as the mortification of the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13), fighting the good fight of faith and laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12), looking unto Jesus (Heb 12:2), and seeking things that are above (Col 3:1-2) demand thinking, intention, and objectives.

In view of these things, Paul now affirms that he had made a certain determination: “*I determined this within myself.*” ^{NKJV} He thought about the circumstances at Corinth and made a determination that was in the best interest of the brethren in Corinth, as

select, choose . . . to deem, to think . . . determine, resolve . . . to judge . . . the sifting and weighing of evidence.” ^{THAYER} Other lexical meanings are, “to divide out or separate off, think of as better, prefer, evaluate, think, judge, resolve, determine, decide;” ^{FRIBERG} “to come to a conclusion in the process of thinking and thus be in the position to make a decision – to come to a conclusion, to decide, to make up one’s mind;” ^{LOUW-NIDA} “to pick out for oneself, choose, decide . . . to determine to do a thing.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

While this may appear to be a rather elementary point, bear with me as I develop it further.

DIVINE DIRECTION

Here is an example of Divine direction – **direction within the framework of thought and consideration.** Solomon once wrote of the “*thoughts*” of men being established: “*Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established*” (Prov 16:3). This is a condition opposite of the fallen human nature. The Lord observed of those living at the time of Noah, “*that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Gen 6:5). That is, man’s capacity for thought

became so distorted that he pondered *“only evil continually.”* To put it another way, *“God is not in all his thoughts”* (Psa 10:4).

The tendency of man to be corrupt in his thinking continues unto this day. **This can only be resolved by regeneration, that has its cause in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**

Those who are reconciled to God, having been made *“partakers of Christ”* (Heb 3:14) think differently. They are renewed *“in the spirit of their mind”* (Eph 4:23). They are able to view the facts, weigh them, and make proper choices. It is in the process of thoughtful evaluation that the Lord actually moves the people into the appointed path.

The Macedonian Call

Take, for example, when Paul and

Here were the facts these brethren had to consider. They were blocked from going into Asia, and forbidden to go into Bithynia. Yet, Paul knew he had been called to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Thus they kept moving about, seeking for an open door. The decisive moment came when Paul received the vision. He, and those with him, *“gathered,” “concluding”^{NIV}* that the Lord had called them. The direction of God in their thought processes was confirmed by the outcome of their trip to Macedonia (Acts 16:13-19:10).

Would to God that such thought processes were more common in our day – when men could reason upon the facts before them, and come to proper conclusions. **Because of the spiritual obtuseness that reigns within the professed church, all manner of opportunists are seeking to direct the people of God with theoretical**

to take a poll of the people – whether they wanted him to come or not. **He thought within the context of Divine workings, and with a mind to harmony with God’s revealed purpose.**

It ought to be observed that one must live close to the Lord to be able to make sound determinations. **Living at a distance from the Lord, dominated by the flesh, and without any regard for Kingdom values, voids the possibility of making proper decisions.** In my judgment, much of the *Christianity* of our day fails to promote closeness to the Lord, and therefore does not, and cannot, promote sound thought.

WITHIN MYSELF

It is good to have a good working relationship with our own inward parts. That is involved in determining within oneself. David once said, *“Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah”* (Psa 4:4). Again he wrote, ***“I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search”*** (Psa 77:6). Solomon expressed himself similarly when he wrote, *“I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge”* (Eccl 1:16).

Paul admonished believers to engage in introspection, communing, as it were, with their own hearts: *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves”* (2 Cor 13:5).

Thus Paul has expressed the involvement of his mind – his will and his desire – in his personal ministry. **His faith led him to special considerations in which the Lord and His purpose were dominant.**

Because of the spiritual obtuseness that reigns within the professed church, all manner of opportunists are seeking to direct the people of God with theoretical considerations rather than perceived realities.

company sought to take the Gospel into all the world. They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go into Asia (Asia 16:7). When they attempted to go into Bithynia, the Spirit did not permit it (Acts 16:8). After arriving at Troas, Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia who begged him, *“Come over into Macedonia and help us”* (Acts 16:9). The Scriptures record that they immediately endeavored to go into Macedonia ***“assuredly gathering*** [concluding^{NKJV}] *that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them”* (Acts 16:10).

considerations rather than perceived realities. It is not at all uncommon to hear men attempt to move us with statistics, surveys, and opinion poles. Others seek to be directed by consensus among the people – many of whom are not even devoted to the Lord. All of these contemporary methods fall short of Kingdom thinking. They apply too much value to circumstance, and determine possibilities by fleshly considerations. This is not the way Paul made the determination mentioned in our text. He did not send someone to Corinth

NOT WITH HEAVINESS

“^{1b} ... that I would not come again to you in heaviness.” Other versions read, *“come again in sorrow,”*

^{NKJV} *“make another painful visit,”* ^{NIV} *“come back to you in grief,”* ^{DARBY} and *“in painful circumstances.”* ^{NAB}

Here is a most intriguing perspective. There were troubles at Corinth – serious ones. One might

suppose that Paul would therefore have rushed to them without delay. Someone who was, as people are wont to say, *“there to help,”* might have left all and went to Corinth to assist them in needed recovery. While there are certainly some noble qualities to such responses, this is not the course of action Paul chose. There are other considerations. He will now tell us why.

IN HEAVINESS

“Heaviness” is sorrow, painfulness, and grief. The word translated *“heaviness”* means *“sorrow, pain, grief... used of one who on coming both saddens and makes sad;”* ^{THAYER} *“Mentally or spiritually sorrow, grief, sadness, anxiety;”* ^{FRIBERG} and *“a state of unhappiness marked by regret as a result of what has been done.”* ^{LOUW-NIDA}

Here we see that there can be conditions within the church that cause grief in those behold them, who, in turn, cause grief among the offenders because they have to deal with such things. Further, such circumstances do not yield the optimum benefit. That is why Paul determined **not** to come again to Corinth – not to confront their uncomely circumstances which promoted grief in him. **This was a grief that compelled harsh action that would, in turn, cause grief among the Corinthians.**

To avoid this *“heaviness,”* Paul chose to deal with the Corinthian circumstances by letter. In this way he hoped, through the grace of God (1:3-4; 16:23; 2 Cor 1:2,12; 6:1; 9:14; 13:14) to

promote a recovery that would allow for a more joyous and profitable meeting. All of this is an explanation of the expression, *“to spare you I came not as yet”* (2:23).

It is apparent that those who insist on continuing in sin greatly compound the difficulty associated with recovery. **A consistent environment of sorrow, caused by the presence of sin, and the corrective teaching inculcated by it, makes profitability unusually difficult.** This principle provides an explanation for much of the spiritual sterility that exists in the modern church. Sin makes for sorrow, and sorrow makes profitable ministry difficult. This is confirmed in our text. Paul changes his approach in order to avoid inordinate levels of sorrow.

MAKING SORRY AND MAKING GLAD

“ 2a For if I make you sorry who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?”

A GLIMPSE OF THE MAN

Here we catch a glimpse of the way in which a singularly devoted and godly man thinks. **This is the thinking of a man who had counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus** (Phil 3:8). Here is someone who had received an abundance of visions and revelations (1 Cor 12:1,7). Jesus had counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry (1 Tim 1:12), and he had received mercy to be faithful (1 Cor 7:25). For Paul, to live was Christ, and to die was gain (Phil 1:21). He knew whom he had believed, and was persuaded that He was able to keep what was committed to Him until that great day (2 Tim 1:12). He was pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14). He had been commissioned, and equipped, to open men’s eyes, turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). He labored *“more abundantly”* than all others (1 Cor 15:10). **Throughout the history of humanity, he stands among the spiritual giants.** He did not

come behind even the *“very chiefest apostles”* (2 Cor 12:11).

How does a man of this caliber think? **What kind of considerations does he have for the people of God, and how is he motivated to write to them?** You may rest assured that his godly manner of life, coupled with the extraordinary insights granted to him (Eph 3:3-6) impacted upon the way Paul thought. It affected the way he considered

Here, in some verses that may appear rather inconsequential, we catch a glimpse of a godly mind at work. This is a discerning mind, a faithful mind, and a considerate mind.

MAKE YOU SORRY

“For if I make you sorry . . . ” Other versions read, *“if I make you sorrowful,”* ^{NKJV} *“cause you sorrow,”* ^{NASB} *“grieve you,”* ^{NIV} *“cause you pain,”* ^{NRSV} and *“inflict pain upon you,”* ^{NAB}

Godliness does influence the way in which men think. When any individual is actually stretching forward with every spiritual sinew to “the things that are before” (Phil 3:13), that posture shapes how the person thinks.

the saints of God, and how he approached them. **Godliness does influence the way in which men think.** When any individual is actually stretching forward with every spiritual sinew to *“the things that are before”* (Phil 3:13), that posture shapes how the person thinks.

Paul has already affirmed the critical role of joy in the life of faith: *“Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand”* (1:24). **This being true, there is some sense in which sorrow is**

counterproductive. Sorrow and grief are part and parcel of living in this world, but they are not to be the dominant, or prevailing, factors in our lives.

Paul has just said he refrained from coming again to them in a state of sorrow or grief. That is, he did not want his presence to stir up all manner of sorrow among the saints. It might be argued that their condition richly deserved being overwhelmed with sorrow. However, this is not how Paul reasoned – and he was a man of unusual spiritual caliber.

The Apostle sees the promotion of

To accentuate that Paul did not ignore the problems at Corinth, consider how extensively he dealt with the problems at Corinth in his first epistle.

- The problem of division (1:10-17).
- Doubting Paul’s Apostleship (2:1-16; 4:1-21; 9:1-27).
- The presence of carnality (1 Cor 3:1-4).
- The presence of a fornicator in the church (5:1-13).
- Suing one another in the civil courts

thus he sought to deal with it by means of something they respected – his letters.

It appears to me that this is a perception that could well be more prominent among God’s people. **Sorrow should be avoided as much as is possible, without compromising the truth, or ignoring spiritually debilitating situations.**

Let it be clear that this was not a sorrow caused by foolish talk, inconsideration, or fleshly brashness. **Rather it was a sorrow brought on by the personal presence of Paul.** In such a case, he would be forced to confront offenders personally and deal harshly with them. Thus he said to them in his first epistle, *“What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?”* (1 Cor 4:21).

Suffice it to say, there are some people to whom it was better for Paul to write, or to send Timothy or Silas, as he did in the case of Corinth. In such cases, his imprisonment actually proved to be an advantage for the Corinthians. I ask you, how can the devil hope to triumph over godliness when such apparent disadvantages are converted into a means for recovery from his snares?

MAKING GLAD

“ . . . who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?”

The reasoning here is most remarkable! *“For if I cause you pain and make you sad, who is going to make me glad?”*^{NLT} On the surface, this may sound like a rather selfish consideration. However, this is emphatically not the case! Rather, the idea is that **Paul was unwilling to be only a source of sorrow to those who ordinarily were a joy to his heart.** The Corinthians were his fruit. After all, he had *“a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them”* (Acts 18:11). He had beheld them embrace the Lord and make certain advancements in the Lord, for *“the Lord”* had *“much people”* in that city (Acts 18:10). Early in this epistle Paul wrote that the brethren in Corinth would be his rejoicing *“in the day of the Lord Jesus”* (2 Cor 1:14). This would all be destroyed if they became excessively *“sorry”* and

It appears to me that this is a perception that could well be more prominent among God’s people. Sorrow should be avoided as much as is possible, without compromising the truth, or ignoring spiritually debilitating situations.

sorrow as ultimately coming back upon himself. **He knows that those to whom he ministers will, eventually, have a calculated affect upon himself.** They will either be a source of encouragement or discouragement, of joy or sorrow, of help or of hindrance. He therefore determines **not** to promote this sorrow by his personal presence – a presence that would have forced him to deal directly with the problems in Corinth – problems that were of such a nature as to provoke harsh treatment.

This by no means suggests that Paul will ignore the problems. He did not do this in his first epistle, and he will not do it in this one. **He chose to deal with Corinthian difficulties from a distance**, so to speak – through letters. Even the Corinthians had acknowledged that his letters were weighty, even though they despised his appearance: *“For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible”* (2 Cor 10:10). **Paul therefore chose to exploit this perception by refraining from visiting them personally.**

- (6:1-8).
- Misconceptions concerning marriage (7:1-17).
 - Inconsideration of weaker brethren (8:1-13).
 - Inconsistent manners of life (10:1-33).
 - Intolerable behavior in the assembly (11:1-19).
 - Abuse of the Lord’s table (11:10-34).
 - Corrupt views of spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40).
 - Denying the resurrection (15:1-58).
 - Failure to gather a collection they had committed to provide for the poor saints in Jerusalem (16:1-5).

Paul did **not**, therefore, refuse to make the Corinthians sorrowful by ignoring their deficiencies, but by **not** coming to them personally. His presence would have compounded the problem, and

pained by his presence.

Mutuality

There is a mutuality, or interdependence, seen here that is precious. Sorrow in the Corinthians brought a certain sorrow upon Paul as well. Conversely, gladness among them brought a mutual gladness to him. Thus, in part, the word was fulfilled, *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep”* (Rom 12:15).

The “mutual faith” that exists among the people of God is intended to bring benefit and advantage (Rom 1:12). This is why Paul made a decision to, as much as possible, avoid the promotion of sorrow. It would turn to his advantage if the Corinthians were brought spiritual maturity in a way that promoted joy. Thus he determined to help their joy, thereby making a greater appeal to their faith, for it is by faith that we stand.

There is no way to explain to a person under the bludgeon of Law, or the blight of institutionalism, how Paul was thinking. To such poor souls, his action appears to be self-serving. Perhaps some would even view it as compromising. **However, for the sensitive soul, this text confirms the marvelous advantages that are brought to the saints when they live by faith, walk in the Spirit, and seek the welfare of one another.**

WRITING TO AVOID SORROW

“^{3a} And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice . . .”

Paul further elaborates on the nature and purpose of his writing. I gather that his first epistle is intended, as well as this one. **Here we behold the Apostle digging and dunging, as it were, lest uprooting be required.** He has the mind of the faithful steward of whom Jesus spoke in a parable of a fruitless fig tree. When, after three years, the tree was still unprofitable, the owner said, *“Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”* (Luke 13:7). The *“dresser of the vineyard”* replied, *“And he answeringsaid unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down”* (Luke 13:9).

Thus Paul is working for the preservation of the Corinthians as well as their immediate benefit. He knows the mind of Lord concerning fruitlessness, trouble, inconsideration, immorality, and confusion – all of which were found in Corinth. He knew how the Head of the body felt about professing members of that body rejecting His messengers – and that condition was also found in Corinth. If these were not corrected, they would prove to be the undoing of that congregation, and the consequent loss of much of Paul’s labors.

It is essential that this perspective

be seen by all of us. **If we adopt a problem-resolution mentality, we will only think about correcting uncomely conditions.** As good as that may seem, that objective is not noble enough for the man and woman of God. There must be a higher reason for

beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Heb 6:8). This is the ultimate condition that Paul is laboring to avoid. Coupled with his strong love for the Corinthians, he was compelled to do everything possible to avoid treating

There must be a higher reason for correction and rebuke. And, indeed, we find it set forth in the Lord’s parable of the fruitless tree. It is a matter of survival – of not being pulled up, roots and all, and cast into the fire. Ultimately, this is the reason for all rebuke and correction.

correction and rebuke. And, indeed, we find it set forth in the Lord’s parable of the fruitless tree. It is a matter of survival – of not being pulled up, roots and all, and cast into the fire. **Ultimately, this is the reason for all rebuke and correction.**

This very thing is confirmed in the sixth chapter of Hebrews. There some tardy believers were being corrected and rebuked, lest they be cursed by the Lord of the vineyard. Here is how the case is stated by the Holy Spirit. *“For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which*

the Corinthians harshly. In concert with the Savior, he was avoiding breaking the bruised reeds and quenching the smoking flax (Isa 42:3; Matt 12:20).

LEST WHEN I CAME

“And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came . . .” Other versions read, *“I wrote this very thing unto you, lest when I came”*^{NKJV} *“I wrote as I did so that when I came,”*^{NIV} *“I have written this very letter to you, that coming I,”*^{DARBY} and *“indeed, I wrote as I did precisely to spare myself.”*^{NJB}

As I have already mentioned, the writing to which Paul refers probably includes his first epistle as well as this one, for he did not see the Corinthians

between the writing of these two letters. While it grieved him to have to write in such a manner, it was necessary to do so in order to make for a congenial meeting in the future.

He is preparing the way for a meeting with Corinth like John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord. John heralded a message of repentance, thereby readying people to receive a Savior. Of him Isaiah prophesied, *“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our*

and strengthen. He wanted to speak to the Corinthians *“as unto spiritual,”* bringing them profit and joy (1 Cor 3:1). But, alas, in order to do this, he had to remove some obstructions. He wanted to do some planting when he came.

FROM THEM OF WHOM I OUGHT TO REJOICE

“ . . . I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice . . . ” Other versions read, *“I should have sorrow over those from whom, I ought to have joy,”*^{NKJV} *“I should have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice,”*^{NASB}

to be made joyful by you, and you have no right to cause them sorrow. This is not the sorrow that we share with one another, as when we bear one another’s burdens, weeping with those who weep (Gal 6:2; Rom 12:15). This is a sorrow produced by sin and transgression. It is a sorrow caused when a believer does not grow up into Christ, choosing to remain infantile and unable to handle *“strong meat,”* which *“belongeth to them that are of full age”* (Heb 5:12-14).

A Critical Area

Here is an area that cannot be addressed by lifeless religious institutionalism. In fact, there is no concern for such things among those caught in that snare. It appears that things are so ordered in the average church that this reaction could not even occur. Those who are young, both in the faith and in years, are sometimes sequestered from the rest of the brethren. They often are provided a spiritual diet that does not even allow for maturity in the faith.

In addition to this, a sense of proper respect for those who are more mature is not developed in them. **Consequently, they never are aware of the grief that is caused in godly people by those whose growth is stunted, and whose progress in the faith is never observed.**

Let it be clear, the body of Christ not only is NOT intended to function under such circumstances, it **cannot** do so. **There can be no growth in Christ when the means of growth are suppressed.** Neither, indeed, can proper advancement in the faith be realized when the lives of professing believers provoke sorrow rather than joy in the hearts of those living close to the Lord.

I am of the opinion that this is a circumstance that is rarely, if ever, realized in the average congregation. The saints are to be made aware that they *“ought”* to cause rejoicing in the hearts of the godly. This is not a luxury, but a necessity! The awareness of genuine faith and produces a harvest of joy in holy people. When this circumstance takes place, there will be more profitable ministry realized by everyone. Where it is not found, little for God will be done.

No believer has a right to be a source of grief to another member of Christ’s body. God’s “great salvation” makes no provision for such a circumstance! In the very beginning of our identity with Jesus, we are “fitly framed together” – made to assist one another in growing together “unto a holy temple in the Lord”

God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain” (Isa 40:3-4). The Apostle was making the way straight that had become crooked through transgression. He was raising up the valleys and low places that had been produced by waywardness. He was gathering out the stones and obstacles created by spiritually offensive conduct, and making the way *“plain.”* He was bringing down the mountains of hindrance that had been created by the thoughtless conduct of the Corinthians.

The ministry of Paul to the church bore some resemblance to Jeremiah’s ministry to Israel. *“See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant”* (Jer 1:10). Paul’s desire was *“to plant”* – to edify, build up,

“I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice,”^{NIV} and *“I will not be made sad by the very ones who ought to give me the greatest joy.”*^{NLT}

No believer has a right to be a source of grief to another member of Christ’s body. God’s *“great salvation”* makes no provision for such a circumstance! In the very beginning of our identity with Jesus, we are *“fitly framed together”* – made to assist one another in growing together *“unto a holy temple in the Lord”* (Eph 2:21). Disciples who cause any other reaction are not living by faith or walking in the Spirit. They are not drawing upon the heavenly resources to which they have been called (Eph 1:3; 2:6). This is precisely why Paul is writing as he does. **He is dealing with a spiritually abnormal situation, seeking to correct it.**

Fellow believers have a right

CONFIDENCE AND JOY

“^{3b} . . . having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.”

HAVING CONFIDENCE IN YOU

“ . . . having confidence in you all . . . ” Other versions read, *“I am confident about all of you,”*^{NRSV} *“I felt sure of all of you,”*^{RSV} *“being certain of you,”*^{BBE} and *“in the conviction that all of you.”*^{NJB}

The word *“confidence”* comes from a word meaning, *“trust, confidence, reliance . . . having been persuaded,”*^{THAYER} *“have become convinced; hence trust (firmly) in, rely on, be confident about,”*^{FRIBERG} *“have confidence, be confident; be certain or sure,”*^{UBS} *“to persuade, convince,”*^{LOUW-NIDA} and *“to trust, rely on, have confidence in a person.”*^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Having spoken so harshly with the brethren in Corinth, it may sound peculiar that Paul now expresses confidence in them. He has already expressed confidence that *“in the day of the Lord Jesus”* He will rejoice in the Corinthians, and they will rejoice in him (1:15). Later, he will again affirm, *“I have confidence in you in all things”* (7:16), and *“the great confidence which I have in you”* (8:22).

Paul wrote similarly to the Galatians, who were also deficient in their spiritual manners: *“I have confidence in you through the Lord”* (Gal 5:10). He wrote the same to the Thessalonians: *“we have confidence in the Lord touching you”* (2 Thess 3:4), and to Philemon as well: *“having confidence in thy obedience”* (Phile 1:21).

How is it that Paul could speak in this manner? Was he simply being polite, or optimistic after a fleshly manner? Or, was this his way of encouraging the

Corinthians, like a parent encourages their infant to walk by saying, *“You can do it!”* It should be apparent that this is not the case, for it is not the manner of

you all would share my joy.”^{NIV}

Paul’s confidence was that the things bringing joy to him would also

When human preferences are accented by the church, divisions are the inevitable result. That is why effective ministry cannot be accomplished according to the flesh, or in ways appealing to “the natural man.”

the kingdom to speak with such earthly motivation.

This expression is driven by an acquaintance with the capacity and manner of the new creation. There is a certain way in which the *“new man”* reacts to the Word of the Lord. After all, it is *“is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him”* (Col 3:10). Paul’s *“confidence”* is not in the Corinthians as men, but in them as those who have been made *“partakers of Christ”* (Heb 3:14) and of *“the Divine nature”* (2 Pet 1:4).

This is a critical distinction that must be made if we are to obtain a proper understanding of Scripture. If this is not seen, we will be led to conclude that serious flaws among God’s people have no bearing upon their acceptance by God, or their ability to recover from setbacks.

MY JOY IS YOUR JOY

“ . . . that my joy is the joy of you all.” Other versions read, *“that my joy would be the joy of you all,”*^{NASB} and *“that*

bring joy to the Corinthians. To put it another way, **what tended to promote Paul’s happiness would also promote theirs.**

There is an underlying reality in this expression that is refreshing to consider. There is a sense in which all believers have the same mind. At the heart of the new creation there is *“one heart, and one way”* (Jer 32:39). In regeneration, the Lord gives us *“one heart,”* putting a *“new spirit”* within us (Ezek 11:19). This is why the people of God have the capacity to glorify God with *“one mind and one mouth”* (Rom 15:6). It is why they can *“with one mind strive together for the faith of the Gospel”* (1 Cor 1:27). It is why they can be *“likeminded,”* being *“of one accord, of one mind”* (Phil 2:2). **When human preferences are accented by the church, divisions are the inevitable result.** That is why effective ministry cannot be accomplished according to the flesh, or in ways appealing to *“the natural man.”* True spiritual advance is taking place when the people of God find joy in the same spiritual realities.

WRITING OUT OF AFFLICTION AND ANGUISH

“^{4a} For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears . . . ” Other

versions read, *“For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears,”*^{NIV} *“For out of much*

trouble and pain of heart and much weeping I sent my letter to you,”^{BBE} *“I wrote to you in agony of mind,”*^{NJB} *“How*

painful it was to write that letter! Heartbroken, I cried over it,^{NLT} and *“for out of much tribulation and pressure of heart I wrote to you through many tears.”*^{NLT}

It did not delight the heart of Paul to have to deal with the sins and ignorance at Corinth. Those with the Spirit will find a similar reaction when having to confront sin and juvenility among the saints. Sin always causes adverse effects. It is an intruder that disrupts and causes waves of sorrow wherever it is found. When Jerusalem did not recognize the time of its visitation by the Lord’s Christ, it caused the Savior to weep (Luke 19:41).

Notice the strength of Paul’s language: *“affliction,” “anguish,”* and *“tears”* erupted when he wrote to this church. Like Jude, he would rather write of the *“common salvation,”* lifting up the saints, encouraging their hearts, and building them up in the most holy faith (Jude 3).

“MUCH AFFLICTION”

This is an inner *“affliction,”* included in *“the care of the churches”* that came upon Paul daily. The word

speaks of pressure – the kind that comes from having a great weight laid upon the human spirit. It saps one’s strength to bear the pressure, causing distress and suffering. The Thessalonians received the Word of God *“in much affliction,”* enduring the insults and oppositions of men (1 Thess 1:6). However, this *“affliction”* was caused by professing believers who were living far beneath the privileges of the sons of God – when there was no good reason for doing so.

“ANGUISH OF HEART”

As *“afflictions”* speak of an increasing pressure placed upon the spirit, *“anguish”* speaks of being forced to deal with abrasive influence. It is like holding two things together that cannot get along – like a thorn in the side, sand in the eyes, or a hot and stifling climate. *“Anguish”* speaks of a narrowing effect – like being forced to walk between two ragged walls that cut and tear the skin. There is an *“anguish”* that awaits those who do evil – a distress they themselves will reap (Rom, 2:9). However, here is an *“anguish”* caused to a holy man by those who boasted of being identified with Jesus.

“MANY TEARS”

“Tears” are the eruption of great sorrow – when the effects of *“affliction”* and *“anguish”* can no longer be contained within. This does not speak of *“tears”* resulting from the infliction of bodily pain – although many of God’s saints have experienced such things. **These are tears that spring from knowledge and understanding – an acute awareness of the real condition of people.** Paul was *“mindful”* of the *“tears”* shed by Timothy as he ministered in the name of the Lord (2 Tim 1:4). Here Paul speaks of *“many tears”* – a profuse crying that issued from a tender and insightful heart. When confronted with the assignment of bearing the sins of an alienated world, Jesus *“offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears”* (Heb 5:7). However, here the sins of the saints have caused tears to erupt in the very man God sent to bless them. One writer has said that Paul *“baptized his letters with his tears.”*^{W.B. GODBEY}

Those who minister in the name of the Lord are often adversely effected by the very ones to whom they minister. This is part of the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, and is a means by which we are prepared to reign with Christ.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF LOVE

“^{4b} . . . not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.”

The Apostle continues to explain

letters as well. **Such explanations are made necessary when carnality rises to inordinate levels.** These explanations are actually speaking *“after the manner of men”* (Gal 3:15). They are spiritual lipings, required by the

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1). Again, Paul wrote to the Romans, *“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh . . .”* (Rom 6:19).

Those who insist on remaining in spiritual infancy place a great handicap upon those who teach them. They need to hear things pertinent to their faith and hope, yet are not able to bear them because of their spiritual condition.

Those who insist on remaining in spiritual infancy place a great handicap upon those who teach them. They need to hear things pertinent to their faith and hope, yet are not able to bear them because of their spiritual condition. Thus, when speaking of Melchizedec, Paul wrote, *“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing”* (Heb 5:11). I have often pondered the possible disadvantages that have been realized by succeeding generations because of their dulness.

what he did and did not intend by his delay in coming, and by means of his

juvenility of the people. This is why Paul said in his first Epistle to the Corinthians,

Every believer should “go on to perfection” (Heb 6:1), not only for their own sake, but for those who follow them. The seriousness of living in a generation that is not noted for an aggressive pursuit of spiritual maturity cannot be overstated. The Corinthians are a case in point.

NOT THAT YOU SHOULD BE GRIEVED

“... not that ye should be grieved . . .” Other versions read, “not that you should be made sorrowful,”^{NASB} “not to grieve you,”^{NIV} “not to cause you pain,”^{NRSV} “not that ye should be made sorry,”^{ASV} “not meaning to cause you distress,”^{NJB} and “I didn’t want to hurt you.”^{NLT}

By saying these words – words coming from his heart – Paul softened the harsh words he was forced to speak. **Their condition forbade silence on his part, and yet his purpose was not to harm them, but to help them; not to grieve them, but to bless them; not to make them sorry, but to bring them gladness.** Notwithstanding, sin introduces a condition that causes sound doctrine to hurt, and admonition to smart like salt poured on an open wound.

No man or woman of God finds delight in inflicting pain upon others. This reflects the very nature of God Himself, who asks, “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?” (Ezek 18:23). Again, the Lord testifies to the wayward, “For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (Ezek 18:32). And again it is written, “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live . . .” (Ezek 33:11).

Solemnly Jeremiah declares, “For the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men” (Lam 3:31-33). Peter rises to affirm the same thing: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

But let none imagine this means God will not deal with those who wear His name, yet slosh about in sin as though that was their appointed domain! It is still true, as the Lord said to David regarding Solomon, “I will be his father, and he shall be my son. **If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men**” (2 Sam 7:14).

The sensitivity of the Lord to this circumstance is reflected in the words of Isaiah: “In all their affliction He was afflicted . . .” (Isa 63:9). And again it is written in the book of Judges, “His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel” (Judges 10:16).

impacts upon the soul that even the balm of Gilead smarts at first, causing grief before its healing virtues are experienced. Blessed is the person who knows these things, and exercises himself to avoid the snare of the devil!

THAT YOU MIGHT KNOW THE LOVE

“... but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.” Other versions read, “might know the love which I have especially for you,”^{NASB} “know the depth of my love for you,”^{NIV} “how great is the love I have for you,”^{BEB} “perceive the love which I have, especially for you,”^{GENEVA} and “how you how very much love I have for you.”^{NJB}

Great love is exhibited in

Thus Paul wrote in a manner consistent with the Divine nature, even though it grieved him to do so. He did not want to cause pain or grief to the Corinthians. However, in order to dig out the roots of transgression, his counsel would cause them some pain, grief, and sorrow.

Ultimately, the Lord’s intention is to bless. As it is written, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer 29:11). However, sometimes He must smite the people in order to heal them, and hurt them in order to bring them comfort. As it is written, “Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for **He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and he will bind us up**” (Hosea 6:1).

Thus Paul wrote in a manner consistent with the Divine nature, even though it grieved him to do so. He did not want to cause pain or grief to the Corinthians. However, in order to dig out the roots of transgression, his counsel would cause them some pain, grief, and sorrow.

Learn from this that sin inflicts more pain than you dare to imagine. It so

addressing the matter of sin among God’s people. Solomon alluded to this reality when he wrote, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov 27:6). One version reads, “Well meant are the wounds a friend inflicts.”^{NRSV} That is, when the words of a friend hurt, know that the friend did not intend to hurt, but to bring good. Such words are to the hearer like the surgeon’s knife is to the patient.

The flesh cries out for transgression to be ignored in the name of worldly friendship. The Spirit cries out for sin to be addressed in the interest of our eternal destiny! No professed follower of Christ truly loves us if they ignore our sin, allowing us to blunder through life to our own hurt, and possible condemnation. The sleeping driver must sometime be shouted awake. A person babbling on in a moment of dementia, must sometimes be smitten to bring them to their senses. It requires a

lot of love to do such a thing, for it will often be misinterpreted.

It is cruel beyond expression to allow a brother to remain unchecked in sin. Thus Paul affirms his special love for the Corinthians, as exhibited by his tearful diligence to

address their spiritual deficiencies. If his words caused sorrow for them, they caused even more for him, because he really did not want to hurt them.

The volume of Paul's writings to the Corinthians confirms that his love for them exceeded the love he

had for many others. It was *"more abundantly,"* and *"especially."*^{NASB} Further, the greater part of the writing was corrective in nature. Just as the Lord chastens those He loves (Heb 12:6), so Paul wrote more painfully and correctively to those he loved, seeking to bring them into greater blessings.

GRIEF IN PART

"^{5a} But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part, that I may not overcharge you all."

☛ The proper response, Paul affirms, was to *"put out of your fellowship the man who did this"*^{NIV} (5:2b).

☛ *"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us,"* thus forbidding the presence of this sin (5:7b).

Paul now comes to grips with the serious offense with which he dealt in his first Epistle – the fornicator who "had his father's wife." There was no ambiguity in the manner by which the Apostle dealt with this matter.

☛ The *"feast"* of the Lord's Supper was not to be eaten with the influence of *"old leaven"* among them (5:8a).

☛ The creeping leaven of *"malice and wickedness"* was not to be allowed (5:8b).

☛ Participation in *"the feast"* was to be attended *"with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"* (5:8c).

Paul now comes to grips with the serious offense with which he dealt in his first Epistle – the fornicator who *"had his father's wife"* (1 Cor 5:1-13). **There was no ambiguity in the manner by which the Apostle dealt with this matter.** A brief reminder of how Paul addressed this issue will serve to prepare us for this section of Second Corinthians (verses 5-11).

☛ Although Paul was not actually among them at this time, he had already judged the man who had committed this sin, just as though he was present (5:3).

☛ In a special letter, Paul had warned the Corinthians not to *"keep company with sexually immoral people"*^{NKJV} (5:9).

☛ This injunction had particularly to do with immoral people within the church, for such people are so prevalent in the world, we would have leave the world to avoid them (5:10).

☛ Immorality had been reported *"among"* the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:1a).

☛ The immorality was especially reprehensible. A man was *"living with his father's wife"*^{NRSV} – *"living in sin with his father's wife"*^{NLT} (5:1b).

☛ When the Corinthians were assembled together, with Paul's spirit among them, and *"with the power of the Lord Jesus,"* they were to *"deliver"* the offender *"to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"* (5:4-5a).

☛ Those with whom the saints are not to keep company include any person who is *"called a brother,"* yet is a *"fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat"* (1 Cor 5:11).

☛ The sin was so terrible that it *"does not occur even among pagans"*^{NIV} (5:1c).

☛ The purpose of this action was *"that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (5:5b).

☛ Such judgment pertains to those **within** the church. Those who are in the world will be judged by God (5:12-13a).

☛ Instead of mourning the existence of such a condition, the Corinthians were proud, apparently boasting of the superiority of their assembly (5:2).

☛ In view of the presence of this sin, the boasting of the Corinthians was *"not good"* (5:6a).

☛ The principle they had ignored was that *"a little leaven leavens the whole lump"* (5:6b).

☛ In view of these realities, Paul admonished the Corinthians, *"Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person"*

☛ The *"old leaven,"* or sinful influence, was to be purged from among them (5:7a).

(5:13b).

It is nearly inconceivable to consider such an action actually being carried out in the average American church. However, we will find that Corinth did, in fact, do what Paul had declared must be done. Now the Apostle begins to address that response and the results coming from it.

IF ANY HAVE CAUSED GRIEF

“But if any have caused grief. . .”

Other versions read, *“But if any has caused sorrow,”*^{NASB} *“if anyone has caused pain,”*^{NRSV} *“if anyone has been a cause of sorrow,”*^{BBE} and *“If anyone did cause distress.”*^{NJB}

The grief or sorrow that has been caused is twofold. **First**, the offending party, the fornicator among the Corinthians. **Second**, the initial haughtiness of the Corinthians in boasting of their superiority while shameful transgression was found among them.

Sin causes grief in those with understanding. It is like a wounding bludgeon to the hearts of those who are living by faith. This is because sin chaffs against the *“new man,”* causing pain and sorrow. **Whether it is personal sin, or the sin of those about us, until it causes sorrow and pain, that sin will continue.** It is only he who has *“suffered in the flesh”* that *“has ceased from sin”*^{NKJV} (1 Pet 4:1). There is no more dangerous religion than one that leaves the people with no sorrow over sin. **When people learn to live with sin, they abruptly cease to live with Christ Jesus!** In our part of the world, there is room for a lot of improvement in this area of life.

HE HATH NOT GRIEVED ME, BUT IN PART

“. . . he hath not grieved me, but in part. . .” Other versions read, *“he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent,”*^{NKJV} *“not to me, but in some degree. . . to all of you,”*^{NASB} *“he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you,”*^{NIV} and *“hurt your entire church more than he hurt me.”*^{NLT}

The point here is that Paul did not address the matter of the Corinthian

fornicator only because it pained him personally. **That sin was a blotch upon the entire congregation – causing grief, pain, and sorrow, even though they did not perceive it at the first.** We know this is the case, because Corinth was not grieved in the beginning. They did not mourn, but were rather haughty in their spirit, boasting in their congregation even though such grievous sin was among them. **However, here Paul is speaking of the ultimate outcome of this matter.**

The sorrow wrought by this incident is spelled out later in this Epistle. *“For behold what earnestness this very thing, **this godly sorrow**, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, **what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong!** In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God”*^{NASB} (2

“. . . that I may not overcharge you all.” Other versions read, *“not to be too severe,”*^{NKJV} *“in order not to say too much,”*^{NASB} *“not to put it too severely,”*^{NIV} *“not to exaggerate it,”*^{NRSV} *“that I press not too heavily,”*^{ASV} *“that I may not be over-hard on you,”*^{BBE} and *“that I may not burden you all.”*^{DOUAY}

The idea here is that although the sin was most grievous with which they had to deal, **Paul would not press the issue further than necessary.** It has caused hurt, indeed, but they had taken measures to correct it. Thus, Paul will not linger upon the hurt that it caused to him, and to the whole congregation. He is being gentle with them *“even as a nurse cherisheth her children”* (1 Thess 2:7).

This also applies to the fornicator himself. As will become apparent, that man had repented. Paul will not, therefore, burden him unreasonably with a sense of his guilt.

AN OBSERVATION

Sorrow and pain are always in the

Ponder what took place among the Corinthians: earnestness, godly sorrow, vindication, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and avenging wrong. What a trail is left by iniquity! Let every soul be zealous to avoid having to walk down this path.

Cor 7:11-12).

Even after the fornicator had been dealt with appropriately, and even restored, yet that sin sent a wake of sorrow throughout the congregation. Ponder what took place among the Corinthians: earnestness, godly sorrow, vindication, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and avenging wrong. What a trail is left by iniquity! **Let every soul be zealous to avoid having to walk down this path.** Remember also that transgressing church members impact the entire congregation, bringing shame and disgrace mingled with pain and sorrow.

NOT OVERCHARGING

wake of the wave of sin. As a stone cannot be cast into the water **without causing ripples, so sin cannot enter the church without causing trouble.** Thus it is written, *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, **and thereby many be defiled”*** (Heb 12:15).

One of the sure signs of a decadent generation and a dead church is the toleration of sin. When sin is not offensive, a distance necessarily exists between that person or persons and the living God. The closer one gets to the Lord, the less tolerance there is toward sin and transgressors. Iniquity becomes

more painful, and the soul smarts at its presence. **However, when men choose to dwell in far off places, aloof from the Lord, and insensitive to His presence and will, sin does not bother them.** Such people have no

compunctions about walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the sear of the scornful (Psa 1:1).

The Lord is not unmindful of such

conditions. Our time is the time for spiritual sensitivity to reach new heights. It is the time when sin must be more abrasive, more offensive, and more painful. This is the day of salvation from the guilt and power of sin.

PUNISHMENT THAT IS SUFFICIENT

“⁶ Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.”

Paul now comes to grips with the expulsion of the man who was living with his father’s wife (1 Cor 5:1). It is apparent from this section (vs 6-11) that this man had, in fact, repented of the evil he was doing. The Spirit now leads the Apostle to instruct the brethren in their response to that repentance.

SUFFICIENT PUNISHMENT

“*Sufficient to such a man is this punishment . . .*” Other versions read, “*This punishment . . . is sufficient for such a man,*”^{NKJB} “*Let it be enough for such a man to have undergone the punishment,*”^{BBE} and “*He was punished enough.*”^{NLT}

Sin always carries with it a

meet the objectives intended by it. We might say, *it did the job*. The man was not to continue to carry the stigma of his transgression. He was duely chastened, and the purpose for chastening is that we might “*be partakers of His holiness,*” when it “*afterward*” yields “*the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby*” (Heb 12:10-11).

It was not necessary for there to be a second stage, so to speak, of the penalty. **To the consternation of fleshly wisdom, recovery does not have to be in stages!** Such imagined stages may contribute to a long and productive career for those who impose them upon people, but they are of no value in the Kingdom of God. Peter did not have to go through a program to recover from denying Jesus. A “*look*” from Jesus did the job (Luke 22:61-62). Paul did not have to go through a

dealt, are said to have been sufficient, adequate, and effective. No further correction is required. **The reason for this circumstance is obvious. God Himself had worked through the action, bringing about a genuine moral and spiritual change.** That being accomplished, it was not necessary to carry the matter further.

Punishment

We do not know exactly what the punishment was. The Corinthians were told to come together with Paul’s spirit and “*the power of our Lord Jesus Chris to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh*” (1 Cor 5:4-5). Other versions read, “*hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed,*”^{NIV} and “*Then you must cast this man out of the church and into Satan’s hands, so that his sinful nature will be destroyed.*”^{NLT} The objective for this punishment is twofold, and is clearly stated. First, it was the “*destruction of the flesh.*” Second, it was in order that “*the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*” The first was necessary for the realization of the second.

Deliver unto Satan

What does it mean to deliver someone over to Satan? The very thought is arresting. First, this does not mean that the man was going to die, as confirmed by our text, which finds the man repenting and restored to his right mind. Second, this is hinged to being excommunicated from the church – which means **the man was deprived of all of the advantages of the body of Christ.** Third, this could have involved some form of grievous illness being imposed upon the man, as when some of the Corinthians became sick because of their inappropriate conduct around the Lord’s table (1 Cor 11:30).

The reason for this circumstance is obvious. God Himself had worked through the action, bringing about a genuine moral and spiritual change. That being accomplished, it was not

penalty. **The nature of the sin will determine the nature of the penalty.** Because of the severity of the transgression committed by the man in question – a sin that did not even occur among pagans (1 Cor 5:1) – it demanded an unusual and severe penalty.

Sufficient

Since the man had repented, the punishment imposed upon him was “*sufficient*” – that is, it was “*enough*” to

recovery program for aggressive persecutors. A single confrontation with the Lord of glory was “*sufficient*” to abruptly conclude that career (Acts 26:13-19). The demoniac from Gadara did not go through a staged recovery from being a wild man. A word from the Master brought about a complete healing (Luke 8:28-35).

Now, the means through which the sin of the offending Corinthian was

Generally speaking, when the church separated this man from their company, even refusing to eat with him (1 Cor 5:11), he was at once in the devil's territory, for he is "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). The principle here may be thus explained.

- First, it was assumed that the man had, in fact, become a member of Christ's body.
- Second, it was assumed that once deprived of the amenities of Divine and congregational fellowship, he would be brought to repentance.
- Third, having been totally separated from the company of God's people, the Lord Himself could work with the man without the distraction of other well-meaning people.

There are some conditions that cannot be helped by advice, rebuke, correction, and instruction in righteousness. There are some sins that are so grievous the people of God must remove their hands and influence from the person, allowing Satan to work his will in him, and the Holy Spirit to penetrate his hard heart.

Paul cites a similar incident to

Timothy that involved two men: "Hymenaeus and Alexander." Hymenaeus was one of the men who taught the resurrection had passed already, overthrowing the faith of some (2 Tim 2:17-18). Alexander was noted for doing much evil to Paul and greatly withstanding his words (2 Tim 4:14-15). Paul said he turned both of these men over to Satan "that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim 1:20). **In that case, as well as the one in our text, the**

put on him,"^{BBE} and "when most of you were united in your judgment against him."^{NLT}

In a rare display of unity, the Corinthians had joined together in the infliction of this punishment – difficult though it must have been. Paul had told them to come together on this matter, aware of the presence of his own spirit, and the power of the Lord Jesus. In that holy union, they were to inflict the

There are some sins that are so grievous the people of God must remove their hands and influence from the person, allowing Satan to work his will in him, and the Holy Spirit to penetrate his hard heart.

judgment was temporal, not eternal: "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," and "that they may learn not to blaspheme." In other words, the aim was recovery, not final condemnation.

INFLECTED OF MANY

"... which was inflicted of many."

Other versions read, "which was inflicted by the majority"^{NKJB} "which the church

"punishment" – and they did.

I can hardly conceive of a modern church agreeing to carry out such a judgment. So much of the wisdom of this world has been brought into the churches that they cannot think in such a manner. A sort of spiritual retardation reigns. This may very well account for the absence of such significant recoveries.

FORGIVENESS AND COMFORT

"^{7a} So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him . . ."

What should be done, now that the punishment is confirmed to have been "sufficient?" For some, it might mean to simply step away from the matter, doing nothing more of any substance. For others, it might be supposed that returning to the normal manner in which brethren are to be treated would be sufficient. However, as we might expect, there was a more spiritually productive way to respond to the individual's recovery.

CONTRARIWISE

"So that contrariwise . . ." Other

versions read, "on the contrary,"^{NKJV} "instead,"^{NIV} "you should rather,"^{RSV} "on the other hand,"^{BBE} and "by contrast."^{NJB} Here is an action that is the opposite of inflicting punishment. It is as though the Apostle said, "You all joined together in inflicting punishment on the transgressor, now join together in reacting appropriately to his repentance."

There is a principle to be seen here that reflects the nature of life in Christ Jesus. **We have not been called into a static, or unchanging, manner of life.** Because we confront differing environments, we are to conduct ourselves appropriately in all of them. When those with whom we are identified alter their manners, our response is also

to be appropriate. This includes a proper reaction to transgression, and repentance as well.

FORGIVE HIM

"... ye ought rather to forgive him . . ." Other versions read, "turn to forgive,"^{RSV} and "it is right for you to have forgiveness."^{BBE} To "forgive" is to "show oneself gracious, pardon, grant forgiveness, and restore,"^{THAYER} and "to cancel a debt."^{UBS}

Here forgiveness is granted for a sin that did not appear to be against the people doing the forgiving. One might suppose the offense had been committed against the man's father, whose wife he had, as it were, taken to himself. However, sin

against others can actually be a sin against Christ Himself. Speaking of another matter – offending weaker brethren – it is written, *“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ”* (1 Cor 8:12).

Sin’s Defiling Influence

Here, however, the entire church at Corinth had been offended by the transgression of the man who chose to take his father’s wife to himself. Like Achan’s sin defiled and troubled the whole camp of Israel (Josh 6:18; 7:25), so **this man had defiled and troubled the whole church.**

people are to forgive him, refusing to withhold that forgiveness from him.

All of this would have no meaning whatsoever if the penalty for sin had not been realized by the expulsion of this man.

Repentance Precedes Forgiveness

These days, there is a lot of loose talk about forgiveness. **Much of it is more psychological than spiritual, and is rooted in human sympathy rather than spiritual discernment.** Thus we hear of people who forgive those who have sinned grievously, even though there is not the slightest evidence of

He *“cannot deny Himself”* (2 Tim 2:13).

Jesus instructed His disciples, *“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him”* (Luke 17:3-4).

In the case before us, the man had repented, and therefore was to be forgiven. He was no longer to be noted or treated as a fornicator, but as a brother who had made *“straight paths for his feet”* (Heb 12:13). He was not to be treated as though it was true, *“once a fornicator always a fornicator.”* Genuine change is to be found in Christ Jesus, and when it takes place, it is to be duly noted and honored by the saints.

COMFORT HIM

“... and comfort him ...” Other versions read, *“console him,”* ^{NRSV} and *“encourage”* ^{DARBY} To comfort involves encouragement, consolation, solace. **Comfort is to the wounded spirit what soothing and healing oil is to a cut in the flesh** (Lk 10:34). It is the spiritual *“balm”* in Gilead that promotes the recovery of spiritual health (Jer 8:22).

If the objective of putting the man out of the church was that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 5:5), **then comfort and encouragement are also required to ready the recoverer for “the day of the Lord Jesus.”** The aim is not merely to recover from sin, but to be ready to stand before Jesus. Comfort contributes significantly to that readiness. How refreshing comfort is to the soul that is recovering from the snare of the devil!

There is a sense in which we, like the Lord Himself, are to be “ready to forgive.” The lack of forgiveness must never be due to the unwillingness of the offended part to forgive – never. However, where there is no repentance, there really can be no forgiveness.

This condition exists because, in Christ, we actually become *“members one of another”* (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25). Together we are members of Christ’s *“body, of His flesh, and of His bones”* (Eph 4:25). Consequently, we are all joined together. There is a sense in which the blessing of one becomes the blessing of all, and the defiling effects of one permeates into the whole, like a *“little leaven”* that finally *“leavens the whole lump”* (1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9).

Now, because the man who had sinned against them had repented, the

repentance.

There is a sense in which we, like the Lord Himself, are to be *“ready to forgive”* (Psa 86:5). **The lack of forgiveness must never be due to the unwillingness of the offended part to forgive – never.** However, where there is no repentance, there really can be no forgiveness. **Not even God Himself forgives those who do not repent – not because He does not have a desire to forgive, but because he cannot forgive the impenitent.** His nature will not allow Him to do so, and

SWALLOWED UP WITH SORROW

“... lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” Other versions read, *“swallowed up with too much sorrow,”* ^{NKJV} *“overwhelmed by excessive sorrow,”* ^{NASB} *“his sorrow may be overgreat,”* ^{BBE} *“swallowed up with excessive*

grief,” ^{DARBY} *“overmuch heaviness,”* ^{GENEVA} *“overwhelmed by the extent of his distress,”* ^{NJB} and *“so discouraged he won’t be able to recover.”* ^{NLT}

This text is pregnant with meaning! Among other things it indicates:

- ☛ The difficulty of recovering from deep immorality. The pleasures of sin may be for a season, but the sorrow that it causes also has a season that makes recovery difficult.
- ☛ The debilitating effects of sin. Sin

takes strength from us, so that even godly sorrow can wear us out and drive us to discouragement.

- The powerful effects of repentance. Repentance results from Godly sorrow and leads to salvation (2 Cor 7:10). It also produces a sorrow that can overwhelm the weakened soul.
- The unavoidable aftermath of sin. Once repentance is realized, the sinner may not be done with the matter of his sin. The very memory of grievous transgression can undo a person.
- The power of sorrow. Sorrow exerts a power over the soul that can only be neutralized by comfort.
- The limitations of sorrow. Sorrow is not an end of itself. Eventually it must give way to the joy of the Lord, else the person will give up.
- Repentance and sorrow are wed together. Where there is no sorrow for sin, there has been no repentance of it.

It is important to remember that repentance and recovery are not synonymous. Repentance can lead to recovery, but it is not the same as recovery. It is AFTER repentance –

It is important to remember that repentance and recovery are not synonymous. Repentance can lead to recovery, but it is not the same as recovery. It is AFTER repentance – repentance that God gives – that transgressors must “recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will”

repentance that God gives – that transgressors must “*recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will*”^{NKJV} (2 Tim 2:26).

This is precisely why, if the penitent are not comforted, sorrow can swallow them up. If the church did not forgive and comfort this brother, Satan would gain the advantage. Working through his defiled conscience and wounded heart, he would actually pull him back into the snare from which he had been liberated.

There is a sense in which this text is attended by a certain strange sound. It is not because the text itself is difficult. Nor, indeed, is it because it contradicts the circumcised heart and spirit (Rom 2:29). **Rather, the strangeness of sound is owing to the distorted**

Christianity of our day. The state of the American church is such as renders this text nearly meaningless. An attitude toward sin has been adopted that is too accommodating. It would be strange to find a congregation actually expelling someone from their presence because of fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing (slander), drunkenness, or extortion (swinging) (1 Cor 5:11). It would also be strange to hear of someone being overcome with sorrow because of their transgression. Modern religion simply does not make room for, or encourage, such responses.

Notwithstanding this situation, this is the manner of the Kingdom. It is actually the church norm or standard. Any conduct that contradicts this norm is, in fact, spiritually abnormal and unacceptable. It is a spiritual blotch on the canvas of redemption.

CONFIRM YOUR LOVE

“⁸ Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.”

Because recovery from sin is so essential, Paul labors the necessity of assisting this brother in regaining the ground lost through his offense.

Right here, it is important to make an observation. **It is not only vital that the church seek the initial deliverance of people from sin, but that they also aggressively seek the recovery of those who have fallen again into sin.** A climate must be produced among God’s people that

compels them to deal with the introduction of sin, and to aggressively respond to repentance from sin. This text provides all that is necessary to confirm that observation.

I BESEECH YOU

“Wherefore I beseech you . . .” Other versions read, “I urge you,”^{NKJV} “I beg you,”^{RSV} “I exhort you,”^{DARBY} “I pray you,”^{GENEVA} and “I call upon you.”^{YLT}

Paul does not say “I command you,” but “I beseech you.” He does not defer to law, but to grace. He entreats, or pleads, with the people. **He is not promoting a procedure, but enabling**

a recovery. He is not simply demanding that the Corinthians do the right thing, but to actually participate in God’s recovery program. Jesus announced, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord*” (Luke 4:18-19). That is what Jesus came to do, and Paul is calling the church to join in that most noble work. **What he is going to urge them to do cannot be done within the**

framework of Law, or by a mere ceremony. This calls for the involvement of the whole heart.

CONFIRM YOUR LOVE TOWARD HIM

“ . . . that ye would confirm your love toward him.” Other versions read, “reaffirm your love to him,”^{NKJV} “make your love clear to him by your acts,”^{BEB} “Assure him of your love,”^{DARBY} and “give your love towards him definite

expression.”^{NJB}

To “confirm” means to “make valid, confirm publicly or solemnly, to ratify;”^{THAYER} “publicly affirm,”^{FRIBERG} “put into effect,”^{UBS} and “give force to, validate.”^{LOUW-NIDA} In other words, **just as the expulsion of the man was public and without question, so his reception must be public and without question.**

There must be no question in the

mind of the man concerning the brethren forgiving and loving him. He would wrestle with enough doubts concerning himself, his strength, and guilt. **He must not struggle with whether or not the brethren have really forgiven him and lover him.** Only an open display of this love will confirm its reality. This is another place where the admonition is appropriate, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; **but in deed and in truth**” (1 John 3:18).

KNOWING THE PROOF OF YOU

“⁹ For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.”

Paul is very conscious of the purpose for which he was called into the

secret agenda or unknown motive. This, of course, is the manner of the Kingdom. There were multiple reasons for which Paul wrote, and he was not hesitant to reveal them. **Truth works best in an open arena, where everything is put on the table, so to speak.** Truth also

your quality,”^{NJB} and “to see how far you would go.”^{NLT}

The Apostle did not take for granted that the Corinthians were obedient. **He put them to the test by admonishing them to do what simply cannot be done if the people do not have a heart for such things.** This is one of the ingenious ways of the New Covenant. Those claiming identity with Christ are summoned to do things that extend outside of the perimeter of human wisdom and power, as well as the will of the flesh. **The nature of these admonitions make them impossible for those who lack sincerity and truth within.**

Truth works best in an open arena, where everything is put on the table, so to speak. Truth also has nothing to lose by revelation, or by being made known. This is particularly true when dealing with those who themselves have been reconciled to God.

One of the serious failings of corrupt religion is that it does not require what God requires. Its demands correspond more to this world than the world to come, and thus provide no proof of genuine spirituality. Where there are no calls upward, all proofs of real discipleship are taken away.

OBEDIENT IN ALL THINGS

“ . . . whether ye be obedient in all things.” Other versions read, “obedient in everything,”^{NIV/NRSV} “your desire to do my orders in all things,”^{BEB} “whether you are completely obedient,”^{NJB} and “how far you would go in obeying me.”^{NLT}

ministry. He also knows the Lord counted him “faithful,” and had given him mercy “to be faithful” (1 Tim 1:12; 1 Cor 7:25). Now he exhibits that this was infinitely more than a bit of intellectual knowledge. **He had embraced his mission with his heart and now sets out to fulfill it among the Corinthian brethren.**

TO THIS END

“For to this end also did I write...” Other versions read, “The reason I wrote,”^{NIV} “this is why I wrote,”^{RSV} “For this cause also did I write,”^{GENEVA} and “This was in fact my reason for writing.”^{NJB}

It is important to note the guileless manner in which Paul writes to the Corinthians. He does not write under the cloak of pretension, or with some

has nothing to lose by revelation, or by being made known. This is particularly true when dealing with those who themselves have been reconciled to God.

This text is equivalent to the preacher saying, “Now, this is why I am delivering this message.” One can only imagine what would happen in the churches if such motives were consistently made known. Of course, this is what both Jesus and His Apostles did.

KNOWING THE PROOF

“ . . . that I might know the proof of you . . .” Other versions read, “that I might put you to the test,”^{NKJV} “to see if you would stand the test,”^{NIV} “to test you,”^{NRSV} “that I might be certain,”^{BEB} “to know your proven character,”^{NAB} “to test

The manners and lives of the Corinthians had not fully confirmed how obedient they really were. Was their religion merely on the surface, or had it penetrated their heart? Paul was not

content to remain in doubt concerning their obedience, and therefore **he asked them to do what could only be done by truly obedient people.** First, would they expel the man who took his father's wife, delivering him unto Satan? Second, following his repentance, would they heartily receive the very same man,

forgiving him and confirming their love to him? Paul needed to know.

Note the different manner in which he spoke to Philemon. *"Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say"* (Philemon 1:21). A

similar expression is found in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. *"And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you"* (2 Thess 3:4). This is a noble objective for every disciple – to be known as one who will surely obey, even doing more than is required.

FORGIVING

"¹⁰ To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ."

Paul brings himself into the matter. He had exhorted the Corinthians to put away the fornicator from their presence while they were gathered together **with his spirit** (1 Cor 5:4). Now he makes himself a part of the recovery as well, joining in the forgiveness of the offender. The Apostle considered himself a part of the body of Christ, and not a manager over it. He refused to have dominion over their faith, and gladly acquiesced in joining their godly response to a penitent sinner.

I FORGIVE ALSO

"To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also . . ." Other versions read, *"If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him,"*^{NIV} *"But to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also,"*^{BBE} and *"When you forgive this man, I forgive him, too."*^{NLT}

The humble spirit of Paul comes across strongly in this text. **Although the Corinthians had balked at being identified with Paul, even doubting his Apostleship, he did not hesitate for a moment in joining with them in godly responses.** He will not be ashamed to join with them in forgiving the man, and will not object to them telling the man so. Every measure must be taken to ensure the recovery of the man, and Paul leaves no doubt about his commitment to that retrieval. In so doing, he is saying he approves of the forgiveness of the man, and publicly so. He goes onto say that this same condition applies to anyone they forgive for any

thing.

I FORGAVE IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST

" . . . for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave

acceptance.

In the Person of Christ

Some versions read, *"in the presence of Christ,"*^{NKJV/NASB/NRSV} *"for Christ's sake,"*^{NIV} *"in the sight of Christ,"*

There is more involved than the offender. Paul also has in mind the purity of the church. He wants it to be a light that is not hidden under the bushel of iniquity, or obscured by any lack of forgiveness on the part of the Corinthians themselves.

I it in the person of Christ."

For Your Sakes

Paul now affirms that the spectrum of forgiveness is larger than the person who committed the transgression. There is more involved than the offender. Paul also has in mind the purity of the church. He wants it to be a light that is not hidden under the bushel of iniquity, or obscured by any lack of forgiveness on the part of the Corinthians themselves.

In this expression, the Apostle confirms that **the reason for the expulsion of the fornicator was in order to his restoration.** Any failure to rejoice in his return, and extend themselves to forgive and comfort him, would have voided the action that took place. Therefore, Paul refused to associate himself with the judgment and not with the forgiveness. He did this to set an example for the Corinthians, and to persuade the returning sinner of his full

^{GENEVA} and *"with Christ's authority."*^{NLT}

I believe more is involved here than forgiving by the authority of Jesus. This rather teaches that what Paul has urged is precisely what Christ requires. It reflects the mind of Christ, and the spirit of the New Covenant. **He is saying that the Lord Jesus sanctions what he has urged them to do – supporting and empowering the forgiveness.**

A Display of Eagerness

Behold how eager Paul is for the recovery of the fallen! He places the signet mark of his own Apostleship upon the forgiveness that is urged. He calls the Lord Jesus Himself to attest to its validity and necessity. It is as though the Corinthians, Paul, and the Lord Jesus, were all standing in a circle around the returning penitent one, holding hands, and agreeing to his acceptance back into the fellowship. **God had forgiven him, and so did they.**

What A Change Is Wrought

We must also see what a change is wrought by repentance. Prior to it, the person was to be expelled from among the saints, unfit to dwell among them. After it, he was to be received with all readiness, and without hesitation, with strong affirmations of forgiveness and

acceptance.

Our generation could use a powerful testimony of moral and spiritual change. In my judgment, there is altogether too much worldly conformity among professing believers, and too little genuine recovery from transgression. It is appropriate for each believer to take this

text and apply it to contemporary circumstances, whether in the matter of judgment or the issue of reconciliation. Both actions are powerful testimonies of the nature of spiritual life – a life that does not make provision for sin. It is also a life that does not allow for a lack of forgiveness wherever there is repentance.

WHEN SATAN GAINS THE ADVANTAGE

“11a Lest Satan should get an advantage of us . . .” Other versions read, *“in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan,”*^{NASB} *“in order that Satan might not outwit us,”*^{NIV} *“to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us,”*^{RSV} *“So that Satan may not get the better of us,”*^{BBE} *“That we be not overreached by Satan,”*^{DOUAY} *“Lest Satan should circumvent us,”*^{GENEVA} and *“so that Satan will not outsmart us.”*^{NLT}

Is it really possible for Satan

of life by being *“delivered from the power of darkness”* (Col 1:13). The prison doors are opened (Lk 4:18), the prisoners go free, and Satan is frustrated. That is how every single person who is born again starts, and there are no exceptions!

What action is required in our text in order to avoid Satan gaining the advantage? **It is the forgiveness and comfort of the returning sinner, and the public confirmation of their love to him.** The *“advantage”* gained by the devil would not be only over the

becomes invincible. **The advantage must be taken from him before we can triumph over him.** That is precisely why it is written, *“Neither give place to the devil,”* or *“do not give the devil an opportunity”*^{NASB} (Eph 4:27). Do not doubt for a single moment that if you make a place for the devil to operate, that he will not take full advantage of it. Should this happen, you will at once be the one with the disadvantage, and there is not so much as a syllable of Scripture that suggests you can overcome him under such circumstances.

It is imperative that every congregation of believers remove from their presence any and every occasion that gives the advantage to the devil. There is every reason to believe that once our adversary gains the advantage, he becomes invincible. The advantage must be taken from him before we can triumph over him.

History is cluttered with the wreckage of simple souls who provided a place in their lives for the devil to work, and thus lost the battle. If Satan’s influence is not stifled and frustrated, it will gain the upper hand.

The question may rise if a person can recover from such dreadful setbacks. **Our text confirms that recovery is, in fact, possible.** The Corinthian fornicator was brought to repentance – but it was an awful way to come back to God. **The only guarantee of recovery is by means of repentance, and repentance is not something to be assumed.** The Spirit speaks of those who have been taken captive by Satan: *“with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth”*^{NASB} (2 Tim 2:25).

to gain the advantage over us? I thought we were *“more than conquerors through Him that loved us”* (Rom 8:37). How is it that action is required to avoid being outwitted by the evil one? It appears that some people are convinced such a thing is not possible. **However, where such an attitude is prevalent, Satan at once gains the advantage.**

This is an advantage that Satan has to *“get.”* It is something he has to obtain, for every believer begins newness

recovering one. It would be over the whole assembly – *“US.”* The entire church would be put to a disadvantage by what they did NOT do! Satan would gain more power and influence among them because of their omission!

It is imperative that every congregation of believers remove from their presence any and every occasion that gives the advantage to the devil. There is every reason to believe that once our adversary gains the advantage, he

The compounding factor is that sin tends to harden the heart, **and a hard heart does not repent.** In fact, God must give the individual repentance, or it cannot be had at all. Those who flirt with sin are foolish beyond all question. They may lose their own soul.

NOT BEING IGNORANT OF SATAN'S DEVICES

“ ^{11b} . . . for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Other versions read, “we are not ignorant of his schemes,” ^{NASB} “We are not unaware of his schemes” ^{NIV} “we are not ignorant of his designs,” ^{NRSV} “we are not ignorant of his thoughts,” ^{DARBY} “We are not ignorant of his enterprises,” ^{GENEVA} and “we are not unaware of his purposes.” ^{NAB}

Life in Christ Jesus is characterized by intelligence – spiritual intelligence. On our part, this consists, in part, of not being ignorant, or of not being unaware. On Satan’s part it consists of strategies, devices, purposes, schemes, designs, and enterprises. We are **not** involved in a battle that is primarily emotional, and we do well **not** to present the case as though that was true.

We are engaged in a warfare in which perception, comprehension, and understanding are imperative. Anything that encourages infantile simplicity is dangerous beyond your fondest imagination. Whether it is our preaching, singing, testimonies, discussions, etc., **ignorance is out of place**. Whatever causes the mind to be inactive, the ears dull, and the heart hard, gives the advantage to the devil, for his strategy is to cause these things to happen. They are the soil in which he plants his seeds – seeds that will bring a harvest of destruction and corruption (Gal 6:9).

Satan has designs, schemes, or devices – **objectives that are driven by thought, and designed to fulfill a purpose**. Those who associate Satanic power only with external phenomenon, overpowering, demon possession, and the likes, will fall into his snare. To be sure, Satan is active in such areas, pulling men down into the quagmire of irrationality, brute force, and the likes. However, this is not his preferred arena. He first surfaced with an elaborate network of faulty thought, which he threw like a net over Eve. His second recorded work among men involved a deliberate offering to God, a discussion with the Lord Himself, anger, a discussion with a brother Abel, and a

planned murder. Another of his strategies involved convincing a whole body of people that they could protect and make a name for themselves by building a tower that reached into heaven. He moved Judas to plan a strategy to betray Jesus – a well thought, yet diabolical, scheme.

Those who lead us to believe Satan’s domain is limited to things like black magic, witchcraft, and other fearful activities, are not our friends. They disarm us with such limited associations. There is also a whole

“method.” A method, or “wiles,” involves a stratagem, or plan, by which one seeks to outwit his opponent.

Satanic attacks do not always take the form of dark and foreboding feelings or thoughts. Sometimes they are very positive, like the acquisition of God-likeness (Gen 3:5). Other times it can be something like wanting to tally up the military personal to ensure one is adequately prepared for battle (1 Chron 21:1-2). He might even move a strong man to divulge the secret of

Those who lead us to believe Satan’s domain is limited to things like black magic, witchcraft, and other fearful activities, are not our friends. They disarm us with such limited associations. There is also a whole area of teaching that is perpetrated by the powers of darkness – “doctrines of demons”

area of teaching that is perpetrated by the powers of darkness – “doctrines of demons” (1 Tim 4 :1).

Our text associates Satan’s “devices” with an overwhelming sorrow that springs out of guilt. **This is a sorrow driven by thought – erroneous thought, yet powerful in its effects.** Satan can gain the advantage over us if we do not react properly to a soul that is repentant. He can gain the dominance if we allow immorality to exist within the church, not driving it out from among us.

There is such a thing as “*the wiles of the devil*” (Eph 6:11). These are his “schemes,” ^{NASB} “deceits,” ^{BBE} “artifices,” ^{DARBY} “tactics,” ^{NAB} and “strategies.” ^{NLT} The word “wiles” comes from the Greek word μεθοδολας (metho-dei-as), from which we get the word

his strength to a woman, who could not possibly overcome him (Judges 16:4-20). To be sure, the devil does not fight his primary battles on the field of emotion. It is in the arena of the mind that he finds his greatest success, hurling fiery darts of temptation, through which he seeks to bring men down.

And what of you? Are you ignorant of Satan’s devices? If so, and if you are in Christ Jesus, there is no need to be. **Salvation is designed to open your eyes so you can see the battle field and at last be a conqueror.** There is no need for any child of God to be overcome by Satan.

Full provision is made in your faith for victory. As it is written, “*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*”

Who is he that overcometh the world, but | he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of | God?" (1 John 5:4-5).

CONCLUSION

We have been exposed to a very real church that had a very real problem. That problem was addressed in a very real manner, and very real solutions were presented. We have a real adversary who brings real circumstances to bear upon us. There is also a real Savior who is working as real salvation among His people. We are fighting in a real battle, with real issues at stake. By the grace of God, we have been given real promises concerning a real inheritance. Faith, in every sense,

inducts us into the sphere of reality.

We have not plowed in the field of human philosophy, but in the field of truth – truth that “makes free” (John 8:32). Taken seriously, this text confirms to us that the church will face issues that it cannot ignore – at least not without paying an enormous penalty. However, full provision has been made for us to address those challenges. We have been given spiritual weaponry that is “mighty

through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:4-5). The text we have just covered provides an example of such triumph.

It is my prayer that you will personally experience the victory that comes from faith (1 John 5:4-5).

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/3/2004. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The ninth lesson will cover verses twelve through fourteen of the second chapter: “AN OPEN DOOR, RESTLESSNESS, AND TRIUMPH.” Labors in the Kingdom, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and by faith, are often attended with difficulties and a restless spirit. These prove to be circumstances in which triumph is realized. 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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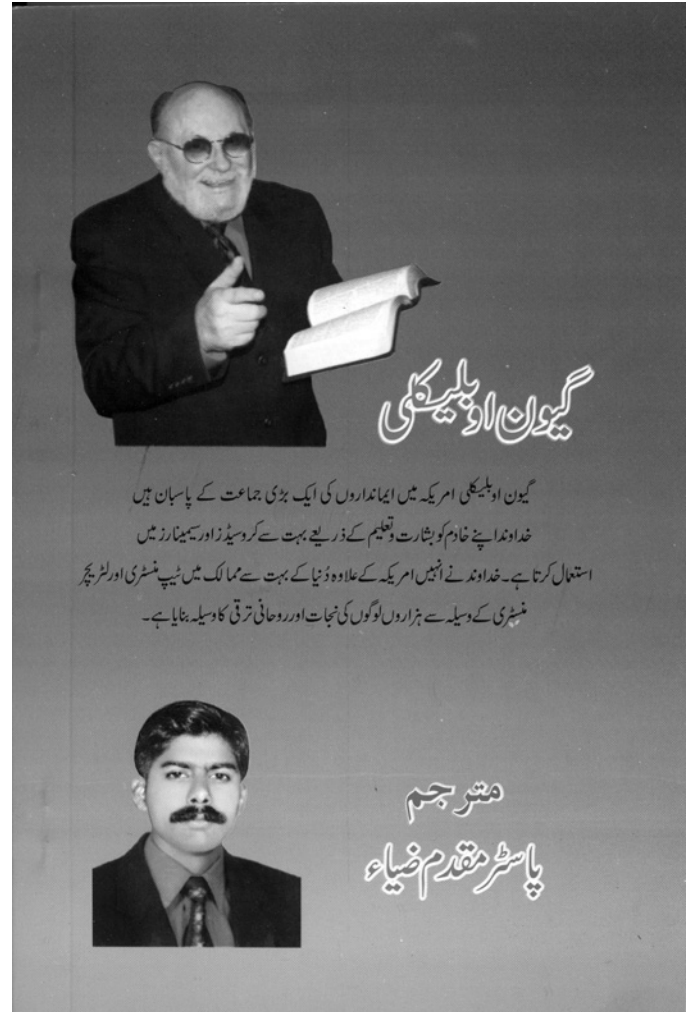
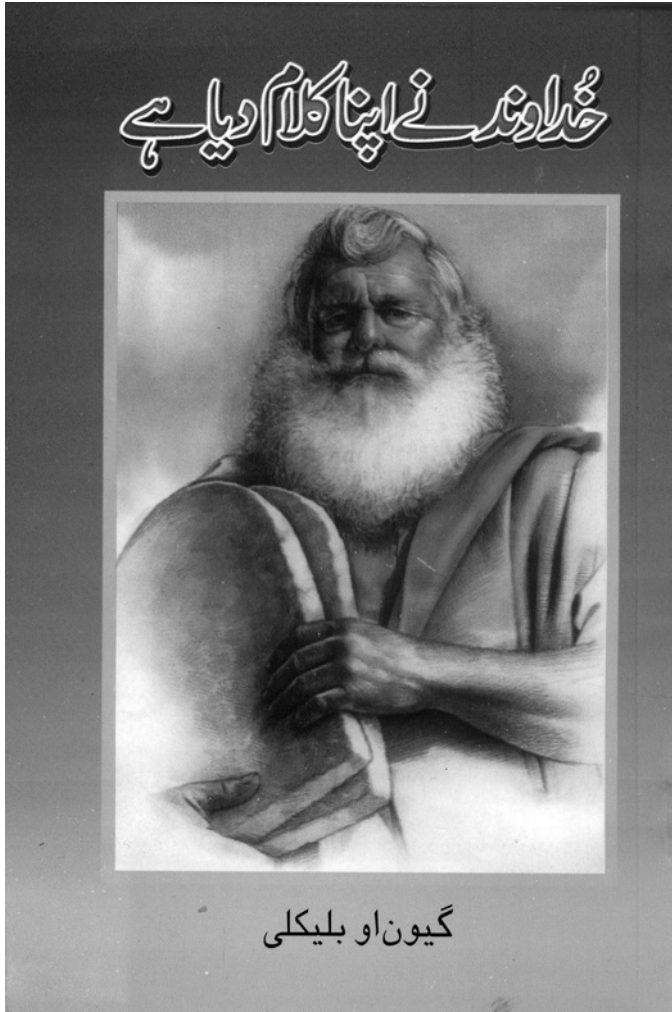
THE PAKISTAN TRIP OF BROTHER GIVEN AND BROTHER AARON HAS BEEN CANCELLED. WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT WE WERE THE TARGETS OF MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALISTS. THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN RULED THE TRIP WAS TOO DANGEROUS AT THIS TIME. PLANS ARE BEING MADE FOR A TRIP DURING 2005.

New Book being distributed in Pakistan

GOD HAS GIVEN HIS WORD

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