

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 #9

COMMENTARY ON: 2:12-14

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

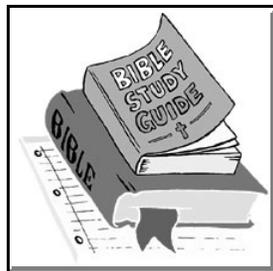
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

AN OPEN DOOR, RESTLESSNESS, AND TRIUMPH

Kingdom life is not static, inactive, or monotonous. In Christ we are called into an area of intense activity. We are surrounded by, and called to engage, competing personalities described as "principalities . . . powers . . . the rulers of the darkness of this world . . . and spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph 6:12). In this arena we are working out our own salvation (Phil 2:12), laboring together with God (1 Cor 3:9), and carrying the word of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20). The presence of these circumstances accounts for the existence of restlessness and triumph – seemingly contradictory experiences.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

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



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



The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 9



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 -----

AN OPEN DOOR, RESTLESSNESS, AND TRIUMPH

“ 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, ¹³ I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. ¹⁴ Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.” ^{KJV} (2 Cor 2:12-14)

INTRODUCTION

There is a certain frame of mind and spirit that must be obtained when we read the Scriptures. These are words that were “*given by inspiration of God*” (2 Tim 3:16). **Those who were used to write the Scriptures were not professional writers.** None of them came from the “*scribes*,” who were trained copyists. Only “*holy men*” were employed, and they wrote only as they were “*moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Pet 1:21). In addition to this, the Word of God is appropriately called “*the sword of the Spirit*” (Eph

6:17). The Holy Spirit uses the Word to penetrate the depths of men (Heb 4:12), convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11), and enabling the saints to live “*by every word of God*” (Luke 4:4).

These circumstances cause the Scriptures to fall into the category of Christ's own words, of which the Savior said, “*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they*

are life” (John 6:63). It is why the Word of God is “*like a fire*,” and “*like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces*” (Jer 23:29). It is why the Word of God is “*quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb 4:12). It is why holy men of all ages have been able to say, “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*” (Psa 119:105). It is why God the

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Father can set apart those who are in Christ for Himself according to Christ's own prayer: *"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth"* (John 17:17).

Throughout God's dealings with men, He has consistently used His Word. A brief reminder of this will serve to assist in the introduction of this text.

- ☛ The Lord revealed Himself to Samuel *"by the word of the Lord"* (1 Sam 3:21).
- ☛ God directed Judah by His word (2 Chron 30:12).
- ☛ David kept himself from the path of the destroyer *"by the word"* (Psa 17:4).
- ☛ Faith comes by hearing the word of God – particularly the Gospel of Christ (Rom 10:17).
- ☛ Men are approved as ministers of Christ *"by the word of truth"* (2 Cor 6:7).
- ☛ Jesus sanctifies and cleanses His church *"by the washing of water through the Word"* (Eph 5:26).
- ☛ We were *"born again . . . by the word of God"* (1 Pet 1:23).
- ☛ Jesus said His disciples were *"clean"*

through His word (John 15:3).

- ☛ Jesus said the seed of the Kingdom *"is the word of God"* (Lk 8:11).
- ☛ Our relationship to Jesus is measured by our hearing and doing of His word (Lk 8:21).
- ☛ When the church grew, it was described as the Word of God increasing, growing, and multiplying (Acts 6:7; 12:24).
- ☛ The conversion of the Gentiles was described as them receiving the Word of God (Acts 11:1).
- ☛ It is the word of God that works effectively within those who believe (1 Thess 2:13).

Both Jesus and the Apostles spoke frequently of the indispensable role of *"the Scriptures."* Both their message and their reasoning were anchored to the written word of God.

- ☛ Jesus traced error back to an ignorance of the Scriptures (Matt 22:29; Mk 12:24).
- ☛ Jesus expounded His own person by affirming what the Scriptures said of Him (Lk 24:47,32).
- ☛ When Jesus enabled people to understand, it was described in these words, *"Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures"* (Luke 24:45).
- ☛ The Scriptures contain the only exposition of the Son of God (John 5:39).
- ☛ When Paul reasoned with men, it was *"out of the Scriptures"* (Acts 17:2).

- ☛ Those who examined the validity of a message, placed what they heard along side the Scriptures to see if it was true (Acts 17:11).
- ☛ Endurance and encouragement are produced by the Scriptures (Rom 15:4).
- ☛ The mystery of redemption, hidden from other ages, is being made known through the Scriptures (Rom 16:26).
- ☛ The Scriptures brings *"wisdom that leads to salvation"* ^{NASB} (2 Tim 3:15).

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

All of these things may appear very evident, suggesting that no real purpose is served by emphasizing them. However, things are not quite that simple. The text before us is, in fact, *"Scripture."* It is inspired of God, and reflects the Divine manner of reasoning. Like *"all Scripture,"* it is *"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim 3:16-17).

On the surface, the personal nature of Paul's words might lead a person to think there is not a lot of profitability in the words of this text. It appears as though it is more personal – sort of a rehearsal of what Paul did, and of the varied feelings that he experienced. However, there is more to this text than that.

THE IMPACT OF INSPIRATION

Inspiration impacted the reasoning of men as well as what they said and wrote. Their feelings were touched, as well as their understanding. Those who were moved along by God to write a record that would be handed down through the ages, were not wrapped up in themselves. They were

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not recording a sort of diary of their activities. **They thought differently.** They assessed situations as men whose thought processes had been impacted with the knowledge of the truth.

When they perused their own activities, they did not assess them as mere men, but as those who were in fellowship with God, filled with the Spirit, and delighting in the Lord. **At no point were their words – whether a testimony or an exposition – at variance with the person or purpose of Almighty God.** They did not sift their views through the wisdom and philosophy of the Greeks. Socrates and his disciple Plato, who both lived during the inter-testamental period, were not the mentors of holy men of God. Their views had not permeated the thinking of the writers of Scripture, like the views of modern philosophers has permeated the thinking of certain preachers and teachers. In fact, there is no indication in Scripture that those appointed by God to write Scripture had any extended exposure to those who were wise in the ways of the world.

When holy men of God wrote, they saw God in the activities in which they were engaged. They traced opportunities back to Him, and gave Him thanks for any successes, victories, or deliverances they realized. Their thinking was in synch with heaven!

That is why the WAY they said things is worthy of our consideration. Their PERSPECTIVE of situations and circumstances has profit for us. **It reflects the impact of newness of life upon the way the redeemed think, assess, purpose, and evaluate.**

The manner of thinking and speaking that is seen in our text is not after the flesh. It is not the way unregenerate people express themselves. Neither, indeed, will it blend with an institutional agenda. Candidly, it will sound strange, and even artificial, to the person who is *“unskillful in the word of righteousness”* (Heb 5:13).

A WORD ABOUT OUR TIME

Our times (2004) are marked by a certain spiritual jeopardy – they are *“perilous times,”* as the Spirit would put it (2 Tim 3:5). Those are defined as times when men can maintain a *“form of godliness,”* while rejecting its power. The result is that all manners of spiritual and moral corruption break forth among those professing godliness. **Their religion is unable to stem the tide of iniquity** (2 Tim 3:1-5).

One of the reasons for this condition is the secondary position (at the best) that has been assigned to the Word of God. Even though this is the appointed means of maintaining spiritual life (Lk

4:4), there is a remarkable level of ignorance concerning the Word of God within the modern church itself. **Other issues and writings have upstaged the Scriptures. A new and different vocabulary has therefore been adopted that reflects the perceptions of men rather than the revelation of God.**

The outcome of this is that the *“word of Christ”* is not dwelling *“richly”* in the hearts of masses of professing Christians (Col 3:16). As a result, they cannot think properly, because their thoughts are being shaped by religious tradition, **not** Divine revelation. Therefore, texts like the one before us have a strange sound to them. Our text appears to the unlearned to speak of a different era and another time. It is, what some might call it, an historical text, or something from *“the first century”* – an appellation traditionalists are fond of ascribing to the days when the church was alive and effective.

These assessments, of course, are not proper. In fact, they are thoroughly wrong. **The words of our text describe contemporary spiritual experience.** They reflect circumstances that still occur to those engaged in the work of the Lord. They are spoken within the context of a *“common salvation”* and a *“common faith.”*

I CAME TO PREACH CHRIST'S GOSPEL

^{2:12a} **Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel...**

When the mind is absorbed with

the things of God, and the locus of thought is Christ Himself, a certain manner characterizes our thoughts and words. An association is seen in matters that appear on the surface to be wholly

unrelated. Our text is a case in point. **To the carnal mind, it appears as though Paul is hop-scotching through a variety of unrelated matters.** Consider what he has mentioned thus far.

When holy men of God wrote, they saw God in the activities in which they were engaged. They traced opportunities back to Him, and gave Him thanks for any successes, victories, or deliverances they realized. Their thinking was in synch with heaven!

- He had trouble in Asia, and was pressed out of measure, above strength (1:8).
- He was delivered from impossible circumstances (1:9).
- Future deliverance would be realized through the prayers of the brethren in Corinth (1:11-12).

- ☛ He had desired to come to Corinth to bring them a “*second benefit*” (1:15-16).
- ☛ His word to them was not “*Yes*” and “*No*,” but was “*yes*,” speaking of sureness (1:17-19).
- ☛ All the promises of God are “*Yes*” in Christ and “*Amen*” to the glory of God by us (1:20).
- ☛ The One who establishes and anoints us is God, who has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit (1:21-22).
- ☛ Paul did not come to Corinth, in order to “*spare*” them, choosing not to come in harshness (1:23).
- ☛ He did not have dominion over their faith, but was a helper of their joy, for by faith they stood (1:24).
- ☛ He determined not to come to them with heaviness, or be a promoter of sorrow (2:1-5).
- ☛ The punishment of the fornicator in their presence was sufficient, and now he should be received, forgiven, and comforted (2:6-10).
- ☛ All of this was done in order that Satan might not gain an advantage over them (2:11).

All of these matters are related. There is a domain in which they all fit together. Paul is, at it were, stepping through a path with differing stones, yet they are all headed in the same direction. Each of this points is related to the other, tied together by certain pillars of thought.

FURTHERMORE

“*Furthermore . . .*”

This word is an interesting one. It denotes a continuance of thought, which presumes what follows is related to what has already been said. Grammatically, this word is a disjunctive – connecting two tributaries of thought. It means “but, moreover, by way of opposition or distinction.” ^{THAYER} It is like a transition to another matter – but not one that is unrelated to what has been said before. **It is like turning a**

jewel and viewing another facet of it – the jewel being life in Christ Jesus, and the facet being the activity of Paul.

This will confirm that Paul’s life was not wrapped up in the Corinthians. Christ was his focus, not the people, and it was **that** focus that moved him to deal with the Corinthians as he did.

Even when godly men deal with specific people and issues relating to them, the people themselves are not the real point. **Christ is always the point! He is the point with God, and He must be the point with us.** The mind of the flesh will reason that this is a

- ☛ The aim is to get through this world without being contaminated by it.
- ☛ Spiritual life cannot be maintained while violating the will of the Author of that life.
- ☛ The spread of the Gospel is impacted by the conduct of those who have embraced it.
- ☛ Nothing is good that hinders spiritual life.
- ☛ Nothing is bad that promotes spiritual life.
- ☛ This world is not the main world, and

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deterrent to personal interests. But this is not a proper assessment. Actually, when Christ is the primary consideration, and His words and objectives are principal, our interests are best served.

It is to be acknowledged that a career cannot be built upon such a premise – but God is not in the business of building careers!

There are certain pillars of reason that unite all valid thoughts, words, and activities – perceptions that tend to knit all valid thoughts together. Allow me to mention some of them. This, in my judgment, is critical to benefitting from this text. Also, these pillars of reason may be applied to any circumstance of life.

- ☛ Salvation involves a new and different life – one that brings glory to God.
- ☛ Sin is never in order or excusable in the life of the believer. It is always interruptive and destructive.

thus must not be held as primary.

- ☛ All men will eventually stand before the Lord Jesus to give an account of themselves.
- ☛ The main purposes are the ones relating to spiritual life.
- ☛ No part of our lives is unrelated to our heavenly calling.
- ☛ What God is doing is the main thing.

There are many other similar perspectives, but these will suffice to make the point. What Paul now says was impacted by his consideration of these, and other, pivotal matters.

TO PREACH CHRIST’S GOSPEL

“ . . . when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel . . . ” Other versions read, “when I came to Troas for the Gospel of Christ,” ^{NASB} “I went to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ,” ^{NIV} “I came to Troas to proclaim the good

news of Christ,"^{NRSV} "I came to Troas for the good news of Christ,"^{BBE} and "I came to Troas for the publication of the glad tidings of the Christ."^{DARBY}

Technically, the word "preach" is not in the text. For those with a knowledge of the Greek text, it reads, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ ("the good news the Christ"). You will note "preach" is italicized in the KJV. Literally, the text reads, "I came to Troas for the good news [of] the Christ." **The Gospel is the word of which Jesus Christ is the sum and substance.**

The word "Gospel" means "good

heart and core of sound doctrine, the foundation upon which exposition is made. **Any doctrinal emphasis that is not built upon the foundation of "Christ's Gospel" is false.** Any teaching that does not obtain its substance and effectiveness from the Gospel is to be rejected. It cannot be true, and thus cannot be effective in the culturing of spiritual life.

A brief pondering of these things will confirm they have staggering implications. The amount of preaching and teaching within the Christian community that is wholly unrelated to the Gospel, and does not

only by the Lord Jesus (Matt 11:27

- ☛ **Gospel of His Son** (Rom 1:9). This is a word that affirms Christ's primary association is with God Himself (John 3:35; Eph 4:32).
- ☛ **Gospel of peace** (Rom 10:15). This is the peace that has been "made" by Jesus alone (Col 1:20).
- ☛ **Gospel of your salvation** (Eph 1:13). This is the salvation that is in Jesus alone (Acts 4:11-12).
- ☛ **The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ** (2 Thess 1:8). The message accentuates Christ's preeminence ("Lord"), humanity ("Jesus"), and Divine appointment ("Christ").
- ☛ **The glorious Gospel of the blessed God** (1 Tim 1:11). The news proclaims a satisfied and happy God, who is thoroughly pleased with what His Son has accomplished (Isa 53:11

This is the message that Paul came to Troas to preach, declare, announce, proclaim, and publish. It was a message concerning the Person Christ, Who sent Him, what was intended by that sending, and what was accomplished by Him. That was the heart and core of his preaching and teaching – all of it. Remove Christ, and nothing was left for Paul to preach or expound.

COMING TO TROAS

The details of this particular visit are not provided in the book of Acts. We know that Paul went to Troas on his second tour of the churches (Acts 16:8-12). While it is true that, at this time, he sailed to Macedonia from Troas, this was well before his initial visit to Corinth, during which he remained for "a year and six months" (Acts 18:11). The writing of Second Corinthians took place some time after that period of a year and six months.

The time to which Paul now refers probably took place just prior to his departure to Macedonia from Ephesus (Acts 20:1-2). He apparently did not remain there long at that time. This assessment is based on the fact that Paul departed to go to Macedonia at that time (Acts 20:1 and 2 Cor 2:13). He will now provide a few details of that occasion, and how they impacted his decisions.

The word "Gospel" means "good news" – that is, a good message that is declared, proclaimed, or announced. A Gospel that is not preached is not Gospel at all, for the very word "Gospel" assumes articulation. It is the declaring of it that makes it "Gospel."

news" – that is, a good message that is declared, proclaimed, or announced. **A Gospel that is not preached is not Gospel at all**, for the very word "Gospel" assumes articulation. It is the declaring of it that makes it "Gospel." It is "good news" (Prov 25:25), or "glad tidings" (Rom 10:15). It is what is **said, or expressed**, that is said to be "Gospel." This is a message that addresses the human dilemma caused by sin, and announces God has resolved it.

The central theme of the Gospel is Christ Jesus. Thus it is "Christ's Gospel," or "the Gospel of Christ" (Rom 1:16). It declares **His** Person and accomplishments, particularly as they pertain to the reclamation of fallen man. This is the **ONLY** good news God has for men – the news of full provision in the Person of His Son. This Gospel is the

depend upon it, is mind-boggling. **One is actually hard pressed to find Christ-centered teaching, preaching, and writing.**

This very message – "Christ's Gospel" – is also referred to in other ways – ways that accentuate the necessity of Christ Jesus.

- ☛ **Gospel of the Kingdom** (Matt 24:14). This is the kingdom that has been given to Christ Jesus (Dan 7:13-14; Eph 5:5).
- ☛ **Gospel of the grace of God** (Acts 20:24). This is the grace that comes exclusively through Christ Jesus (John 1:17; Acts 15:11; Rom 16:20).
- ☛ **Gospel of God** (Rom 1:1). This is the God who is known and expounded

A DOOR OPENED TO ME BY THE LORD

^{12b} *... and a door was opened unto me of the Lord . . .*

Here is an example of the “steps of a good man” being “ordered by the Lord” (Psa 37:23). Although Paul’s intention to preach Christ’s Gospel in Troas did not apparently materialize, yet his fervent desire to preach the Gospel itself was honored.

There is a lesson to be learned here concerning godly plans or purposes. **Our aim should be high – reaching beyond HOW or WHERE our objectives will be fulfilled.** While it is certainly not wrong to determine to preach the Gospel at Troas, it is not right to suspend all of our hopes upon the preaching being done at Troas. The Lord may direct our ambitions to be fulfilled elsewhere. This is also seen in Paul and company determining to carry the Gospel into Asia, only to be forbidden by the Spirit to do so (Acts 16:6). It is also seen in their determination to go into Bithynia, only to confront the Spirit of Jesus not allowing them to do so (Acts 16:7).

We also learn that the Lord directing our steps does not mean that we ourselves have no purposes or objectives. The secret is to subject all of our plans to the will of the Lord, even as our blessed Lord Himself did: “nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done” (Lk 22:42). This is the same spirit David exhibited when He confessed to God, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8). Jesus stated it succinctly to His disciples when He said, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).

This frame of spirit is what made Paul directable.

A DOOR

“ . . . and a door . . . ” Most all of the versions read “door.” One exception is the New Living Translation which reads, “a tremendous opportunity.”

From the standpoint of language, a “door” is “that through which a rush is made . . .

an entrance, way or passage into . . . used of the opportunity of doing something,” THAYER and “an opening for entrance or exit . . . as of what is a possible or feasible opportunity.” FRIBERG

Therefore, the text is speaking of an opportunity to do something – something for God. It is a Divine provision whereby Paul is able to pass from one area of activity to another – from one detail to another. Other references to such a “door” are as follows:

- John 10:7,9 – An opportunity to become part of the fold of Jesus. “Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **I am the door of the sheep . . . I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.**”
- Acts 14:27 – An opportunity to believe: “And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened **the door of faith** unto the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27).

bonds” (Col 4:3).

Therefore, while Paul was in Troas, a special opportunity was opened to him – an opportunity directly relating to the commission Jesus had given to him (Acts 26:20).

Several things can be learned from this expression.

- There are opportunities, created by the Lord, that are to be obtained.
- A door is something to which a response is necessary.
- Spiritual life is to be lived in a state of awareness, looking for these supernatural opportunities.

OPENED UNTO ME

“ . . . was opened unto me . . . ” Other versions read, “opened for me,” NASB/NIV/NRSV and “the Lord gave me.” NLT

The idea here is that the opportunity was especially presented to Paul. It was not one thrown open for

The idea here is that the opportunity was especially presented to Paul. It was not one thrown open for grabs, so to speak, but was particularly for Paul himself. What is more, Paul was able to see it – he recognized the open door, and was able to associate it with his Lord and his calling.

- First Corinthians 16:9 – An opportunity to serve the Lord: “**For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries**” (1 Cor 16:9).

- Colossians 4:3 – An opportunity to speak: “**Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in**

grabs, so to speak, but was particularly for Paul himself. What is more, Paul was able to see it – he recognized the open door, and was able to associate it with his Lord and his calling.

A door can be closed as well as opened. The door to the ark was “shut” (Gen 7:16). The door to the wedding feast of the Lamb will be “shut” (Matt 25:10). The door to preach the Gospel in Asia was

shut (Acts 16:9). The door to Bithynia was shut as well (Acts 16:7).

Now, Paul testifies of an open door – an unmistakable opportunity to preach the Gospel of Christ. **It was opened to him because of his involvement in the will of the Lord.** He structures his life in order to fulfill the revealed will of the Lord – his heavenly calling.

One More Thing

There is one more thing about this circumstance that ought to be noted. **An “open door,” in fact, constitutes a Divine call.** It is a summons to involvement in the work of the Lord. It is a call for those whom God has endowed with certain abilities to engage in the work of the Lord. An “open door” works together with “the measure of faith” that has been dispensed by God (Rom 12:3).

OF THE LORD

“ . . . of the Lord . . . ” Other versions read, “by the Lord,”^{NKJV} “in the Lord,”^{NASB} and “the Lord opened the door.”^{NIV}

The differing translations place an

☛ **“In the Lord”** – Here the emphasis is placed on **the role of Paul** himself in the whole matter. The door was opened **while** Paul himself was in the process of walking in the light, serving the Lord, and intending to do His will.

Among those who are cognizant of spiritual realities, there is no question about the Lord Jesus governing the Kingdom of God. However, there are varying opinions as to how He does this, particularly in regard to the involvement of men in the working of His will.

☛ Some are of the opinion that all of Christ’s decisions are carried out arbitrarily – in a manner that appears to be random, and without discretion. His workings, therefore, are largely undetected by those living in this world. Those embracing this view look at things from a fatalistic point of view – i.e. whatever will be, will be. They therefore disengage their own hearts and minds from the will of the Lord, leaving everything to take place in a sort of automatic way. This is not a proper assessment of the case.

The Real Scenario

In reality, **salvation calls the individual into involvement in the will and purpose of God.** This is referred to as being called “*into the fellowship*” of His Son (1 Cor 1:9), being “*workers together with God*” (1 Cor 3:9), and participating in the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

In salvation, God begins to work **within** His people “*both to will and to do of His own good pleasure*” (Phil 2:12). The involvement of the “*will*” confirms this is a conscious involvement. The doing of it emphasizes that it is an effective involvement. God is not moving the saved about like pawns on the chessboard of Divine purpose. While it is true that He often works in this manner with the heathen, He does not do so with those who are in His Son.

It is ONLY to the extent that we maintain the “communion of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 13:13), **fellowship with Christ** (1 Cor 1:9), **and the knowledge of God** (Heb 8:11), **that we are profitably involved in the Kingdom of God!** Those who rely upon being struck down forcibly in order to holy involvements, are not right in such thinking. Those who imagine that God will pry their mouth open like that of Balaam’s donkey, and cause His words to flow like refreshing water out of it, could not possibly be more wrong. Such views contradict both the nature and intent of God’s great salvation, even though they are quite common in our time.

Let us have done with the notion that there is any real benefit in being used by God, yet not being aware of it. I do not deny that such a thing is possible, but I emphatically deny that such usage is a blessing, or that it is the Kingdom norm.

Allow me to state the case once again. **It is while we are in the process of living by faith that we are directed by the Lord!** It is while we are aware of the Lord that He speaks to, and directs us. It is while we are walking in the light that He shows us the way of our involvement in what He is doing. It is while we are “*looking to Jesus*” that He guides us with His eye. Some examples will suffice to buttress this point.

In reality, salvation calls the individual into involvement in the will and purpose of God. This is referred to as being called “into the fellowship” of His Son, being “workers together with God,” and participating in the Divine nature

emphasis on various aspects of this expression.

- ☛ **“Of the Lord”** – Here the **government** of the Lord Jesus is emphasized – His Kingship. The open door came through His Sovereign will, and according to His good pleasure.
- ☛ **“By the Lord”** – Here the **actual doing** of the thing is emphasized. Jesus Himself did this, working in concert with Paul, whom He had personally commissioned.

☛ Others consider the will of God to be strictly contingent upon human decision. Their decision to engage in the will of the Lord is strictly their own. They have a mind and the Bible, and that is enough. Those embracing this view will say something like this: “If we do not go to the heathen with the Gospel, they all will be lost.” They are not prone to pray that the Lord will send forth laborers into His harvest, as Jesus enjoined (Matt 9:38). This also is an erroneous and damaging view.

- The day of Pentecost came WHILE the disciples were gathered together with one accord in one place (Acts 2:1).
- Peter received his direction to go to the Gentiles while he was praying (Acts 10:9).
- While the early brethren were ministering to the Lord, they were, the call to separate Barnabas and Saul was received (Acts 13:2).
- Remember, John received the extensive Revelation of Christ's kingly activities, and the ultimate outcome of all things, while he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev 1:10).

If this assessment is correct – and it surely is – then **those who choose to live at a distance from Lord, enamored of the things of this world, and with their minds penned to the earth, have, by that very posture, excluded themselves from profitable involvement in the will of the Lord.** Whatever you may choose to think about the future of such people, I must confess to you that it looks rather dismal. **If God does not work in men here, there is no promise of them being with Him there.**

Those who choose to live at a distance from Lord, enamored of the things of this world, and with their minds penned to the earth, have, by that very posture, excluded themselves from profitable involvement in the will of the Lord.

Jesus Has the Keys

The door before Paul was opened "of the Lord" – that is, the door was opened by the Lord Jesus, who is presently administering the Kingdom. In delivering the message of Jesus to the church in Philadelphia, a holy angel said: "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, **He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth**" (Rev 3:7).

This word refers to a Messianic prophecy delivered by Isaiah: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder; **so He shall open, and none shall shut; and He shall shut, and none shall open**" (Isa 22:22). Speaking of the extent of His use of this "key," Jesus Himself said, "I am He that

liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev 1:18). That is, with this key he will release all who are in "hell," or "Hades," ^{NKJV} the abode of spirits, and "death," or the grave which retains the bodies of the dead.

The glorified and exalted Christ has the authority to create opportunities – to open doors where it is impossible from any other point of view – and to close them as well, even when they seem impossible to close. He can, in fact, "make a way in the wilderness" (Isa 43:19), a "path in great waters" (Psa 77:19), and "a way in the sea" (Isa 43:16). The knowledge of this causes hope to abound. It increases the strength of the inner man, and pushes discouragement into the background.

NO REST IN MY SPIRIT

^{13a} *I had no rest in my spirit.*"

For some, this text speaks of the humanness of Paul – a man who, like Elijah, was "subject to like passions as we are" (James 5:17). There certainly is an element of truth to that. However, I choose to look at this in another way – one that does not comfort the flesh, but challenges the spirit. **I see this as evidence of spiritual sensitivity. Here is a godly man who lived in such a way as to cause less than ideal circumstances to be abrasive to his inward man.** This is not a commentary on the sinfulness of weakness, but upon an acute awareness of the invariably disruptive nature of life in this "present evil world."

NO REST IN MY SPIRIT

"I had no rest in my spirit . . ." Other versions read, "I still had no peace," ^{NIV} "I had no relief for my spirit," ^{ASV} "I had no relief from anxiety," ^{NJB} and "But I couldn't rest." ^{NLT}

The word "rest" comes from the Greek word *ἀνεσις* (an-es-in). Lexically, it means "a loosening, relaxing, relief from anxiety, and quiet," ^{THAYER} "measure of freedom, refreshment, relief from tension," ^{FRIEBERG} "have some liberty," ^{UBS} and "relief as a cessation or suspension of trouble and difficulty." ^{LOUW-NIDA} **This is not a sinful agitation, but one that necessarily accompanies the frailty of our human constitution.**

The idea here is that Paul was

disappointed, and even agitated within over the circumstances he found. He acknowledges a similar reaction in the seventh chapter of this epistle: "when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest" (7:5). Here, however, we will find that the restlessness was in Paul's "spirit." **That is, it was a deeper agitation – more than mere inconvenience, human opposition, and the likes.** It is similar to the experience he had in Athens. He was also waiting for some of the brethren there. Of that occasion Like wrote, "And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, **his spirit was**

stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:15-16). Other translations of that highlighted phrase read, "*his spirit was provoked with him,*" ^{NKJV} "*he was greatly distressed,*" ^{NIV/NRSV} "*his spirit was troubled,*" ^{BBE} "*his spirit was painfully excited,*" ^{DARBY} "*he grew exasperated,*" ^{NAB} and "*his whole soul was revolted.*" ^{NJB}

There are earthly circumstances that have an adverse affect upon the sensitive spirit. Such a soul has grown to the point where the abrasiveness of an alienated world, and even the untimely conduct of good brethren, has an adverse effect upon the

human spirit. Only those who are immersed in the work of the Lord, are living by faith, and walking in the Spirit experience such sensitivity. How the church needs such people!

The state of "*no rest*" kept Paul from settling down at this point. He was apparently so agitated within that he could not enter into the "*open door*" that was before him. **This was not owing to any timidity or fear on his part, but because of his great care for fledgling believers in Corinth.**

It appears from this text that the sluggardly spirit of the Corinthians had an effect upon the ministry of Paul in

Troas. He went there to preach the Gospel, the Lord opened a door for him, yet he ended up leaving that area. **I wonder how often this like of thing has happened throughout the ages – where one body of people were handicapped because of the slowness of another group.** We ought not be so naive as to think our status and conduct has no effect upon others.

Paul will elaborate on this in the words that follow. Suffice it to say at this point, when those who have been taught by faithful men fail to advance as they should, it has debilitating effects upon godly and sensitive leaders.

I FOUND NOT TITUS

^{13b} *... because I found not Titus my brother ...*

Now Paul shares the source of his inward turmoil, or lack of "*rest.*" On the surface, one might surmise this to be a needless experience – something that does not justify such sensitivity as forbade the Apostle to enter into a door opened to him by Jesus Himself.

I FOUND NOT TITUS

... because I found not Titus...

It is apparent that Paul was

"Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also" (2 Cor 8:6). Titus had "*the same earnest care*" as Paul did for the Corinthian brethren (2 Cor 8:16), and thus would bring Paul an accurate report of their condition. Had they responded to his first letter commendably? Did they deal correctly with the offending fornicator? Had those who denied the resurrection of the dead seen its truth? Had they gathered up the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, as they said they would? Was there improvement in their conduct

concerning marriage? Were their assemblies now characterized by edification instead of confusion? How had they received and treated Titus?

These were all matters on which Titus would provide insightful observations. Now, expecting to find Titus in Troas, he has no rest because he was not there. Thus, the work in which Paul found the loftiest joy and satisfaction was adversely affected because of disappointment. Concerned for the church in Corinth, he was forced to remain ignorant of their condition.

Here was something God would not reveal to him personally. He would have to learn it from one of his brethren. Later, we will find Titus did meet Paul in Macedonia, and gave him the desired report: "*For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus*" (7:5-6).

We do not know why Titus was not there – whether it was because Paul arrived earlier than expected, or because of some delay on the part of Titus. **The point is that the Apostle earnestly wanted to know of the state of the Corinthians.**

Now, expecting to find Titus in Troas, he has no rest because he was not there. Thus, the work in which Paul found the loftiest joy and satisfaction was adversely affected because of disappointment. Concerned for the church in Corinth, he was forced to remain ignorant of their condition.

expecting Titus to meet him in Troas, bringing a report of the situation at Corinth. Later Paul will refer to Titus being sent to Corinth in order to ensure the completion of some matters there:

around the Lord's table? Were they still suing one another in the courts of the land? Was there any improvement in their treatment of weaker brethren? Had there been a greater clarity among them

This was a situation similar to that of Elisha the prophet. On one occasion, after miraculously bearing a child at the word of Elisha, the child of the Shunammite woman died. She immediately journeyed to the prophet. When she arrived she took hold of Elisha's feet. Thinking she was being presumptuous, Elisha's servant Gehazi "came near to thrust her away." Elisha stopped him saying, "Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and **the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me**" (2 Kgs 4:27).

That is the situation Paul was in. **The Lord had not revealed the condition of the Corinthians to him.** He had not told the Apostle how they responded to his letter. Even as Elisha was now dependent upon someone else providing the desired information, so Paul needed Titus to tell him about the Corinthians. When Titus was not there, the great apostle, being tender of heart, became restless because of it.

There is something to be learned from this circumstance. **Those who labor for the Lord must avoid juvenile views of the Kingdom of God.** The Lord's direction is sure, but it is not always apparent. There are times when the assistance of the brethren is necessary. There are also times when delays cause agitation within – not because the servant of God seeks his own pleasure, but because of a deep concern for the people of God. This was the same spirit Paul exhibited toward the Thessalonians: "For this cause, **when I**

There is something to be learned from this circumstance. Those who labor for the Lord must avoid juvenile views of the Kingdom of God. The Lord's direction is sure, but it is not always apparent. There are times when the assistance of the brethren is necessary.

could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain" (1 Thess 3:5).

It seems to me that the modern church is sadly lacking in this matter of sensitive spiritual leaders – those who have as heart to know of the progress of the people. Judging from the condition of many of the churches, there is a serious lack of leaders who are concerned about the failure of *Christians* to appropriate what belongs to them in Christ Jesus.

MY BROTHER

... my brother . . . " To Titus Paul wrote, "mine own son after the common faith" (Tit 1:1). To the Corinthians he said of him, "my brother." **The one whom he had begotten in the Lord was also his co-laborer in Christ Jesus** – a fellow pilgrim en route to glory.

Titus is mentioned nine times in

Second Corinthians. This is the first of those references. Later he refers to "the coming of Titus," by which he himself was comforted (7:6). We learn that Titus was rejoicing over the advance of the Corinthians (7:13). Paul had boasted of the Corinthians before Titus (7:14). He had been charged with finalizing the collection that was to be gathered in Corinth for the poor saints in Jerusalem (8:6). God had put the same earnest care for the Corinthians that Paul possessed into the heart of Titus (8:16). Paul said of him, "he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you" (8:23). Of all of the people who may have been available to him, Paul had urged Titus to go to Corinth to learn of their state (12:18).

I say these things to point out that the expression "my brother" was more than a mere formal identity – as in, everyone in Christ is our brother. **This was an expression denoting working together in the Lord, laboring in the harvest of the Lord together.** He was a brother in labor.

TAKING MY LEAVE, I WENT TO MACEDONIA

^{13C} *... but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.*"

Paul is explaining why he did not come to Corinth as he had said he would (1 Cor 16:5). He has already stated that he had determined not to come to them "in heaviness," weighed down with the knowledge of their spiritual deficiencies (2:1). He had resolved to avoid a personal confrontation that would promote sorrow,

choosing rather to focus on helping their joy (1:24).

The point of this section is that he would not come to them until he had learned of their state. He did not want to be surprised by their condition. He was rather anticipating a good report from Titus, which would enable him to help their joy. When Titus did not meet him in Troas as was apparently planned, he became too

restless to remain in Troas.

An Impact to Be Avoided

This text confirms that **those who are spiritually vacillating DO have an adverse affect upon others. They are not neutral in their attitudes.** In this case, uncertainty about the real state of the Corinthians cause Paul to be restless. That, in turn, moved him to leave an area where a door had been opened to him by the Lord.

I have often pondered how many such occurrences have taken place in our day. **This is one of the serious influences of lifeless churches, or of spiritual Babylon. Such religious institutions leave a wake of stultifying influences that discourage, cast down, and make restless.** A form of religion that denies the power thereof so impacts the landscape of religion as to leave open doors standing ajar, discourage godly laborers, and retard the work of the Kingdom. When there is immorality, lukewarmness, a lack of spiritual growth,

people – men who become restless within when due progress is not being made.

TAKING MY LEAVE OF THEM

“ . . . *but taking my leave of them* . . . ” Other versions read, “*So I said goodbye to them,*”^{NIV} “*So I said farewell to them,*”^{NRSV} “*so I went away from them,*”^{BBE} and “*but bidding them adieu.*”^{DARBY}

To my knowledge, this is one of the only – if not **the** only – times Paul did not enter into a door that was opened to him. The restlessness caused by his concern for the state of the Corinthian

or restlessness to rob us of our good sense, or cause us to act presumptuously. As with Paul, we can be blessed to think properly and profitably, even when we have no rest within, and are much concerned about the condition of others. That, of course, is the nature of life in Christ Jesus. We have been given the “*spirit of a sound mind*” (2 Tim 1:7), and that spirit can prevail under any and all circumstances.

I WENT TO MACEDONIA

“ . . . *I went from thence into Macedonia.*” Other versions read, “*I departed for Macedonia,*”^{NKJV} “*I went on to Macedonia,*”^{NASB} and “*went forth to Macedonia.*”^{ASV}

Paul left for Macedonia, where, we find, he expected to find Titus – and he did. This was not an action driven by despair. Rather, it was one compelled by a desire to learn of the state of the Corinthians in order that, when he visited them, he might help their joy, encouraging and strengthening them.

It is generally understood that this movement is recorded in Acts 20:1-2.

A NUGGET OF TRUTH

There is a nugget of truth nestled in this text that must be seen. Paul had went to Troas to preach the Gospel, and a door was opened for him to do so. Yet, **in deference to the Corinthian situation,** he left Troas, seeking the means to establish the Corinthians, rather than continuing on in Troas. **In other words, he deemed it of greater importance to stabilize those who were already in Christ than make new converts.** However you may choose to review this passage, this is a conclusion you will not be able to avoid.

I readily acknowledge that this flies squarely into the face of the mentality of the modern church. In fact, I have heard a significant number of preachers and teachers actually criticize those who seek to build up the saints, while appearing to neglect, what is called, “evangelism.” Countless people have heard the “get-outside-of-these-walls-and-go-into-the-community” sermon, so common in our time. It all sounds right to the spiritually untrained mind. **But you did not find Jesus leaving His**

There is no need for concern or restlessness to rob us of our good sense, or cause us to act presumptuously. As with Paul, we can be blessed to think properly and profitably, even when we have no rest within, and are much concerned about the condition of others. That, of course, is the nature of life in Christ Jesus.

slothfulness, a lack of dependability, and the likes among professing believers, **it has a debilitating effect upon those who are laboring for the Lord.** Many a soul has cried out with Jesus, “*O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to Me*” (Mat 17:17). That word was not spoken to the scribes and Pharisees, but to his own disciples. **Do not think for a single moment that spiritual dulness and obtuseness do not impact the work of the Lord!**

For myself, I cannot begin to tell you what sorrow and agitation of soul I have experienced because of the state of the churches. I can only imagine the weighty import Paul’s statement concerning his sufferings: “*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches*” (2 Cor 11:28).

While this is something that can by no means be legislated or taught, the church desperately needs godly men who are sensitive of the condition of God’s

brethren, moved him to leave Troas, bidding farewell to the brethren there. It is quite possible that he left someone there to take advantage of the opportunity that was opened to him – we do not know.

There is a consistency in Paul that is seen here – one that must not be missed. He had already said he had determined not to come to the Corinthians in heaviness, or to come into their presence promoting sorrow among them. I see in this text that he also refused to do this among those in Troas. **He refused to minister to others while in a state that would tend to promote sorrow.** He would come back to this area again (Acts 20:6-12), determined for his ministry to be as profitable as possible.

We also learn from this text that Paul did not simply vacate the area without telling anyone. He said farewell to the people, no doubt sharing with them some of the reason for his departure.

There is no need for concern

disciples in deference to the multitudes. His choice and prolonged exposure was to His disciples. His explanations were to His disciples.

This must not be construed to be an objection to preaching the Gospel to every creature, and making disciples of all men. After all, the King Himself has commanded that this be done (Matt 28:28-20; Mk 16:15-16). The **EMPHASIS**, however, has been placed upon the body of Christ – its edification and comfort (Eph 4:11-16). That is the reason for ALL of the spiritual gifts. *“And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Eph 4:11-12). *“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant . . . Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. **But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal**”* [the “common good”^{NASB} of the body] (1 Cor 12:1-7).

Although this is not a common perception, it ought to be clear to us. **The body of Christ is the means through which Jesus exclusively works.** The church is *“His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”* (Eph 1:23). That is where He deposits His grace, and His “fulness,” of which we have “all received” (John 1:16). **The church is the solitary custodian of the truth** – *“the pillar and*

ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). If it is weak and emaciated, truth will *“fall in the streets,”* just as it did with Israel (Isa 59:14). **If that kind of church goes forth into all the world, they will only accomplish what the scribes and Pharisees did.** Of them Jesus said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves”* (Mat 23:15).

Settle it in your heart, **it is not possible** to live by faith and neglect the will of the Lord or be spiritually dead (Heb 10:38). **It is not possible** to walk in the Spirit and still fulfill the lusts of the

5:15). **It is not possible** to be *“dead with Christ”* and not be raised by God to live with Christ in the newness of life (Rom 6:4-5).

A mature church cannot remain unspiritual, disobedient, slothful, lukewarm, or slow of heart. It simply cannot be done! If the church can ever be *“grow up into Christ in all things”* (Eph 5:15), it will do what it right. Such a church, even if it is scattered by persecution, will go *“everywhere, preaching the Word”* (Acts 8:4).

That is why Paul earnestly sought the stability of the church. It is why he spent a considerable of his time visiting

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flesh (Gal 5:16). **It is not possible** to be *“strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,”* and yet fail to do God’s will (Eph 6:10). **It is not possible** to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, without God working in you *“both to will and to do of His own good pleasure”* (Phil 2:12-13). **It is not possible** to live unto Him who died for us, and still live unto ourselves (2 Cor

the churches, ensuring that they were built up (Acts 15:36). It is why he wrote Epistles to the churches. Now, in our text, this is why he took his leave from Troas, and went to Macedonia. It was in interest of the body of Christ that He did so. May God raise such men in our generation! May multitudes of godly men be found throughout the world, who have a heart for the saints of God.

THANKS BE UNTO GOD

“^{14a} **Now thanks be unto God** . . .”

NOW

“*Now . . .*” Other versions read, *“But”* ^{NASB/NIV/NRSV} The word translated “now” means “but or moreover.” ^{THAYER}

Paul is contrasting his present state of mind with that which he

experienced in Troas. Something has happened that has lightened the load, and removed the restlessness. He has, in fact, been *“comforted.”*

How glorious is the nature of spiritual life. **When there are valleys, they are raised. When there are mountains, they are lowered. When there are crooked places, they are**

made straight. As it is written, *“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 40:4). And again, *“will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight”* (Isa 42:16).

When we enter into times that

are characterized by heaviness, sorrow, or enfeebling obscurity, our faith must stretch forward, expecting the Lord to make essential things “plain” to us. Such anticipation will enable us to get through difficult times, rather than being overcome by them.

THANKS BE UNTO GOD

“... thanks be unto God...”

“Thanks” includes the idea of gratefulness. **This appreciativeness is**

the result of insightful reflection – a reflection in which the working of the Lord is obvious. Thanks also includes joy and gladness. It serves to lift the heart when we ponder what the Lord has done, for the Judge of all the earth always does right (Gen 18:25).

As evidenced in this text, **thanksgiving is always articulated.** I do not believe there is an example of thanksgiving that was not expressed in words. Nor, indeed, can I conceive of the possibility of unexpressed thanksgiving.

Thanks is rendered to God because “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, **are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen**” (Rom 11:36). It is because “**all things are of God**” (2 Cor 5:18). He is, in truth, the “**one God, the Father, of whom are all things**” (1 Cor 8:6). More precisely, thanksgiving is the result of spiritual perception – **being able to associate what is seen and experienced with the Lord Himself.** Faith perceives this, and causes thanksgiving to erupt from the pure in heart.

CAUSED TO TRIUMPH

“^{14b} ... which always causeth us to triumph in Christ ...”

Paul takes his own experience as a sort of standard for all believers. He is not

own. “Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ”^{NASB} (2 Pet 1:1).

The prayers of some of the righteous are not heard, while the prayers of others are denied such a hearing (1 Pet 3:12). The “*whole armor of God*” is not intended for a select few in the body of Christ (Eph 6:10-18). The entirety of the justified community live by faith, not just a few of them (Heb 10:38). Overcoming the world is not intended to be experienced by representatives of those who believe (1 John 5:4-5). The successful resistance of Satan is for everyone who is in Christ Jesus (1 Pet 5:8-9). The eyes of the understanding of all of the saints can be opened to comprehend the wondrous things of God (Eph 1:15-20). All of the saints can be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man (Eph 3:15-20).

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merely testifying to what God has done for and in Him, but declaring that it is indicative of what the Lord does for all of His children. Thus, even though, from one point of view, his conversion was extraordinary, from another perspective, it was the norm. As it is written, “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*” (1 Tim 1:15-16).

This was the same rationale that compelled Peter to speak of the faith of the saints as being the same kind as his

For All of the Saints

The people of God must carefully avoid reading Scripture without an acute awareness of the commonness of salvation. By that, I do not mean to suggest there is something ordinary or mundane about salvation. **Rather, there is a certain likeness that is realized in all of the children of God.** That is what is intended by the expressions “*common salvation*” (Jude 1:3) and “*common faith*” (Tit 1:4). The general nature of salvation is shared by all of the saved, from their initial entrance into Christ, to their exit from this present evil world. There is no such thing, for example, as some having the Holy Spirit and some saints not having the Spirit (Gal 4:6). Some do not have full access to God while others lack that access (Eph 3:12).

A Misconception

There is an unacceptable mentality that has crept into the Western church. **It has left the people assuming that most Christians are something like commoners who live in virtual spiritual poverty.** They know very little about the Scriptures, and have a minimal understanding of the benefits of redemption. However, they love Jesus, and that is imagined to be enough. There are, however, a few exceptional souls – generally especially educated and trained – who know much more than the others. These are afforded professional positions, and are responsible for keeping the institutional wheels well oiled and running. Most of the *spiritual* communication and work come from these individuals, while the remainder of the

people are mere spectators.

The *commoners* attend what few gatherings are scheduled, and support the work with their finances. The upkeep of the facilities, the care of the children, and various other institutional requirements are maintained by people coming from this larger group. Those with a desire to know more of the Scriptures do not consult with the *commoners*. Nor, indeed, are those who require upbuilding fellowship, encouraged to find it among this lower and uninformed class of people.

Occasionally the *commoners* are told that God surely must have loved ordinary people, because there are so many of them. **By this, they suggest that God is actually drawn toward people who are identified with His Son, yet know little about Him, remain unable to teach, cannot give an answer for the hope within them, and live in practical aloofness from Him.**

If this seems a bit strong, allow me to state the case with even more strength. I am going to say that **institutional religion cannot be maintained without entertaining these, and similar gross misrepresentations.** As soon as the saints of God begin to obtain *“all wisdom and spiritual understanding”* (Col 1:9), they can no longer occupy the seats of the unlearned and the inactive. **In order for lifeless religion – form without power (2 Tim 3:5) – to be maintained, the people MUST be kept in a state of ignorance.** Faith must **not** grow and increase (2 Thess 1:3), and the people must **not** be filled *“with all the fulness of God”* (Eph 3:19). A clergy-laity system must be maintained at all cost, or the institution cannot maintain its prominence.

In order to guarantee that a purely sectarian stance is maintained, crystalized doctrines are developed that support the sect, ensuring that it is able to maintain its identity. That identity provides for a separation of the sect from all other professing Christians. This is a separation that is **not** the result of godliness (1 Tim 4:7), living by faith (Gal 3:11), or walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:25). It is **not** the result of spiritual understanding (Col 1:19), abstaining from

the lusts of the flesh that war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11), or setting the affection on things above and not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2).

The doctrine of the sect is not wholly false, and often contains many statements that are very true. **However, attempts are made to mingle those statements with human perceptions that are not true.** They are also under the covering of an incorrect emphasis, a wrong direction, and objectives that are not harmonious with God’s revealed

Occasionally the commoners are told that God surely must have loved ordinary people, because there are so many of them. By this, they suggest that God is actually drawn toward people who are identified with His Son, yet know little about Him, remain unable to teach, cannot give an answer for the hope within them, and live in practical aloofness from Him.

“eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11). In such a case, **the primary aim of Scriptural texts is to buttress the emphasis that makes the institution unique.**

Without such a doctrinal emphasis, it is not possible to maintain institutional identity. For purposes of clarity, this emphasis is not Christ Jesus Himself. It is not preparing for resurrection of the dead, standing before Christ, and the day of judgment. It has little or no relevance to *“the world to come,”* or growing up into Christ in all things (Heb 2:5; Eph 4:15).

Is This Related to Our Text?

Is this brief excursion related to our text? Indeed it is. Paul has maintained such a profound concern for the people of God that he could not rest in his spirit, left an open door, and went to Macedonia to secure an understanding of the condition of the Corinthian brethren. Now he will tell them something they need to know – something he himself has experienced. There is triumph to be had in Christ Jesus, and it is for the Corinthians, and all saints, as well as Paul himself.

ALWAYS

“... which always...” All major versions read the same – *“always.”* One exception is Young’s Literal Translation which reads, *“at all times.”* The word translated *“always”* is πάντοτε (pan-tote), which means *“at all times, in every case, and ever more.”* ^{STRONG’S}

The point to be seen here is that in Christ Jesus a consistency, or invariableness, is obtained that is totally unavailable from any other source. A brief consideration of how this term is used will confirm this to be the

case. It will also acquaint us more thoroughly with the nature of spiritual life.

- There is such a thing as *“ALWAYS abounding in the work o the Lord”* (1 Cor 15:58).
- There is a condition where we are *“ALWAYS bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus”* (2 Cor 4:10).
- Those in Christ can be *“ALWAYS confident”* (2 Cor 5:6).
- It is possible for God to make all grace abound toward us so that we, *“ALWAYS having sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work”* (2 Cor 9:8).
- It is *“good to be “zealously affected ALWAYS in a good thing”* (Gal 4:18).
- We are called to a living in which we are *“giving thanks ALWAYS for all things”* (Eph 5:20).

Spiritual life is characterized by godly consistency – both in objective and experience. The closer

one gets to the earth, the more prominent inconsistency becomes. When *“the flesh”* is prominent, life becomes erratic, or mercurial. A variability is experienced that is disconcerting, and tends to make for discouragement. While the religious world has its psychological merchants who hawk solutions to its dilemma, I do not believe it possible to be *“carnal”* and avoid this circumstance.

Stability of life can only be

☛ That God is leading His people forth in a certain manner.

While there is a sense in which both of these are correct, **the emphasis of this text is on the former** – God causing something to happen. The particular action that will be described could not possibly have occurred without Divine intervention. It is the work of God, and of God alone. **While human activity was involved, the**

Prophets, who provide a Divine index to the real nature of *“triumph.”* **We must rid ourselves of the erroneous notion that Scriptural concepts are tied to the regional customs and manners of heathen nations.**

David pled with the Lord, *“O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.”* (Psa 25:2). Again he thanked God that his enemies did not triumph over him. *“By this I know that thou favorest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me”* (Psa 41:11). The patriarch knew who really did the work!

In a very specific articulation of praise, David traced triumph back to God Almighty. *“O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet”* (Psa 47:13). Again he wrote, *“For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands”* (Psa 92:4).

Examples of Triumph

Through Israel, His chosen people, the Lord provided a vivid picture of the triumph He CAUSES. **It is a triumph that cannot be accounted for apart from God Himself.** Some of the more notable examples will confirm the marvelous scope of Divinely caused triumph

- ☛ Noah triumphed over a global flood, brought by God upon the world (Gen 8:13).
- ☛ Abraham and Sarah triumphed over the impotency of age and the futility of the barren womb (Rom 4:19).
- ☛ Jacob triumphed in a wrestling match with an angel from heaven (Gen 32:28).
- ☛ Joseph triumphed over the malice of his brothers, the contrivances of Potiphar’s wife, and the chains of an Egyptian prison (Psa 105:16-21).
- ☛ Israel triumphed over Egypt, who had held them captive for 430 years (Ex 12:40-41).

It is imperative to so live as to minimize spiritual fluctuation – to avoid blowing hot and cold. The more variable we become, the more a place is made for the devil. This is another of the indispensable advantages of growing up into Christ in all things, going on to perfection, and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

experienced in *“the heavenly places,”* where we have been **“seated”** in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6). It is only possible as we *“walk by faith, and not by sight”* (2 Cor 5:7). This ushers us into the *“always”* domain, where we are actually living in harmony with heaven, in fellowship with Christ, and as *“dear children”* before God (Eph 5:1).

It is imperative to so live as to minimize spiritual fluctuation – to avoid blowing hot and cold. The more variable we become, the more a place is made for the devil (Eph 4:27). This is another of the indispensable advantages of growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15), going on to perfection (Heb 6:1), and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1). **The more spiritually mature we are, the more we can speak of “always.”**

CAUSETH

“ . . . causeth . . . ” Other versions read *“leads,”* NKJV/NASB/NIV and *“maketh,”* DOUAY/BBE

The versions differ significantly in their representations of this text.

☛ That God is causing, or making, something happen.

effectiveness is completely owing to the work of God Himself.

If this is too difficult to receive, it should be very obvious because thanks is being given to God for the accomplishment now affirmed. **It simply is not possible to give thanks to God for something He did not do.** Such a notion is too obvious to require any further explanation.

TRIUMPH IN CHRIST

“ . . . us to triumph in Christ . . . ”

Other versions read, *“triumphal procession,”* NIV/NRSV and *“overcome.”* BBE

The versions that render the text *“triumphal procession”* depict a victory celebration – as though marching through the city following a great victory. However, this is not at all the point of the text. The emphasis here is WHO wrought the triumph, and the MEANS through which the victory was accomplished. The WHO is *“God who causeth.”* The MEANS is *“Christ – “in Christ.”*

This expression is NOT a reference to the Roman armies marching through the city in triumphal procession after some great victory. Rather, this is anchored in the writings of Moses and the

- The believing Israelites triumphed over a great and terrible wilderness wherein was no water, wandering through it for forty years (Deut 8:15).
- Israel triumphed over Jericho's restraining walls with a shout (Josh 6:5,20).
- Gideon and an army of three hundred men triumphed over the militarily superior army of the Midianites (Judges 7:16-23).
- Samson triumphed over one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass (Judges 15:15-16).
- Young David triumphed over Goliath, giant from Gath (1 Sam 17:23-50).
- Eleazar fought, and triumphed over, the Philistines singlehandedly, smiting them until his hand froze to his sword (2 Sam 23:9-10).
- A widow and her son triumphed over a severe famine, feeding herself, her son, and the prophet Elijah with a small supply of meal and oil that never diminished (1 Kgs 17:12-16).

Not a single one of these triumph's can be accounted for on a purely human level. It is apparent that the strategies and natural abilities of men could not have wrought these victories. No amount of human wisdom could have plotted these triumphs. They were "caused" by God – He made them happen.

A Ultimate Word

"Triumph" is an ultimate word. It does **not** mean those in Christ are never "troubled," "perplexed," "persecuted," or "cast down." It **does** mean **they are not "distressed," "in despair," "forsaken," or "destroyed"** (2 Cor 4:7-9). Moses may spend forty years in the back side of the desert, but he will lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage! Joshua and Caleb may spend forty years in the wilderness, but they will come into Canaan! James may be killed by Herod, but not until he has finished his work! Paul may be shipwrecked, but he will land safely on a shore, and be treated hospitably.

God's people must know that in the present circumstances are

difficult, even appearing to be hopeless, the end is not yet. In the way best suited for the glory of God, He will "cause" them to triumph in Christ Jesus.

"In Christ"

There is an exclusive domain in which triumph occurs – a solitary environ in which God causes triumph. **No person is superior to his circumstances outside of this surrounding.** It is "Christ" – the "Lord's Christ" (Lk 2:26). In the sense of our text, there is no triumph outside of Christ Jesus the Lord.

While there are things that we do related to getting into Christ, in the last

us to triumph over all opposing powers and influences. These range from our own "flesh" (Rom 7:18) to principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:12). The wide range of experiences over which God causes us to triumph include death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, or any other creature (Rom 8:38-39). None of these are capable of removing us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, dislodging us from the heavenly places into which we have been raised (Eph 2:6), or plucking us out of the hand of Christ or of God (John 10:28-29).

To be caused to "triumph" means

There is an exclusive domain in which triumph occurs – a solitary environ in which God causes triumph. No person is superior to his circumstances outside of this surrounding. It is "Christ" – the "Lord's Christ." In the sense of our text, there is no triumph outside of Christ Jesus the Lord.

analysis, we are put there by God **Himself.** As it is written, ". . . and the base things of the world and the despised, **GOD has chosen, the things that are not, that HE might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before GOD. But BY HIS DOING you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom FROM GOD, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, 'LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD'**"^{NASB} (1 Cor 1:28-31). This is involved in being "born of God" (1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18). It is also the means by which we are "sanctified by God the Father" (Jude 1:1).

From the standpoint of obedience, we are "baptized into Christ" (Gal 2:27) – baptism being the "form of the doctrine" to which we submitted. That involves being baptized "into His death" (Rom 6:3), from which we were raised "by the glory of the Father" (Rom 6:4). In so doing, **God put us into Christ – into the environment in which He causes**

that the objective of Satan and his hosts cannot be realized in the person who abides in the Son. It means that God, throughout all of our experiences, works all things together for our ultimate good (Rom 8:28). It means that in all of the circumstances of life those who abide "in Christ" are being "conformed" to the image of God's Son (Rom 8:29). God is continuing to work in such people "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). He is working in them that "that which is well pleasing in His sight" (Heb 13:21). That is involved in being caused to "triumph in Christ in Christ."

At any given time, it may appear as though the saints are being defeated – as when Abel was killed by Cain, Stephen was stoned by the Jewish council (Acts 7:58-60, or Paul and Silas were imprisoned with their feet "in the stocks" (Acts 16:23-24). It may seem that the enemy has the upper hand when Paul is lowered over the wall in a basket in order

escape from Aretas (2 Cor 11:32-33), or John is exiled on the Isle of Patmos (Rev 1:9). **But when all of the facts are in, we will find that God “always” caused His people to triumph in Christ** – that His purposes for them were fulfilled, and that the devil and his wicked hosts could not stop that from happening.

As with Paul, every person who abides in Christ will at last be able to say, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also*

that love his appearing” (2 Tim 4:8). **They will also acknowledge that God is the One who “caused” this to happen – who delivered, sealed, anointed, and caused to them to triumph!** Salvation is ascribed to God (Rev 7:10; 19:1). We do not have to wait until the end to recognize this truth.

SAVOR MADE MANIFEST

^{14c} . . . **and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.”**

In Christ Jesus, God is implementing and bringing to completion

Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Eph 1:10)

• **BRING MANY SONS TO GLORY.** *“For it became him, for whom are all*

together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Eph 2:7)

There is no Divine activity, guidance, blessing, or intervention that is unrelated to God’s purpose. It is a purpose that is tied to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is never proper to conceive of God as taking a personal and active interest in matters unrelated to this purpose. While this is not intended to leave the impression that the Lord refuses to become involved with His people in the details of life in this world, it is intended to encourage the saints to raise their vision into a realm where Divine activity can be anticipated and enjoyed most fully. **There is altogether to much thinking and speaking among professing Christians that has little to do with God has declared to be His purpose.**

His *“eternal purpose”* (Eph 3:11). This is a purpose originating and *“given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began”* (2 Tim 1:9). **There is no Divine activity, guidance, blessing, or intervention that is unrelated to this purpose.** It is a purpose that is tied to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is related to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24), and is expressed throughout Scripture in a variety of ways.

things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10)

• **CONFORM THOSE IN CHRIST TO CHRIST’S IMAGE.** *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* (Rom 8:29)

• **SHOW HEAVENLY PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS HIS DIVERS WISDOM THROUGH THE CHURCH.** *“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”* (Eph 3:10)

A sort of religion is being promoted that actually makes man the center of attention. What he does, desires, accomplishes, needs . . . etc., is spoken of as though they were the main things. Successful religion is thought to be realized when human needs are met. However, this is a gross misrepresentation of the case. It is still true, *“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake”* (2 Cor 4:5).

• **GATHER EVERYTHING TOGETHER IN ONE IN CHRIST.** *“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in*

• **SHOW THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE THROUGHOUT THE AGES TO COME.** *“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us*

Preaching *“ourselves”* can take a variety of forms. However, it all boils down to mankind itself being the focal-point of preaching. **I cannot overemphasize how utterly wrong this is.** Yet, in the Western church, you will be hard-pressed to find a place where

this is not the emphasis. It may take the form of presenting Jesus as the solution to all of our problems. It may also take the form of promoting sectarian interests. **But, when the center-piece of religion becomes humanity, so that men think primarily of themselves, what they need, and what they do, men have swerved off course.**

With these things in mind, the following text will confirm that Paul thought in synch with God's "eternal purpose." **He is still referring to the working of God** who comforts (1:4), raises the dead (1:9), delivers (1:10-11), establishes (1:21a), anoints (1:21b), seals (1:22a), gives the earnest of the Spirit (1:22b), opens doors (2:12), and causes to triumph (2:14). Now we are told that He is making manifest, or evident, something associated with His purpose.

MAKETH MANIFEST

" . . . and maketh manifest . . . "

Other versions read, "diffuses," ^{NKJV} "spreads everywhere," ^{NIV} "spreads in every place," ^{NRSV} and "makes clear." ^{BBE}

The word translated "makes manifest" means to show, make known, cause to be plainly recognized, make thoroughly understood, ^{STRONG'S} "to make known, cause to be seen, show, to be revealed." ^{THAYER}

I want to emphasize that this is something God Himself is doing – making manifest. It is NOT something He is making known TO Paul, but what is being revealed THROUGH the Gospel that Paul preached. This is an example of the Gospel being "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16).

Because of the corruption that so dominates the modern church, it is essential that this point be emphasized. **It is God who causes the proclaimed Gospel to be understood.** The understanding of reference is not the result of human expertise, communication skills, and the likes. It is the result of being "taught by God" ^{NKJV} (John 6:45).

This understanding comes by means of the Gospel. God simply does not reveal, or manifest, things through "the doctrines of men" (Col 2:22). "Spiritual understanding" **does not** come by means

of religious creeds and sectarian positions. Religious cliches and slogans **are not** the means God uses to open the truth to the hearts of men. A better understanding of Divine objectives **cannot be** obtained by means of human wisdom. Furthermore, **where God does not work, all religious activity is in vain.** It is pointless, and even competes against the knowledge of the truth.

This is "learning Christ" (Eph 4:20) – coming into an acquaintance with the Lord. This acquaintance produces an

The particular "savor," or "fragrance," involved is "His knowledge," "the knowledge of Him," ^{NIV} or "knowing Him." ^{NRSV} **This is man's knowledge of God – a knowledge that comes by means of the Gospel of Christ.** The Gospel, God's power unto salvation, provides the most thorough view of God's Person and purpose. When that Gospel is believed (Acts 15:7; Eph 1:13) and obeyed (2 Thess 1:8; 1 Pet 4:17), Jesus comes to dwell within the individual (John 14:21,23). In this regard, **it is the particular ministry of Jesus to**

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understanding of both God's Person and what He is doing. **It is the necessary prelude to becoming "laborers together with God"** (1 Cor 3:9). This is not to be confused with academic learning. It is not the result of "study," as ordinarily perceived. Rather, "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psa 118:23).

THE SAVOR OF HIS KNOWLEDGE

" . . . the savor of His knowledge. . . "

Other versions read, "the fragrance of His knowledge," ^{NKJV} "sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him," ^{NASB} "the fragrance of the knowledge of Him," ^{NIV} "the fragrance that comes from knowing Him," ^{NRSV} and "the value of the knowledge of Him." ^{BBE}

The word "savor" means "fragrance, pleasant odor, aroma, and sweet smell." ^{THAYER} This speaks of a spiritual perfume that is pleasing to both God and man – but especially to God. It is to preaching what the incense was to the tabernacle service (Ex 30:1,7). It also parallels a phrase used by Solomon in his song: "Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth . . ." (Song of Sol 1:3).

expound the Father, enabling the believer to "know" Him. Jesus spoke of this when He said, "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. **Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.** Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and **learn from Me,** for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" ^{NKJV} (Mat 11:27-29).

This is the "knowledge" to which our text refers – a knowledge that is appropriately referred to as "the savor." This is the "knowledge" that brings great pleasure to God Himself, as well as the one possessing it. This is expressed by the prophet Jeremiah. "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, **that he understandeth and knoweth Me,** that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer

9:23-24).

The expression “*in these things*” is better translated “*in these.*”^{NKJV/NIV} The objects of Divine delight are those who know and understand Him. If you choose to use the word “*things*,” the “*things*” are knowing and understanding “*the LORD.*” **In both cases, the conclusion is the same: those who know and understand the Lord are a source of great delight to Him.**

Lest anyone be tempted to think knowing God is an option rather than a necessity, let me remind you that **failing** to know God will result in condemnation. As it is written, “*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess 1:7-8).

Of old time, some who did not

comes again. That is a matter of revelation.

Our text affirms that God Himself is making manifest the savor of His knowledge – the perfuming fragrance of men knowing the Lord, or being acquainted with Him. **If this knowledge is not found, it is because God has not made it known. If He is not making it known, it is because His Gospel is not being preached.** I do not believe it is possible to escape this conclusion. The gravity of this circumstance, then, is seen in the fact that those who “*know not God*” will, in the end, be condemned.

There is no accomplishment or identity that can compensate for the lack of the knowledge of God. Apparent moral goodness, even though it is essential to Divine acceptance, is of no value whatsoever without the knowledge of God. If men do not know the Lord, being acquainted with His ways and

enough. However, the state of affairs of which I speak is found within the professing church itself. It is not uncommon to hear a collective church to invite the Lord to be with them in their gatherings, or to ask Him to break their hearts. Such expressions betray a fundamental ignorance of the glory of the New Covenant.

Even though God has clearly affirmed His focus is upon His Son, He is often addressed as though this was not the case. The people, for the most part, appear to know no more of God’s ways than the recalcitrant Israelites of all. **The fact that they tend to rely upon men and their wisdom confirms that they have not seen Him as He has been revealed in Christ Jesus.**

This is by no means intended to be a word of condemnation. Rather, it is meant to draw attention to the seriousness of the condition in which the modern church finds itself. It’s constituents resemble the hard-hearted Israelites more than those who have been reconciled unto God, been raised up to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, and have free access to Him and His grace. God is not pleased with such circumstances. This is because **His “great salvation” is designed to eliminate the ignorance of Himself, acquainting men with His Person and His ways.**

There is nothing about reconciliation to God that condones or promotes the ignorance of God. Nothing about justification allows for the ones who are justified to live at a distance from the God who justified them.

It is understood that every person who comes into Christ begins in a state of spiritual infancy. But woe to that individual who insists on remaining in such a state – which imagined feat simply is not possible. This is the point of the sixth chapter of Hebrews, written to those who deluded into thinking they could remain in a spiritually juvenile state. This notional condition is thought to be maintained by commitment to a religion of ritual and routine – much like that of the Israelites. However, the Holy Spirit pushed the people to abandon such foolish thinking, and go on to “*perfection,*” or

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know God were referred to as “*sons of Belial*” (1 Sam 2:12). Unconverted Gentiles are also referred to as those “*which no not God*” (1 Thess 4:5).

It is a serious thing to be ignorant of God – to be fundamentally unacquainted with His Person and purpose. If you have been in Christ for any length of time, you know that it is not uncommon to find professing believers to be grossly ignorant of God. They have little or no understanding of His character, His purpose, His manners, or His word. This is not a circumstance with which we can be content. Those who do not know God will face the wrath of God when Jesus

Word, all else in vain. A thorough familiarity with a religious movement or a sectarian creed has no value of its own. In the matter of salvation, knowing God, as distinguished from knowing **about** Him, is everything.

In our day, particularly in the Western world, a fundamental ignorance of God can be perceived within professing Christendom. One can detect a sort of groping that is taking place within the Christian community – a groping that is being driven by a lack of acquaintance with God Himself. If we were speaking of those who professed no faith, and made no claim to identity with God through Christ, the situation would be bad

spiritual maturity.

The absolute necessity of doing this is set before us. **We are plainly told that “falling away” is inevitable for those who do not grow up in Christ.** Here are the words of the Spirit. Let all who have ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying “to the churches.”

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, **let us go on to perfection**, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner” ^{NKJV} (Heb 6:1-9).

Let us be clear about what has been affirmed in this text.

- **Our communication concerning the things of God must not linger in the vestibule of truth** – “leaving the discussion of elementary principles.”
- **The Divine mandate is to “go on to perfection.”** No person is given the luxury of ignoring this word!
- Even though a soul is “enlightened,” has “tasted of the heavenly gift,” become “partakers of the Holy Spirit,” and “tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come,” **those conditions cannot be maintained in a state of spiritual juvenility.** A failure to grow leads to a falling away!
- **When those who have been reconciled to God fail to “go on to perfection,”** they have, in fact, crucified Jesus again, and “put Him to an open shame.”

- Such a condition is utterly inexcusable because **salvation is “accompanied” with everything required to “go on to perfection.”** Therefore, those who do not do so, have actually “neglected so great salvation,” putting themselves into a condition from which there is no escape (Heb 2:2-3).

It should be abundantly apparent that we are speaking of things most serious! Furthermore, this all has to do with the “the savor of the knowledge of Him” – **a condition salvation is calculated to produce.** Furthermore, working through the Gospel, “the record

Furthermore, this all has to do with the “the savor of the knowledge of Him” – a condition salvation is calculated to produce. Furthermore, working through the Gospel, “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11), God “makes manifest” this knowledge, diffusing it everywhere. This is what God does – not what He CAN do, but what He DOES wherever the Gospel is preached and believed! He brings men to know Himself!

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The following will confirm the centrality of knowing God in the redemptive economy. This cannot be understated.

The Knowledge of God

- **Isaiah prophesied that the Redeemer would justify men through the knowledge of God.** “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: **by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities**” (Isa 53:11).
- **Eternal life is knowing God.** “And this is life eternal, **that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent**” (John 17:3).

- **Not knowing God is a source of shame.** “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some **have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame**” (1 Cor 15:34).
- **Things opposing this knowledge are to be thrown down.** “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 10:5).
- **The spirit of wisdom and revelation are found in the knowledge of God.** “That the God

of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation **in the knowledge of Him**” (Eph 1:17).

- **The knowledge of God is an area in which increase is to be realized.** “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing **in the knowledge of God**” (Col 1:10).
- **Grace and peace are multiplied to us through this indispensable knowledge.** “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord**” (2 Pet 1:2).
- **Everything pertaining to life and godliness is dispensed to us by means of this knowledge.** “According as His Divine power throne room given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, **through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and**

virtue” (2 Pet 1:3).

- **We escape the condemning pollutions of the world through this knowledge.** “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world **through the knowledge** of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet 2:20).

Let us be clear about this! If

that I may **win Christ**, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: **that I may know Him**, and the power of **His resurrection**, and the fellowship of **His sufferings**, being made conformable unto **His death**; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil 3:8-11).

Knowing Christ, and being with Him in His resurrection and

If there is not advancement in “the knowledge of God,” there is a corresponding forfeiture of all of the benefits that are realized through that knowledge.

there is not advancement in “*the knowledge of God*,” there is a corresponding forfeiture of all of the benefits that are realized through that knowledge. Among those benefits, as listed above, are the following: being justified, having eternal life, avoiding shame, having wisdom, walking worthy, being fruitful, obtaining grace and peace, obtaining things required for life and godliness, and escaping the pollutions of this world.

May there be a zealous effort expended by every child of God to cease from any effort to know anything or anyone better than God! It is of no value to know the ages or rocks, if the Rock of ages is not known. There is no advantage in knowing about God or Christ, if they Themselves are not known. There is no other knowledge that pleases God, moving Him to send forth seasons of refreshing. It is no wonder that Paul wrote, “*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung,*

sufferings, can only be realized by abandoning all competing interests. Whatever militates against this pursuit must be discarded. Whatever promotes it must be embraced. This is an intensely personal matter. In it, no person can impose their will upon another. However, after all is said and done, every person in Christ is solemnly charged to make advancement “*in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet 3:18). **That is the knowledge that perfumes your life, making it pleasing to the Lord.** Without it, pleasing God is impossible.

BY US IN EVERY PLACE

“... by us in every place.” Other versions read “*through us . . . in every place,*” ^{NKJV} “*through us spreads everywhere,*” ^{NIV} and “*wherever we go He uses us.*” ^{NLT}

By this Paul means that everywhere he went, he preached this glorious Gospel with favorable results. As men and women believed this Gospel, a pleasing fragrance was emitted from this world into the very throne room of

God. Allow me to enumerate some of these instances – occasions during which God caused the fragrance of His knowledge to rise from areas once dominated by Satan.

- **The Isle of Paphos.** Here, although Paul met with resistance from a certain sorcerer the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus “*believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord*” (Acts 13:6-12). The “*savor of His knowledge*” perfumed the area.
- **Antioch of Pisidia.** After delivering a remarkable summary of Jewish history, and exhorting the Jews to zealously avoid not believing on Jesus, the Gentiles begged Paul to preach to them the next Sabbath. Even though the Jews contradicted and blasphemed what was said, the Gentiles “*were glad and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed*” (Acts 13:48). The “*savor of His knowledge*” perfumed the area.
- **Iconium.** In Asia Minor, Paul and Barnabas spoke in a synagogue of the Jews. Even though “*unbelieving Jews*” sought to poison the minds of the people, “*a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed*” (Acts 14:1). The “*savor of His knowledge*” perfumed the area.
- **Thessalonica.** When Paul arrived in this city, he went into the Jewish synagogue. There, he boldly opened and alleged that “*Christ must needs suffer, and risen again from the dead,*” affirming that the “*Jesus*” He preached was, in fact, that Christ. As a result, “*some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few*” (Acts 17:4). The “*savor of His knowledge*” perfumed the area.
- **Berea.** When Paul and Silas came to Berea, a place in Macedonia, they went into a synagogue of the Jews. Having preached Christ unto them, “*many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few*” (Acts 17:12). The “*savor of His knowledge*” perfumed the area.

• **Athens.** In this citadel of Grecian culture and philosophy, Paul delivered a public message concerning man's accountability to God through Jesus Christ. The result: *"certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them"* (Acts 17:34). The *"savor of His knowledge"* perfumed the area.

• **Corinth.** When Paul came to Corinth, he was at first opposed when he *"testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ."* However, upon leaving the synagogue and entering into the house of Justus, *"Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized"* (Acts 18:8). After being informed by the Lord that He had *"much people"* in that city, Paul remained in Corinth for *"a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them"* (Acts 18:11). The *"savor of His knowledge"* perfumed the area.

• **Ephesus.** Amidst all manner of religious pretension and Satanic domination, Paul preached in this seat of Satan. On one occasion, an evil spirit taunted seven *"vagabond Jews"* who sought to cast him out in the name of *"Jesus whom Paul preacheth."* He told these Jews, *"Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?"* The man *"in whom the spirit was"* then leaped upon the seven men, *"overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and*

These were all things that God caused to happen. In our text, Paul affirms God "made manifest the savor of His knowledge" by them [Paul and company] "in every place." As the Gospel was preached, the hearts of listeners were opened by the Lord (Acts 16:14), so they could respond to the message, coming to know the Lord the Lord – having eternal life

wounded." When this *"was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver"* (Acts 19:16-19). The *"savor of His knowledge"* perfumed the area.

• **Rome.** When Paul finally arrived as a prisoner in Rome, a day was appointed to him during which he was allowed to declare the Kingdom of God. Each day for two years he testified *"from morning until evening."* It is said of that time, *"And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not"* (Acts 28:24). The *"savor of His knowledge"* perfumed the area.

I have not taken the time to mention the three thousand who believed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), or when the number of men who believed

came to five thousand (Acts 4:4). Nor, indeed, have I mentioned the whole city of Samaria believing the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:12-13), or when the Ethiopian eunuch believed Philip when he preached Christ to him (Acts 8:26-39). There was the fragrance of the knowledge of God that rose from the riverside in Philippi (Acts 16:12-15). That blessed fragrance also emitted from the house of a certain Philippian jailor, who washed the stripes of Paul and Silas, *"and was baptized, he and all his straightway"* (Acts 16:33).

These were all things that God caused to happen. In our text, Paul affirms God *"made manifest the savor of His knowledge"* by them [Paul and company] *"in every place."* As the Gospel was preached, the hearts of listeners were opened by the Lord (Acts 16:14), so they could respond to the message, coming to know the Lord the Lord – having eternal life, escaping the world's corruption, etc.

When this took place, the knowledge of God became a reality in those who believed, and it was a pleasing fragrance to God. However, it was God Himself who brought it all to pass.

CONCLUSION

We have been exposed to the manner of the Kingdom – the way in which the Lord works in this marvelous *"day of salvation"* (2 Cor 6:2).

- He closes doors and opens doors.
- He directs His messengers in ways

that bring certain advantages to the body of Christ, which has the priority over all other people.

- When the state of God's people is not known, it causes restless in the spirit of His ministers – those whom He has placed in the body for the perfecting

of the saints and the work of the ministry.

- Those who are engaged in the work of the Lord are indefatigable in their labors, always seeking the betterment of the saints, and never content to leave them in an unacceptable state

before the Lord. That is the manner of the heavenly Kingdom.

From heaven, and through Christ, God is at work. He is causing His people to triumph in Christ – making them equal to the challenges they face, and superior to all competing influences. The reason they are standing after the smoke of battle has been carried away, is that God has made them stand (Rom 14:4). **Their triumph is not the result of human wisdom, ingenuity, or procedure, but of Divine involvement.**

In the triumph of the Gospel, and of those who proclaim it, God is causing the fragrance of His knowledge to rise from this earth. Through the Gospel, and in Christ Jesus, men and women are being brought to know God and Christ, which knowledge IS eternal life. Eternal life is **not** ceasing to commit immoral deeds. It is **not** the result of conforming to a certain code of conduct, or following a prescribed procedure. Eternal life IS knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). **It is a holy familiarity with God that allows His voice to be heard, His works to be**

perceived, and His will to be known.

Where this knowledge is absent, there is no eternal life. Under such a circumstance, there is no Divine acceptance. There is no such thing as pleasing God while remaining fundamentally ignorant of Him.

May the Lord raise up ministers – preachers and teachers – who will declare a message through which God can cause triumph, and manifest the pleasing fragrance of the knowledge of Himself.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/17/2004. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The tenth lesson will cover verses fifteen through seventeen of the second chapter: **“A SWEET SAVOR OF CHRIST.”** This lesson will deal with the effect that we have upon God. That effect is traced back to the presence of the Lord Jesus in our lives. The effect is also reflected through the impact we have upon various types of people. 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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