

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 # 12

COMMENTARY ON: 3:4-6

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

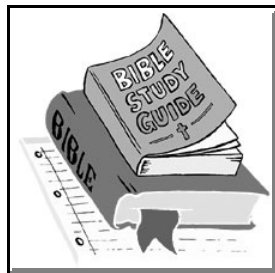
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

ABLE MINISTERS

What makes a man a capable minister – one who is able to declare and expound the New Covenant in an acceptable manner before God? How is it that a message can be declared with such power that the character and lives of those who receive it are actually changed for the better? When disdain for the messenger rises among those who hear him, these things are no longer known. They slip from the mind, and it becomes necessary to reaffirm them, and establish the people in the truth. Improper attitudes toward faithful messengers cause a fog to envelop the understanding, thus robbing the soul of things most precious. Paul now comes to grips with this matter, declaring the source of his enablement.

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 12



TRANSLATION LEGEND: AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible, ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version, KJV=King James Version (1611), LIVING = Living Bible, MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament, 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). WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament, WILLIAMS = William's New Testament.

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 -----

ABLE MINISTERS

“ 3:4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; 6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”

KJV

(2 Cor 3:4-6)

INTRODUCTION

How is it that men and woman of God can be effective in their labors for Christ? What causes genuine success in the Kingdom of the Lord and His Christ? Is it training? Or education? Or natural abilities? What are the objectives of real ministry in the name of Jesus, and how are those objectives realized? Are there certain approaches that are inherently defective and lead to death – regardless of who uses them? What is the secret to genuine spiritual life?

These, and more, are the questions that Paul addresses in this section. His

answers will not mesh with the standard approaches of organized religion. They will not contribute to a religious career, or make a person famous among men. Our Father in heaven has no interest in such things. He already has a “*Man*” that fully pleases Him, and He has invested that Man with “*all power in heaven and in earth*” (Matt 28:18). He has shown “*all things*” to Him (John 3:35; 5:20), “*given all things into His hands*” (John 10:3), has “*committed all judgment unto*” Him (John 5:22), and “*given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man*” (John 5:27).

It is not possible to ignore the Son and, at the same time, be qualified or competent in any aspect of the Kingdom of God. There is no natural ability, or aspect of purely human endeavors, that can compensate for a lack of fellowship with Christ or a lack of personal acquaintance with, or knowledge of, Him. Academic expertise cannot offset a lack of familiarity with Christ Jesus. There is no religious routine than can make up for living at a distance from Him. It is not possible to have a religious affiliation that will counterbalance a fundamental ignorance of Christ Jesus’ person,

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accomplishments, present ministry, and revealed objectives. No man can be “trained” into a state of acceptance with God, so that God will more readily use him in the fulfilling of His purpose.

A NEW SOURCE OF COMPETENCE

Spiritual competence cannot be achieved by fleshly means. The Lord Jesus died to “deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal 1:4). **It is the epitome of ignorance to imagine that valuable assets, required for spiritual adequacy, can in any way be complemented by resources found in the realm from which we have delivered.** That would be like Israel, after arriving in Canaan, returning to Egypt to obtain plants, grains, and animals with which to promote and enhance their lives in the promised land.

In every aspect of spiritual life, “the heavens do rule.” Our initiation into Christ is accomplished by the Lord. The Holy Spirit convicted and sanctified us (John 16:8-11; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:12). The Father Himself put us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30). Our hearts were opened to respond to the Gospel (Acts 16:14). Repentance was granted unto us (Acts 11:18). It is God who, through the Holy Spirit, “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” us (1 Cor 6:11). We were placed into Christ’s body precisely where it

“pleased Him” (1 Cor 12:18). He is the One who “delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col 1:13).

Grace has abounded toward us “by one Man, Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:15). It is He, and He alone, who “redeemed” us (Gal 3:13), “made us free” (Gal 5:1), “made peace” (Col 1:20), and “reconciled” us to God (Col 1:21). Jesus is the only “Head of the body, the church” (Col 1:18), and it is “of His fulness” that we have all “received” (John 1:16). If we are alive, it is only because Christ “lives in” us (Gal 2:20). Christ is, in every sense of the word, “our life” (Col 3:4). If we have any power, it is “His power” that is working in us (Eph 3:20).

Under such wonderful circumstances, how can any effectiveness in matters pertaining to life and godliness be traced to worldly resources, human wisdom, or natural abilities? The truth of the matter is that Christ is “the last Adam”, having borrowed nothing from him. Whereas Adam was made alive, Christ Jesus makes alive. Thus we read, “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening [life-giving^{NKJV}] spirit” (1 Cor 15:45).

Purely human resources have no role in conforming us to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). They have no part in the critical work of changing us from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18). They cannot make us “meet” or qualified (Col 1:12), sanctify us (John 17:17), or cause us to be righteous before God (2 Cor 5:21). The well of nature has not merely been stopped up, it has run dry. There is no water in it, and God has no provision to fill it again. He has chosen to begin with a “new covenant” (Heb 12:24) and a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).

THE NEW ORDER

The Lord has declared “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:9). He began by making a “new covenant,” sealed and ratified with the blood of Christ (Matt 26:38). Having taken away the sins of the world, Jesus is now enthroned in glory, invested with all power in heaven and earth, and is mediating this new covenant (Heb 9:15). In Christ Jesus a new generation is being created – a new people who are born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). Individually they are a “new creature” (2 Cor 5:17). Collectively they are “one new man” (Eph 2:15). They each have a “new heart” and a “new spirit” (Ezek 36:26), which together constitute a “new man” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). They are coming to God by “a new and a living way” (Heb 10:20). As they live by faith, they are looking for “a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet 3:13).

True competence is the God-given ability to prepare men for the new heavens and the new earth by living in the “newness of life” (Rom 6:4). It is the ability to so declare the Gospel of Christ as to promote a withdrawal from the condemned realm, and an anticipation of, and preparation for, glory with Christ Jesus.

Everything that grows old will pass away, and therefore is not a suitable object for our affection. Whatever one may think of the natural order, it has, in its totality, been consigned to “the bondage of corruption” (Rom 8:21). While the temporal realm is presently governed by the exalted Christ, and provision for His people carefully and lovingly administered, that is not the domain of our Lord’s primary work. Nature is not the focus of Divine activity. It has already been consigned to death,

Everything that grows old will pass away, and therefore is not a suitable object for our affection. Whatever one may think of the natural order, it has, in its totality, been consigned to “the bondage of corruption”

and nothing can reverse that decree. **Those who attempt to anchor the faith of God's people in the here-and-now, promising them health and wealth, and worldly abundance, are not supported by the Lord.** They are declaring an "old covenant" view of things – a view which cannot prepare a person

for eternity.

Whatever is ultimately traced to Adam is forthrightly rejected. **Only what is traced specifically to Christ Jesus is accepted** – and there are no exceptions. Paul will not only declare his competence to minister these things, he

will demonstrate it in this very text. He will confirm the folly of a covenant that is rooted in this world. **He will show the danger of becoming attached to things that pass away.** He will confirm why it is essential to be equipped by God to do the work of God among the people of God.

SUCH TRUST WE HAVE

^{3:4a} **And such trust have we.**"

Paul now explains how he can speak with such obvious confidence – a requisite for effectively laboring in the Kingdom of God. He lived out the affirmation the Spirit moved him to make concerning those who are in Christ Jesus: they "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:3). Although Paul had a remarkable Jewish pedigree, yet he

- Concerning the Law, a Pharisee.
- Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.
- Touching the righteousness of the Law, blameless.
- Of the seed of Abraham (2 Cor 11:22).
- He profited in the Jew's religious

- God separated him from his mother's womb (Gal 1:15).
- Jesus appeared to Him after He had been enthroned in glory (Acts 9:17).
- Jesus personally commissioned him (Acts 26:15-18).
- Jesus personally taught Him after He had ascended back into heaven (Gal 1:12,16; Eph 3:1-6; 1 Cor 11:23-29).
- Jesus personally put him into the ministry (1 Tim 1:12).
- Jesus considered him to be a faithful man (1 Tim 1:12).
- He was more of a minister of Christ than others (2 Cor 11:23).
- He labored more abundantly than others (2 Cor 11:23; 1 Cor 15:10).
- He experienced more extensive sufferings for Christ (2 Cor 11:23b-28).
- He received an abundance of revelations (2 Cor 12:1,7).
- He was caught up into paradise (2 Cor 12:4).
- He wrought the signs of an Apostle (2 Cor 12:12).

If it was possible for anyone to have a legitimate confidence in the flesh, Paul would have been the man. He had a proper birth among a proper people who had the proper religion. He excelled in a revealed religion, both in understanding and in participation.

refused to base his confidence on such shifting sand. Contemplate again what he said of his past – something that would have given rise to boasting in most anyone else. The world would account of Paul as having a reason to boast. As he himself said, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more" (Phil 3:4).

- Circumcised the eighth day.
- Of the stock of Israel.
- Of the tribe of Benjamin.
- A Hebrew of the Hebrews.

above his peers (Gal 1:14a).

- He was more zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Gal 1:14b).
- Brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, distinguished teacher of the Law (Acts 22:3a).
- Taught according to the perfect manner of the Law (Acts 22:3b).
- Was zealous toward God (Acts 22:3c).
- Was a member of the strictest sect of the Jew's religion (Acts 26:5a).
- Lived as a Pharisee (Acts 26:5b).

If it was possible for anyone to have a legitimate confidence in the flesh, Paul would have been the man. He had a proper birth among a proper people who had the proper religion. He excelled in a revealed religion, both in understanding and in participation. He was a member of the

most disciplined section of a God-chosen people. He received more. He did more. He suffered more. He experienced more. He saw and knew more. Surely, if anyone could have “confidence” in himself, this is the one who could do it!

How do you suppose the religious achievers of our day would appear if they stood next to Paul before the Lord? How would a degree, or two, or three, appear then? How would an accomplished orator appear? Or a person who had organized a large and successful religious institution? How would someone with expertise in the Greek or Hebrew language appear? Or someone who was an expert in church history?

It is not that any of these things are wrong, and God forbid that anyone should think so. **The point is that none of them truly distinguish a person before God.** Confidence cannot be placed in them, for they are not what makes a person competent in Kingdom labors. This is the point that Paul is making, and we do well to take hold of it.

A system of religion that teaches its constituents to rely upon natural abilities and advantages, or human accomplishments, is flawed to the core. **The truth of the matter is that, of himself, man can do nothing that can gender legitimate self-confidence.** Nor, indeed, can true qualification to labor in the kingdom of Christ be achieved in such a manner.

SUCH TRUST

“And such trust . . .” Other versions read, “we have such trust,”^{NKJV} “such confidence,”^{NASB} “such is the confidence,”^{NRSV} “this is the certain faith,”^{BBE} “Such is the reliance and confidence,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “only because of our great trust.”^{LIVING}

“Such”

The word “such” is translated from a word meaning, “such as this,”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} “of this kind or sort,”^{THAYER} and “like that.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

The statement to which this word refers the previous statements:

• **THEY WERE THE RESULT OF THE APOSTLE’S WORK.** “Ye are

our epistle written in our hearts.”^{verse 2a}

• **THEY WERE IN THE HEART AND CONSCIENCE OF THE APOSTLE.** “Ye are . . . written in our hearts.”^{verse 2a}

• **THEY WERE LIKE A MESSAGE THAT COULD, IN SOME WAY, BE DECIPHERED BY MEN.** “Ye are our epistle . . . known and read of all men.”^{verse 2b}

• **JESUS PRODUCED THEM THROUGH THE APOSTLE’S MESSAGE.** “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us.”^{verse 3a}

• **THEY WERE THE PRODUCT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** “Written . . . with the Spirit of the living God.”^{verse 3b}

• **THEIR CHARACTER HAD BEEN CHANGED.** “Written . . . in fleshly

tables of the heart.”^{verse 3c}

Ordinarily, these are all matters on which men tend to speculate. They do not tend to be areas of strong confidence. Men might conjecture that they really had nothing to do with the transformation of the people. They might hesitate to confess there was an intimacy between the people and themselves. There would be an inclination to say it was not possible for them to be perceived by others. Men might express a hope that they were the product of Jesus’ own work. It might be conceded that the ideal situation would be that they were the product of the Spirit’s own work, and that their character had really been changed.

But this is not how Paul speaks. He speaks with a certitude that is almost staggering. There is not the slightest tone of doubt in his words. In fact, they even have a ring of authority in them. It is as though he leaves the Corinthians with no alternative but to accept what he has said as the total truth.

How is it possible for a mortal to speak with such certainty? That is what Paul is going to explain in this passage.

“Trust”

The word “trust” is translated from a word meaning “trust, confidence, reliance,”^{THAYER} “to believe in something or rely on to the extent of placing reliance or trust in or on - ‘to rely on, trust in, to depend on, confidence, trust,’”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “trust, confidence, boldness.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

The previous words were actually an expression of trust or godly confidence. They were not a surface assessment, or the expression of a fervent desire – as though he said, “I certainly do hope this is

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true of you.”

The precise word that is here translated “trust,” is used only one other time in Scripture. This word is also translated “confidence,”^{KJV} “faith,”^{BBE} “trust,”^{DARBY} and “rely.”^{NJB} “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more” (Phil 3:4). Other forms and tenses of the word appear in the following verses. I have underscored the translation of those various forms.

• “And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit” (2 Cor

1:15).

- “And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you” (2 Cor 8:22).
- “But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh” (2 Cor 10:2).
- “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” (Eph 3:12).

The “trust” of which he speaks is the aspect of faith that emphasizes reliance on or confidence in. **We will find that this trust is toward God through Christ.** That assumes familiarity with the one trusted.

HAVE WE

“... have we...” Other versions read, “we have,”^{NKJV} “is ours,”^{NASB} and “We dare to say these good things about ourselves.”^{LIVING}

What follows is an expression of what Paul himself possessed. It was not a statement of a creedal position he had embraced. It was not a statement of how things ought to be. It was not the

iteration of a goal toward he strived.

His words have been motivated by “the spirit of faith.” Later he will confess, “We having the same **spirit of faith**, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2 Cor 4:13). **That “spirit of faith” not only moved him to declare the Gospel of Christ, but to correctly assess those who had embraced that Gospel as well.**

His faith had given him to see the real situation – the reality of God, Christ, his personal labors, and those who were in Christ. He was thus enabled to make proper assessments without boasting or taking glory to himself. Faith comes with remarkable peripheral vision!

THROUGH CHRIST TO GOD-WARD

“^{3:4a} . . . through Christ to God-ward . . . ”

In a sense “trust” is not simplistic. There is a technical aspect to it as well as a practical one. Here we will see how trust bears upon our assessment of the very people to whom we have ministered. As we trace this matter, it will become evident that it represents an area in which most of us can make some decided improvement.

There comes a point where we must trust in God that the results of our work are genuine, and that the people will do what is right.

- “And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you” (2 Thess 3:4).
- “And I myself also **am persuaded** of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” (Rom 15:14).
- “**Thave confidence in you** through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be” (Gal

5:10).

- “**Being confident** of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).
- “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and **I am persuaded** that in thee also” (2 Tim 1:5).
- “**Having confidence** in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say” (Phile 1:21).

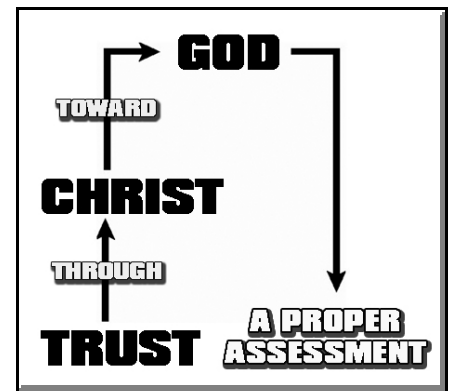
In all of these instances, it is evident that confidence was not in the people themselves. The confidence, or trust, was in the Lord, that He would do the work. Now Paul elaborates on this, teaching us to think precisely on this matter of trust or confidence.

THROUGH CHRIST

“... through Christ.” Other versions read, “through **the** Christ.”^{DARBY/YLT}

Whether we are speaking of benefits received from God, or effective associations with God, the solitary means

of appropriating that association is “through Christ.” It is essential that this be perceived and embraced. It is precisely true, as Jesus said, “no man cometh unto the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). This is not as mere formality. The Lord Jesus must Himself be active in our association with God – in this case, in the “trust.” We can neither come to Him or receive from Him independently of our faith in and fellowship with His Son.



Jesus is not like a secret password that opens the door to the Throne room. Rather, there is a very real connection with Him that is forged in the new birth. We “joined to Him” (1 Cor 6:17) in His death (Rom 6:8), burial (Rom 6:4), resurrection (Col 2:12), and life (Gal

2:20). This joining is so precise and living that believers are said to be *“of His flesh and of His bones”* (Eph 5:30), paralleling the relationship of Adam to Eve (Gen 2:21-23). **That is, this is not an association by mere profession, or by identity with a religious organization.**

Paul Transfers the Glory to God

In this passage, Paul is transferring the glory of his labors to God. He is doing so in a spiritually intelligent manner, through which we are instructed more perfectly in the manner of *“the*

live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Later Paul will acknowledge that *“the life of Jesus”* is being made manifest in his own *“body”* (2 Cor 4:10). He will also declare his own teaching to be *“Christ speaking in me”* (2 Cor 13:3).

Christ living within is not a mere platitude – a dull and lifeless saying. The Spirit says of the body of Christ, Christ is **“IN all”** (Col 3:11). He also reasons, *“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness”* (Rom 8:10).

There is a kind of fence around valid kingdom labors, so that imposters cannot enter the sacred citadel of working together with God. Those who do not live with the Lord are really not able to work for or with Him.

kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph 5:5).

The assessment of his own work, and the state of the Corinthians in Christ Jesus, is based upon his faith in God, not in the work that he has accomplished, or his own natural abilities. **His efforts were not the result of learning a technique from a Jerusalem workshop, but of trusting in the living God through Christ Jesus.**

However close we may be to God, Jesus remains between us and Him – the *“one Mediator between God and man”* (1 Tim 2:5). God speaks to us *“by His Son”* (Heb 1:2), and our associations with Him are through the Son. This even involves having confidence that our assessments are correct – which is a most remarkable circumstance. Admittedly, this has a strange sound within the context of contemporary Christianity. Nevertheless, this is the way in which Paul is speaking.

Christ Living Within

This circumstance postulates that Christ is living within. As it is written, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I*

Further, this indwelling involves certain advancement, in which we are become more precisely like Jesus. Thus Paul wrote, *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you”* (Gal 4:19).

The point here is that Paul’s *“trust”* is flowing out of this reality – that Jesus has taken up residence in Him, and is manifesting Himself to him (John 14:21). He is also being so *“conformed”* to Christ’s image that he is able to speak with a confidence that transcends any ability of the flesh or nature.

Faithfulness in Ministry

The *“trust,”* or confidence, of which Paul speaks also presumes his faithfulness to the commission given to him by Jesus. The Lord summarized that commission in these words, *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”* (Acts 26:18). **Faithfulness to that charge was the soil out of which Paul’s “trust” grew.** His was a living trust from a living faith.

Newness of life has certain traits that cannot be emulated or fabricated by the wisdom of man. One of them is this: **Faithfulness to God produces a strong confidence that empowers the individual to fulfill his ministry.** No person can labor confidently who is slothful and disloyal in the work the Lord has given to him. Such servants are forced to rely upon the wisdom of men because they do not possess *“the full assurance of understanding”* (Col 2:2).

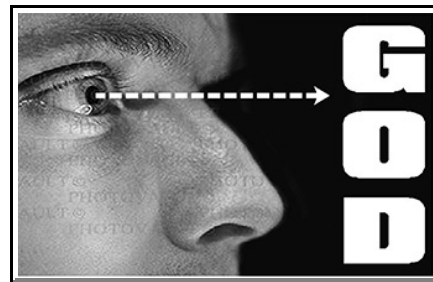
In this way, the work of the Lord is protected. **There is a kind of fence around valid kingdom labors, so that imposters cannot enter the sacred citadel of working together with God.** Those who do not live with the Lord are really not able to work for or with Him. Those who have stifled the life of Christ within, will not be able to labor in the harvest fields of the Lord.

Thus we see that having *“trust through Christ”* is a most essential aspect of effective ministry. Paul is not confessing to an extraordinary situation, but is acknowledging his participation in the manner of Christ’s kingdom.

Stated in yet another way, it is not possible for confidence, qualification, or competence to be realized apart from personal identity and fellowship with Jesus Christ. This also is the manner of the Kingdom, and it is not possible for any degree of real success to be realized apart from that association.

GOD-WARD

“ . . . to God-ward . . . ” Other versions read, *“toward God,”*^{NKJV} *“before God,”*^{NIV} *“in God,”*^{BBE} *“to God,”*^{GENEVA} *“facing God.”*^{NJB} and *“in the presence of God.”*^{WEYMOUTH}



The term *“God-ward”* is

translated from a three-word Greek expression: πρὸς τὸν θεόν. Literally translated it read, “towards, or with regard to, the God.” The Greek word πρὸς is a preposition “denoting direction toward a thing, or position and state looking toward a thing.” THAYER Other lexical meanings are, “looking toward the end point . . . up to the point of, ending up in,” FRIBERG “toward . . . Pertaining to, with reference to,” UBS and “extension toward a goal, with the probability of some type of implied interaction or reciprocity.” LOUW-NIDA

“Trust,” like its mother “Faith,” faces toward God, rests in Him, looks to Him, and anticipates from Him. Faith, together with all of its subsidiary components, **focuses** upon “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3). It is fundamentally “God-ward.” If our religion does not bring us to have faith in God, and to the point where our “trust” is toward Him, it has totally missed the mark! There is no point to a religion in which men are not “with God.” This is made clear in Apostolic doctrine.

- ☛ Glory is given “to God” (Rom 4:20).
- ☛ We were reconciled “to God” (Rom 5:10).
- ☛ In Christ we “live unto God” (Rom 6:10).
- ☛ Salvation makes us “alive unto God” (Rom 6:11).
- ☛ In Christ we are summoned to yield ourselves “unto God” (Rom 6:13).
- ☛ We have become “servants unto God” (Rom 6:22).
- ☛ The objective for becoming “dead to the law by the body of Christ,” is that we might “bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom 7:4).
- ☛ Believers are a “sweet savor of Christ unto God” (2 Cor 3:4).
- ☛ The saved have turned “unto God” to serve Him (1 Thess 1:9).
- ☛ In Christ, and by means of the New Covenant, “we draw nigh unto God” (Heb 7:19).
- ☛ We “come unto God” through Jesus Christ (Heb 7:25).

- ☛ One of the fundamental facets of faith is coming to Him (Heb 11:6).
- ☛ Our spiritual sacrifices are made “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5).
- ☛ Jesus “suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet 3:18).

The fundamental thrust of the entire salvational enterprise is toward God. That is what the Lord Jesus is all about – bringing fallen man back to God. His death, resurrection, present life, and coming again have to do with bringing us to God. In the end, after all enemies have been openly and apparently placed under His feet, and the sons are safely gathered into the presence of the Lord, “then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). **It is all about God!**

who are redeemed: “Who **BY HIM** do believe in God” (1 Pet 1:21). Other versions read, “who through Him believe in God,” NKJV “through Him are believers in God,” NASB “Through Him you believe in God,” NIV “Through Him you have come to trust in God,” NRSV “Through Him you have confidence in God,” RSV “through Him have faith in God,” BBE “Through Christ you have come to trust in God,” NLT and “Through Him you believe in (adhere to, rely on) God.” AMPLIFIED

In the strictest sense of the word, believing on God and trusting in Him, are not the result of human reasoning. **It is not that we have been presented with the facts, thought upon them, and concluded that it is reasonable to trust in, or depend upon, the Lord.** Faith involves our cognition, or mental processes – but it is **not** the result of those powers of reason! Faith is not the result of intellectual activity. It is not based upon empirical knowledge, or

entire salvational enterprise is toward God. That is what the Lord Jesus is all about – bringing fallen man back to God. His death, resurrection, present life, and coming again have to do with bringing us to God.

Believing through Jesus

There is a poignant statement made concerning our belief in God that ought to be noted. Peter makes this statement in the midst of a marvelous declaration of our redemption. He affirms that we have been “redeemed” from the “futile way of life”^{NASB} inherited from our fathers. That redemption was accomplished “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet 1:18-9). Tracing our salvation back to the council chambers of heaven itself, Peter adds: “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet 1:20).

The Apostle then makes this arresting statement concerning the ones

things that can be observed through the natural senses. Faith cannot be produced by studying the orderliness of nature, or by pondering some archeological find. It is not based upon ontological evidence – things that exist within the realm of nature. It cannot be brought into existence by some teleological argument that points to the precision and orderliness of nature. Such approaches to convincing men there is a God may appear excellent to the scholar, but they are all miserable proofs to the angelic hosts, as well as those who have been brought into their fellowship through Christ Jesus.

Men believe in God “through Christ.” They come to trust in God “by Him.” That is the clear affirmation of Scripture. Jesus said that believing “on” God followed hearing His Word – that is,

By accenting man, the findings of man, and the reasoning of man, Jesus has been shoved into the background. In His place, an army of psychiatrists and counselors have surfaced to usurp leadership in His church.

hearing it with as discerning ear, an ear that God alone can give (John 5:24; Deut 29:3; Prov 20:12). **Believing “on” God necessarily follows believing on Christ.** As Jesus said, *“He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me”* (John 12:44). Any approach to God, whether initial faith or drawing nigh unto Him as one who has been *“made accepted in the Beloved”* (Eph 1:6), is by means of Jesus Christ. In the most precise sense and extent of the word, we *“come unto God BY Him”* (Heb 7:25). In the words of our text, *“such trust have we through Christ to God-ward.”*

Why Say These Things?

Is it really necessary to say such things – to spend time establishing the Source of our faith, the cause of our trust,

and the direction and focus of believing? Indeed it is! This truth has been greatly obscured by the *Christian* academic community. With its emphasis on logic, the original language, proofs external to Scripture, “higher reasoning,” and the likes, **it has diverted the attention from Jesus Christ** – the sole means of gaining access to God. By accenting man, the findings of man, and the reasoning of man, Jesus has been shoved into the background. **In His place, an army of psychiatrists and counselors have surfaced to usurp leadership in His church.** The result is that faith can hardly be perceived in the average Christian congregation. The kind of trust that is declared in our text is strange to the modern church – and there is a reason for the condition. **Faith can neither**

come into being nor be sustained independently of personal identity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Trust Is Fundamentally God-ward

Our text affirms that *“trust”* is fundamentally *“God-ward.”* It is not self-ward – that is, it is not being self-confident. It is not church-ward. This kind of *“trust”* has nothing whatsoever to do with, what is called, *“the power of positive thinking.”* It is not the result of respecting yourself or having a good self-image. Like all human efforts, these are *“cisterns”* hewed out by men – *“broken cisterns that can hold no water”* (Jer 2:13). They are like *“a bag with holes”* that cannot keep what is put in them (Hag 1:6). **These cannot generate the confidence to which this text refers.**

By saying his trust is *“God-ward,”* Paul has expressed a facet of knowing whom he had believed, and being *“persuaded that He is able to keep that which”* he had *“committed unto Him until that day”* ^{NKJV} (2 Tim 1:2). **In so doing, he has actually articulated the very nature of true spiritual life. Life – true life – is the result of being in fellowship with the Source of life.** Wherever that fellowship is found, spirituality and life are present.

NOT SUFFICIENT OF OURSELVES

“^{5a} Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves . . .”

Because of the strong tendency of flesh to trust in self, Paul elaborates on this subject. Although *“the flesh profiteth nothing”* (John 6:63), the *“natural man”* is unwilling to accept that circumstance. **Even though “a good man shall be satisfied from himself”** (Prov 14:14), **what is within him did not have its origin in self or in nature.** It is only as we believe that effective resources are deposited within us that they become effective. Jesus made two statements that especially confirm the truth of this observation. To the Samaritan woman who came in contact with Him at Jacob’s well Jesus said, *“But whosoever drinketh*

of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). The source of the flow of life is *“the water”* that Jesus gives, which comes in the container of His Word. Again, Jesus traced this life back to the Holy Spirit, whom He would give. *“He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:38). John goes on to say that Jesus said this word in reference to *“the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”* (John 7:39).

Whether, therefore, we are speaking of the refreshment and

satisfaction realized by the believer, or the effectiveness of their labors, the source does not come from themselves, but from a gift that has been given to them by Christ Jesus. That is the point that is being made by this text, and it is a critical one.

NOT THAT WE ARE SUFFICIENT OF OURSELVES

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves . . .” Other versions read, *“not that we are adequate in ourselves,”* ^{NASB} *“not that we are competent in ourselves,”* ^{NIV} *“not that we are competent of ourselves,”* ^{NRSV} *“not as if we were able of ourselves,”* ^{BBE} *“not that of ourselves we are qualified,”* ^{NAB} *“It is not that we think we can do anything of lasting value,”* ^{NLT} *“Not that we are fit (qualified and*

Confidence and Effectiveness in Preaching Come through Divine Enablement – by Given O. Blakely

sufficient in ability) of ourselves to form personal judgments. ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “sufficient” has a large meaning. It is translated from the Greek word *ἰκανοί* (hik-an-os), which means “sufficient . . . having enough, or large enough, fit, worthy or able for something,” ^{THAYER} “sufficient, enough, adequate, qualified, competent,” ^{FRIEBERG} “with sufficient power to, a match for, and equivalent to.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

In the work of the Lord, qualification, or competence, is essential. The laborer must be “able to finish” the work he has been given to do (Lk 14:29-30). He must be equal to the task that is assigned to him.

This is involved in the distribution of “a measure of faith,” as taught in Romans 12:3: “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom 12:3). This does not mean, as some erroneously teach, that every mortal has received faith, and that it only has to be aerated within by acting upon it.

The Spirit is speaking about the body of Christ, not the mass of humanity. A “measure of faith” refers to the aptitude to fulfill the ministry to which one has been assigned. The verses that follow make this clear: “For as we have many members **in one body**, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are **one body in Christ**, and every one members one of another. Having then **gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us**, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness” (Rom 12:4-8). Peter uses the same form of reasoning, referring to “the ability” that is given by God. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it **as of the ability which God giveth**: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet 4:11).

In Christ there is no such things as a ministry for which the minister is not made capable. There is not a stewardship for which the steward is not made sufficient! The Divine placement program (1 Cor 12:18) makes no provision for a worker without competence. When God puts the various members in the body as it has pleased Him, He always provides the abilities required to function acceptably in the role in which the members are placed.

Spiritual Babylon has inducted an era of incompetence.

Spiritual Babylon has inducted an era of incompetence. That is why there is such an accent on “how-to” methodologies. The amount of time that is devoted to supposedly producing effectiveness is staggering. Sometimes it appears to be the major activity within the professed church.

That is why there is such an accent on “how-to” methodologies. The amount of time that is devoted to supposedly producing effectiveness is staggering. Sometimes it appears to be the major activity within the professed church. All such activity is nothing more than a profession of incompetence, or insufficiency.

Let it be clear, there are certainly areas in which the children of God sense they possess no genuine competence – and honest people are keenly aware of these areas. **If, in fact, it is proper for us to be sufficient in these areas, that sufficiency must come from God.** That is the point that must register upon our conscience.

Now Paul speaks of his own “sufficiency.” He has assessed the Corinthians, and his own labors as well. How was he able to do this? Was he merely prattling on in the energy of the flesh? Were these self-assessments that were birthed out of a sort of self-

diagnosis? Had he taken a kind of self-assessment test that had caused him to speak confidently? He will dogmatically affirm this is **not** the case.

TO THINK ANYTHING AS OF OURSELVES

“. . . to think any thing as of ourselves . . .” Other versions read, “to think of anything as being from ourselves,” ^{NKJV} “to consider anything as coming from ourselves,” ^{NASB} “to claim anything for ourselves,” ^{NIV} “to claim anything as coming from us,” ^{NRSV} “to account anything as from ourselves,” ^{ASV}

“to do anything for which we might take credit,” ^{BBE} “claim any credit for ourselves,” ^{NJB} “do anything of lasting value by ourselves,” ^{NLT} and “or to claim or count anything as coming from us.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul is affirming that he possesses no natural ability to form the judgments that he has given – whether of himself, or of the Corinthians. Paul knew what Jesus had affirmed to the other Apostles on the night of His betrayal: “without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Our ultimate example, the Savior Himself, frequently spoke of His own words and work as **not** coming from Himself. His affirmations are carefully and insightfully crafted.

- ☛ “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do” (John 5:19).
- ☛ Jesus confessed, “I can of Mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30).

- ☛ And again, *"I do nothing of Myself"* (John 8:28).
- ☛ And again, *"I have not spoken of Myself,"* or *"on My own authority"* ^{NKJV} (John 12:49).
- ☛ And again, *"the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself,"* or *"on My own initiative"* ^{NASB} (John 14:10).

Who is the fool who will dare to say the well of nature is sufficient for him? The Apostle is affirming that he was not capable of himself to have comprehended the marvelous things that had been revealed to him. He had no natural ability to effectively communicate the truth of the Gospel, being a *"wise master builder"* (1 Cor 3:10). He had no fleshly ability to convert sinners or build up saints. As a man, he was not capable of forming proper judgments concerning himself or those to whom he faithfully

ministered.

Jesus affirmed he could not DO anything of Himself (John 5:19). He said He could not SPEAK of Himself (John 14:10). Now Paul says he is not able to THINK of anything as coming out of himself. **That is, his faith had impacted the way that he thought!** He was experiencing what David had fervently sought: *"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer"* (Psa 19:14). Paul was not merely abasing himself, but had seen things as they actually were. He really had nothing – even godly thoughts – that he had not *"received."* As he wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* (1 Cor 4:7). These were not mere words, but

were his very real perception.

We have in this text a confirmation of something the **Lord Jesus declared: "the flesh profiteth nothing"** (John 6:63). It is the condition to which Paul referred when he wrote, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not"* (Rom 7:18). **There is no spiritual aptitude in the flesh – not so much as a single weightless mote.** The flesh, however much it is trained and disciplined, can rise no higher than the condemned order. Thus Paul confessed, *"So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin"* (Rom 7:25). The expression *"I myself"* refers to the regenerated part – *"the new man"* (Col 3:10). That is the part that has been made competent, or sufficient. Furthermore, it is the only part of us in which competence can be found.

OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD

^{5b} *"... but our sufficiency is of God..."*

The fact that nature has no Kingdom sufficiency by no means suggests the child of God is wholly inadequate. It is not the presence of sufficiency that is the issue, but the **source** of it. **There is not a single aspect of spiritual adequacy that comes from the flesh or nature – either our own, or from our peers.** However, there is a very real sufficiency that is possessed by those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul now elaborates on that sufficiency.

OUR SUFFICIENCY

"... but our comes from God," ^{NAB} *"our only power and success comes from God,"* ^{NLT} *"our ability comes from God,"* ^{IE} *"our credentials,"* ^{ISV} and *"our power and ability and sufficiency."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

"Sufficiency" is like a multifaceted jewel: it has many sides. There is competence that qualifies one to do the



work, and ability to complete that work. **There is an equivalency to address the challenges of that work, and an adequacy to endure throughout those challenges.** Sufficiency involves being qualified in God's sight to do the work that He Himself has ordained.

Of course, it is one thing to have the ability – it is quite another to confidently recognize it. This text fairly exudes with Pauline confidence. It is to be acknowledged that such assurance is highly offensive to the flesh – particularly religious flesh. That is one reason why some of the Corinthians doubted the validity of Paul's apostleship and message. Such people were *"carnal"* (1 Cor 3:1-4), and therefore balked at Paul's person and message.

However, Paul possessed the confidence that comes from faith: *"the full assurance of faith"* (Heb 10:22). Speaking for himself and Timothy he refers to *"OUR sufficiency."* Thus, they not only possessed the sufficiency of reference, but knew they did. This is not an uncommon manner of speaking for men of faith. For example, some of David's confessions of adequacy are as follows:

- ☛ *"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever"* (Psa 52:8).

- “Nevertheless **I am continually with Thee**: thou hast holden me by my right hand” (Psa 73:23).
- “Preserve my soul; for **I am holy**: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee” (Psa 86:2).
- “O LORD, truly **I am thy servant**; I

Adequacy, or sufficiency, does not come from self, or from the reservoir of nature. **It is rather a gift, or endowment, from God Himself. It is not the result of training, culture, worldly wisdom, or personal discipline.**

Earlier, when delineating the

thought or deed is not possible until “*the Spirit be poured upon us from on high*” (Isa 32:15).

THE EXTENT OF MINISTRY

We catch a glimpse in this text of the extent of valid ministries. Nor only are preaching and teaching required, **there is also the necessity of correct thinking, proper assessments, and godly judgments.** This is involved in being “*sufficient*” for the work given to us by the Lord. In the kingdom of God, a work that does not require thought is an absurdity. In Christ, there is no such thing. Rather, it is imperative that our thoughts produce sound conclusions – conclusions that will stand up in the heavenly court. That is one reason we are admonished, “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*” (Phil 4:8). It is why Paul admonished Timothy, “*Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all*” (1 Tim 4:15).

Having spent more than half a century in Kingdom labors, I can tell you that it is exceedingly rare to find a religious leader that is strong in spiritual thought.

The individual who cannot arrive at proper conclusions or make valid assessments is not sufficient. Such a person must obtain an adequacy from God that permits a confident ministry. There is every reason to be optimistic about being given such sufficiency. **The very fact that such competency is required is of itself proof that it will be supplied.** In the heavenly Kingdom there is nothing required that is not supplied.

The sufficiency of which Paul speaks is the ability to so reason as to produce confidence. These are actually powers of reason – reason that leads a person to proper conclusions. These are valid conclusions that conform to the truth.

am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds” (Psa 116:16).

- “**For Thou art my rock and my fortress**; therefore for thy name’s sake lead me, and guide me” (Psa 31:3).

The sufficiency of which Paul speaks is the ability to so reason as to produce confidence. These are actually powers of reason – reason that leads a person to proper conclusions. These are valid conclusions that conform to the truth. They are judgments based upon the truth of God that lead to confidence and boldness. It is that confidence that makes the servant of God adequate for the work to which he has been called.

IS OF GOD

“ . . . is of God . . . ” Other versions read, “*is from God*,”^{NASB} “*comes from God*,”^{NIV} “*are from God*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

reality of being “*unto God a sweet savor of Christ*” in both those who are being saved, and those who are perishing, Paul said, “*And who is sufficient for these things?*” That is, from a human point of view, how is it possible to be adequate for such an arresting responsibility? It should be evident that no natural aptitude can qualify a person for God-ordained and commissioned works. Yet, Paul affirms he is, in fact, sufficient, adequate, and fully able to confidently fulfill his calling.

That “*sufficiency*” came to him “*from God*.” **That is, Paul’s intellect, sanctified and illuminated by the Spirit of God, enabled him to think and reason in a godly manner.** This is precisely why Jesus forbade His disciples to go into all the world preaching the Gospel until they were “*endued with power from on high*” (Luke 24:49). They were to “*wait for the promise of the Father*” (Acts 1:4), which would make them adequate for the commission given to them. Acceptable fruitage in either

MADE ABLE MINISTERS

“ ^{6a} **Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament.**”

The importance of this line of reasoning is seen in extended manner in which it is addressed. It underscores the

importance of kingdom competence. Knowing the nature of salvation, it ought to be obvious that no place has been

provided for ministers who have no sufficiency, and therefore have no confidence.

WHO ALSO HATH MADE US

"Who also hath made us . . ."

Other versions read, *"He has made us,"* NIV *"who has indeed qualified us,"* NAB *"who has given us,"* NJB *"He is the one who enabled us,"* NLT *"He is the one who has helped us,"* LIVING and *"[It is He] Who has qualified us [making us to be fit and worthy and sufficient]."* AMPLIFIED

The word "made" comes from the Greek word *ἰκανώσεν*, which means "to make sufficient, render fit." THAYER Other lexical definitions are, "make sufficient, qualify. Make adequate or competent for," FRIBERG and "to cause someone or something to be adequate . . . to cause to be qualified." LOUW-NIDA It is the same word used in Colossians 1:12: *"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"* (Col 1:12). It refers to something that can only be achieved by the Lord.

The Spirit now elaborates on the "God" from whom sufficiency is derived. It is important to note that the **support** of the "new creation," as well as its beginning, is the result of God's own work. **There is no point in the salvation of God where the work is handed over to the ones who are being saved.** Even though they extend themselves, working out their "own salvation with fear and trembling," yet they do it knowing that it is God Himself who works in them *"both to will and to do of His own good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13).

The saved did not give themselves "newness of life" (Rom 6:4). They did not deliver themselves "from the power of darkness," or translate themselves "into the kingdom of" God's "dear Son" (Col 1:13). They did not become "dead to the law" through their own efforts (Rom 7:4). Nor, indeed, did they raise themselves up to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

Therefore, it ought to surprise no one that the Lord authors Divine aptitude in His servants. **That is, He is the one who causes their labors to be productive.** This is involved in all increase coming from God. Men may plant

and water the seed, but their efforts produce results only because of the Lord. As it is written, *"So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase"* (1 Cor 3:7).

ABLE MINISTERS

"Who also hath made us able ministers . . ." Other versions read, *"sufficient ministers,"* NKJV *"adequate as servants,"* NASB *"competent as ministers,"* NIV *"competent to be ministers,"* NRSV *"sufficient as ministers,"* ASV *"able to be his servants,"* BBE *"fit ministers,"* DARBY *"as ministers,"* NAB *"the competence to be ministers,"* NJB *"to represent,"* NLT *"to tell others,"* LIVING *"competent to serve Him,"* WEYMOUTH and *"as ministers and dispensers."* AMPLIFIED

Lord of glory. Concerning their effectiveness, and as used in this text, these are "ministers by whom ye believed" (1 Cor 3:5). If we consider the one whose interests they are serving, they are "ministers of Christ" (1 Cor 4:1) and "ministers of God" (2 Cor 6:4).

Concerning the agenda by which these ministers function, it is not the schedule of an institution. They are not the "servants of men." They have been purchased, called, commissioned, and endowed by the Lord. Those who have been called into Divine employment are admonished, *"be not ye the servants of men"* (1 Cor 7:23). An "able minister" is, as Jesus said, *"instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven"* NKJV (Matt 13:52). They minister in strict accord with "the

The Lord does not employ the world's wisdom to accomplish His purpose. He does not use it to make His servants sufficient or able. Men may boast that God employs these means, but they have not spoken the truth when saying such things. No man is actually a better minister because of something given to him by other men.

"Able ministers" are ones who, as servants of God, dispense things with which the Lord is committed to work. For example, God has already written off the wisdom of this world, counting it to be foolishness. As it is written, *"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"* (1 Cor 3:19). **The Lord does not employ the world's wisdom to accomplish His purpose.** He does not use it to make His servants sufficient or able. Men may boast that God employs these means, but they have not spoken the truth when saying such things. **No man is actually a better minister because of something given to him by other men.** "Able ministers" are the result of Lord's work, not man's work: "God" has made men "able ministers!"

"Ministers" are those serving the interests of another – in this case, the

ability which God giveth" (1 Pet 4:11). These minister "according to the grace of God" that has been given to them (1 Cor 3:10). Their effectiveness is not the result of being self-taught or man-taught, but of being God-taught! They have been "made" able.

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

" . . . of the new testament . . ." Other versions read, *"of the new covenant,"* NASB/NIV/NRSV *"His new agreement,"* LIVING *"a new agreement,"* IE and *"a new covenant [of salvation through Christ]."* AMPLIFIED

Now we come to grips with the focus of real Kingdom ministry. Some of us have heard about "new testament Christians," "new testament churches," and "new testament commandments." But what do we have to say about

someone who is a “minister of the new testament?” Note, he does not say “new testament ministers,” but “ministers of the new testament.” That is, the thing they are ministering, or serving up to the people, is “the new testament” itself.

The Amplified Bible reads, “[It is He] Who has qualified us [making us to be fit and worthy and sufficient] as ministers and **dispensers of a new covenant** [of salvation through Christ] . . .” Jesus referred to His blood as “the blood of the New Testament” (Matt 26:28). He is presently “the Mediator of the New Testament” (Heb 9:15). Now Paul affirms they have joined in this grand work, being “made able ministers of the New Testament.”

The New Testament

Among the standard translations, only the King James and New King James versions use the word “testament.” The others use the word “covenant.”

The Greek word from which

and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee” (Gen 6:18). This covenant was spelled out to Noah following the flood. Again the Lord stated, “And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; **neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth**” (Gen 9:9-11).

The Lord also established a “token,” or “sign” ^{NKJV} of the covenant that there would never again be a flood that would “destroy the earth.” “And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a

sided. God alone was the responsible party.

- There were no conditions that could void the covenant.
- God established a sign of the covenant that brought confidence the informed of the earth – a sign that would provoke God Himself to remember what He had promised.

Whatever we may think about a God-made covenant, here is one that is worthy of our consideration. It is an example of the **kind** of covenant God can make – a **covenant between Him and a person that depends solely upon Him**. The promise to never again destroy the world with a flood was not contingent upon the conduct or response of men. It was a Divine commitment – a promise that could not be voided and made ineffectual. **Also, it was not a promise to never again destroy the world.** Rather, it was a promise to never again destroy it with a flood. The present world is now reserved “unto fire” – that is, it will be destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:7). That too is a covenant that cannot be voided.

God’s Covenants with Abraham

A Covenant of the Land

The next time we read of God making a covenant, it was made with “Abram,” whose name was later changed to “Abraham” (Gen 17:5). God covenanted to give the land of Canaan to the seed, or progeny, of Abram. “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites” (Gen 15:18-21). **Once again, this took the nature of a promise. It also was a unilateral covenant that was not attached to conditions. The promise was not contingent upon Abraham’s works, or those of his “seed.”** Later in Scriptural history we find that some of Abraham’s seed were, indeed, purged from the land. However, the promise itself was never abrogated. Once again, we see the kind of covenant God is capable of making.

As used in Scripture, the word denotes a Divine commitment or promise. It also involves an agreement between two parties – an agreement that is initiated by God Himself.

“testament” is translated is διαθήκης (deatha-kaas). The lexical meaning of the word is as follows: “a disposition, arrangement . . . a testament . . . a compact, covenant,” ^{THAYER} “a declaration of the will of God concerning His self-commitment, promises, and conditions by which He entered into relationship with man,” ^{FRIBERG} “covenant, will, testament,” ^{UBS} “to make a solemn agreement involving reciprocal benefits and responsibilities,” ^{LOUWS-NIDA} and “an arrangement between two parties, covenant.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} As used in Scripture, the word denotes a Divine commitment or promise. It also involves an agreement between two parties – an agreement that is initiated by God Himself.

God’s Covenant with Noah

The first mention of a God-initiated covenant is found in Genesis. God made the covenant with Noah. “But with thee will I establish My covenant;

covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and **I will remember** my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Gen 9:15).

It is important to note the characteristics of this covenant, for it will assist us in comprehending the nature of the covenant, or testament, mentioned in our text.

- The covenant was made BEFORE the destroying flood.
- It was initiated by God Himself.
- It was unilateral – that is, it was one

The Covenant of Multiplication

The covenant made concerning Abraham's seed, through whom the world would be blessed, is of particular relevance in our review of this text. The details of that covenant are given in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. They are expounded by David in the 105th Psalm, and affirmed by Paul in the third chapter of Galatians. Some of the details are provided below.

Genesis 17

- ☛ God would multiply Abraham "exceedingly" (17:2).
- ☛ Abraham would be a "father of many nations" (17:4).
- ☛ His name would be changed from "Abram" to "Abraham," which means "the father of a multitude" (17:5).
- ☛ Abraham would be fruitful, and nations and kings would come from him (17:6).
- ☛ A covenant was made with Abraham and his seed – an "everlasting covenant" – in which God promised to by a God to Abraham and his seed (17:7).
- ☛ All the land of Canaan would be given to Abraham and his seed, and God would be their God (17:8).
- ☛ God commanded the covenant of circumcision, which was a "token of the covenant" He had made (17:9-14).
- ☛ The name of Abraham's wife was changed from "Sarai" to "Sarah," for, though barren at the time, God would bless her, give her a son, and she would be "a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her" (17:15-16).
- ☛ The covenant would be through Isaac's lineage alone (17:17-21).

A Covenant of Blessing

Genesis

- ☛ In Abraham, all "families of the earth" would be "blessed" (12:3).
- ☛ In Abraham's "seed" all nations of the earth would be "blessed" (22:18).
- ☛ The promise of blessing "all nations

of the earth" was confirmed to Isaac (26:4).

- ☛ The promise that "all families of the earth" would be blessed through Abraham's "seed" was reasserted to Jacob (28:14).

Psalm 105

- ☛ It was a covenant of great duration – commanded to "a thousand generations" (105:8).
- ☛ Gods remembers this covenant (105:9a).

- ☛ That covenant was a "promise" (3:18).

THE WORLD. This covenant made with Abraham was much more complex than the one made with Noah. Through Noah, God actually confirmed the world would not be destroyed before the coming of the Redeemer. He had affirmed in the Garden that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. Nothing would stop that Seed from being born and fulfilling that mission in this world. **The ultimate reason for sparing the world from**

The ultimate reason for sparing the world from another destruction by water was the coming of the appointed Redeemer – the Seed of the woman.

- ☛ It was made with Abraham and confirmed with an oath to Isaac (105:9b).

- ☛ It was confirmed to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an "everlasting covenant" (105:10-12).

Galatians 3

- ☛ The covenant to bless all nations through Abraham (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 26:4; 28:14) is referred to as "the Gospel," which was preached before "unto Abraham" (3:8).
- ☛ A confirmed covenant cannot be disannulled or have additions made to it (3:15).
- ☛ The promises made to Abraham were also made to his ultimate Seed, "which is Christ" (3:16).

- ☛ The "covenant" made with Abraham was confirmed in Christ (3:17a).

- ☛ That covenant could not be disannulled, or cancelled, by the Law, which was given four hundred and thirty years after the covenant made with Abraham (3:17b).

another destruction by water was the coming of the appointed Redeemer – the Seed of the woman.

A LAND. The promise was extended further to include a land – a place in which the Savior would be born. He would come forth from Bethlehem in the land of promise. **The real purpose for giving Israel a land was in order to the appearance of the Savior of the world.**

A PEOPLE. The promise was further extended to include a people, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Rom 9:5). The purpose for the multitudinous offspring of Abraham was to provide God with a people to whom His Son would be given, and from whom He would spring forth (Isa 9:6; 65:9).

The covenant of which God had made Paul an "able minister" was the covenant that was traced back to Abraham – a covenant of blessing, for which the covenant made with Noah was a preparation.

Jeremiah's Prophecy

The term "New Testament," or

“*New Covenant*,” relates to a certain prophecy made by Jeremiah. The term itself is one of comparison – comparison with a previous covenant that was made with Israel. That covenant is referred to as an “*Old Testament*” (2 Cor 3:14), or a covenant that was “*made old*” (Heb 8:13). Because an extensive comparison will be made later of the “*Old*” and “*New*” covenants, I will proceed to a consideration of Jeremiah’s prophecy of the “*New Testament*,” or covenant. This is the “*Testament*” of which Paul had been made an “*able minister*.” This is confirmed in the eighth and tenth chapters of Hebrews.

Jeremiah’s Prophecy. “*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*” (Jer 31:31-34).

Several critical details are provided in this remarkable prophecy, confirming the nature of this covenant.

- ☛ This is a covenant that WOULD be made (31a).

- ☛ It would be made with Judah and Israel – the progeny of Abraham (31b).
- ☛ It would **not** be like the covenant God made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt – a covenant THEY broke, although God was “*an husband unto them*” (32).
- ☛ God would MAKE the covenant with them (33a).
- ☛ He would put His law in their “*inward parts*” (33b).
- ☛ He would write His law upon their hearts (33c).
- ☛ He would be their God (33d).
- ☛ They would be His people (33e).
- ☛ Those within this covenant would no longer teach their neighbors to “*know the Lord*” (33f).
- ☛ Everyone under this covenant, from the least of them to the greatest, would “*know the Lord*” (33g).
- ☛ The remarkable knowledge would be the result of God forgiving their iniquity (34a).
- ☛ God would remember their sin no more (34b).

This passage is quoted in the eighth chapter of Hebrews. It is introduced with these words, “*But now hath He [Jesus Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises*” (Heb 8:6). The passage concludes by affirming this covenant has

rendered the first “*old*,” or obsolete. “*In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away*” (Heb 8:13).

This is the Covenant of which Paul has been Made a Minister

This is, then, the covenant that Jesus is presently mediating. It is also the covenant of which Paul had become an “*able minister*.”

You will note the unusual brevity of this covenant. In English it consists of **684 letters and 169 words**. Compare that with the covenants made with Noah and Abraham, as well as the Old Covenant. The following numbers are nearly exact – about 99.5% accurate.

| |
|---|
| <p>COVENANT WITH NOAH 1922 Letters and 484 words</p> <p>COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM Gen 15 -- 292 letters and 61 words Gen 17 -- 1579 letters and 378 words Total -- 1871 letters and 439 words</p> <p>THE FIRST COVENANT The summation -- 1374 letters and 326 words Levitical Law -- 107000 letters, 2500 words Blessings/Curses -- 9157 letters, 2135 words Total -- 117531 letters, 4961 words</p> |
|---|

One might wonder how so much can be said about a “*new covenant*” that is stated in so few words. **It is primarily because the words comprising the New Covenant are all promises.** There are no commandments within the covenant itself. Behavioral instructions are not found in the words of this covenant. The responsibilities of men are not delineated. There are no curses in the New Covenant itself, no threats, and no conditions.

This is not to be construed as meaning there are no commandments addressed to those who are in Christ Jesus, or that there is no teaching concerning our manner of conduct in this world. **However, those commandments and instructions are not part of the New Covenant itself.** Under the Law, the commandments WERE the covenant: i.e. they were the words of the covenant. As it is written, “*And He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments*” (Ex 34:28). Those words constituted the covenant itself!

This is not to be construed as meaning there are no commandments addressed to those who are in Christ Jesus, or that there is no teaching concerning our manner of conduct in this world. However, those commandments and instructions are not part of the New Covenant itself.

However, this is NOT the manner of the New Covenant! **It is a different kind of covenant that is established upon "promises," not commandments** (Heb 8:6). Because this "better covenant" is established upon promises, the primary means of participating in it is FAITH AND PATIENCE, for only faith and patience [endurance] can take hold of what God has promised. As it is written, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12).

The New Covenant, or Testament, is a statement of what God promised – an affirmation of what He pledged Himself to do. Whether He would do it or not is not the question. The only area of question involves whether or not the hearers will be participants.

The Nature of the New Testament

Ponder the nature of the expressions in the New Testament. They are all affirmations, with not the slightest tinge of ambiguity in them.

- ☛ "I WILL make a New Covenant."
- ☛ "NOT according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt . . . but this **SHALL BE** the covenant that I will make."
- ☛ "I WILL put my Law in their inward parts."
- ☛ "I WILL . . . write it [My Law] in their hearts."
- ☛ "I . . . WILL be their God."
- ☛ "They **SHALL** be My people."
- ☛ "They **SHALL** teach NO MORE every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord.'"
- ☛ "They **SHALL** all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."
- ☛ "I WILL forgive their iniquity."
- ☛ "I WILL remember their sin NO

MORE." (Jer 31:31-34).

There are ten affirmations. In number they parallel the TEN commandments. However, the nature of these statements have only one likeness to the ten commandments: **God spoke them!** These, however, were statements of what God would do and how that would impact upon what men would BE.

In Consideration of Abraham

Right here, the consideration of Abraham, and how he obtained righteousness, is appropriate. We are told in Scripture **why** Abraham was accounted as righteous. It was **NOT** because he obeyed – although he surely did obey, leaving Ur of the Chaldees when commanded to do so (Gen 12:1-4). **It is not at that point that Abraham was accounted as righteous before God!**

command to offer up Isaac, the heir of the promises (James 2:21-23).

The New Testament, or Covenant, is that kind of promise. It is a promise that men cannot make happen – they can only believe it, which frees (so to speak) God to accomplish it in them.

The promise given to Abraham was the Gospel in embryo. It focused upon a single individual, Abraham's Seed, through whom the world would be blessed. He would be the sole means of blessing. Jeremiah's prophecy unfolded HOW God would bless the world. **It would be by changing man's nature, bringing him to a point where he was acquainted with the Lord, and loved and kept His Word.** This is the covenant of which Paul was a

Jeremiah's prophecy unfolded HOW God would bless the world. It would be by changing man's nature, bringing him to a point where he was acquainted with the Lord, and loved and kept His Word. This is the covenant of which Paul was a minister.

God makes a point of the precise time when Abraham was considered righteous. The occasion is written in Genesis 15:6: "And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). That text is referred to repeatedly as an example of **how** we become righteous in Christ Jesus (Rom 4:3-6,9,20-25; Gal 3:6-14; James 2:23). And what was it that Abraham believed? **IT WAS A PROMISE!** "And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, **So shall thy seed be**" (Gen 15:5).

Abraham took hold of that promise by faith, and it motivated him throughout his life. James testifies that nearly fifty years later, it was the root cause for him responding in faith to God's

minister.

What Is A Minister of the New Testament?

What is a "minister of the New Testament?" Some are of the persuasion it is someone who preaches from the last twenty-seven books of the Bible – Matthew through Revelation. Among certain legalists, the part of the Bible they choose to call "the New Testament" is actually Acts through Revelation. Their reasoning is that the New Covenant was not in force until Jesus died. Therefore, everything written prior to that time was written under the Old Covenant. One flaw in that reasoning is that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written well after Jesus had ascended back into heaven. **That means those books were written from a New Covenant perspective, and are therefore most**

relevant.

In describing the things that he preached, Paul affirmed he said *“none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come”* (Acts 26:22). In his description of the latter ministry of Paul, Luke wrote that he *“expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening”* (Acts 28:23). He was, in fact, declaring the *“New Testament”* that was prophesied by the prophets – things

showings his superiority to *“the old man”* (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10). He will speak of a *“new”* kind of unity, where both Jew and Gentile, once separated by a *“middle wall of partition”* (Eph 2:14), have been made *“one new man”* (Eph 2:15).

The *“able minister”* will speak much of the *“heart”* (Rom 2:29; 5:5; 6:17; Rom 10:10; 2 Cor 1:22; 4:6; Gal 4:6; Eph 3:17; 5:19; Phil 4:7; 2 Thess 3:5), the *“inner man”* (Eph 3:16), and the *“inward man”* (Rom 7:22; 2 Cor 4:16). He will open up what is involved in the Spirit dwelling in us (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 3:16), the word of

Aspects of the New Testament

These are all aspects of the New Covenant that was promised to Abraham, prophesied by Jeremiah, and expounded by Paul. **These are matters that must be, to some measurable degree, comprehended.** They are at the heart and core of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, ascension, enthronement, and intercession. Remove these things from the religious arena and everything becomes hollow and meaningless.

“Able ministers of New Testament,” in their primary work, are **not** problem solvers. **They are essentially New Covenant expounders.** It is their business to assist the people to understand what is being offered to them in Christ Jesus. Their fundamental work is not organizing an institution, and putting a denomination on the religious map. **Rather, they are readying a people for the coming of the Lord, the day of judgment, and a reign with Jesus!** *“Able ministers”* are **not** teaching people how to worship God, organize their public gatherings, and post impressive numbers on the attendance board. **Rather, they have joined with Jesus in bringing men to God** (1 Pet 3:18). They are working in concert with the Holy Spirit who brings inward strength and vision.

It should be very apparent that such *“ministers”* are not trained and produced by men. It is not possible to develop a *“minister factory”* that cranks out *“able ministers.”* That is a work that God has reserved for Himself. He alone can place the members in the body where He Himself pleases (1 Cor 12:18).

Their fundamental work is not organizing an institution, and putting a denomination on the religious map. Rather, they are readying a people for the coming of the Lord, the day of judgment, and a reign with Jesus!

“concerning Jesus” that both Moses and the Prophets foretold.

An *“able minister”* of the **“New Testament”** expounds what is contained in that Covenant. Because it is a *“NEW”* Testament, or Covenant, the faithful minister will speak of *“new”* things. He will expound things like *“the newness of life”* (Rom 6:4) serving God in *“newness of Spirit”* (Rom 7:6), and being a *“new creature”* (2 Cor 5:17). He will open up the marvelous truth of the *“new man,”*

Christ dwelling in us richly (Col 3:16), and being *“renewed in the spirit of our mind”* (Eph 4:23). Much will be made of the removal of sin (Gal 1:4; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 2:24), the cleansing of the conscience (Heb 9:14; 10:22), and matters of the mind (Rom 7:23,25; 8:6; 12:2; Phil 2:5; 4:7; 2 Tim 1:7; Tit 2:6; 2 Pet 3:1).

Expect the *“able minister”* to make much of being acceptable to God (Rom 12:1; 14:3,18; 1 Pet 2:5) and knowing Him (1 Cor 8:3; 1 John 4:6-8; 1 Cor 15:34; 2 Cor 10:5; Col 1:10; 2 Pet 1:2).

NOT OF THE LETTER

^{6b} . . . **not of the letter . . .** ”

Other versions read, *“not in a written code,”*^{RSV} *“not of letter,”*^{DARBY} *“not in the letter,”*^{DOUAY} *“not of written letters,”*^{NLT} *“We do not tell them that they must obey every law of God or die,”*^{LIVING} *“not literal,”*^{IE} *“which is not a written code,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“which is not a written . . . covenant,”*^{WILLIAMS} and *“not [ministers] of the letter (of legally written code).”*

AMPLIFIED

Because this section so contradicts the religious thrust that is prominent all about us, men tend to pass over it. **The emphatic nature of this verse demands that we handle it carefully and correctly.** This is not a statement to be wrapped in speculation and thrown into the caldron of human philosophy. It precisely defines the nature of valid

ministry – of a proper preaching of the Word of God. **Just as the New Covenant was NOT after the manner of the Old Covenant, so its effectual ministry is NOT of the letter.**

The expression *“the letter”* is used four times by the Holy Spirit, and all of them are negative.

- “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and **not in the letter**; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom 2:29).
- “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and **not in the oldness of the letter**” (Rom 7:6).
- “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; **not of the letter**, but of the spirit: for **the letter killeth**, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor 3:6).

Thus, “the letter” is seen as distinguished from something involving the heart (Rom 2:29). It is also something associated with an old and obsolete order (Rom 7:6). Our text will also affirm it is associated with death, as compared with life – spiritual life. It is apparent that we are now dealing with something of the utmost importance. This is not a subject about which we are to hypothesize.

The ultimate example of “the letter” is the Law – written in tables of stone. **It is the example of an effort to reach the inside of man from the outside.** In “the letter,” man’s mind becomes his chief resource, and the commands of the Lord are what it is to be considered. “The letter” is addressed to the mind, not the heart. It does not require faith, but strict and unwavering obedience – an obedience that is rendered in human strength alone.

“The letter” brings no resources, only requirements. It informs men of what they are to do, but provides no strength to do it. It states the Divine requirement – a requirement that cannot be modified in the slightest degree – yet does not furnish the means through which the requirement can be met.

“The letter” speaks to man from the outside – like God spoke to Israel from Sinai. **That is, it is not given within the context of willingness, inclination, and preference.** “The letter” requires willingness, but cannot bring it to the hearer. When it thunders its demands, there is nothing about its voice that draws the hearer, or inclines

the heart to want to hear more. By its very nature “the letter” is threatening and intimidating, because it is addressed to a person who is actually at variance with the One who is delivering the requirement.

THE REASON FOR THIS TEACHING

One might wonder why Paul is writing in this manner to the Corinthian church. After all, “some” of them, though coming from a sordid background, were “washed,” sanctified,” and “justified” (1 Cor 1:30). They did not lack any “spiritual gift,” appearing on the surface to be quite

spiritually stagnant in a juvenile state. The evidence of that condition was found in their divisions and the reason for them. **They had grouped themselves under ministers instead of under Christ:** Paul, Cephas (Peter), and Apollos. There were even some who separated themselves from others saying “I am of Christ” (1 Cor 1:12).

The Present Time

It is imperative that there be some among us who are “wise men,” and “know the times,” like the wise men who served under king Ahasuerus (Esth 1:13). Our

No doubt, if you were to interview a Corinthian church member, you would be told of the virtues and superiority of that congregation. However, this would not be a fair representation of the case. Actually, there was carnality among the Corinthians – fleshly inclinations and expressions for which the New Testament makes no allowance at all.

competent (1 Cor 1:7). Their assemblies had a great deal of diversity, even though it appears they bordered on being chaotic – like some assemblies of our time. No doubt, if you were to interview a Corinthian church member, you would be told of the virtues and superiority of that congregation. However, this would not be a fair representation of the case. Actually, there was carnality among the Corinthians – fleshly inclinations and expressions for which the New Testament makes no allowance at all. Hear Paul as he assesses the brethren there. “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, **but as unto carnal**, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. **For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?**” (1 Cor 3:1-4).

The very best assessment of those Paul addressed was that they were “babes in Christ” – not newly born, but

times cry out for men like those of Issachar, “which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron 12:32). **It is time to call a halt to unwise leaders, incompetent ministers, and powerless teachers!** The purported Christian scholastic institutions of the day have not done well in addressing the needs of the body of Christ. Somehow, they have managed to duplicate the miserable conditions that existed in Corinth. That circumstance makes this passage very relevant to us.

The whole situation at Corinth was a miniature picture of the church of our day. Different names are used, but it is the same spirit. Factionists in Corinth identified themselves with Paul, Cephas, Apollos, and even Christ. Today, things have degenerated even further, as men are heard to say, “I am of Luther, I am of Calvin, I am of Wesley, or I am of Campbell.” There may even be some who declare that are “the true New Testament Church, and “we have no creed but Christ.” These conditions are clear evidence that “the letter” has taken

dominance over *“the spirit.”*

What Paul Is Saying

Paul is saying that this condition has nothing whatsoever to do with believing the Gospel – the Gospel that he preached. It is completely and totally disassociated from the real New Testament, of which he had been made a competent minister. **Their deficiencies could not be traced to Paul, what he preached, or how he conducted himself among them.** What he had ministered among them could have made them mature, just as surely as it was the means of taking them out of darkness and putting them into the light. The very Gospel that shed light on the natural condition was also capable of illuminating their spiritual condition.

Divisions are the kinds of conditions “the letter” produces. It did so in Israel, who fought among themselves (2 Sam 2:12-3:1; 2 Sam 15:1-18:32). Eventually, they even divided into

the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, who often fought each other (2 Sam 2:1-32; 19:41-43; 1 Kgs 12:1-33; 15:17; 2 Kgs 9:21; 13:12; 2 Chron 11:1; 16:1).

“The letter” speaks of routine, procedure, and fleshly regimentation. It addresses the matter of recalcitrant flesh rather than strengthening and freeing a regenerated spirit. The point of *“the letter”* is to keep the flesh down, not to bring strength to the inner man, or move the *“new man”* to fuller expression. **In a word, “the letter” focuses upon what man is and is not to do, leaving him to accomplish both in the energy of nature.** *“The letter”* is precisely what it implies – instructions on what to do. It brings no power, confers no ability, and offers no assistance. Ponder the Ten Commandments, which are the epitome of *“Law,”* or *“the letter.”* They serve as the most comprehensive example of *“the letter.”*

Only two commandments

“³ Thou shalt have no other gods. . . ⁴ Thou shalt not . . . ⁵ Thou shalt not . . . ⁷ Thou shalt not . . . ⁸ Remember . . . ⁹ thou shalt labor . . . ¹⁰ thou shalt not . . . ¹² Honor thy father and thy mother . . . ¹³ Thou shalt not . . . ¹⁴ Thou shalt not . . . ¹⁵ Thou shalt not . . . ¹⁶ Thou shalt not . . . ¹⁷ Thou shalt not” (Ex 20:3-17).

-- The Ten Commandments --

concerned things the people were to actually DO: **“Remember the Sabbath day,”** and **“honor thy father and mother.”** The only promise pertained to children, and it only offered long life in the promised land: *“that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”* (Ex 20:12). There you have a Divine depiction of *“the letter.”*

The primary characteristic of *“the letter”* will be briefly expounded in the latter part of this verse. Its ministry was inferior to that of the New Covenant.

BUT OF THE SPIRIT

“^{6c} . . . but of the Spirit . . .”

Other versions read, *“but in the Spirit,”* RSV *“but we tell them there is life for them from the Holy Spirit,”* LIVING *“which is spiritual,”* IE and *“but as Spirit.”* WEYMOUTH

The “Spirit” of reference is the Holy Spirit, not the human spirit. This will be more fully expounded in the verses that follow.

At this point, I do want to establish that the New Testament, or Covenant, is an economy of the Holy Spirit. **That is, it is the context in which the Holy Spirit effectively works.** To put it another way, the things that Paul ministered proved to be an effective means through which the Holy Spirit Himself could work in the people.

Although I have made reference to the working of the Spirit before, I again want to briefly rehearse some His activities. These things are critical to a proper understanding of this text.

- ☛ Sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Rom 5:5).
- ☛ Frees us from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2).
- ☛ Quickens our mortal bodies (Rom 8:11).
- ☛ Leads us in mortifying the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13-14).
- ☛ Bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom 8:16).
- ☛ Causes us to groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23).
- ☛ Helps our infirmities (Rom 8:26).
- ☛ Makes intercession for us (Rom 8:27).
- ☛ Produces righteousness, peace, and joy within (Rom 14:17).
- ☛ Enables us to abound in hope (Rom

- 15:13).
- ☛ Makes known what God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9-10).
- ☛ Washes, sanctifies, and justifies (1 Cor 6:11).
- ☛ Provides a diversity of gifts to the church (1 Cor 12:4).
- ☛ Enables believers to profit one another (1 Cor 12:7).
- ☛ Changes us from one stage of glory to another, conforming us to the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29).
- ☛ Enables believers to patiently wait for the hope of glory (Gal 5:5).
- ☛ Empowers us to NOT fulfill the lists of the flesh (Gal 5:16).
- ☛ Produces fruit within the believer: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,

and temperance (Gal 5:22-23).

- Through Him we will reap life everlasting (Gal 6:8).
- The strengthening of the inner man, so Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:16).
- The unity of God's people (Eph 4:3).
- Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, always

The question only concerns the means through which the Spirit does these things. Perhaps it might be better to say, **the kind of environment in which the Spirit accomplishes these indispensable ministries.** Paul will emphatically affirm it is **not** within the context of *"the letter."* **That is, it is not within the framework of Law, procedure, or fleshly regimentation.** That was the structural frame of the Law – the *"Old Testament,"* but it is **not** the openwork of the *"New Testament"* of

15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33).

Now, under what circumstances do the Father and the Son send forth the Holy Spirit. **Precisely what causes, works, or messages does He undergird and empower?** Is there a soul presumptuous enough to declare that the Spirit is dispatched from heaven to facilitate the plans and procedures of men? It is possible that anyone would presume to think any work can possibly be successful before God without the involvement and support of the Holy Spirit? Such postulates are unworthy embracing for a single moment.

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Let it be clear: the Holy Spirit does not ultimately work through a code – *"the letter."* He works within a broader context, which is that of the Gospel – the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). The outer perimeter within which He works is the New Testament as defined by Jeremiah (Jer 31:34), and confirmed by Paul (Heb 8:9-13). The inner, or more specific perimeter, within which the Spirit works is *"the Gospel of Christ,"* which is God's *"power unto salvation"* (Rom 1:16). **It is with by means of the power of the Gospel that the promises of the New Covenant are personally realized.** Those realizations are the ultimate purpose that undergirds all valid ministries.

giving thanks, and submitting to one another (Eph 5:18-19).

- The effective use of the Word of God (Eph 6:17).
- Effective prayer (Eph 6:18).
- Sanctification to God (2 Thess 2:13).
- Keeping, or maintaining, the gifts that God has given to us (2 Tim 1:14).
- Renewal (Tit 3:5).
- Obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (1 Pet 1:2).
- Unfeigned love of the brethren (1 Pet 1:22).

which Paul was made an *"able minister."*

Within the administration of *"the Spirit,"* man is, indeed, required to work. However, **his** work is not the fundamental work! The primary work belongs to God, who works within us *"both to do and to will of His own good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13). However important one may consider his work, the work of Jesus in heaven is more critical to us successfully navigating through this world (Heb 7:25). That in no way diminishes the requirement of our effort. **It is, however, the secret to a successful effort.**

The Holy Spirit, from one point of view, is sent by God to those who are in Christ Jesus – *"because"* they *"are sons"* (Gal 4:6).. His presence within is *"the promise of the Father"* (Acts 1:4; Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13). From another perspective, He is sent to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is presently administering the Kingdom in the interest of bringing many sons to glory (John

No person who ignores the Gospel in preference for a routine is a minister of the New Testament. Those whose labors are not toward the direction of inward renewal, transformation, and empowerment, cannot be laborers together with God. The person whose ministry is *"of the Spirit"* is working in concert with the Lord of glory. He is doing something that reflects what God has revealed to be **His** purpose. It is for that reason that the Lord undergirds the work, making it effective and glorifying to Himself. Paul will now briefly elaborate on *"the letter"* and *"the Spirit."*

No person of sound mind will suggest that we can do without any of these things. They are obvious requisites to spiritual life. None of them can be accomplished independently of the Holy Spirit. That is surely obvious to all.

THE LETTER KILLS

^{6d} *...for the letter killeth.* | Other versions read, *"for the written code kills,"* ^{RSV} *"the letter gives death,"* ^{BBE} *"the*

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letter *brings death*,"^{NAB} "the *written letters kill*,"^{NJB} "The *old way ends in death*,"^{NLT} "for the *letter doth kill*,"^{YLT} "The *old way, trying to live by the Ten Commandments, ends in death*,"^{LIVING} "for the *written code inflicts death*,"^{WEYMOUTH} "because *the written text brings death*,"^{ISV} and "for *the code [of the law] kills*."^{AMPLIFIED}

Confining ourselves to the original language will be of little value in a consideration of this text. The word "letter" cannot be satisfactorily defined etymologically – like "baptism," "love," or "mercy." From the standpoint of language alone, the word "letter" comes from the Greek word γράμμα (gramma), from which we derive our word "grammar." Its lexical meaning is, "that which has been written; a letter; any document or record,"^{THAYER} "a piece of writing – letter, document, or book,"^{FRIEBERG} "a letter of the Greek alphabet,"^{LOUW-NIDA} and "that which is drawn; that which is written; a written character, letter."^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

The expression "the letter" specially refers to the Law inscribed on tables of stone. It generally applies to any code of conduct through which human conduct is intended to be regulated or controlled. "The letter" does not apply to "the Scriptures," which are "able to make us wise unto salvation" (2 Tim 3:15). It is not used on reference to inspired writings that have been provided "for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom 15:4). There are things that have been "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor 10:11). Such things as these are not intended by the words "the letter." In this text, a contrast is being made between the message of the Law and the message of the Gospel. One is a code, and one is news. One contains commandments, the other contains promises. One contributes to death, the other to life.

THE FOCUS OF "THE LETTER"

We know from Scripture that "the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for

menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim 1:9-10). In its address to such individuals, the Lord makes no allowance for the expression of sin. It rather condemns the sinner forthrightly, without mercy, and without equivocation. That is precisely why the Law – "the letter" – was given: "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom 3:19). What Romans refers to as stopping every mouth and rendering all the world "guilty before God," our text calls killing, or causing death.

Paul's Own Experience

Paul alludes to this in the testimony of his own encounter with the Law, or "the letter." While living under the Law, he testifies elsewhere that he was "blameless," concerning "the righteousness that is of the Law" (Phil 3:6). That is, he was not guilty of impiety, or outward corruption. He described this

commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me" (Rom 7:8-11). In other words, "the letter" killed him – just as our text states!

The death evoked by "the letter" is particularly delineated by Paul. Remember, the Law is addressed to sinners, not to righteous people. In this part of the seventh chapter of Romans, Paul is describing his experience prior to coming into Christ (Rom 7:7-13). In that section Paul refers to the past: "I had not known sin . . . I had not known lust . . . wrought in me . . . I was alive without the law once . . . the commandment came . . . sin revived . . . I died . . . I found . . . sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me . . . sin slew me . . . Was then that which is good made death unto me?"

Man's natural condition is one of

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condition as one in which he was "alive" – that is, his conscience led him to believe he was acceptable to God, and that he had fulfilled his duties toward the Lord. However, the message of the Law – "the letter" – came home to him, smiting his conscience with the words "Thou shalt not covet" (Rom 7:7). Here was sin in the mind – a certain lusting and desiring that was not acceptable to God.

Paul describes the impact of this upon his own person. "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the

unregeneracy. In that state hostility and enmity exist between fallen man and God. Because "the natural man" cannot receive the things of God, and "the carnal mind" is hostile against God (1 Cor 2:14; Rom 8:7), "the commandment," or "the letter," actually awakens sin, causing it to assert itself. Paul stated this in these words, "sin sprang to life and I died"^{NIV} (Rom 7:9). And again, "For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death"^{NIV} (Rom 7:11).

The letter kills! It kills because it is "weak through the flesh" (Rom 8:3).

No code can confer moral or spiritual power, no matter how forcefully and convincingly it is spoken. No habit, even though developed under the most rigorous circumstances, and in the most stringent manner, can empower the human spirit.

That is, “*the letter*” relies upon the accomplishments of the flesh, and “*no good thing*” dwells in the flesh (Rom 7:18). That is, it has no capacity for true goodness. In fact, Jesus affirmed “*the flesh profiteth nothing*” (John 6:63). **Anything that relies upon the supposed strength of capacity of the flesh cannot possibly succeed**, for “*they that are in the flesh cannot please God*” (Rom 8:8).

The Ultimate Letter

These things are true of the ultimate “*letter*” – the Law of God, or the “*Old Testament*” (2 Cor 3:14), or “*First Testament*” (Heb 9:18). Of this Law it is written, “*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good*” (Rom 7:12). And again “*the law is spiritual*” (Rom 7:14).

If the ultimate “*letter*,” the Law that is from God, and is holy, just, good, and spiritual, can only bring death, what can be said of a

Law that is generated by men? Who could possibly imagine that “*the commandments of men*” (Matt 15:9; Tit 1:14) can lead men to be holy or acceptable to God? It is not remotely possible that a man – any man – can come up with a routine, procedure, or discipline, that will contribute to spiritual life! If the supreme and transcendent compilation of procedures, given by the Living God Himself, could not produce life, only a fool will surmise that a man can do so.

Not In Word Only

The teaching of this passage coincides with an affirmation found in First Corinthians: “*For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*” (1 Cor 4:20). Other versions read, “*does not consist in words, but in power*”^{NASB} “*not a matter of talk, but of power*”^{NIV} and “*depends not on talk, but on power*”^{NRSV}

The “*power*” of reference cannot be conferred by a Law, or by means of

“*the letter*.” No code can confer moral or spiritual power, no matter how forcefully and convincingly it is spoken. **No habit, even though developed under the most rigorous circumstances, and in the most stringent manner, can empower the human spirit.** “*The letter*,” whether in the form of the First Covenant, or in the inferior and insipid codes invented by men, can **only** produce death. “*The letter killeth.*”

In its very best state, a religion that **begins** on the outside is nothing more than “*form*” devoid of “*power*.” It leaves the human nature unchanged, and thus generates death. This is the kind of religion that Paul depicted as introducing perilous times, where men would remain unregenerate and fundamentally corrupt, all the while claiming to be religious. In the words of the Spirit, “*Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*” (2 Tim 3:5).

The predominancy of this lifeless approach to life in Christ Jesus is staggering, causing the sensitive of heart to “*marvel with great amazement*,”^{NKJV} as John did when he saw the great harlot, Babylon the Great (Rev 17:6). **Proceduralized religion is thriving in the American church!** The workshop and “*how-to*” phenomenon has swept through the professing church like a poisonous gas, bringing and promoting spiritual death. The whole condition confirms the statement of this text: “*the letter killeth!*” A religion of lifeless rules can only promote death and alienation.

THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE

“^{6e} . . . **but the Spirit giveth life.**” Other versions read, “*but the Spirit quickens*,”^{DARBY} “*but the Spirit quickeneth*,”^{DOUAY} “*the Holy Spirit gives life*,”^{NLT} “*the Spirit doth make alive*,”^{YLT} “*the Holy Spirit gives them life*,”^{LIVING} and “*but the [Holy] Spirit makes alive.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

This refers to the Holy Spirit, not the human spirit. It ought to be apparent that the human spirit, whether redeemed or not, cannot confer life. **When it comes**

to men, only “the Man Christ Jesus” can be appropriately described as a “quickening,” or “life-giving Spirit”^{NKJV} (1 Cor 15:45). Only Jesus has “*life in Himself*,” so that He is able to cause other men to come alive toward God (John 5:21-24). Even then, He causes men to live by sending the Holy Spirit to them, as He promised He would do (John 15:26; 16:7), and as Peter affirmed He did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33).

When it comes to the salvation

that is in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit is consistently associated with life.

- ☛ “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*” (Rom 8:2).
- ☛ “*And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness*” (Rom 8:10).
- ☛ “*For he that soweth to his flesh shall*

of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal 6:8).

- "It is the Spirit that quickeneth [who gives life] ^{NKJV}; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).
- "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Pet 3:18).

The Holy Spirit is here contrasted with "the letter," of the Law. Speaking of His ministry in salvation, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). This did not refer to the resurrection of the dead from the graves, for the Lord continued, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). "The dead" of verse 25 are those "dead in trespasses and sins." Through the voice of the enthroned Jesus, they are brought to life by the instrumentality of "the Spirit of life" – the Holy Spirit who produces the life. That is His ministry – to bring life to those whom "the letter" has killed. **If He does not bring life, it will not be experienced – all rules and regulations notwithstanding.**

It is God who "quickeneth the dead" (Rom 4:17). He does this through the Lord Jesus, to whom He has committed all judgment (John 5:22), and

who brings to life "whom He will" (John 5:21). Jesus, in turn, accomplishes this newness of life through the Holy Spirit, who liberates the individual "from the law of sin and death" that is resident in the human nature (Rom 8:2).

The real issue is not what you do, but if you are alive! Those who are alive in Christ Jesus can be taught, directed, led, admonished. Just as death cuts a person off from God, so life connects the human spirit with Him. In Christ, through the Holy Spirit, we become "alive unto God" (Rom 6:11).

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That is, we become sensitive Him, aware of Him, and conscious of His being and will. We are brought to the point where we can "see" Him "who is invisible" (Heb 11:27), and "hear" Him who is "speaking from heaven" (Heb 12:25). This is "life" that eventuates in knowing God, whom to know is life (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20).

As will be expounded in the verses that follow, the life that is ministered by the Holy Spirit follows the hearing and belief of the Gospel of Christ. **Just as death worked through the word of the Law, so life works through the word of the Gospel.** The Holy Spirit does not work through human feelings,

but through an appointed word – a message. The Gospel is, in this sense, the "word of life" that is held forth by faithful messengers (Phil 2:16). **It is a word that primarily concerns the Person and accomplishments of the Lord Jesus** (1 John 1:1). It is not a word of rules and regulations, or the outline of a manner of life encased in a lifeless code. The Gospel announces a Person – a Person who is "alive for evermore" (Rev 1:18). The Holy Spirit takes that message and produces spiritual life in those who believe it, who receive it "gladly" (Acts 2:41), with "all readiness of mind" (Acts 17:11).

It is the Spirit's ministration of life that causes the people to be "willing in the day of His power" (Psa 110:3). This is the life that makes itself known when the heart is "opened" (Acts 16:14), men are "granted repentance" (Acts 11:18), and they "turn from idols" (1 Thess 1:9).

In the last analysis, it is the Holy Spirit to "gives life." ^{NKJV} **He is the One who produces genuine receptivity to God.** He is the One who actually convinces men of sin, righteous, and judgment (John 16:8-11), persuading them of the reality of Jesus and what He has done.

CONCLUSION

The passage we have just reviewed has paved the way for a more extensive comparison of the Old and New Covenants. This very matter is the point

at which all manner of confusion has been generated in the Christian community. The distinctiveness of the New Covenant, and the decreed obsolescence of the Old

Covenant, has been greatly obscured by the modern church.

The burden of flawed theology can

be traced directly to the failure of preachers and teachers to correctly declare and expound the New Covenant. In our day, there has, in fact, been a resurrection of Old Covenant approaches that, though subtle, have been highly successful in diverting people from the life that is in Christ Jesus. This can be seen in several current trends.

- The inclination to associate seeming success with mere routine or habit.
- The remarkable proliferation, of “how-to” books and convention

workshops.

- The prominence of Christian counseling that borrows its techniques and insights from psychology.
- The undue elevation of scholastic approaches to Scripture that bear more resemblance to the Scribes than to Jesus and His Apostles.
- The revival of Old Covenant praise, that is more a quest for the presence of the Lord that insightful thanksgiving for its reality.

- The assignment of inordinate value to academic credentials.
- The diminishment of the importance and value of preaching.

We are, in fact, facing the same difficulties that necessitated the writing of Second Corinthians, and other, similar epistles – lifeless, or routine, religion. The answer to these dilemmas is a return to the powerful preaching and exposition of the Gospel by those who have been “made” able ministers by the Head of the church.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 10/29/2004. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The thirteenth lesson will cover verses seven through nine of the third chapter: “CONTRASTING COVENANTS.” In this text the Spirit comes to grips with the cause of most, if not all, flawed theology. Erroneous views and applications of the New Covenant Scriptures generally proceed from an improper understanding of the New Covenant, and its absolute distinction from the Old, or First Covenant. 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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