

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 # 16

COMMENTARY ON: 4:1-5

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

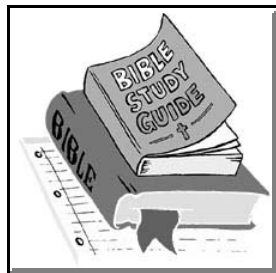
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

EFFECTIVE PREACHING

In the sight of God, what is "effective preaching?" Notice, preface *"in the sight of God"* changes the whole complexion of the question. It removes it from the realm of worldly analysis, and distances it from all human wisdom. In this passage, Paul will affirm that effective preaching begins with a man of perseverance and character. Only a person who has renounced the things that promote worldly advantage and acceptance can be approved to preach. Preaching – true preaching – has to do with making the truth of God known. By it's very nature it excludes the promotion of self, and binds one to the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself is the sum and substance of effective preaching.

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 16



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 -----

EFFECTIVE PREACHING

“ 4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; ² But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. ⁵ for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” ^{KJV} (2 Cor 4:1-5)

INTRODUCTION

PREACHING

“Preaching” is a pivotal activity in New Covenant life. Newness of life can neither be initiated nor maintained without it. Preaching is referred to thirty-seven times in the Gospels, thirty-seven times in the book of Acts, and sixty times in the Epistles.

IN THE GOSPELS Jesus is said to have been introduced by a preacher – John the Baptist who “came preaching” (Matt 3:1; Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3,18). Fifteen

times Jesus is depicted as “preaching” (Matt 4:17,23; 9:35; 11:1,5; Mk 1:14,38,39; 2:2; Lk 4:18,19,43,44; 7:22; 8:1). Jesus commissioned His disciples to “preach” (Mk 3:14; 6:12; 16:15; Lk 9:1,6,60; 16:16; 20:1). He spoke of “preaching” as a fundamental activity of the future (Matt 14:14; 26:13; Mk 14:9; 16:20; Lk 24:47).

IN THE BOOK OF ACTS Jesus is “preached” (Acts 3:20). The Apostles “preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 4:2). Early believers

“ceased not to preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). When scattered by persecution early believers “went everywhere preaching the Word” (Acts 8:4; 11:19,20). Philip “preached Christ” to the city of Samaria (Acts 8:5,12). Peter and John “preached the word of God” (Acts 8:25). Philip “preached” Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35), and “in all cities at Azotus” (Acts 8:40). When Saul of Tarsus was converted “straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues” (Acts 9:20), and in Damascus (Acts 9:27). Peter told

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Cornelius and his household that God had sent the word to Israel “preaching peace by Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:36). He told them that Jesus had commanded them to “preach unto the people” (Acts 10:42). Barnabas and Saul were separated by the Holy Spirit to preach (Acts 13:5). Paul affirmed that through Christ the forgiveness of sins was “preached” (Acts 13:38). Throughout entire regions the Gospel was “preached” (Acts 14:7,25; 16:10; 17:13). It was “preached” that men ought to turn from vanities unto the living God (Acts 14:15). Paul and Barnabas “preached” the Gospel in Derbe (Acts 14:21), and in Antioch (Acts 15:35). Paul reasoned and “preached” in

Thessalonica (Acts 17:3), and in Troas (Acts 20:7,9). He “preached the resurrection” in Athens (Acts 17:18). Paul was noted for “preaching the kingdom of God” (Acts 20:25; 28:31).

IN THE EPISTLES Paul depicted himself as “ready to preach the Gospel” (Rom 1:15). The “word of faith” – that is, the word through which faith comes – is “preached” (Rom 10:8). Men cannot believe “without a preacher” (Rom 10:14). True “preachers” are “sent” (Rom 10:15). Paul said he “fully preached the Gospel” (Rom 15:19), and that it was his ambition to “preach the Gospel” where Christ was not known (Rom 15:20). Establishment in the faith is said to be according to “the preaching of Jesus” (Rom 16:215). Paul said Jesus did not send him to baptize, “but to preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 1:17). There is such a thing as “the preaching of the cross” which is “the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). God has chosen to save them that believe “by the foolishness of preaching” (1 Cor 1:21; 15:1-3). Paul said he “preached Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23). Preaching the Gospel is set forth as a primary activity (1 Cor 2:4; 9:1,16,18,27; 2 Cor 1:19; 2:12; 4:5; 10:14,16; 11:7; Gal 1:8,9,11,23; 2:2; Eph 3:8; Phil 1:18; Col 1:23,28; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Tim 4:17). Believing is associated with preaching (1 Cor 15:11). Paul said that God revealed His Son to him in order that He “might preach Him among the heathen” (Gal 1:16). The exalted Jesus is declared as having come “and preached peace” (Eph 2:17). Paul said he was “ordained a preacher” (1 Tim 2:7), and “appointed a preacher” (2 Tim 1:11). Jesus is said to have been “preached among the Gentiles” (1 Tim 3:16). Paul exhorted Timothy to “preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:2). God manifests His Word “through preaching” (Tit 1:3). The benefits provided in salvation are reported to men “by them that have preached the Gospel” (1 Pet 1:12). The Word of the Lord, which endures forever, “by the Gospel is

preached unto you” (1 Pet 1:25). A great spiritual awakening is said to be prompted the preaching of “the everlasting Gospel” (Rev 14:16).

A MESSAGE TO BE PROCLAIMED

“Christianity,” as men are wont to refer to it, is the only religion in the world with a transforming message – a message that is to be proclaimed. Other world religions declare a code of conduct, a philosophy of life, or some perspective of life in this world. **None of them, however, have a message that actually changes the people.** Even in the Christian community itself, there is a variety of words being delivered that deal with nothing more than new habits or regimented ways of approaching life.

All manner of specialists have arisen who come to straighten out, what they conceive to be, the difficult areas of life. Thus we have “Christian” gurus in family life, teen life, single life, senior life, finances, marriage, stewardship . . . etc. Add to that the small army of religious specialists in planting churches and growing them into mega-churches. The land is filled with their books, seminars, and workshops.

When it comes to procedural matters, the New Covenant writings provide us with very little information. They rather set before us an objective – like edifying – and urge us to fulfill that objective (1 Cor 14:26; Eph 4:12,16,29; 1 Tim 1:4). Even then, there are not a lot of extensive expositions on such things, like a list of various things that edify.

The Reason for this Circumstance

There is a reason for this circumstance. **The chief difficulty with man is not what he does, but what he IS.** Thus the unregenerate are described as “lost” (2 Cor 4:3), “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1) “alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18),

“Christianity,” as men are wont to refer to it, is the only religion in the world with a transforming message – a message that is to be proclaimed.

We already know from the Old Covenant that men cannot be brought to an acceptable state by outward, or external, means – even when they are authored

“strangers” (Eph 2:19), and “enemies” (Rom 5:10). **This speaks of a condition that cannot be altered by human initiative or accomplishment.** As even the prophets said, “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil*” (Jer 13:23).

God is not in the business of teaching swine to act like sheep. He does not provide various listings to the people that identify new habits that should replace older ones. **We already know from the Old Covenant that men cannot be brought to an acceptable state by outward, or external, means – even when they are authored and strictly enforced by the Lord Himself. Of course, that entire economy was imposed upon a chosen people to confirm that men needed a Savior, not a system; a Redeemer not a routine; a Propitiation, not a procedure; a Mediator, not a**

method.

The nature of men must be changed, so that they think and feel differently. Under the First Covenant you were not required to understand – only to do, and to do it consistently and without the slightest deviation from the revealed methodology. **However, under the New Covenant, understanding is the critical factor.**

In summary form, that understanding is knowing the Lord: “*for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them*” (Jer 31:34). If, in the first place, our ignorance alienated us “*from the life of God*” (Eph 4:18), then it is imperative that we be filled with “*the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*” (Col 1:9). Therefore, it should not surprise us that a **message** lies at the heart of God’s communication to us in Christ Jesus. That message is filled with the

glory of God as personified in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is encapsulated in the Gospel, which is to be “*preached*” (Rom 10:15), “*reported*” (1 Pet 1:12), “*declared*” (1 Cor 15:1), “*published*” (Mark 13:10), “*testified*” (Acts 20:24) “*made known*” (Eph 6:19).

This is the message that is being expounded in this text. It will be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ, the glory of God, and the changing of men. It is the premier message in all the world. There is no message – no word – that supercedes this message. No other word is actually “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16). No other message exposes us to more of God and Christ – it alone is called “*the glorious Gospel*” (2 Cor 4:4; 1 Tim 1:11). In all the world, and during all time, there is no other word from heaven that so reveals “*the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24; Gal 1:6; Phil 1:7), declares “*peace*” with God (Rom 10:15; Eph 6:15), or announces “*salvation*” (Eph 1:13). There is no word of a movement that can be compared with the Gospel. There is no moral code or discipline that is parallel with it. The Holy Spirit works with no other message as He does the Gospel of Christ. For a religious body of people to be noted for any other communication constitutes a transgression of unspeakable magnitude.

WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY

“4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry . . .”

Paul will now provide an explanation for the substance and manner of his ministry. He will present the reason, or foundation, for what he is doing. This will **not** be traced to a heart for people – although Paul surely had such a heart. He is not preaching with a mind to promote an historical Christian movement, or acquaint people with a particular religious institution. His aim is not to distinguish one group of professing Christians from another, or maintain some sectarian boundary.

THEREFORE

Therefore . . .” Other versions

read, “*since,*”^{NRSV} and “*because.*”^{BBE}

The doctrine Paul preached was also his motivation. It shaped the manner in which he labored as well as the words that he declared. Permit me to remind you of the statements Paul has made – statements that shaped what and how he spoke and wrote.

- Believers were epistles of Christ (3:3a).
- They were written with the Spirit of the living God (3:3b).
- Paul’s sufficiency was of God (3:5).
- God made him an able minister

(3:6a).

- He was a minister of the Spirit, not the letter (3:6b).
- The letter kills but the Spirit gives life (3:6c).
- The ministration of the Spirit is “*rather glorious*” (3:8).
- The ministration of righteousness exceeds “*in glory*” (3:9).
- He did not preach with a veil over his face, obscuring the magnificent glory of the Gospel (3:12-13).
- When men turn to the Lord, the veil

is lifted from their heart (3:16).

- Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (3:17).
- In beholding the glory of Christ revealed in the Gospel, we are changed from glory to glory (3:18a).
- This change is wrought by the Holy Spirit (3:18b).

Now, how does a person minister who perceives such things? What could possibly constrain such an one to major on life in this world? How could a perceptive soul devote himself to refurbishing or promoting a movement spawned by men? What could possible move such a person to set his heart to restoring the church of the first century? Who, knowing these things, could emphasize the Sabbath day, or major on the coming Antichrist, or the environment, or finances, or politics?

“Therefore” is correlating what we are doing with what God is doing through Jesus and by the Holy Spirit. It is connecting the ministry with the New Covenant, which is the only covenant Jesus is mediating, and the only means of maintaining an affiliation with the God of heaven.

SEEING WE HAVE

“... seeing we have this ministry . . .” Other versions read, “we are engaged”^{NRSV} “we have been made

servants,”^{BBE} “God has given us,”^{NLT} “being engaged,”^{Weymouth} “I hold a place,”^{WILLIAMS} and “we do hold and engage in.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Not only does Paul speak and write in view of the stark realities of the New Covenant itself, **but in view of where he has been placed in the body of Christ, and the work he has been assigned.** He does not speak as a graduate of a preacher-training institute, or as a Pharisee in good standing. He **knows** what he has been given to do – **“seeing!”** He understands where Jesus has placed him – **“seeing!”** He is aware of the vast Divine purpose into which he has been called – **“seeing!”**

THIS MINISTRY

Other versions read, “this new order,”^{BBE} “this ministration,”^{DOUAY} “this wonderful ministry,”^{NLT} “this wonderful work [of telling His good news to others,”^{LIVING} “this service,”^{Weymouth} and “this ministry.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul speaks in view of what he has been given to do – the means by which he

has been called to serve Christ – **“this ministry.”** He is not building a religious career or making a name for himself. He is serving the interests of Another – **“this ministry.”**

In Christ Jesus a “ministry” is an appointed work through which something is brought from heaven to men. It is a service through which the Son of God administers the benefits of the New Covenant. It is a function through which the Holy Spirit becomes active in the lives and affairs of men. **Paul’s “ministry” was a vehicle through which heavenly powers worked.**

In the professed “Christian” world, much of what flies under the banner of “ministry” is really no ministry at all – at least not in the sense of our text. Too often personal and institutional objectives are being served, neither of which are honored in heaven. I find I can no longer serve such meager aims. They are too small, too short-sighted, and do not last long enough – that is, into eternity itself.

In Christ Jesus a “ministry” is an appointed work through which something is brought from heaven to men. It is a service through which the Son of God administers the benefits of the New Covenant.

WE HAVE RECEIVED MERCY

“^{1b} . . . as we have received mercy . . .” Other versions read, “as we received mercy,”^{NASB} “through God’s mercy,”^{NIV} “it is by God’s mercy,”^{NRSV} “through the mercy given to us,”^{BBE} “as we have has mercy shown us,”^{DARBY} “according as we have obtained mercy,”^{DOUAY} “God in His mercy,”^{NLT} “according as we did receive kindness,”^{YLT} “God Himself, in His mercy,”^{LIVING} “God has given us mercy,”^{IE} “being mindful of the mercy which has been shown to us,”^{WEYMOUTH} “I have had God’s mercy shown me,”^{WILLIAMS} “because of God’s mercy to

me,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “by the mercy of God [granting us favor, benefits, opportunities, and especially salvation].”^{AMPLIFIED}

AS

Paul is very particular in delineating his ministry. **There is a sort of engine that is driving it all – something from which his ministry obtained both meaning and power.** The word “as” is like an arrow that points to this spiritual engine. It refers to what made Paul effective.

WE HAVE RECEIVED

Life in Christ Jesus is driven by what we “receive” – what actually becomes a part of us. Much of the religion of our day is theoretical and speculative. It has no personal substance to it, and thus is dry and powerless. This is evident to everyone who has “tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet 2:3).

Paul said elsewhere, “we **have received grace and Apostleship**” (Rom 1:5). Again he wrote, “we **have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the**

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things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Cor 2:12). Believers are said to have received “the Spirit of adoption” (Rom 8:15), “the knowledge of the truth” (Heb 10:26), “a kingdom that which cannot be moved” (Heb 12:28), of Christ’s “fulness” (John 1:6), and “the atonement” (Rom 5:11). These, and more, all come “from above,” not the earth. They have their genesis with God, not man.

It is ever true that **an effective ministry for Christ is founded upon what the individual has received from Christ.** Such a ministry is not based upon the human personality, administrative skills, or people skills. It cannot be shaped by any form of knowledge that is taught by men. **There is no seminar or work shop that can lead a person into an effective ministry for Christ.** Although this ought to be readily apparent, it is not seen by the masses. **Those who themselves required deliverance from the power of darkness can, of themselves, produce no resources that operates in the heavenly realms.** When trafficking in the souls of men, those who require an Intercessor cannot supply what is needed to accomplish the work of the Lord. At the very best, men can provide practical helps – like Philippi did for Paul (Phil 4:16). But in the end, something must be received from Christ in order to do the work of Christ. **I will wax bold and say that Jesus will not fulfill His purpose in men through a means that He has not Himself supplied.**

MERCY

There are places that refer to servants receiving the grace of God. Elsewhere Paul says he received “*grace and apostleship*” (Rom 1:5). He also traced his prodigious labors to “*the grace of God that was with me*” (1 Cor 15:10). But “*grace*” is not the word that the apostle uses in this text – either in English or in Greek. Other translations read, “*kindness,*”^{YLT} and “*the mercy of God [granting us favor, benefits, opportunities, and especially salvation].*”^{AMPLIFIED}

Lexically, the word “*mercy*” means “*mercy; kindness or good will toward the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them*”^{THAYER} “*to show kindness or concern for someone in serious need,*”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “*pity, mercy, or compassion.*”

SCOTT-LIDDELL

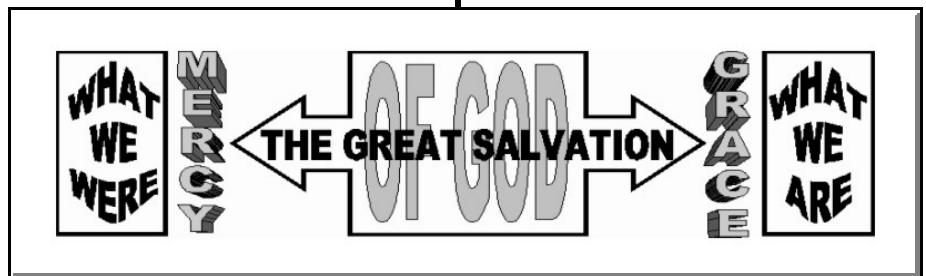
The mercy of God is consistently associated with delivering us from a wretched state, and bringing us into as blessed one.

- **QUICKENED FROM A DEAD STATE.** “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)*” (Eph 2:4-5).
- **SAVED FROM BEING A**

Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3).

- **THOUGH NOT A PEOPLE, WERE MADE A PEOPLE.** “*Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy*” (1 Pet 2:10).

Both mercy and grace are involved in God’s “*great salvation.*” As it is written, “*grace, mercy, and peace*” (1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; 2 John 1:3).



BLASPHEMER AND A PERSECUTOR. “*Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*” (1 Tim 1:13).

- **DELIVERED AS AN EXAMPLE.** “*Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting*” (1 Tim 1:16).

- **SAVED, THOUGH ONCE FOOLISH AND DISOBEDIENT.** “*For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*” (Titus 3:3-5).

- **BEGOTTEN AGAIN.** “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus*

And again, “*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*” (Heb 4:16).

Grace and mercy are not synonymous terms. They have differing accents, though both are grounded in God’s nature, or character. When speaking of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus “*mercy*” accents the miserable state from which we were delivered – what we were. Grace places the emphasis on what we are brought into – what we are and will be.

In this particular text, Paul places the stress on the marvelous deliverance he experienced from his former condition – one in which he was “*a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious*” (1 Tim 1:3a). His former condition is described as one of “*ignorance and unbelief*” (1 Tim 1:13b). In that state he confessed “*beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it*” (Gal 1:13).

All of this means that the deliverance Paul experienced was not an end of itself. He obtained mercy in order to become a laborer

together with God. He was severed from his past in order to participate in a glorious future. He obtained grace to equip him – to strengthen and enable him to fulfill his Divine appointment.

The recollection his past caused Paul to rejoice in the mercy of God. The consciousness of the work to which he had been called compelled him to rely upon the

grace of God.

Now Paul will tell us the effect of his understanding of the mercy of God. This mercy is something that he “received.” His deliverance from the past was not theoretical. Neither, indeed, was it the end of the matter. God does not go into the market place of life and hire people to sit under a comfortable shade tree, uninvolved and inactive. Jesus

likened the kingdom of heaven to a “householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard” (Matt 20:1-16). That vineyard was associated with toil, and bearing the burden and heat of the day. **Knowing the mercy of God will cause those called into God’s vineyard to labor in a certain manner, and with a certain spirit.** Paul now shares one aspect of that manner.

WE FAINT NOT

“^{1c} . . . **we faint not**” Other versions read, “*we do not lose heart,*” NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV “*we are strong,*” BBE “*we are not discouraged,*” NAB “*we do not waver,*” NJB “*we never give up,*” NLT “*we don’t give up,*” IE “*we are not cowards,*” WEYMOUTH and “*we do not get discouraged (spiritless and despondent with fear) or become faint with weariness and exhaustion.*” ^{AMPLIFIED}

PAUL’S PERSECUTIONS

Ponder the staggering hindrances that Paul experienced in his ministry.

- ☛ Persecuted in and forced to leave Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-12).
- ☛ Persecuted in Berea by Jews from Thessalonica (Acts 17:13-15).
- ☛ Persecuted by Jews in Corinth (Acts 18:12-18).
- ☛ Persecuted in Ephesus by the silversmiths (Acts 19:23-41).
- ☛ Bound with thongs and confined in a castle in Ephesus (Acts 22:24-30).

- ☛ In a shipwreck (Acts 27:14-44).
- ☛ Bitten by a poisonous snake (Acts 28:3-6).
- ☛ Delayed in Melita for three months (Acts 28:11-16).
- ☛ Pressed above measure in Asia, even despairing of life (2 Cor 1:8-11).
- ☛ Had a grievous “*thorn in the flesh,*” from which he thrice sought deliverance (1 Cor 12:7-9).
- ☛ Shamefully treated in Philippi (1 Thess 2:2).
- ☛ Suffered hunger, thirst, nakedness, buffeting, and had no certain dwelling place (1 Cor 4:11).
- ☛ Suffered persecution, being defamed and being considered the “*offscouring of all things*” (1 Cor 4:12-13).
- ☛ Was troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down (2 Cor 4:8-9).
- ☛ Experienced afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watchings, and fastings (2 Cor 6:4-5).
- ☛ Subjected to dishonor, evil report, being considered a deceiver, being unknown, dying, chastened, sorrowful, poor, and having nothing (2 Cor 6:8-10).
- ☛ Experienced stripes “*Above*

Ponder the staggering hindrances that Paul experienced in his ministry. See how Satan attempted to thwart him on every hand – how the people opposed him, and how he was tested in most unusual ways.

- ☛ Early in his ministry, “*the Jews took counsel to kill him.*” He escaped by being let down over a wall in a basket (Acts 9:23-25).
- ☛ Persecuted in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:50-51).
- ☛ Persecuted in Iconium (Acts 14:1-6).
- ☛ Stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:19).
- ☛ Beaten and imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:19-34).

- ☛ Jews again conspire to kill him while he is confined in Ephesus (Acts 23:12-15).
- ☛ Confined in Herod’s judgment hall in Caesarea (Acts 23:35).
- ☛ Held bound in custody in Caesarea for two years by Felix (Acts 24:27).
- ☛ Carried as a prisoner to Rome by Julius, a centurion (Acts 27:1-5).

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measure,” labors “more abundant,” and “deaths oft” (2 Cor 11:23).

- ☛ Three times was beaten by the Jews with 39 stripes (2 Cor 11:24).
- ☛ Beaten with rods three times, and stoned once (2 Cor 11:25a).
- ☛ Shipwrecked three times (2 Cor 11:25b).
- ☛ Spent a day and night in the open sea ^{NIV} (2 Cor 11:25c).
- ☛ Many journeyings (2 Cor 11:26a).
- ☛ Experienced perils from waters, robbers, his own countrymen, the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren (2 Cor 11:26b).
- ☛ Experienced weariness, painfulness, sleepless nights, ^{NASB} hunger and thirst, often without food, ^{NASB} and cold and exposure ^{NASB} (2 Cor 11:27).
- ☛ Carried scars in his body inflicted by persecution (Gal 6:18).
- ☛ Suffered trouble as though he as an evil doer (2 Tim 2:9).
- ☛ Experienced persecutions and afflictions in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (2 Tim 3:11).
- ☛ Alexander the coppersmith did much evil to him (2 Tim 4:14).
- ☛ When he stood in court in his own defense, all men forsook him (2 Tim 4:16).

What a staggering record of suffering, opposition, persecution, heartache, and inconvenience! All of these things occurred to Paul **while** he was engaged in doing the will of the Lord! He did not experience them while wandering from the Lord. They were not the chastening hand of the Lord upon him because he did not judge himself, or was unfaithful to his calling! Rather, these all took place when he was in the very heart of the will of God, fully submitted to the Lord, and pressing toward the mark for the prize. These were realized when he was counting everything loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus!

And what is Paul’s response to these repeated, painful, and extended experiences? Hear him speak, and hear him with discerning ears.

- ☛ **“WE FAINT NOT!”**^{KJV}
- ☛ **“WE DO NOT LOSE HEART!”**^{NKJV}
- ☛ **“WE ARE STRONG!”**^{BBE}
- ☛ **“WE ARE NOT DISCOURAGED!”**^{NAB}
- ☛ **“WE DO NOT WAVER!”**^{NJB}

Paul did not “faint” of “give up” because the mercy of God loomed larger in his vision than the difficulties he encountered. Who he was in Christ Jesus was a greater matter to him than those who opposed him. What he had been given to do by the one who saved him was more pressing than personal comforts. To him, the **destiny** of life’s voyage was more important than the troubled sea upon which it was sailed.

And what of you, dear reader? What have you been called to endure? Or have you even be able to associate what you have experienced with your calling? After what the mercy of God has done with you and in you, what possible

All of these things occurred to Paul while he was engaged in doing the will of the Lord! He did not experience them while wandering from the Lord. They were not the chastening hand of the Lord upon him because he did not judge himself, or was unfaithful to his calling!

- ☛ **“WE NEVER GIVE UP!”**^{NLT}
- ☛ **“WE ARE NOT COWARDS!”**^{WEYMOUTH}
- ☛ **“I NEVER GIVE UP!”**^{WILLIAMS}
- ☛ **“WE DO NOT GET DISCOURAGED (SPIRITLESS AND DESPONDENT WITH FEAR) OR BECOME FAINT WITH WEARINESS AND EXHAUSTION!”**^{AMPLIFIED}

And how as it that Paul was able to sustain his spirit and determination during such enormous hardship? **It was because he had received “mercy,” and he knew it – extraordinary and abundant mercy!** He knew that the mercy that had extricated him from such an evil background could surely enable him to remain faithful to the One who had called him. He knew that the mercy that delivers can maintain that deliverance.

circumstance of life can be too great to bear? Daniel would ask us, “What is a lion’s den to fellowship with a holy angel?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would only scoff at the fire in which they walked. Joseph would tell us thirteen years was not too long to wait – not if a throne was at the end of that wait.

Here is a word that needs to be heard from the church today – a word that needs to be testified by everyone who labors in the vineyard of the Lord: **“We faint not!”** Let us have an end of fallen and quitting leaders in the church. Let there be a cessation of spiritual drop-outs – a miserable number that exceeds the non-quitters. It is not comely for the professing church to be characterized by the circumstances faced by Joshua and Caleb – ten fainters and two non-fainters!

The truth of the matter is that the experience of the modern church confirms its lack of vision, understanding, and persuasion – just as it did in Corinth.

Such conditions cannot be justified. The New Covenant makes no provision for them. They do not have to do with

knowing God, but with being ignorant of Him. **They are associated with a static spiritual condition, not a**

change from glory unto glory. Fainting is connected to unbelief, not the faith that saves the soul.

RENOUNCING THE HIDDEN THINGS OF DISHONESTY

“^{2a} *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty . . .*”

Both regeneration and spiritual

ministers. Those who lack these things are **not** ministers of Christ at all. Rather, they are, as Paul says elsewhere, *“the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end*

This was not done in a casual manner, or only at selected and infrequent times.

HOW a professed ministry of Christ is carried out is of critical importance. Godly results CANNOT be achieved by godless means! Good fruit cannot be obtained from an evil tree! Holy outcomes cannot be realized by unholy methods.

The lexical meaning of the word translated “renounced” is as follows. The strength of the word will be apparent. “To forbid . . . to give up, renounce,” THAYER “To renounce, disown,” FRIBERG “renounce, put aside,” UBS “pertaining to not able to be tempted” root LOUW-NIDA and “to renounce, disown, give up.” LIDDELL-SCOTT It also includes the idea of “to speak off or away from.” ROBERTSON **That is, the practices that will be mentioned are denounced as well as renounced.** They are in no way acceptable. There is no possible way of improving them or using them to anything but shame and disadvantage. Other English words that are implied in this expression include desert, forsake, repudiate, throw over, reject, disapprove, spurn, disallow, and discard.

growth involve the renunciation of certain manners – manners that have their roots in this world, and are driven by the devil himself. At this point Paul will address a very sensitive matter – one that honest souls know is altogether too prevalent in our times. **HOW a professed ministry of Christ is carried out is of critical importance.** Godly results CANNOT be achieved by godless means! Good fruit cannot be obtained from an evil tree! Holy outcomes cannot be realized by unholy methods. All of this is involved in one of our Lord’s pungent sayings. *“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit”* (Matt 12:33). In further amplification of the seriousness of this matter Jesus also said, *“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”* (Matt 7:17-19).

is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil 3:18-19).

What Paul now writes is like a devastating spiritual wind that topples houses the Lord has not built (Psa 127:1).

BUT WE HAVE RENOUNCED

Other versions read, *“But have renounced . . .”* Other versions read, *“Rather, we have renounced,”* NIV *“but we have renounced,”* ASV *“And we have given up,”* BBE *“But we have rejected,”* DARBY *“But we renounce,”* DOUAY *“But have cast from us,”* GENEVA *“We reject,”* NLT *“but did renounce for ourselves,”* YLT *“We do not try,”* LIVING *“Nay, we have renounced,”* WEYMOUTH *“On the other hand, I have renounced.”* WILLIAMS

The words *“But have renounced”* come from the Greek phrase *ἀλλὰ ἀπειπάμεθα* (al-la ap-ei-pow-metha). This is the only place in Scripture this precise expression is used. The first word of this phrase is an expression of emphasis meaning, “even more than that.” ROBERTSON What follows refers to things that are spiritually reprehensible. **They were things Paul exercised himself to shun and avoid.**

What is “renounced” is not merely unlawful – although that is involved. **Rather, these things, when seen correctly, are repulsive, obnoxious, offensive, abhorrent, and invidious.** Their nature is in sharp conflict with the Divine nature and God’s eternal purpose. They are things that are intrinsically part of this present evil world, and therefore can have no part in anything associated with the living God. **They represent areas in which the devil is prominent, and where his objectives are being promoted.** God is not in them. Jesus is not in them. The Holy Spirit is not in them. They clash with the New Covenant, and cause the experience of Divine power to dissipate. It is not possible to overstate the seriousness of attempting to employ these things in the good work of the Lord.

THE HIDDEN THINGS

Other versions read, *“the hidden things,”* NASB *“secret ways,”* NIV *“that one hides,”* NRSV *“the secret things,”* *“the cloaks,”* GENEVA *“secrecy,”* NJB *“trick people into believing,”* LIVING *“the secrecy,”*

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WEYMOUTH “underhanded,” WILLIAMS “secret thoughts, feelings, desires.” AMPLIFIED

“Hidden things” are things that are concealed or secret. These are “things” that are covered with the veneer of culture and pretense. They are like trenches that are covered and concealed by rotten planks that deceive those walking around and upon them.

This has particularly to do with motives – hidden motives that spring from defiled character. Jesus spoke of this condition when addressing the “scribes and Pharisees:” “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed **appear beautiful outward**, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also **outwardly appear righteous unto men**, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matt 23:27-28). In these words Jesus was dealing “hidden things” – things that, though unseen by men, were very real, existing in the inward parts of men.

Jesus exposed the real desires of the scribes and Pharisees – their “hidden things.” “But all their works **they do for to be seen of men**: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and **love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi**” (Matt 23:5-7). **HIDDEN THINGS!** “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and **for a pretense make long prayer**: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation” (Matt 23:14). **HIDDEN THINGS!**

Jude spoke of “hidden things” – a condition in which false teachers flattered in order to gain personal advantage. “These are **murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage**” (Jude 1:16). **HIDDEN THINGS!**

Paul spoke of those who had an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words, driven by the false assumption that godliness is a means to

financial gain. ^{NIV} “He is proud, knowing nothing, but **doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, **supposing that gain is godliness**: from such withdraw thyself**” (1 Tim 6:4-5). **HIDDEN THINGS!**

Again, Paul spoke of those causing division in order to serve their own appetites. ^{NIV} “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, **but their own**

is not wise to make them known. It would be too apparent that they were neither noble nor in keeping with heavenly priorities. “Hidden things” are all in the category Paul called “earthly things.” He also affirms that the conclusion of such things is “destruction” – a sobering thought, indeed, in view of their prominence in this day. “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: **whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things**)” (Phil 3:17-19).

“Hidden things” have to do with secret motives and agendas. The purposes that are being served did not originate with God or Jesus. They were not the result of the moving of the Holy Spirit, but sprang out of the flesh.

belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom 16:17-18). **HIDDEN THINGS!**

Peter spoke of those covetous men who, with feigned words, or stories they have made up, ^{NIV} make merchandise of people, exploiting them for personal gain. “And through covetousness shall they **with feigned words make merchandise of you**: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Pet 2:3). **HIDDEN THINGS!**

“Hidden things” have to do with secret motives and agendas. The purposes that are being served did not originate with God or Jesus. They were not the result of the moving of the Holy Spirit, but sprang out of the flesh. “Hidden things” may have to do with a career, making a name for oneself, appropriating wealth, becoming a leader, maintaining denominational prominence, or satisfying the lust of the flesh. Whatever they may be, even the one possessing them knows it

OF DISHONESTY

Other versions read, “of shame,” ^{NKJV} “because of shame,” ^{NASB} “shameful ways,” ^{NIV} “shameful things,” ^{NRSV} “disgraceful,” ^{RSV} “disgraceful methods,” ^{WILLIAMS}

Here, the word “dishonesty” means shame or disgrace. ^{STRONG’S} This is a demeaning that is the result of departing from the truth – which is what it means to be “dishonest.”

The “hidden things of dishonesty” are things of which people will be ashamed when they stand before “the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10). They will be the cause of disgrace, and will be the prelude to condemnation. They will not begin to be shameful and disgraceful at that time, but will be **revealed** as such. It will then be evident that such things never did conform to the truth, and were always, and in every instance, a departure from the truth, competitive with spiritual reality, and fostered by the devil himself.

Williams New Testament captures the sense of the word used here: “disgraceful methods.” That is, Paul refused to make any effort to advance the truth of God with ignoble means. **He would not borrow from the domain from which he had to be delivered to fulfill his ministry!**

With godly deliberation, Paul had renounced and disowned all such approaches. How frequently he made this known.

- ☛ “I have *coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel*” (Acts 20:33).
- ☛ “For neither at any time used we

flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness” (1 Thess 2:5).

- ☛ “*Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ*” (1 Thess 2:6).
- ☛ “*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*” (1 Cor 2:4).
- ☛ “*For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of*

sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (2 Cor 2:17).

How is it that Paul did not resort to the use of such things? Was it because of a Law – a commandment – that had been bound upon him? **Indeed, he tells us why such chicanery could not be found in his ministry.** He had “renounced” such things, and thus they had no attraction to him. He did not wrestle with these things, but had discarded them because they were repulsive to him. **He could not indulge in them because they caused pain to his spirit.** There was no attraction in them.

NOT WALKING IN CRAFTINESS

“^{2b} . . . **not walking in craftiness . . .**” Other versions read, “we do not use deception,”^{NIV} “we refuse to practice cunning,”^{NRSV} “not walking in false ways,”^{BBE} “not walking in deceit,”^{DARBY} “not acting deceitfully,”^{NAB} “It is not our way to be devious,”^{NJB} “We do not try to trick anyone,”^{NLT} “we are not interested in fooling anyone,”^{LIVING} “playing around,”^{IE} “we practice no cunning tricks,”^{WEYMOUTH} “we do not use trickery,”^{ISV} and “we refuse to deal craftily (to practice trickery and cunning).”^{AMPLIFIED}

Even in the early days of the church, Satan’s subtle ways were creeping in. There were doctrines being taught “by the *sleight of men, and cunning craftiness*,” who were lying “in wait to deceive” (Eph 4:14). These were guilty of “*deceitful plotting*”^{NKJV} and “*deceitful scheming*.”^{NASB} These taught doctrines that were devised by cunning –

unscrupulous and unprincipled methods that were developed in the flesh. They had the appearance of wisdom, but were actually shrewd after the manner of the devil. **They left people looking the wrong way, and removed the glory of the Gospel from their thinking.**

NOT WALKING

Here Paul enlarges his border of reference. He does not confine himself to preaching – what he affirmed by word of mouth or the written page. Now he talks of his entire manner – particularly his public manner (although not in exclusion of his private life). **A person’s “walk” encompasses WHY he acts as well as HOW he does it.** It includes WHERE he is headed in what he does, as well as HOW that objective is articulated.

When Paul says “not walking,” he is saying that nothing about his life is characterized by what follows – not so

much as a single part of it. It was not in his private life or his public life. It was not found in his purposes or in his working.

CRAFTINESS

“*Craftiness*” – all of it – is from the devil. He is the one who catches people with subtlety (2 Cor 11:3). It is the sort of quality that attempts to exploit people, seeking to bring them into an private agenda that is not known to them. This is a specious, or false, wisdom that appears to put the truth of God close to the people, while actually thrusting it away from them. **It is spiritual trickery, where an attempt is made to simulate spiritual realities.**

The professed Christian world is literally filled with “*craftiness*.” Perhaps some examples will serve to underscore their presence. Instead of preaching salvation through Jesus Christ, some have taught, what is called, “the Romans road.” Others employ what is called “the four spiritual laws.” Who has not heard of “the sinner’s prayer,” even though no Apostle ever hinted at such a thing. Perhaps you have heard people in an audience challenged, “If you want to receive Jesus now, raise your hand, and I will pray for you.” Who has not heard some preacher tell seeking souls, “Repeat this prayer.” Some make the matter convenient enough that all you have to do

A person’s “walk” encompasses WHY he acts as well as HOW he does it. It includes WHERE he is headed in what he does, as well as HOW that objective is articulated.

is “sign this card.” Others have you send a gift and you will receive a special anointed prayer cloth, or perhaps a bottle of genuine olive oil from Israel. Some offer a special edition of the Bible, or some religious trinket or attractive gift.

Is all of this wrong? Well, that is not the proper question. The question is, “Is this right?” Is this a proper way to deal with the souls of men? **These are all in the category of craftiness, and are designed to get people to do what they would not ordinarily do.** There was, for example, a time in religious history when a “prayer altar” was introduced. There – at that altar – you were told you could receive something that could not otherwise be received. Again, after telling people they can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, people are told to come forward to do so. It is all made quite easy for them if they can get to someone who has the anointing in his hands. A touch from him will bring the blessing of the Lord.

This all, in my judgment, comes under the heading of “craftiness” – deception and subtlety. **It is what men use to attempt to step within the circle of Divine activity – an attempt to make something happen that does not take place when their message is preached.**

When, for example, Peter preached, the people cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). When Peter told them what to do, adding that they should save themselves from their untoward generation, they “gladly received the Word” (Acts 2:38-41) When Philip preached Christ, the Ethiopian eunuch interrupted saying, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized” (Acts 8:36). When Paul preached to some women gathered for prayer at a river, the Lord “opened” Lydia’s heart “that she attended unto the things spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). When the Philippian jailor was confronted with the working of the Lord he cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved” (Acts 16:30).

However, there are messages that do not, and cannot, produce such results. They are delivered in words that are spiritually sterile.

This is why men resort to “craftiness.” God does not, and cannot, work with their message, so they attempt to take men by trickery and stealth. Perhaps if they give the people a gift, the people will consent to return one to them – even though Jesus outlawed such an approach (Luke 14:12-14). The Lord said, “freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt 10:8). Instead of selling his literary works, Paul worked with his hands, even supporting those who labored with him (Acts 20:33-34). Explaining his conduct Paul said, “I have showed you all things,

The first twenty-six items of merchandise are incidental. They are all of this world, and were produced by the hands of men. **None** of them were eternal. **None** of them made anyone better. **None** of them could improve the character of man. **None** of them added to the true worth of man. **However, the last two items are of special significance: “slaves, and souls of men.”** Men were thus brought into bondage to something other than God Himself. “The souls of men” were employed to advance purely human

This all, in my judgment, comes under the heading of “craftiness” – deception and subtlety. It is what men use to attempt to step within the circle of Divine activity – an attempt to make something happen that does not take place when their message is preached.

how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). He did not resort to “craftiness.”

Religious Merchandise

On the Isle of Patmos, isolated from the machinations of men, the apostle John was given to see a religious monstrosity. It was something that came in the name of Christ, yet was really from the devil. It was noted for its unfaithfulness to God, and thus was depicted as a harlot and a fornicator. **This religious entity was wed to the world, and therefore sought its own interest.** Here is manner in which this perversion was represented. Her “merchandise,” or the areas of her commerce, are said to be “gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men” (Rev 18:12-13).

agendas.

It is within this framework that “craftiness” is employed. **It is a human means of constraining people to do what their own hearts would never suggest to them – “craftiness.”** Men are thus compelled from without, not from within – “craftiness.”

Let me be clear about this. **A false message, or skewed message, can never move men toward God.** It cannot possibly constrain them to call upon the name of the Lord, for “the power of God” is not in such a word. Yet, in spite of having a fundamentally powerless message, religious men and organizations resort to human input, supposing that will make them “successful.” They need support, and a lot of it, to fulfill their programs. If a man’s name is going to become great in this world, some man must promote it, for that is not the kind of business in which Jesus is engaged. God has exalted His name above all others, and simply is not in the business of exalting any other name (Acts 4:12; Eph 1:21; Phil 2:9).

How, then, can men build something that God has not said He

Himself would build? How can they advance an agenda in which the Lord Himself is not preeminent? There is only one way to do this – “craftiness.”

Paul’s Walk

The total lack of “craftiness” is found in the earthly ministry of our blessed Lord. Candidly Jesus told His disciples, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority

upon them. **But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many”** (Matt 20:25-28). **That set the tone for all activity in the name of the Lord!**

You will find no “craftiness” in

Paul’s walk – not so much as the slightest hint of it. **When he was preaching in the limelight, with the people accepting what he said, “craftiness” was not there.** When he was alone in prison, “craftiness” was not there. When he was defending himself in the courtroom, “craftiness” was not there. When he was shipwrecked on a barbarous island, “craftiness” was not there. Whether abounding or suffering need, he never resorted to “craftiness.”

HANDLING THE WORD OF GOD DECEITFULLY

“^{2c} **nor handling the word of God deceitfully . . .**” Other versions read, “adulterating the Word of God,”^{NASB} “distort the Word of God,”^{NIV} “falsify God’s Word,”^{NRSV} “tamper with God’s Word,”^{RSV} “making use of the Word of God with deceit,”^{BBE} “deceitfully using the Word of God,”^{YLT} “We never try to get anyone to believe that the Bible teaches what it doesn’t,”^{LIVING} “playing around

individual who preaches “another Gospel” is “cursed.” As it is written, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8-9). Other versions read, “let him be eternally

mentioning of the many gospels that are extant the church world. There is the gospel of wealth, the gospel of health, the gospel of the Holy Spirit, the gospel of the church, and the gospel of marriage and the family. There is a young people’s gospel, a gospel for singles, and a gospel for senior citizens. Some people have a Sabbath gospel, and other a sort of do-it-yourself gospel of justification by works. There is even a gospel of the secret rapture, and of deliverance from the Antichrist and the beast.

In all of these meretricious gospels, the word of God is distorted so that it appears to support what is said. **However, an erroneous gospel cannot be supported by the truth of God.** That is why the Word must be twisted or wrested to support these favored doctrines of men.

God’s Word is corrupted, perverted, or falsified, when it is presented so as to produce the wrong conclusion. This is done when an erroneous emphasis is embraced, or improper values are assigned to various Scriptural expressions.

NOT HANDLING DECEITFULLY

Paul affirms he does not handle the Word of God “deceitfully.” That is, he does not “adulterate”^{NASB} it, or **mix it with human notions.** He does not “distort”^{NIV} the Word, so that it sounds like it is saying what men want it to say. He does not “tamper”^{RSV} with the Word of God, tinkering with it like a child with a puzzle – trying to put it together so that it will make sense to the flesh. He does not “play around”^{IE} with the message of God, as though it was a kind of mental play-dough to be used for the amusement of men.

God’s Word is corrupted, perverted, or falsified, when it is

with God’s message or by using it the wrong way,”^{IE} “pervert God’s Word,”^{IE} and “adulterate or handle dishonestly the Word of God.”^{AMPLIFIED}

DISTINGUISHING HIMSELF

Paul is distinguishing himself from anyone and everyone whose message is declared independently of personal faith, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Such messages are spurious, coming from men, and not from God. They have no power, and lead men to destruction. The seriousness of the situation is seen in the fact that the

condemned,”^{NIV} “let him be anathema,”^{ASV} “let there be a curse on him,”^{BBE} “is under God’s curse,”^{NJB} “let God’s curse call upon that person,”^{NLT} “anathema let him be,”^{YLT} “let that person be condemned,”^{IE} and “let him be accursed (anathema, devoted to destruction, doomed to eternal punishment)!”^{AMPLIFIED}

It is not an innocent thing to preach “another Gospel.” **Actually, there is a sense in which one’s eternal destiny will be determined by WHAT he preaches – by the fundamental message he delivers or emphasizes.** Time forbids the

presented so as to produce the wrong conclusion. This is done when an erroneous emphasis is embraced, or improper values are assigned to various Scriptural expressions. If, for example, the words of Solomon are addressed as though they had equal weight with the words of Jesus, the Word God has been distorted. If a text like *“the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just”* (Prov 13:22) is presented as though that is gospel to be preached, the Scriptures have been wrested. If the promises given to Israel, contingent upon the perfect obedience of the people (Deut 28:1-13) are declared as though they are what Jesus came to bring, the Word of God has been used deceitfully. If a person refers to John’s desire for Gaius, that he would *“prosper and be in good health”* (2 John 1:3), affirming that this is the heart of what God wants for us, the Word of God has been adulterated.

The Transgression of the Modern Church

The transgression of the modern church is summarized in its emphasis. It is establishing fundamental objectives that do not require Jesus living within, or the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. A gospel has been fabricated that actually appeals to those who are walking in the flesh and in the vanity of their minds. **However, the Gospel of Christ is tailored to sound good to those who know they are sinners, and are seeking to gain the approval of God.** It simply does not sound good to anyone else.

A church that caters to the world, and to the carnally minded **must** distort the Word of God if they are going to appeal to it for support. Somehow, they must represent God as saying what **they** saying, and emphasizing what they are emphasize. Armed with their own carnal minds, a hoard of false prophets has descended upon the church pointing to what they say is the main thing. For some

it is the Sabbath day. For others, it is the rapture. Still others see it as, what they call, “winning souls.” Some have chosen to emphasis, what they call, “planting churches.” Of course, there are emphases like making solid homes, taking the youth off of the street, feeding the poor of the city, and building Christian colleges.

It is not that all of these things are wrong. **Rather, it is that they are wrong as an emphasis.** The person embracing such accentuations is forced to read the Scriptures with colored glasses – glasses that filter out what God has underlined.

THE OPPOSITE OF HANDLING THE WORD OF GOD ARIGHT

In saying he does not handle *“the Word of God deceitfully,”* Paul is referring to a use of the Word that is precisely

truth with precision,”^{ISV} and *“correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

In our time, there is an enormous abuse of the word of God. It is being handled *“deceitfully.”* If this was not so, Christendom would not be so significantly divided. The Word of God does not make “Baptists,” or “Catholics,” or “Charismatics,” or “Christian Church” people. **No person of sound mind will say that the Word of God has been given to enhance the membership of a special denomination or church group.** Yet, it is being handled in just that way – and on a regular and ongoing basis.

Without hesitation, and with a pure heart, Paul declares this is not the

No person of sound mind will say that the Word of God has been given to enhance the membership of a special denomination or church group. Yet, it is being handled in just that way – and on a regular and ongoing basis.

the opposite of its correct use. The correct use is spelled out to young Timothy. *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim 2:15).

To *“rightly divide the word of truth”* is to **dispense it properly**, not distorting it. Other versions read, *“handling accurately the word of truth,”*^{NASB} *“correctly handles the word of truth,”*^{NASB} *“rightly explaining the word of truth,”*^{NIV} *“giving the true word in the right way,”*^{NRSV} *“imparting the word of truth without deviation,”*^{NAB} *“Know what His word says and means,”*^{LIVING} *“Interpret the message of truth in the proper way,”*^{IE} *“straightforward dealing with the word of truth,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“handling the word of*

manner in which he used God’s Word. **He made no attempt to make it serve any other purpose than that of God.** He so declared it that the Son of God stood out above all else. He presented a Gospel that, if intently considered, would shed light on the entirety of life, and even transform the one beholding its glory.

At some point, the word of God must be seen correctly – what is said must be understood, and reliance on other men must be brought to a close. **Men can progress no further than the circumference of their faith** – and faith cannot be obtained or nurtured by the wisdom of men. It is time for the church to put academics where they belong – **behind** the Word of God and its emphasis of the Lord Jesus Christ.

MANIFESTATION OF THE TRUTH

“^{2d} . . . but by manifestation of the truth . . .”

What is the opposite of *“handling the Word of God deceitfully?”* Paul will

point out two things – one is objective (“truth”), and the other is subject

(“manifestation”). He will confirm that merely quoting Scripture is not enough. The devil can do that (Matt 4:6). The Ethiopian eunuch knew precisely what a certain text in Isaiah said, but he did not know what it meant (Acts 8:31). When the Word of God is not used deceitfully, or is “*handled aright*,” the message God is delivering will be perceived.

MANIFESTATION

Other versions read “*setting forth . . . plainly*,”^{NIV} “*the open statement of*”^{NRSV} “*but by the revelation of*,”^{BBE} “*declaration of*,”^{GENEVA} “*we tell*,”^{NLT} “*we make . . . plain*,”^{IE} “*a full clear statement*,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*clear statements of*,”^{ISV} “*by clear and candid statements of*”^{WILLIAMS} “*setting forth . . . openly*,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “*we state . . . openly (clearly and candidly)*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “*manifestation*” is a good word, even though modern culture has chosen not to use it. Although a fifteenth century word, it is still listed as proper English. Its modern meaning is, “the act, process, or an instance of manifesting b: (1) something that manifests or is manifest (2) a perceptible, outward, or visible expression c: one of the forms in which an individual is manifested.”^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} The modern English word “*manifest*” has the meaning, “easily understood or recognized by the mind.”^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

The Greek word from which

economy of the kingdom of Christ. **It is an economy of understanding, comprehension, and discernment.** Ignorance has no place in this kingdom – in fact we have been delivered from ignorance – saved from it because of its alienating effects (Eph 4:18).

When Paul received his commission from Jesus, he was told to “*open men’s eyes*” (Acts 26:18). In strict accord with that commission, he confessed he had been given grace to “*make all men see*” (Eph 3:9). This is in invariant accord with Christ’s own words: “*What I tell, you in darkness, that speak in the light*” (Matt 10:27).

In his teaching to the churches, Paul made known the role of understanding – or experiencing manifestation. He affirmed this was the appointed purpose to be realized in growth: “*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*” (Eph 3:19). Persuaded of this essentiality in his heart, Paul prayed for the churches: “*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation*

cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9).

In order for preaching to be effective and fruitful, it must be married to “manifestation.” The one who is preaching must be able to see, and the ones who believe must also come to see. If this does not occur, no personal; benefits will be realized.

Tragically there are some who have heard preaching for years, and still cannot see! Some of these individuals have faithfully imbibed the words addressed to them, yet are abysmally ignorant of the fundamental realities proclaimed in the Gospel. **They do not see the centrality of Christ Jesus, and thus are easily diverted to other things.** They have little or no understanding of the New Covenant, and thus live far beneath the privileges vouchsafed to them in Christ. This is not an unusual circumstance, but is rather quite common.

My Own Experience

From person experience, and after preaching in hundreds of churches over the last fifty-two years, I can testify to the general state of spiritual ignorance that exists in churches across the land. I have made it my personal aim to wage war against this condition by the “*manifestation*” of the truth. I have found that this is not a popular approach. However, I have also found that those who focus on **what is manifested** invariably are brought to higher and more productive vistas of the truth of God.

THE TRUTH

Other versions read “*what is true*.”^{BBE}

The apostle is careful to tell us what is being “*manifested*.” It is “*the truth*.” Mind you, it is not what men think is “*the truth*,” but is “*the truth itself*.”

Years ago, when Jesus was standing before a disinterested Pilate, the governor mockingly asked Jesus, “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38). I find that this question is still being asked – even in the professed church. In some way many are

In order for preaching to be effective and fruitful, it must be married to “manifestation.” The one who is preaching must be able to see, and the ones who believe must also come to see. If this does not occur

“*manifestation*” is translated is φανερώσει (fan-er-o-sei). Its lexical meaning is, “plainly, clearly, openly,”^{THAYER} “an action making public, clear announcement, disclosure, evidencing, making known, revelation,”^{FRIBERG} “bringing to light, full disclosure,”^{UBS} “to cause something to be fully known by revealing clearly and in some detail – ‘to make known, to make plain, to reveal, to bring to light, to disclose, revelation,”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “conspicuous.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Here is a word that speaks of the

in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Eph 1:17-19).

Again he prayed, “*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not*

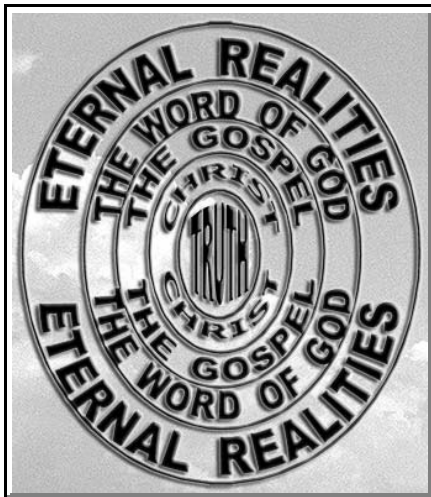
hearing the question, “Well, just what is *‘the truth?’*”

In Scripture, *“truth”* is always used in the singular, **never** the plural. We **never** read of “a truth,” “some truth,” “all truth,” “a little truth,” or “a lot of truth.”

“Truth” is said to belong to God. It is referred to as *“His truth”* (Gen 24:27; Psa 57:3; 91:4; 96:13; 98:3; 100:5), *“the truth of God”* (Rom 1:25; 3:7; 15:8), and *“the truth of the Lord”* (Psa 117:2).

From the standpoint of language itself, *“truth”* is what is real, as opposed to a fable or some form of delusion. It is also factual in all its details, without embellishment or enhancement. Additionally, as used in Scripture, *“truth”* is upright, and in strict consonance with God’s character and purpose.

Truth is multifaceted, and does not consist of a single fact, or reality. It is a composite of verities that are interrelated, fitting together and complementing one another. *“Truth”* is to *“thought”* what the creation is to science. It is a vast array of diverse and complex components that work together to make known the Person and purpose of God Almighty.



A Broad Definition of Truth

In its broadest definition, as used in Scripture, *“truth”* is **eternal realities** – things that really are. These things are not influenced by time or men, but are themselves the things that influence – the things that shape men’s character.

In a more compressed sense, *“truth”* refers to realities made known through and in **the Word of God** – the Scriptures.

In an even more condensed form, the *“truth”* is **the Gospel of Jesus Christ**, which affirms the particular realities that bear upon the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The most concise definition of “truth” is the Lord Jesus Himself. As the *“express Image of God”* (Heb 1:3), and

Paul is saying that he has devoted himself to making God’s purpose clear as it has been revealed in Christ Jesus, and declared through the Gospel. He has clarified what God has accomplished in Christ and why He has done so.

the One in whom *“all the fulness of the Godhead”* dwells “bodily” (Col 1:19; 2:9), Jesus Christ, as He Himself affirmed, *“the Truth”* (John 14:6).

Generally speaking, to *“manifest”* the truth is to make eternal realities perceptible to the hearts and minds of men. More precisely, it is to make the Word of God clear. Even more precisely, it is to bring the Gospel of Christ within the grasp of faith – to cause Jesus Christ, both His Person and His accomplishments, to be more clearly understood.

IN THIS TEXT

As used in our text, *“truth”* refers to the Gospel of Christ, which is the most concise, yet extensive, representation of reality. **Since Jesus Himself is “the truth”** (John 14:6), **the message that declares and expounds Him is the most exact presentation of the truth.** Thus we read of *“the truth of Christ”* (2 Cor 11:10) and *“the truth of the Gospel”* (Gal 2:5,14; Col 1:5). That is why Paul, in his calling from Jesus, was *“separated unto the Gospel”* (Rom 1:1).

Paul is saying that he has devoted himself to making God’s purpose clear as it has been revealed in Christ Jesus, and declared

through the Gospel. He has clarified what God has accomplished in Christ and why He has done so. In that manifestation man’s need for such a salvation was made clear, as well as the means of appropriating it. What is intended to be achieved in salvation was also elucidated, as well as how it would take place.

Paul did not disguise the Gospel, or attempt to tailor it for the disinterested. He did not put a veil over it so that it was difficult to understand,

hiding it beneath the facade of Greek, culture, history, and the likes. **As an artist puts his paintings on display, so that all can see, so Paul openly displayed the Gospel so that men could behold its many splendors, and advantage from the truth.**

The fact that such things are not commonly known among professing believers confirms that *“another gospel”* has too often been preached. It is time for the people who wear the name of Jesus to declare war upon the ignorance of God among its members. Such ignorance was a shame in the first century, and it is even more so now (1 Cor 15:34). **In the church, let us have done with preachers, teachers, literature, and other media that leaves people puzzled about the very things God is making known in His Son.** The ignorance of God and the things of God must be expelled from the church!

This is *“the day of salvation”* in which a *“great light”* has shined into the dark regions of this world. It is no longer excusable for people to continue sitting in gross darkness – particularly in the church. In Christ we are **not** children of the night, but of the day (1 Thess 5:5). Darkness is out of place!

COMMENDING OURSELVES TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE

“^{2e} . . . commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

Paul did not fulfill his ministry in an effort to “please men.” As he wrote to the Galatians, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10). However, he had no compunctions in relying upon men of good conscience to conclude that his word had come from God. **Wherever honest men were subjected to his word, he knew they would acknowledge that Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Gospel, was the focus of his message.**

Paul lived so as not to contradict the Gospel, so that he might “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Tit 2:10). As Peter would say, he was “holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Pet 1:15), living “in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Pet 3:11). He could openly declare, “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts 20:33). He did not speak of being delivered from this present evil world (Gal 1:4), then settle down in it as though it was the main place.

To commend oneself is to say, “Look at my life. Look where I have placed my priorities, see how I live. Behold how my life is an open

tells them. But it is a guiding principle of life, and no man is to live in contradiction of the testimony of the conscience (1 Cor 8:7,10,12; 10:25-29). A “good conscience” is the objective God’s “commandment,” and it is never to be violated (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 1:5,19; Heb 13:18; 1 Pet 3:6).

Paul preached a Gospel that did not clash with the sense of right and wrong that has been Divinely placed in every man. As it is said of the Gentiles, who did not know God, “Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another**” (Rom 2:15). **There is nothing in the Gospel of Christ that will chaff against a good conscience.** Only a conscience that has been “seared with a hot iron” is not touched by the Gospel. That is a conscience that has been deadened – generally by corrupt religion. Thus, when speaking of a departure from the faith, Paul wrote, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared with a hot iron**” (1 Tim 4:2). But for those with a conscience that sends a clear signal of right and wrong, Paul did not hesitate to commend himself to them.

It is a stroke of spiritual genius to so appeal to the human conscience! It is the kind of thing Paul was speaking of when he wrote, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, **and approved of men**” (Rom 14:17-18). Of course, this is something that an opportunist or charlatan cannot do. Those who live in the grip of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, cannot commend themselves “to every man’s conscience.”

IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

“ . . . in the sight of God.” Other versions read, “before God,”^{IE} “in the presence of God,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “in the

All who wear the name of Jesus – especially those who preach and teach – are to strive to commend themselves in such a manner. They are to rid themselves of all things that detract from the Gospel, and cause men to cease to think of Jesus!

COMMENDING OURSELVES

“ . . . commending ourselves . . . ” Other versions read, “we approve ourselves,”^{GENEVA} *“presenting ourselves,”*^{LIVING} *“to commend ourselves,”*^{IE} *“And so we commend ourselves.”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“And so we commend ourselves.”*^{WEYMOUTH}

Paul commended himself, not by words, but by a godly manner of life. **No person should endeavor to preach the Gospel who has not himself been changed by its glory!** Such men, regardless who they may be, are like the Pharisees of old who, after they had spoken the Law, “devoured widows houses” (Matt 23:14). Jesus described them as sitting in Moses’ seat, authorities on the intricacies of the Law. Yet, Jesus declared, “they say and do not” (Matt 23:3). Thus, to men of understanding, the Pharisees were really no different than those they endeavored to teach, even though they thought themselves unique.

commentary on the effectiveness of the Gospel of Christ.” **All who wear the name of Jesus – especially those who preach and teach – are to strive to commend themselves in such a manner.** They are to rid themselves of all things that detract from the Gospel, and cause men to cease to think of Jesus!

TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE

“ . . . to every man’s conscience.” Other versions read, “every man’s sense of right and wrong,”^{BBE} *“to everyone’s conscience,”*^{GENEVA} *“and all who are honest know that,”*^{NLT} and *“as all who know us will agree.”*^{LIVING}

The conscience is that God-given faculty whereby men distinguish between right and wrong, and truth and error. **It is more intuitive than cognitive, lending itself to assurance and confidence.** Men cannot always explain the conscience, or put into words what it

sight and presence of God.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The meaning here is that Paul lived as though the eye of the Lord was continually upon him. **That, of course, is the real situation with everyone.** As it is written, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13). **That is simply the way it is, and no person is exempt from continual Divine assessment.** However, when the individual is keenly

aware of this, and conducts his life in view of this stark reality, there is no question as to how he will live.

In order for lives to be lived in sin, God must be forgotten. Such a person must blot from his thinking that the eyes of the Lord are upon him, and that everything he thinks, says, and does, are “naked and opened unto Him with whom we have to do.” No person can give himself to sin while considering this.

A person who is acutely conscious

of God will live toward Him – to please Him. He will speak of things pertaining to life and godliness, and make much of Jesus. Such a person will be more prone to talk about heaven than earth, and of Jesus than men. A person who can commend himself to every man’s conscience has no fear of people seeing his life as though it was being lived for self. It will be apparent to all men of “good conscience” that his life is driven by realities outside of himself – things having to do with God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A HIDDEN GOSPEL

“^{3a} **But if our gospel be hid.**”

Paul knows that every person will not stand up and shout of the truthfulness of his message. **There will be people who can make no sense out of what he preaches.** He will make no endeavor to pull the Gospel into the quagmire of sin in order to make it more palatable for those who wallow in iniquity. Rather, he will acknowledge their real situation – which is not one to be envied. As is characteristic of anyone speaking the truth, Paul will speak with candor.

OUR GOSPEL

Other versions read, “But even if our Gospel,”^{NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV} “If the Good News we preach,”^{NLT} “If also our good,”^{YLT} “If our Gospel,”^{IE} “If, however, the meaning of our Good News,”^{WEYMOUTH} “But even if my Gospel,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “But even if our Gospel (the glad tidings).”^{AMPLIFIED}

By saying “our Gospel,” Paul is making no claim to having originated the message he proclaims. **It is not his by ownership, but by stewardship.** He speaks as a “faithful and wise steward” who is the custodian of his Master’s goods (Lk 12:42).

Paul refers to “my Gospel” (Rom 2:16,25; 2 Tim 2:8) and “our Gospel” (2 Cor 4:3; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Thess 2:14). **He means more than “the Gospel that I preach.” This is rather the Gospel**

that he had been GIVEN to preach. It was in his hands because Jesus put it there, and he was responsible for its proclamation. This circumstance is what Paul referred to when he wrote to the Corinthians, “a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me” (1 Cor 9:17). That is, he had been “entrusted with a

(obscured and covered up with a veil that hinders the knowledge of God).”^{AMPLIFIED}

There is a condition appropriately described as the Gospel being hidden, veiled, obscured, and covered up. This is not a condition created by Paul himself, for he

Paul knows that every person will not stand up and shout of the truthfulness of his message. There will be people who can make no sense out of what he preaches. He will make no endeavor to pull the Gospel into the quagmire of sin in order to make it more palatable for those who wallow in iniquity.

stewardship.”^{NKJV} Paul described his “Gospel” as “that which I also **received**” (1 Cor 15:3).

Now Paul speaks of the effect of the Gospel given to him, which he faithfully declared, **upon a certain class of people.**

BE HID

Other versions read, “is veiled,”^{NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV} “is veiled to anyone,”^{NLT} “is covered,”^{IE} “has been veiled,”^{WEYMOUTH} “too, is ‘veiled,’”^{MONTGOMERY} “is covered up at all,”^{WILLIAMS} and “also be hidden

preached without a veil. There was nothing inherent in his preaching that caused the Gospel to be “hid.”

We will find that this is a circumstance that cannot be remedied by men. A simplified translation will not resolve this situation. Extensive explanation will not remove it. Parables, stories, and illustrations will not cause this condition to disappear. That is why the condition itself will be explained, and **no attempt will be made to resolve it.** There are some problems that are not intended to be resolved.

In this text, what is “hid” cannot be understood or comprehended. **From the highest perspective, this is actually something that God does.** Jesus once thanked God for this circumstance: “*I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because **Thou hast hid these things** from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*” (Matt 11:25). This hiding is what makes “*the preaching of the cross*” “*foolishness*” to certain people (1 Cor 1:18). It simply speaks of things they are incapable of understanding.

Isaiah described this condition in most arresting words: “*They have not known nor understood: for **He hath shut***

their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand” (Isa 44:18). In Isaiah’s day, this judgment was brought about by the very words that Isaiah preached: “*And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and **shut their eyes**; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed*” (Isa 6:9-10). Again we read, “*For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath **closed your eyes**: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath He covered*” (Isa 29:10).

There is a spiritual condition in which the liberating truth of the Gospel is hidden, and cannot be comprehended. This is a condition in which no value is placed upon the Gospel, and it is perceived as irrelevant and inconsequential. As the prophets and Jesus have described this from the highest perspective, now Paul will show us HOW the Lord shut their eyes – the means by which men were rendered blind to the things of God. **What is now described is to be understood as taking place under the undisputable government of God.** Nothing occurs in heaven or earth that is not under Divine administration. That is precisely Paul speaks with such a note of finality.

HIDDEN TO THEM THAT ARE LOST

“^{3b} . . . **it is hid to them that are lost.**”

What is now affirmed will jar upon the **thinking of the simple soul.** The Spirit will move Paul to identify precisely who it is that cannot understand – those to whom the Gospel is hidden.

IT IS HID

Other versions read, “it is veiled,” NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV “*it is veiled only*,”^{ESV} “*it is so*,”^{NJB} “*it is hidden from*,”^{LIVING} “*it is covered*,”^{IE} “*the veil has been on the hearts*,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*it is hidden [only]*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

There is a category of people whom God will not allow to see the

assessment caused the people to go away. “*And when they agreed not among themselves, **they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them***” (Acts 28:25-27).

In view of this statement, perhaps it is not precisely true that “God wants

state the case. It is also true that God is “*not willing that any should perish, **but that all should come to repentance***” (2 Pet 3:9). That also differs from the representations of many.

There is a category of people of whom it is written, “*And for this cause **God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness***” (2 Thess 2:12). These are the kind of people to whom the Gospel “**IS hid.**” These are the people who “*cannot see,*” “*cannot understand,*” and “*cannot believe*” (Isa 44:18; John 12:39).

TO THEM THAT ARE LOST

Other versions read, “*those who are perishing,*”^{NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV} “*in them that perish,*”^{ASV} “*those who are on their way to destruction,*”^{BBE} “*It is a sign that they are perishing,*”^{NLT} “*in those perishing,*”^{YLT} “*the one who is on the road to eternal death,*”^{LIVING} “*of those who are on the way to perdition,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*to those who are dying,*”^{ISV} “*it is among those who are on the way to perish,*” and “*to those who are spiritually dying and veiled [only] to those who are lost.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

There is a sense in which all unregenerate men “*are lost*” (Lk 19:10) – “*having no hope and without God in the*

What is now affirmed will jar upon the thinking of the simple soul. The Spirit will move Paul to identify precisely who it is that cannot understand – those to whom the Gospel is hidden.

truth. It is “*hidden from them.*”^{LIVING} Paul once preached to this kind of people, and perceived the situation. He correlated what he was experiencing with the word of Isaiah. The Scriptures affirmed that his

everyone to be saved.” That statement is too general. It is true that God “*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:4) – but that is not generally how men

world” (Eph 2:12). However, this is not how the word “lost” is used in this text. It should be obvious that this is not the general category of those who are “without Christ” (Eph 2:12a). **Rather, these are people who have been subjected to the Gospel, yet see no sense in, or need of, it.**

Technically, the Jews who heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost were “lost” – but not in the sense of this text, for the Gospel was not hidden from them. Rather, they came to see the truth of it. The same may be said of the Ethiopian eunuch, Lydia, and the Philippian jailor. **This is not speaking of that kind of lostness.** Paul is speaking of a people who, after hearing the Gospel, prefer to keep their own lives, and thus are destined to lose them. As Jesus said, **“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal”** (John 12:25). **Those who love their own lives, even though the sound of the Gospel has fallen on their ears, are those who “are lost.”**

Here, the word “lost” means more than cannot find the way. Here the word means “lost,” like dross is lost when the pot of silver is skimmed (Ezek 22:19). It is “lost,” like the chaff is lost when the threshing floor is cleared (Matt 3:12).

The word “loss” comes from the Greek word ἀπολλυμένοις (a-pol-lumen-ois). Lexically, the word means “to destroy, to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to, ruin,” THAYER “destroy, bring to nothing . . . be ruined,” FRIBERG “be lost, perish, be ruined,” UBS “to destroy or to cause destruction of persons . . . to ruin, to destroy, destruction,” LOUW-NIDA and “to destroy utterly, kill, slay, demolish, waste . . . to lose utterly.” LIDDELL-SCOTT Thus several versions read with great strength: “are perishing,” NKJV “on their way to destruction,” BBE “on the road to eternal death,” LIVING and “on the way to perish.” AMPLIFIED

This condition parallels one of which Jesus spoke – a condition in which men **do not believe the Gospel that has been declared to them:** “he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk 16:16); “he that believeth not is

condemned already” (John 3:18); “he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

Those who “are lost” are progressing to condemnation – it is only a matter of time until the verdict will be finalized. An institutionalized church has taught men to be patient with those who do not believe. Men are taught to dignify doubt and view unbelief as a mere delay, while men sort out the truth to their own satisfaction. But no such representation can be found in the Word of God. When Paul confronted some Jews who refused to believe, choosing rather to contradict and blaspheme, he said to them, “was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). It is serious when men do not believe, refusing to turn to the Lord! Such people “ARE perishing,” and “condemned already.” This accounts for them not being able to comprehend the Gospel.

THE GOD OF THIS WORLD BLINDS MINDS

“^{4a} In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not . . .”

There is a body of people among whom Satan can more easily work – a people whom he is given license to “blind.” This is not arbitrary, nor is it a sort of fatalism that cannot be avoided. **Remember, Paul is describing who it really is that does not believe the Gospel.** He is showing who **cannot** see the truth of the Gospel, and **why** they cannot see it. The root of this whole situation is the fact that they “believe not.” This is why they “cannot see.” It is also why the words that follow are being fulfilled in them. The strength of this statement is remarkable, and cannot be denied.

When I read these words I find myself having the same experience as John the beloved: “And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it

up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter” (Rev 10:10). He saw the implications of what had been revealed to him by Jesus. He was given to see multitudes of religious people who had absolutely missed the point, were deluded, and **would not** dwell forever in the house of the Lord. No person who lives by faith can behold such awful circumstances without being touched by them. Be clear, we are speaking of people who have been subjected to the Gospel, yet have chosen **not** to believe it.

IN WHOM

“In whom . . .” Other versions read, “whose minds,” NKJV “in whose case,” NASB “in their case,” NRSV “Because,” BBE “those people,” IE and “among them.” MONTGOMERY

Paul is speaking of a **class** of people – all of them are characterized by the same trait – they “believe not,” and therefore the glorious Gospel, designed to be comprehended, is hidden to them.

These are the people who are not

Remember, Paul is describing who it really is that does not believe the Gospel. He is showing who cannot see the truth of the Gospel, and why they cannot see it. The root of this whole situation is the fact that they “believe not.” This

being “*changed from glory to glory.*” **That, in fact, is how we know these people do not believe, and that the Gospel is hidden to them.** Everyone who gazes at the glory of the Gospel (“*we ALL*”) is changed. Paul explains more fully why such people are “*lost*” – perishing, with the wrath of God abiding on them.

THE GOD OF THIS WORLD

“... *the god of this world* ...”

Other versions read, “*the god of this age,*”^{NKJV/NIV} “*the god of this evil world,*”^{NLT} and “*the god of this present age.*”^{WEYMOUTH}

This is the only place in Scripture that Satan is referred to as “*the god*” (ὁ θεός). His domain is “*this world*” – that is, **this is the area in which he works his will.**

Accenting the liability of being in

thus separating them from God.

- ☛ “*Spiritual wickedness in high places*” – These are lofty spirits who promote wickedness in the earth – like the “*prince of Persia*” and “*the prince of Grecia*” (Dan 10:20).

The “*god of this world*” employs these dark powers to execute his purpose. The whole conglomerate is referred to as “*the power of darkness*” (Lk 22:53). In salvation, we are said to have been “*delivered from the power of darkness*” (Col 1:13). **However, that deliverance can only be realized by believing and obeying the Gospel** (2 Thess 1:8; 1 Pet 4:17).

This World

Notice the association of the devil with “*this world.*” He is “*the god of this world*” (2 Cor 4:4), “*the prince of this*

nor since. Ordinary men were willing to settle for far less.

Satan has nothing to offer outside of this world. He cannot offer anything eternal – satisfaction and pleasure included. It should be obvious that the more a person is enamored of this world, the more that individual comes under the power of the wicked one.

HATH BLINDED THE MINDS

“... *hath blinded the minds* ...”

Other versions read, “*whose minds* ... *has blinded,*”^{NKJV} “*has made blind the minds,*”^{BBE} “*has blinded the thoughts,*”^{DARBY} “*did blind the minds,*”^{YLT} “*has made them blind, unable to see,*”^{LIVING} “*has blinded the eyes,*”^{WILLIAMS} and “*has blinded the understanding.*”^{MONTGOMERY}

The minds of men can be rendered sterile so far as Kingdom matters are concerned. They can be so blinded that they can make no sense out of the glorious Gospel – they can behold nothing in it that seems important and attainable. Here is something that Satan does, and heaven does not stop him from doing it.

The prophet Isaiah said that this was something that God did: “*He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart*” (John 12:40). This is a work that is carried out by Satan under the auspices of the Lord Jesus. He is, at it were, given license to render certain people incapable of seeing the truth.

Jesus described this process even more precisely. He stated that when the Word of God is heard, yet not understood, “*then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart*” (Matt 13:19). Mark records, “*Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts*” (Mark 4:15). Luke records, “*then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved*” (Luke 8:12).

It is not that these people make every effort to comprehend the Gospel, yet are not able to do so. **Rather, it is that they see no Gospel at all –**

It is not that these people make every effort to comprehend the Gospel, yet are not able to do so. Rather, it is that they see no Gospel at all – nothing worthy of their attention. They are blinded to the glory that draws and transforms men.

this world, Satan is also referred to as “*the prince of this world*” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Because he has a vast militia of powerful spirits, he is also called “*the prince of the power of the air*” (Eph 2:2). He marshals these powers in fulfilling his diabolical purpose in the world. “*The power of the air*” is broken down into at least four groups (Eph 6:12).

- ☛ “*Principalities*” – first in rank, leaders, magistrates.
- ☛ “*Powers*” – those possessing powers of influence, and license to do their will.
- ☛ “*The rulers of the darkness of this world*” – powerful rulers who spread ignorance throughout the world, presiding over the regions of ignorance and sin. They use wicked means to rivet people to this world,

world,” (John 16:11), and leads men to walk “*according to the course of this world*” (Eph 2:2).

When the devil tempted Jesus prior to His baptism, he directed the Lord’s attention to the kingdoms of this world. “*And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine*” (Luke 4:5-7). **All of this world’s kingdoms, in all of their glory, in a moment of time!** Satan said they had all been delivered to him, and that he was at liberty to give them to whoever he willed. Jesus did not contest his claim. **So far as we know, the devil never made an offer like this before**

nothing worthy of their attention. They are blinded to the glory that draws and transforms men. Therefore, they simply occupy themselves with other things, treating the Gospel as if it did not exist at all. Such responses are sure evidence that the devil has been at work.

OF THEM WHICH BELIEVE NOT

“ . . . of them which believe not...”

Other versions read, “*who do not believe,*”^{NKJV} “*of the unbelieving,*”^{NASB} “*of unbelievers,*”^{NIV} “*of the unbelievers,*”^{NRSV} “*They don’t believe because,*”^{IE} and “*their unbelieving minds.*”^{WEYMOUTH}

As soon as an individual falls into the category of “*which believe not,*” he is no longer shielded from the devil. No effort to “*resist the devil*” is even possible where faith, or believing, is found. The ONLY way Satan can be resisted is through faith. As it is written, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith . . .*” (1 Pet 5:8-9). Where men do not persist in believing, spiritual blindness is inevitable.

It should be apparent that the situation being described is most serious. Here are some things to be considered.

- The essential writing involved in this covenant is **upon the heart**, and by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:3).
- The “*ministers*” of the New Covenant have been **made “able”** by God Himself (2 Cor 3:5-6).
- “*Life*” is **the standard**, or norm, of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:6).
- The New Covenant **is** the “*ministration of righteousness,*” and exceeds in glory (2 Cor 3:9).

- The veil of ignorance **is** removed in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 3:14,16).
- The Holy Spirit **brings** liberty wherever He is ministering (2 Cor 3:17).
- Progressive change **is** realized by those who behold the glory of the Lord as perceived in the Gospel (2 Cor 3:18).

With these things in mind, consider the impact of unbelief and its consequent blindness. **All hope of the required “change” is removed** – for that change is produced by gazing steadfastly at the glory of Jesus. **No**

believe the record God has given of His Son has made “*Him a liar*” (1 John 5:10). God is depicted as swearing that those who **do not believe** will “*not enter into His rest*” (Heb 3:18). Projecting us to the consummation of all things, it is written that “*all might be damned who believed not the truth*” (2 Thess 2:12). This is the ultimate sin – the sin of not believing. It is the sin of which the Holy Spirit convinces people – i.e. “*of sin, because they believe not on me*” (John 16:11).

I hardly see how any condition can be more serious than that of unbelief – of **not** believing what God has said, and thus becoming incapable of seeing or responding to the Gospel. This is why

I hardly see how any condition can be more serious than that of unbelief – of not believing what God has said, and thus becoming incapable of seeing or responding to the Gospel. This is why Satan is at liberty to blind such people, causing them to be incapable of seeing the truth of Christ.

person will be “*changed into the same image*” – the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29) – who does not believe. **Thus, the entire work of salvation is aborted, for that is what salvation does – conform us to the image of God’s Son.**

Of old time, during the Old Covenant era, it is said that God “*destroyed them that believed not*” – even though they were once “*saved*” out of the land of Egypt (Jude 1:5). Jude sites this as pertinent to the church. John affirms that the person who **does not**

Satan is at liberty to blind such people, causing them to be incapable of seeing the truth of Christ.

The clear implication of this teaching is that if there is no change in a person, it is because they are not believing. If they are not believing, it is because they do not understand. If they do not understand, it is because their minds have been blinded by the god of this world. The Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation, has been hidden to them, and they are lost, or perishing!

THE LIGHT OF THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

“^{4b} . . . lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

It may appear as though the observations I have made are unusually strong. **Actually, however, they have probably not been strong enough.**

Paul will now confirm what is really at stake when a person is blinded to the truth of the Gospel. Here are the results of not being “*changed into the same*

image.”

LEST

“ . . . lest . . . ” Other versions read “that,”^{NASB} “so that they cannot see,”^{NIV} “to keep them from seeing,”^{NRSV} “so that they may not see,”^{NAB} “so they are unable to see,”^{NLT} “that there doth not,”^{YLT} “unable to see,”^{LIVING} “They cannot see,”^{IE} “so as to shut out,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “preventing them from seeing.”^{AMPLIFIED}

This word introduces the objective of blindness. **Here is what results from the inability to understand – when the glorious Gospel of Christ is hidden to men.** This is the inevitable result of not believing.

THE LIGHT OF THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST

“ . . . the light of the glorious

words “No man cometh to the Father but by me” (John 14:6). While these are certainly good and profitable words, it comes across to me that they are being handled much like a lifeless creed. Jesus being the way to God does **not** speak of a kind of lifeless formula by which we obtain Divine approval.

Notice the way in which the Gospel is mentioned – “**the glorious Gospel.**” This is the Gospel from which the glory of Christ shines forth – **the glory that transforms us from one stage of glory to another,** “even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18).

There is **only one Person** who shines forth from the Gospel – Jesus Christ. The glory belongs to Him. The message, through which that glory is beamed into the heart, is the Gospel. Other versions of Scripture are correct in

behold, and through which the Spirit changes us. As we behold this glory, the purpose is not to exploit it for personal advantage, or bring it to bear upon our earthly circumstances. Such a corrupted view will not “change” us from glory to increasing measures of glory. Jesus is not to be viewed as a means to obtaining our temporal needs. Such a view has no glory to it, because, by its very nature, it is a passing view that can last no longer than a lifetime.

The “change” wrought by the Spirit is an orientation for glory. It is not a change from sickness to health, or from poverty to wealth, or from a lack of success to success. **This is a change that involves becoming less like men and more like God.** It is a change that moves us away from this world and toward “*the world to come.*” This is all accomplished by “*the glory of Christ,*” which comes to us on the wings of the Gospel.

As we behold this glory, the purpose is not to exploit it for personal advantage, or bring it to bear upon our earthly circumstances. Such a corrupted view will not “change” us from glory to increasing measures of glory. Jesus is not to be viewed as a means to obtaining our temporal needs.

WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD

“ . . . who is the image of God . . . ” Other versions read, “who is the likeness of God,”^{RSV} “who is the exact likeness of God,”^{NLT} “who is God,”^{LIVING} and “Who is the Image and Likeness of God.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Jesus is our means of coming into acquaintance with God Himself. **This is something that must happen, for God will receive no one into His presence who is fundamentally unlike Him!** You should remember that Israel was faulted for not thinking like God or conducting themselves as He did (Isa 55:8-9). How serious is it for a person to be **unlike God?** In its essence, such a state is one of condemnation and cursing!

Therefore, when we read that Jesus is “*the image of God,*” we are reading of the likeness into which we are being “*changed.*” Jesus is not a mere likeness of God, but the “**express image of His Person**” (Heb 1:3). The “*fullness of the Godhead*” is found in Him (Col 1:19; 2:9). **There is nothing pertaining to God’s being or character that is not in Jesus. No essential quality of Deity is lacking in Him.**

SHOULD SHINE UNTO THEM

“ . . . should shine unto them.”

gospel of Christ . . .” Other versions read, “*the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ,*”^{NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV} “*the light of the good news of the glory of Christ,*”^{BBE} “*the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ,*”^{DARBY} “*the message we preach about the glory of Christ,*”^{NLT} “*the glorious light of the Gospel,*”^{LIVING} “*the glorious light of the good news of Christ,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*the sunshine of the gospel of the glorious Christ,*”^{MONTGOMERY} and “*the illuminating light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ (the Messiah).*”^{AMPLIFIED}

While much of the “Christian” world is covered with the black shroud of ignorance, this text unveils the tragedy of being in such a circumstance. **Let it be clear that God will save no one independently of Jesus – no one.** Today, we hear people spouting Christ’s

saying the Gospel is a message “*of the glory of Christ.*”^{NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV/BEE/DARBY/NLT/LIVING/AMPLIFIED} That is, it is a message of the risen, triumphant, exalted, enthroned, and empowered Christ. This is the glory to which Peter referred when he gave us the sum of the prophetic message: “*the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*” (1 Pet 1:11).

The “*good news*” of the Gospel is not so much about what Christ can do for you, but what He has done for God – providing a means for Him to be “*just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*” (Rom 3:26). It has more to do with who He is than how He can “answer all of your problems.” The theme of the Gospel is “*the glory of Christ!*”

This is the glory that we

Other versions read, “*should shine on them,*”^{NKJV} “*should not dawn upon them,*”^{ASV} “*might not be shining upon them,*”^{BBE} “*should not shine forth for them,*”^{DARBY} “*from dawning upon them,*”^{WILLIAMS} and “*preventing them from seeing.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

These Divine qualities shine out upon us through the “*glorious gospel.*” **Among other things, this confirms the Gospel is not rudimentary or elementary.** No person living in this world will ever be brought to a point where they grow beyond a need to hear and consider the Gospel of Christ. If the Gospel is the appointed means through which we are changed, we cannot grow beyond a need for it unless no further change is required.

This transforming “*shine*” or radiance is always emitting from the Gospel. **If a person is not effected by it, it is only because it is not shining upon THEM.** If it is not shining upon them, it is only because they are cannot see. If they cannot see, it is because Satan has blinded their minds. If Satan has blinded their minds, it is because they did not believe.

This is WHY people are not changed! It is why carnality is prominent in many. It is the cause for all moral lapses. It is at the root of spiritual

This is WHY people are not changed! It is why carnality is prominent in many. It is the cause for all moral lapses. It is at the root of spiritual obtuseness and slowness. Here is the cause of lukewarmness, disinterest, and spiritual retardation. It is why people lose their first love, tolerate false teaching, and do not find it in their heart to ingest the Word of God.

obtuseness and slowness. **Here is the cause of lukewarmness, disinterest, and spiritual retardation. It is why people lose their first love, tolerate false teaching, and do not find it in their heart to ingest the Word of God.** These conditions, although common within the nominal church, are not at all acceptable. They betray a condition of rebellion and anarchy against God. They reveal the presence of an “*evil heart of unbelief*” (Heb 3:12).

When the light of the “*glorious gospel of Christ*” does not shine upon a person, there is only one alternative. That is for the person to walk in the flesh – a condition of which it is written, “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God*” (Rom 8:7-

8). Here is what is said of the mind that is **not** changed by the transforming glory of Christ’s Gospel: “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (1 Cor 2:14). These are the people in whom Satan is at work, blinding their minds, and working in them at will. Not only are they **not** resisting the devil, they have no mind to do so, because the transforming and empowering light of the “*glorious gospel of Christ*” is not shining “*unto them.*” Even though the “*Sun of righteousness*” has risen to His zenith, He is not shining upon them. Even though the Gospel is unveiled and glows with celestial glory, these people cannot see it, nor do they even want to do so. There is no possible way to dignify such a condition with some carnal explanation!

NOT PREACHING SELF, BUT CHRIST

“^{5a} . . . for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord . . .”

In a merely creedal religion, a set of formal beliefs is constructed that tend to be an end of themselves. **No essential change can be produced by such an approach.** Such creeds also tend to degenerate and become very detailed, thus having no transforming value.

Religious men tend to justify themselves by saying “*We believe . . .*” To be sure, there are such statements in Scripture. However, they vastly differ from the way in which men speak in our time. Here are a few of those statements.

- ☛ “*And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*” (John 6:69).
- ☛ “*Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God*” (John 16:30).
- ☛ “*But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they*” (Acts 15:11).
- ☛ “*Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him*” (Rom 6:8).

These are all statements of perception and persuasion – not of creedal acceptance. They do not give the idea of embracing a kind of doctrinal system. They are rather like saying, “*We can see this clearly, and persuaded of its reality, rely upon it.*”

A more common saying that is used in regards to the commonality of faith is “*we know.*” This is an expression of faith in which real and effective understanding is acknowledged (Rom 3:19;7:14; 8:22,28; 1 Cor 8:1,4; 2 Cor 5:1; 1 Tim 1:8; 1 John 2:18; 3:2,14; 5:2,15,18,19,20). In all of these texts, the perception of the panorama of truth has persuaded the heart. **Knowing is more**

of a conclusion that is drawn than a recitation of a fact.

This is the kind of thing that is to be seen in this verse. Paul has perceived the nature and transforming power of the Gospel of Christ. He has a true understanding of the New Covenant, and of its more excellent and abiding glory. It is in view of these things that he now speaks of his manner of ministry. His ministry was not something that he did out of a sense of mere obligation. It was the result of the change that was being wrought in him by the glorious Gospel of Christ shining upon him.

WE PREACH NOT OURSELVES

“ . . . for we preach not ourselves .

The transforming glory of Christ cannot be realized by preaching that extols another person or movement. The message invested with the power of God is the Gospel, and it alone! No other word is invested with a power that transforms!

. . . ” Other versions read, “we do not preach ourselves,”^{NKJV/NASB/NIV} “we do not proclaim ourselves,”^{NRSV} “For what we preach is not ourselves,”^{RSV} “For our preaching is not about ourselves,”^{BBE} “What we proclaim is not ourselves,”^{ESV} “It is not ourselves that we are proclaiming,”^{NJB} “We don’t go around preaching about ourselves,”^{NLT} “I am not proclaiming myself,”^{WILLIAMS} “It is not myself that I proclaim,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “For what we preach is not ourselves.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Right here we touch an especially sensitive area of religious life – **what is promoted by our preaching.** What Paul says in this text is private, but not merely private. He is reflecting the manner of the kingdom. This is an approach that has resulted from his fellowship with Christ and continued exposure to the transforming light of the Gospel.

Paul does not preach about himself. His fundamental quest is not to familiarize the people with himself. He is

not promoting “The Pauline Ministries.” He is not drawing attention to what has happened to him, or what he is intending to do. That is not the focus of his preaching. His preaching does not consist of his personal testimony, though he often alludes to it. The aim of his ministry was not himself, his fame, or his support. He did not preach himself.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus once said, “*He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him*” (John 7:18). Here, speaking “of himself” means speaking from his own resources – an uninspired message, or one that has not been given by God. Such a

person speaks “on his own.”^{NIV} It is therefore obvious that such a person is seeking his own glory, for why else would a person speak in such a way? On the other hand, the person who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is the true messenger. Jesus presents Himself as such a one.

Jesus said, “*I receive not honor from men*” (John 7:18). That is, this was not His motive, and thus He also confessed, “*I seek not Mine own glory*” (John 8:50). When Jesus prayed to the Father, He did **not** say, “Glorify **My** name.” He rather said, “*Father, glorify Thy name*” (John 12:28). When he prayed on the eve of His betrayal, He besought the Father, “*And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was*” (John 17:5). His driving compulsion was to glorify His Father – to make Him known.

The Significance of the Text

The transforming glory of Christ

cannot be realized by preaching that extols another person or movement. The message invested with the power of God is the Gospel, and it alone (Rom 1:16)! **No other word is invested with a power that transforms!**

That is easy enough to say, and the words may fit well into many mouths. **But when this is perceived, men will find themselves unable to speak of movements any longer!** Writing volumes that explain what we believe and the origin of “our movement” will no longer suffice. In fact, the sensitive soul will find such preaching and teaching repugnant.

A considerable effort is being expended in the Christian community to preach “ourselves.” Who is able to number the sermons and books that deal with “Who we are,” and “Our movement,” and “What we believe”? **When men make it their business to acquaint the world with the religious movement to which they belong, they are preaching themselves.** That would be like Paul writing a book explaining the Apostles, where they came from, and why men ought to listen to them. It is true that Paul mentioned such things, but they were never his message. Such diversions ought not to be named among us. It is time for a host of preachers and teachers to arise who do not preach themselves.

Let every preacher and teacher take care not to burden people by speaking about themselves, their church, their movement, etc. If a person finds himself unable to make Jesus the focus of preaching, then that individual should seek another vocation.

BUT CHRIST JESUS THE LORD

“ . . . but Christ Jesus the Lord . . . ” Other versions read, “but Christ Jesus as Lord,”^{NASB} “but Jesus Christ as Lord,”^{NIV} “we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord,”^{NRSV} “but about Christ Jesus as Lord,”^{BBE} “but Christ Jesus Lord,”^{DARBY} “but Jesus Christ our Lord,”^{DOUAY} and “but Christ Jesus as Master.”^{MONTGOMERY}

The phraseology of the Spirit is important. He is not ambiguous about the particular facet of Jesus that is being accented: “*Christ Jesus THE LORD.*”

This is the aspect of the Savior that actually transforms us. The **glory** we steadfastly behold is “*the glory of THE LORD*”(3:18). The Gospel through which this glory is seen is the Gospel of a glorified Christ: “*the Gospel of the glory of Christ*”^{NKJV} (4:4). It should not surprise us, therefore, that Paul says he preaches “*Christ Jesus THE LORD.*”

On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared Jesus to be “*Lord.*” In his powerful summation he said, “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). To the household of Cornelius he testified, “*The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)*” (Acts 10:36).

The “*Lord Jesus Christ*” is mentioned eighty-four times in Scripture. All of them are employed AFTER Jesus had glorified, and are found beginning with Acts 11:17, and ending with Revelation 22:21). The phrase declares a glorified and exalted Christ, who has been made “*Head over all things for the church*”^{NIV} (Eph 1:22). This is what Peter referred to as “*the glory that should follow*” (1 Pet 1:11). The Jesus that was preached by God-sent messengers was not a problem solver, or one who was devoted to being our Friend – although He surely is both of those things.

Proper preaching declares a Christ who has been “highly exalted,” and given a name “which is above every name” (Phil 2:9). This is the Christ who has been exalted with God’s “*right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins*” (Acts 5:31). Twice the Lord is referred to as a “*Savior*” who is “*the Lord*” (Luke 2:11; Phil 3:20). Once we read of “*God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Tim 1:1). That is, **there is no such thing as a Savior who is not also “the Lord.”** Most of the times “*Lord*” and “*Savior*” are mentioned together, “*Lord*” is used first (Tit 1:4; 1 Pet 1:11; 2:20; 3:2,18).

We must forever blot from our minds the notion that there is such a condition as being “*saved*” in which Jesus is not “*Lord.*” Men often say, “Now that

you are saved, make Jesus your Lord.” Such talk is nothing more than foolishness. It is “*the Lord*” who saves us, and there really is no salvation in which Jesus is not recognized and served as “*Lord.*”

The Reasoning

To some, this all sounds a bit radical. They are so used to hearing explanations for ungodliness and carnality in church members that they have become oblivious to God’s explanation of His “*great salvation.*” Admittedly, this “*great salvation*” can be neglected. **However, that neglect is accompanied with eternal peril.** As it is written, “*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great*

glory is emanating. This enthroned Christ is the one who transforms.

Transformation cannot be experienced by considering Jesus as a Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. That is a precious vision indeed, but it is not enough to change us “*from glory to glory.*”

The contemplation Jesus’ earthly ministry is necessary, and filled with benefits. But it has no transforming glory. Jesus was veiled by His flesh, not revealed by that means. If ever a person is going to be “*changed,*” he must come to the point where he no longer knows Jesus “*after the flesh.*” As it is written, “*Wherefore*

Our text has confirmed that we are actually changed by the glory of Christ – that is, by the glory of the risen, exalted, and enthroned Christ. The glory of that Christ is reflected in the Gospel – the preached Gospel. If, then, the exalted Christ is not perceived, moral and spiritual change become impossible.

salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Heb 2:3). Is there anyone foolish enough to postulate that an escape really is possible to those who neglect or “*ignore*”^{NIV} this salvation? The question that is posed is not intended to provoke speculation concerning how such people will be saved in spite of their neglect. **Rather, it is intended rivet in our minds that this is one condition that shuts the door of escape.** The only way to experience salvation is to **not** neglect or ignore it.

Our text has confirmed that we are actually changed by the glory of Christ – that is, by the glory of the risen, exalted, and enthroned Christ. The glory of that Christ is reflected in the Gospel – the preached Gospel. If, then, the exalted Christ is not perceived, moral and spiritual change become impossible. This is why Paul affirmed he did not preach himself, “*but Christ Jesus the Lord.*” This is the Christ from which transforming

henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more” (2 Cor 5:16).

It is equally necessary that we consider Jesus’ death on the cross, where He was “*crucified through weakness*” (2 Cor 13:4), the sins of the world being laid upon Him (Isa 53:6). Yet, the glory that transforms the soul is not found coming from the cross of Christ. That is not the primary illuminating factor.

It is the risen, glorified, and empowered Christ that must shed glory upon the people if they are to be “*changed.*” That is why it is written, “*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, YEA RATHER, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*” (Rom 8:34). In His resurrection, Jesus was “*declared to be the Son of God with power*” (Rom 1:4). **That is, in His resurrection Christ’s life and death**

were validated and ratified – shown to be fully accepted by the Father.

There is a Christ being preached these days that is not “glorified.” It is a Christ whose glory does not change the people. When extended consideration is given to this fabricated Christ,

advancement into the likeness of the real Son of God is not realized. This situation confirms beyond all doubt that the Christ being preached is actually “another Jesus,” and the gospel that announces him is “another gospel” (1 Cor 11:4).

It is not enough to preach “a

Jesus.” The real Jesus must be preached – the one whom God has exalted, and given a name that is above every name. When that Jesus is preached, and people by faith gaze steadfastly upon Him, they will be changed into His image. The Holy Spirit will surely do the work.

YOUR SERVANTS FOR JESUS' SAKE

“^{5b} . . . and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”

Paul now says a word about how he conducted himself toward those to whom he preached.

AND OURSELVES YOUR SERVANTS

“ . . . and ourselves your servants . . . ” Other versions read, “and ourselves your bondservants,”^{NKJV} “and ourselves as your bondservants,”^{NASB} “and ourselves as your servants,”^{NIV} “and ourselves as your slaves,”^{NRSV} “with ourselves as your servants,”^{RSV} “and ourselves your bondmen,”^{DARBY} “All we say about ourselves is that we are your servants,”^{NLT} “we are only your servants,”^{IE} “and ourselves as merely your servants,”^{ISV} “and myself a slave,”^{WILLIAMS} “and myself your slave,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “and ourselves [merely] as your servants (slaves).”^{AMPLIFIED}

Jesus once told His disciples, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Luke 22:25-26). Jesus was not suggesting this was to be the goal of the Apostles, or that they were to try and measure up to this criterion. Rather, He was declaring this to be the manner of His kingdom. There is no other acceptable posture.

Therefore, Paul is not saying that, after considerable effort, he was finally able to be a servant to the people of God. Rather, he himself had been so impacted by the glory of the Lord that he conducted himself among men as Jesus did. On one memorable occasion, Jesus served His

disciples by washing their feet. After doing so, He asked them, “Know ye what I have done unto you?” He then offered this explanation. “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than He that sent him” (John 13:14-16).

In What Sense Was Paul A Servant?

In what sense was Paul the servant of the Corinthians. Within the framework of institutionalized religion, this would involve visiting the sick, quickly responding to various family crises, and transporting people here and there. While there is certainly a place for all of these things, that is not the kind of service to which Paul alludes.



There are distracting

influences within the framework of religion that obscure the glory of Christ. They are all self-centered, or appealing to the earthly aspect of life. It has become fashionable to major on these things in preaching and teaching. The result has been a lack of change into the image of Christ. This is because the means of the change – the glory of Christ as perceived in the Gospel – has been removed. When religious movements, self-centered interests, and the church itself upstage Jesus, all hope of spiritual growth has been removed. This cannot be stated too strongly, and accounts for the miserable condition of the average American church.

True spiritual “servants” are assisting people in their progress toward glory. They are primarily serving eternal interests, as well as visiting “the fatherless and the widows in their affliction” (James 1:27). They are providing God-ordained means by which the people can be oriented and prepared for eternal glory. In such a condition they will be ready to live or to die. As it is written, “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's” (Rom 14:8). No person who fails to prepare people to live and die is truly serving them.

Paul's immediate meaning is that he was serving up a Gospel that allowed for transformation – for being “changed from glory to glory.” He is preaching and teaching without a veil, in order that the people may more clearly perceive the exalted Christ, who is the appointed means of transformation.

The more a minister is enamored

of “the glory of the Lord,” the more he becomes a true servant of the people. As soon as a person is diverted to lesser things, or adopted an inferior emphasis, he ceases serve the people and to please God. Ultimately, the person of God serves the people when he adopts the Divine agenda, which is to “make ready a people, prepared for the Lord” (Lk 1:17). This calls for the investment of one’s life. It also requires delivering to the people what one has received from the Lord.

My Father in the Flesh

I have noted a few people in my lifetime who were noted for their tireless efforts to be the kind of “servants” mentioned in our text. The chief of those “servants” was my beloved father, Fred O. Blakely – now with the Lord. Although he maintained a daily job as a printer, he was tireless in his labors to provide materials for the people of God. His publishing achievements are remarkable for any man, but especially for one who appeared to have so little time. Many times I have seen him in a state of physical weakness, yet toiling in writing, standing as he typed so as to remain alert and sensitive to the Lord. His writing was no ordinary writing, but was well thought out, and always saturated with the Word of the Lord and challenging to the reader.

How is it that my father was able to accomplish such things? It was because he was, as Paul has said, “your servants.” He thought nothing of “very gladly” spending and being spent for the people of God (2 Cor 12:15). Like the household of Stephanus, he had “addicted” himself “to the ministry of the saints” (1 Cor 16:15).

I have found by experience that this is the way to live, and thus I take this occasion to give thanks to my God for the noble example of my good father.

Few songs express the sentiment of this text like the hymn written by Timothy Dwight, in the late 1700’s. Here

is a most precise expression of being a servant of the saints of the most high God.

I LOVE THY CHURCH, O LORD

*I love Thy Church, O Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood.*

*I love thy church, O God,
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.*

*If e’er to bless Thy sons
My voice or hands deny,
These hands let useful skill forsake,
This voice in silence die.*

*If e’er my heart forget
Her welfare or her woe
Let every joy this heart forsake,
And every grief o’erflow.*

*Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heav’nly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.*

*For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
’Til toils and cares shall end.*

Timothy Dwight, 1752-1817
Music, Aaron Williams, 1770

FOR JESUS’ SAKE

“ . . . for Jesus’ sake.” Other versions read, “through Jesus,”^{BEBE} “for the sake of Jesus,”^{NAB} “because of what Jesus has done for us,”^{NLT} and “because of Jesus.”^{IE}

Paul is very careful to state his motives precisely. He is not loose in his expressions. He is not serving the saints out of a sense of fleshly concern, or because he has found it to be advantageous to a religious career. Rather, he is a servant “for the sake of

Jesus.”^{NAB} What does he mean by this expression?

At its root, this means “because of Jesus,” or, more precisely, because of Paul’s perception of Jesus. He states this another way later in the next chapter. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Cor 5:14). That is, **Paul knew that if Jesus died for him, it was wholly inappropriate for him to live for himself.** He knew that Jesus had “died for all, that they which live **should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again**” (2 Cor 5:15).

Therefore Paul adopted the posture toward the church that Jesus Himself has. It is said of our blessed Lord, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:25). He is, in a very special way, “the Savior of the body” – His body (Eph 5:23). He “nourishes and cherishes” the church (Eph 5:29), daily interceding for her (Heb 7:25), and succoring her in the hour of temptation (Heb 2:18).

This is why Paul made the church his top priority. The care which came upon him daily was not the care of the heathen, but “of all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28). He knew that is precisely what Jesus is doing, and thus he entered into that blessed labor. All of his Epistles were to the people of God, either personally (Timothy, Titus, and Philemon), or collectively (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonians, and the Hebrews. He never represented himself as a servant of Rome, or Athens, or some other metropolitan area – or even the Jews.

For the sake of Jesus – because of what he had comprehended of the Captain of our salvation – he gave himself to the edification of the body of Christ.

CONCLUSION

The text we have reviewed confirms both the necessity and means of

spiritual change – a change of character. While a very real change **does** take place

when we are “born again,” that change is not complete. It does not, for example,

include the transformation of our bodies. That is to take place when the dead are raised in the last day. The “change” wrought in regeneration is in the sense of “old things” passing away and “all things” becoming “new” (2 Cor 5:17).

However, at the time we are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13), we are in an infant stage – “newborn babes” (1 Pet 2:2). That is a beginning – but there is also an ending, a consummation, to be realized. The work has been “begun” in us, and God will “perform it until the day of Christ” (Phil 1:6). Every believer must confess with David, “The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me” (Psa 138:8).

The “perfecting of the saints” is still the objective of all valid ministry (Eph 4:12). It remains true that we require, “the God of all grace,

*who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, **make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you**” (1 Pet 5:10).*

There remains a work to be done. Thus the Scriptures say, “*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, **make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen**” (Heb 13:21).*

True preaching is joined to this purpose – the perfecting of the saints, being conformed to the image of Christ, and growing up into Him in all things (Eph 4:15). **Where this is not being**

done, the work of the Lord is not being done! There is no valid endeavor for the Lord that excludes being “*changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*”

A religion that leaves people in the flesh, under the domination of their earthly appetites, is false to the core. There is no truth in it, for truth cannot be mingled with error. As soon as men make an effort to mix error with truth, the whole substance becomes error. God will not use flawed means to bring His people to perfection. The Holy Spirit will not employ unholy methods to accomplish the change over which He presides. A glorified Christ will not utilize “unglorious” means to bring us to glory.

We are living in a day when this needs to be stressed. **If what our text affirms is true, the salvation of men is at stake in this matter.**

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 12/24/2004. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The seventeenth lesson will cover verses six through seven of the fourth chapter: **“THE BEGINNING AND NATURE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.”** The Scriptures never use the expression “becoming a Christian.” It is too ambiguous – especially in our day of religious sophistry. This text will precisely describe how spiritual begins and is maintained. 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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Because Men are Saved by a Message that is Preached, Preaching is a Critical Matter– by Given O. Blakely

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