

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 #26

COMMENTARY ON: 6:1-3

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

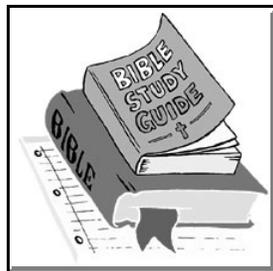
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

A PROPER FRAME OF MIND

There is a certain frame of mind that must dominate those who work together with God. They must not allow their thoughts to be driven by human circumstance, or the substance of their preaching and teaching to be determined by the perceived needs of the people. This mind-set compels the person of God to make every effort to move the people to a proper response toward God, Christ, and the Gospel that affirms what has been done in the behalf of humanity. Knowing the time in which we live is also imperative, and that is determined by what God is doing at this time – something that has been declared with clarity and power.

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 26



TRANSLATION LEGEND: **AMPLIFIED** or **AMP** = Amplified Bible, (1965), **ASV**=American Standard Version (1901), **BBE**=Bible in Basic English (1949), **DRA**=Douay-Rheims (1899), **ESV**=English Stand Version (2001), **IE** = International English, **ISV** = International Standard Version (1967), **KJV**=King James Version (1611), **LIVING** = Living Bible (1971), **MONTGOMERY** = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), **NAB**=New American Bible (2002), **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 (1985), **NKJV**=New King James Version (1979), **NLT**=New Living Translation (1996), **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version (1989), **PHILLIPS** = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), **RSV**=Revised Standard Version (1952), **TNK**=JPS Tanakj (1985), **Webster**=The Webster Bible (1833), **WEYMOUTH**=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), **WILLIAMS** = William's New Testament (1937), **TYNDALE**=Tyndale's Bible (1526), **WYCLIFFE**= Wycliffe New Testament (1382), **YLT**=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

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

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

A PROPER FRAME OF MIND

“^{6:1} We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. ² (For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) ³ Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.” (2 Cor 6:1-3)

INTRODUCTION

There is a certain mind-set that accompanies all valid Kingdom labors. Here we are not speaking of orientation toward “religious careers” or “professionalism.” Nor, indeed, is an institutional mind-set in any way found in those who are “planting” and “watering” for Christ. In a statement of the case, Paul speak of the **only** “increase” that is honored in heaven. “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Cor 3:7-8).

It is important to emphasize that the **only** fruit that is accepted by God, and will pass the test of Divine scrutiny, is the fruit that God Himself has produced – HIS “increase.” **There is no such thing as a valid work for God in which He Himself is not active.** It is not possible for a work to be accepted by God if Jesus Christ, the Head of the body, is not actively preeminent in that work. Let no man imagine for a moment that any effort expended in the name of Christ can possibly be good or acceptable if the Holy Spirit is not administrating and empowering that effort. **It is not possible for salvation to be ascribed**

“to the Lord” if anything related to that salvation is done independently of Divine influence and fellowship.

In spite of this obvious circumstance, there is a phenomenal amount of “Christian” activity in which God Himself does not appear significant. His Word is not being declared and expounded in a manner that is consonant with what has been revealed about the Kingdom of God. There is not an obvious quest for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness – something that Jesus affirmed must be first. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his

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righteousness" (Matt 6:33). There is a whole religious hierarchy of offices resident in the contemporary church that do not even require familiarity with the Living God – much less implicitly rely upon it. It has come to such a point that institutional names and theological positions are perceived as having a sanctifying effect – a result that only the Lord Jesus can cause. The favorable use of a church name, a certain religious movement, or a cherished church doctrine can cause free and friendly religious acceptance among certain people. There is no demand for acquaintance with God or fellowship with Christ. In such cases a religious environment exists that does not depend upon the Lord, and everyone with discernment knows it. **In short, there is a extraordinary absence of God-consciousness within the professed Christian community.**

The presence of this condition tends to make the text before us irrelevant. Those who approach the work of the Lord in the energy of the flesh, relying upon worldly wisdom, can only view this text as a sort of theological novelty. They cannot lay it along side of their own endeavors, for it is obvious that

it does not blend with them.

WHAT PAUL IS DOING

Paul is defending the validity of his labors, holding before the Corinthians substantial proof that he is, in fact, doing the work of the Lord. He makes no appeal to worldly credentials, fleshly wisdom, institutional approval, or impressive external results – all of which rank very high in this world. Since this is coming from one who was blessed with unusual *"visions and revelations"* (2 Cor 12:1), and who *"labored more abundantly than they all"* (1 Cor 15:10), **his words are of particular relevance to all who work in the vineyard of the Lord.** They instruct us on how to view working for the Lord, and how to speak of those labors. While I have already mentioned some of these things, it is important to once again set them before you for consideration. Referencing only Second Corinthians, chapters one through five, this is the manner in which Paul identified and assessed his labors for the Lord.

- Paul was an *"Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God"* (1:1a).
- That he wrote to God's church (1:1b).
- Both the *"sufferings of Christ"* and His *"consolation"* abounded in him (1:5).
- Whether he suffered or was consoled, it was for the *"consolation and salvation"* of the church (1:6).
- He had *"the sentence of death"* in himself that he might learn not to trust in himself, but *"in God who raises the dead"* (1:9).
- His conscience testified that *"in simplicity and godly sincerity, not*

with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," he lived in the world and toward the saints 1:12).

- He was not vacillating and uncertain in making his determinations (1:17).
- The word he preached as not *"Yes"* and *"No,"* but was consistently *"Yes"* in Christ Jesus (1:18-19).
- He was *"established"* and *"anointed"* by God, who had *"sealed"* him and given him *"the earnest of the Spirit"* (1:21-22).
- He did not have *"dominion"* over the faith of the people, but was a *"helper"* of their joy; for he knew they stood *"by faith"* (1:24).
- He determined not to come to the Corinthians in a state of personal *"heaviness"* (2:1-4).
- God was making known the *"savor of His knowledge by"* Paul *"in every place,"* so that people were actually becoming more acquainted with God, His ways, and His great salvation (2:14-17).
- He did not require letters of commendation from others, for those who received his message were themselves testimonies to its truth – they were *"epistles of Christ,"* written by the Spirit of God (3:1-3).
- His *"sufficiency was of God,"* who made him an *"able minister"* This was confirmed by what he preached, and the effects it wrought in those who believed that message (3:5-6).
- His ministry was one of clarification, not mystery, so that the things of God became clearer to the people (3:12).

In such cases a religious environment exists that does not depend upon the Lord, and everyone with discernment knows it. In short, there is a extraordinary absence of God-consciousness within the professed Christian community.

- Through his message, spiritual liberty and transformation were being realized through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (3:17-18).
- Although he experienced remarkable opposition, sufferings, and trials, he did not “faint,” or give up (4:1).
- He had already “renounced” all dishonesty, fleshly subterfuge and craftiness, which had no place whatsoever in his ministry (4:2).
- The message he preached was the means God used to shine into the hearts “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus” (4:6).
- He knew why God had placed a

“present with the Lord” (5:6-8).

- He labored in order that he might be “accepted” by Jesus, before whom he knew he would stand to give an account for the deeds he had done in the body (5:9-10).
- Knowing “the terror of the Lord” against unfaithfulness, he powerfully persuaded men (5:11).
- “The love of Christ” also constrained Paul, compelling him to minister with this in mind, that if “one died for all, then all are dead” – dead with Christ. He therefore ministered to men with their separateness from the world order in mind (5:14-16).
- He was an ambassador of Christ,

training, and the likes, fit into what Paul has said. Should one make an effort to wedge them into this book, they would not fit, and the whole message of the book would be destroyed. This ought to be apparent enough to require no further comments on the matter.

I do not know of a Bible College or Seminary in the land that teaches its students to approach ministry in the manner made known in this text – or, for that matter, in **any** Scriptural text. Most of the things related to religious careers fall into the category of “dung.” In testifying of his former religious involvements (which were extensive, to say the least), Paul confessed, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil 3:8).

For all who attempt to serve God in the flesh, or function according to an institutional agenda, such expressions will appear to lack any practical meaningfulness.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The work of the Lord must be within the context of the awareness of, and hunger for, Divine fellowship. There must be an acute cognizance of who owns the Kingdom, and of the “eternal purpose” He is fulfilling. The objective of men being “reconciled unto God” must be discerned, as well as the appointed outcome of the life of faith. Those who “feed the flock of God” must see the people for what they are in Christ Jesus – “new creatures” who are being prepared to stand before “the judgment seat of Christ,” and finally reign with Him in a state of “immortality.” **If these things are ever forgotten, or pushed into the background of thought, all professed labors for Christ become meaningless.**

heavenly “treasure” in “earthen vessels,” and thus triumphed over circumstances that suggested he was not doing the right thing (4:7-9).

- Both the “dying of the Lord Jesus” and “the life also of Jesus” were taking place within Paul’s person – death to the world, and life toward God (4:10-12).
- He did not “faint” because he kept his focus on “unseen” and “eternal” realities (4:17-18).
- He knew this life was not the primary life, and that our current bodies and not our primary bodies. He knew that God had made us to inhabit resurrection bodies – “our house which is from heaven” – and thus labored with this in mind, looking forward to making the appointed transition (5:1-5).
- He was “always confident,” walking by faith in anticipation of being

urging men to “be reconciled to God.” He did this with an understanding of how God reconciled men, and the outcome of experiencing that reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21).

REASONING ON THESE THINGS

Without the perspective created by these realities, the words that follow become hollow, falling powerless to the ground. **For all who attempt to serve God in the flesh, or function according to an institutional agenda, such expressions will appear to lack any practical meaningfulness.** At the very best, they might be considered to be “deep things,” reserved for some mystical class of supposed “thinkers” who are not in touch with reality. None of these will ever be found on the standard “resume” for religious professionals, for they have no immediate bearing on those whose minds have been shaped by the world.

Where, pray tell, do surveys, statistics, polls, social research, scholastic

I am going to state the case with even more strength. **If these things are not uppermost in the thinking of the “worker,” he abruptly ceases to be a representative of Christ, and is only a promoter of Satan’s agenda.** If this is not the case, then we must imagine that God blesses and works through the flesh, not requiring that the “record” He has given of His Son be declared, but working through the imaginations of the flesh, which He has condemned. If God can or will work through an agenda that He Himself has not created, then He is not God at all, but is only a competitor with

the false gods of this world. **If men can be saved independently of the Gospel of Christ, then it is not the power of God, and is nothing more than a pointless word.** If a man – any man – can take upon Himself the office of a Kingdom “*worker*,” be sent forth by men, and function according to an agenda created by men, then Jesus is really not the “*Head*” of the church at all. **He cannot possibly be the “*Lord of all things*” if men build valid institutions and organizations independently of His calling and empowerment.**

However, if He **IS** the “*Head of the body*” and “*the Lord of all*,” **then everything representing itself as coming from Him, yet in which He does not have the obvious preeminence, will surely be condemned by Him.** There is no way to escape this conclusion. To attempt to do so is to have Jesus joining hands with those He has neither called nor empowered – and such a thing is impossible. Christ has no concord with Belial! **It is not possible for the objective of God to be realized by a focus He Himself does not have!**

Let it be clear, Paul is writing with proper spiritual focus, and in strict harmony with Divine purpose. At the heart of his thinking a definite circumference of thought is evident. Within that circumference the Person and purpose of God is prominent. The Lord Jesus, His accomplishments, and His present ministry are at the forefront. **The temporality of life in this world, together with the eternity of what we possess in Christ and where we are headed in Him, are foundational to everything he says.** This is most evident in what follows.

WORKERS TOGETHER WITH HIM

“ 6:1a ***We then, as workers together with Him . . .***”

Paul now writes with his preceding statement in mind: “*For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*” (2 Cor 5:21). In view of this remarkable statement of the case, how should we speak to the saints of God? What kind of spiritual tone ought to be in our words?

WE THEN

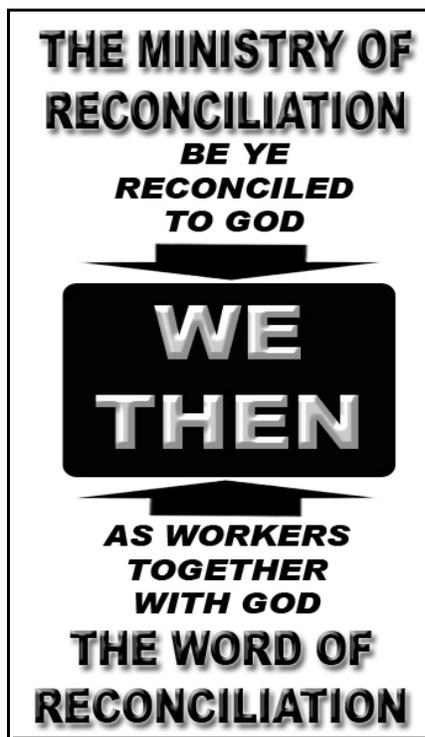
“*We then . . .*” Other versions read, “*But*,”^{DARBY} “*Since, then*,”^{ISV} “*so we therefore*,”^{GENEVA} and “*and*.”^{NAU}

Most of the more modern versions exclude these words – “*We then*.” However, they are in the Greek text, and have not simply been supplied to make for smoother reading in the English. The word “*then*” is included in the following versions: KJV, NKJV, BBE, ESV, NAB, RWB, WEB, ISV and AMPLIFIED.

The Meaning of the Expression

The word “*then*” is translated from a Greek particle, δε (deh) – a particle adversative. This is a unit of speech that is used with verbs to tie thoughts together. Some examples of this kind of expression are, “*yea, let God be true*”^{Rom 3:4} “***but if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God,***”^{Rom 3:5} “***now we know that what things soever the Law saith,***”^{Rom 3:19} “***and not only so,***”^{Rom 5:3}

“*but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,*”^{Rom 8:6} “***so then they that are in the flesh,***”^{Rom 8:8} “***but if ye through the Spirit,***”^{Rom 8:13} and “***and hearing cometh by the word of God.***”^{Rom 10:17}



The use of this expression is that of showing further implications of what has already been said. The thoughts that follow this are inherent in what has been said before. They are a part

of what has been proclaimed, although hidden beneath the surface.

Opposite thoughts. Sometimes, in the use of this “particle,” there is a contrasting thought, as in Romans 8:6. There the preceding statement is, “*for to be carnally minded is death.*” That being true, the statement that follows “*but*” is necessarily true also: “*but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*” These are two opposite thoughts having to do with the mind.

A necessary conclusion. Other times, the use of this “particle” precedes a necessary conclusion – something that is essential to the understanding of the first of the two statements that are being joined. An example of this is found in Romans 8:8. The preceding verse reads, “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom 8:7). The “particle” δε is then used to introduce an incontrovertible conclusion. “***So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God***” (Rom 8:8).

Here is something that is also included, and worthy of thought. Another use of this “particle” is in joining two things that are essential, and which necessarily go together. An example of this is found in Romans 10:17. “***So then faith cometh by hearing, and (δε) hearing by the word of God***” (Rom 10:17). In other words, there is no such thing as faith

coming without doing “*by hearing*,” which also “*comes*.” Both actions necessarily come together, for “*faith*” is comes by means of “*hearing*.”

The above usage is what we find in this text. Paul has already said he is beseeching the people, “*Be ye reconciled to God*” (5:20). **However, there is more to his beseechment that initial reconciliation to God.** There is a ministry that is necessarily joined to that beseechment. To say it another way “*the ministry of reconciliation*” involves **more** than (as men say) getting people “*saved*.” He will declare something that is necessarily involved in being reconciled to God – a sort of ongoing work that is to be found in every believer.

In other words, what Paul is going to now affirm something that is **included** in “*the ministry of reconciliation*” – it is part of it. It is something that is implied in “*the word of reconciliation*” – something that is imperative to the realization of the objective of reconciliation.

WORKERS

“... *as workers together*...”

Other versions read, “*And working*,”^{NASB} “*As God’s fellow workers*,”^{NIV} “*As we work*,”^{NRSV} “*as fellow-workmen*,”^{DARBY} “*And we helping*,”^{DOUAY} “*we are working*,”^{ISV} “*Laboring together*,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*As co-operators*.”^{PHILLIPS}

These days there is a talk among professed believers about having “*fun*.” A light-hearted and unproductive spirit has invaded the professing church, giving rise to a lucrative facet of entertainment. It has reshaped the entire structure of the professing church from its “*staff*” to the manner in which their gatherings are conducted. **The element of spiritual endeavor is quickly passing from the scene as men’s energies are being devoted to things pertaining to the flesh and its enjoyment, ease, and comfort.**

In Christ, however, the expressions and endeavors of men are brought to their highest and most productive level. Paul characterizes the role and other brethren in “*the ministry of reconciliation*” as that of “*workers*.” The Greek word used here is a compound

one: Συνεργούντες (soon-ere-goov-tes). It is properly translated “*workers together*,” with the emphasis being placed on “*together*.” Lexically, the word means, “*help in work, be a partner in labor, to put forth power together with and thereby to assist*,”^{THAYER} “*of persons working together . . . help, cooperate with*,”^{FRIBERG} “*to engage in an activity with someone else, to work together with, to be active together with*,”^{LOUW-NIDA AND} “*to cooperate with, assist*.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

This is the word from which our English word “*synergy*” comes. It speaks of a combined action that produces the desired effect. Among men, the word implies that each worker contributes to the effectiveness of the other, so that the optimum result is found when all of the individuals are doing their best in a focused effort. Synergy demands the activity of every member. It also requires that each member function in the role for which it was intended. If one member tries to do the work of another member – like a foot trying to do the work of an eye – the work falls to the ground.

In the body of Christ, there are no non-functional or useless members. Every member is made to “*work*,” and the grace of God brings that work to its full measure. Paul once spoke of how he “*labored more*

who “*labored much in the Lord*” (Rom 16:12). He said he had bestowed “*labor*” upon the Galatians (Gal 4:11). He also acknowledged that he **labored**, “*striving according to His working, which worketh in my mightily*” (Col 1:29). He reminded the Thessalonians that they were to “*know them*” which “*labored*” among them in the name of the Lord (1 Thess 5:12). Those elders who were to be “*counted worthy of double honor*” were those who “*labored in the word and in the doctrine*” (1 Tim 5:17).

In outlining the proper manner in which to carry out his ministry, Paul admonished 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). Here, the word “*study*” does not mean to read books, but to “*give diligent attention to*” – not to come short in the intended objective. That objective was to be a “*workman*” who had no need of being ashamed before the Lord.

Here, a “*worker*” is not merely someone who is active, or doing something. **The next clause establishes that the true “*worker*” is engaged in the same activity as the One who has called him.** From the

These days there is a talk among professed believers about having “*fun*.” A light-hearted and unproductive spirit has invaded the professing church, giving rise to a lucrative facet of entertainment. It has reshaped the entire structure of the professing church from its “*staff*” to the manner in which their gatherings are conducted.

abundantly than they all” [the other apostles, 1 Cor 15:9] (1 Cor 15:10). He was speaking of a work that brought weariness, as when our blessed Lord who, while engaged in His Father’s business, sat on Jacob’s well because He was “*wearied*” (John 4:6). That kind of “*work*” is described in the word “*toil*,” which means to work hard and feel fatigue because of it (Lk 5:5). Paul spoke of those

spiritual perspective, no other person is considered a true “*worker*.”

WITH HIM

“... *with Him*...”

Other versions read, “*As God’s fellow workers*,”^{NIV} “*But, as fellow-workmen*,”^{DARBY} “*As God’s partners*,”^{NLT} “[*as God’s fellow workers*],”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*As co-operators with God Himself*.”^{PHILLIPS}

Students of the original text point out that these words – “with Him” – are not found, but have been supplied for easy reading. That is why they are italicized in the King James Version. However, the word that introduces the text (“We then”), together with the final statements of the forgoing chapter, make clear that this IS the intended meaning of the text.

Working together with one another is good and essential, **but it is not the secret to Kingdom success.** Increase does not come from men, but from God (1 Cor 3:6-7). Further, **it is God’s work**, who “*hath reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 5:18). **It is God** who dispensed “*the ministry of reconciliation*” (5:18b). Additionally, **it was God** who was “*in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*” (5:19a). **It is also God** who “*committed to us the word of reconciliation*” (5:19b). **It is also God**

who is beseeching men through this marvelous “*word of reconciliation*”(5:20). **God is the One** who made Jesus “*to be sin for us.*” **He is the One** who makes us “*the righteousness of God*” in Christ (5:21).

Pray tell, who else could possibly be the subject of this verse? What other person or persons could validate this holy work but God Himself? If He called us, gave us “*the ministry of reconciliation,*” and committed “*the word of reconciliation*” into our care, how could we possibly attribute our activity to working with anyone else but Him? **As for our labors with one another, if they yield fruit, it is only because we are working together with Him.** That is the point of this text.

To put it another way, we are working on the same project God Himself has inaugurated, and in which the Son

and the Holy Spirit are engaged as well.

It is wrong to, in the name of the Lord, be working on any other project but His own! God does not work together with us on **our** projects, but we work together with **Him** on His. It is coming across to my spirit that much of the religious activity of our day cannot be characterized as working together with God. **There is too little power in much of labors of our time. There is not enough consistency and longevity in it. There are too many quitters, backsliders, and weak and impoverished “Christians” for the work to be said to have been wrought “with God.”**

The words that follow will confirm this observation, revealing and confirming the glaring current absence of an important facet of “*the ministry of reconciliation.*”

WE BESEECH YOU ALSO

Paul now introduces a critical facet of “*the ministry of reconciliation.*” It will confirm being reconciled to God does not induct us into a static state where things cannot change. Currently, while we remain “*in the body,*” we are in a moral universe where competing and aggressive influences are all around us. Even from within our own bodily framework there is a fierce warfare at work. As it is written, “*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*” (Gal 5:17). And again it is written, “*Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit He caused to live in us envies intensely?*”(James 4:5)^{NIV} Another version reads, “*Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?*”(James 4:5).^{AMPLIFIED}

This situation is further compounded by an aggressive adversary who “*as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*”(1 Pet 5:8).

We are also daily assaulted with “*fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*” (1 Pet 2:11). This is not to mention the experiences of being “*troubled on every side,*” “*perplexed,*” “*persecuted,*” and “*cast down*” (2 Cor 4:8-9). There is also the vexing fact that in our flesh “*dwelleth no good thing*” (Rom 7:18). And who can forget that we, by Divine design, “*have this treasure in earthen vessels*” (2 Cor 4:7), which are in a state of constant and irreversible decline (2 Cor 4:16). There is even the experience of fightings “*without*” and fears “*within*” (2 Cor 7:5).

Who is unable to see that these circumstances require a special word from God, as well as strength adequate to meet the challenges they pose? These conditions are why Paul now speaks as he does.

WE BESEECH YOU

“*th . . . beseech you . . .*” Other versions read, “*also plead with you,*”^{NKJV} “*urge you,*”^{NASB} “*entreat you,*”^{RSV} “*make our request to you,*”^{BBE} “*exhort you,*”^{DOUAY} “*appeal to you,*”^{NAB} “*we beg you,*”^{NLT} and “*call upon you.*”^{YLT}



As previously noted in these lessons (2 Cor 2:8; 5:20), “*beseech*” is a strong word. It involves calling one into an essential activity – pleading earnestly with the people to do something that is required for their survival in this world. **This activity is like a tributary into which the river of the water of life is intended to flow.** This is not a mere option, or the opportunity to be excellent, even though mediocrity is quite unacceptable with God. The

exhortation that follows reflects the manner of the kingdom, the nature of salvation, and the involvements of reconciliation. This is the spiritual environment in which God works.

It is dangerous beyond description to ignore this exhortation. There is not the slightest evidence that it is not absolutely required by God, or that it is

not a vital part of *“the ministry of reconciliation.”* It is also integral to *“the word of reconciliation.”*

ALSO

“ . . . also . . . ” This word is a coordinating conjunction that joins two separate clauses. The first clause is, *“Be ye reconciled to God”* (5:20). The second is the phrase that follows: *“Receive not the*

grace of God in vain.” **Both of these conditions are integral to *“the ministry of reconciliation.”*** Both addressed in *“the word of reconciliation.”* Neither of these – the *“ministry”* or the *“word”* – can be excluded. They go together, complement one another, and work together. The saying applies here, *“What God has joined together, let not man put sunder.”*

RECEIVE NOT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN

“^{1c} . . . that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”

Right here a devastating blow is dealt to common religion – the kind that is largely embraced and promoted by the

already immortal, and already *“absent from the body and present with the Lord.”* Neither, indeed, will He present the grace of God as something light, frothy, and very tolerant of aberrant human behavior. **There is a certain**

perpetrated a view of grace that leads men to equate it with Divine tolerance – a way God has of covering up human deficiencies and treating them as though they did not exist. Others, reacting to this abuse, refer to such representations as “cheap grace.” However, there is no such thing as “cheap grace.” **Something that is represented as *“the grace of God”* that does not strictly comport with the Spirit’s representation of grace is no grace at all.** It is rather a lie, an imagination, a doctrine of demons, and a delusion. Nothing of God is in it, and nothing from God can result from it.

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Further, where *“the grace of God”* is not proclaimed and expounded, the people of God are put at a decided disadvantage. They will be led to believe they are more adequate than they really are, and will thus be inclined to despair and be ruled by faintheartedness.

Western world. Some have even developed a theology that causes these words to sound preposterous and foolish, as though such as thing was not even possible. **There are others who do, in fact, affirm that the grace of God can be received in vain, yet conduct their affairs as though it was not possible.** Their whole church program is designed to reach the lost, with little or no effort given to the feeding, nurturing, and perfecting of the sheep. All of this is done in spite of the fact that the obvious emphasis of Scripture is the readying of the people of God to be forever with the Lord.

environment in which grace will work – else it would be utterly impossible for it to be received in vain.

RECEIVING THE GRACE OF GOD

“ . . . the grace of God . . . ”

Other versions read, *“His grace,”*^{NJB} *“this marvelous message of God’s great kindness,”*^{NLT} *““God’s gracious love,”* *God’s favor,”*^{WILLIAMS} and *“merciful kindness by which God exerts His holy influence on souls and turns them to Christ, keeping and strengthening them.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

I personally come from a theological background where the grace of God was rarely mentioned. Most of what was said about it had to do with defining what it was NOT, and what it did NOT allow. While there certainly is much to be said on such things, it certainly is not the greater part of God’s grace. Satan has

Defining the Grace of God
The standard definition of *“grace”* that is hawked in the church world is *“unmerited favor.”* This, however, is an erroneous representation, even though there is a very slight element of truth in it – like a *“jewel in a swine’s snout”* (Prov 11:22). It will be time well spent to define what is meant by the word *“grace.”*

In this text, *“grace”* comes from the Greek word *χάρις* (ka-rin), which is a noun used in the singular. **As used here,** it is exclusively a Divine quality. It is used in various modes over one hundred and fifty-six times in Matthew through Revelation, and is translated into a variety of terms: *“favor”* (Lk 1:30), *“grace”* (Lk 2:40), *“gracious”* (Lk 4:22), *“thank”* * (Lk 6:33), *“pleasure”* (Acts

24:27), “liberality” (1 Cor 16:3), “benefit” (2 Cor 1:15), “gift” (2 Cor 8:4), “joy” (Phile 1:7), “thankworthy” (1 Pet 2:19), and “acceptable” (1 Pet 2:20). A few of these have to do with human responses to God or circumstances (thank, pleasure, liberality, gift, joy). In such instances, the context is always quite clear concerning the meaning. However, the overwhelming majority of the uses of this word apply to God and Christ, referring to a Divine quality or expression.

As used here, the lexical meaning of the word is, “outward grace or favor...kindness, goodwill, delight,” LIDDELL-SCOTT “good-will, lovingkindness, favor, acceptable,” THAYER “a special manifestation of the Divine presence, activity, power, or glory; a favor, expression of kindness, gift, blessing,” UBS and “to show kindness, to manifest graciousness toward.” LOUW-NIDA In “grace” the following Divine qualities are expressed: favor, preference, kindness, delight, good-will, lovingkindness, acceptance, power, and glory. There is nothing in the word itself that remotely suggests “unmerited,” even though, in our case God’s grace is not deserved. In confirmation of the former statement, it is said of the growing and maturing Jesus, “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him” (Luke 2:40). And again, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). It is obvious that “unmerited” is not an appropriate description in those texts.

Associations Made with Grace

The associations that are made with the grace of God confirm its magnitude and uniqueness.

- ☛ “The grace of God” (Acts 11:23).
- ☛ “The gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24)
- ☛ “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 16:20).
- ☛ “The grace of life” (1 Pet 3:7).
- ☛ “The Spirit of grace” (Heb 10:29).
- ☛ “The abundance of grace” (Rom 5:17).
- ☛ “The riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7).

- ☛ “The Word of His grace” (Acts 20:32).
- ☛ “The glory of His grace” (Eph 1:6).
- ☛ “The exceeding riches of His grace” (Eph 2:7).

Ponder the accomplishments of grace – what it actually does. **These reveal the greatness of the power that is in God’s grace.**

- ☛ We have “believed through grace” (Acts 18:270).

to men (Tit 2:11).

- ☛ The “grace of God” effectively **teaches** us “that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:12-13).
- ☛ It is “the true grace of God wherein ye stand” (1 Pet 5:12).
- ☛ Where “sin abounded, grace did much more **abound**” (Rom 5:20).

In “grace” the following Divine qualities are expressed: favor, preference, kindness, delight, good-will, lovingkindness, acceptance, power, and glory. There is nothing in the word itself that remotely suggests “unmerited,” even though, in our case God’s grace is not deserved. In

- ☛ “Justified freely by His grace” (Rom 3:24).
- ☛ Called “by His grace” (Gal 1:15).
- ☛ God has given us “everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thess 2:16).
- ☛ Righteousness is called “the gift by grace” (Rom 5:15).
- ☛ We are “saved by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8).
- ☛ The “grace of God” enables abundant labors (1 Cor 15:10).
- ☛ The godly maintain their lives acceptably in this world “by the grace of God” (2 Cor 1:12).
- ☛ Jesus tasted death for every man “by the grace of God” (Heb 2:9).
- ☛ The “grace of God” brings salvation

- ☛ Grace reigns “through righteousness unto eternal life” (Gal 5:21).
- ☛ “There is an election of grace” (Rom 11:5).
- ☛ Those in the body of Christ have received “gifts differing according to the grace of God” (Rom 12:6).
- ☛ Grace made Paul a “wise masterbuilder” (1 Cor 3:10).
- ☛ By grace Jesus “became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich” (2 Cor 8:9).
- ☛ Grace can cause us to always have “all sufficiency in all things,” and also to “abound in every good work” (2 Cor 9:8).
- ☛ The experience of grace is said to be “the power of Christ” resting upon us (2 Cor 12:9).
- ☛ The “forgiveness of sins” is

“according to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7).

- The grace of God is *“exceeding abundant with **faith** and **love**”* (1 Tim 1:14).
- God **called** us in strict accord with His own *“purpose and grace”* (2 Tim 1:9).
- We can be *“**strong** in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim 2:1).
- Grace can effectively **help** us *“in the time of need”* (Heb 4:16).
- Through grace we can *“**serve** God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Heb 12:28).
- The heart is *“**established** with grace”* (Heb 13:9).
- When Jesus comes again, He will **bring** grace to us (1 Pet 1:13).
- Spiritual gifts are a **stewardship** of *“the manifold grace of God”* (1 Pet 4:10).

Thirteen times the Apostolic writers spoke of grace being **given to the saints** (Rom 16:20,24; 1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 13:14; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; 2 Tim 4:22; Tit 3:15; Heb 13:25; 2 John 1:3). The last words in the Bible are, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen”* (Rev 22:21). Two times the Spirit speaks of grace being *“**multiplied**”* to believers (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2).

There are twenty-one references to *“the grace of God”* (Lk 2:40; Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 15:40; 20:24; Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor 1:2; 6:1; 8:1; Gal 2:21; Eph 3:2,7; Col 1:6; Tit 2:11; Heb 2:9; 12:15). There are ten references to *“the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom 16:20,24; 1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; Phile 1:25; Rev 22:21), and one reference to *“the grace of Christ”* (Gal 1:6). Who cannot see the obvious prominence of the grace of God!

- *“Baptism,”* in all uses, from John’s baptism to the baptism with the Spirit, and the baptism of suffering – all forms and all tenses are found

seventy-four times in Scripture.

- In the New Testament Scriptures, *“repentance”* in all of its forms is mentioned sixty times.
- *“Obedience”* in all of its forms is mentioned forty-two times
- *“Works”* are mentioned one hundred and eighteen times.
- *“Sin”* is mentioned one hundred and twelve times.
- *“Husband”/“husbands”* are mentioned forty-one times.
- *“Wife”/“wives”* are mentioned eighty-four times.
- *“Money”* is mentioned twenty three times.
- *“Unity”* is mentioned two times.
- *“Peace”* is mentioned one hundred and eleven times.
- *“Forgive,” forgiveness,”* and *“forgiven”* are mentioned forty-six times.
- *“Church”* is mentioned seventy-seven times.
- *“Salvation”* is mentioned forty-five times.
- *“Gospel”* is mentioned one hundred and one times.



The full weight of a subject is certainly not always determined by the

number of times it is used. Although, in the New Testament Scriptures, *“Jesus”* is used nine hundred and eighty-three times, *“faith”* two hundred and forty-five times, and *“God”* one thousand three hundred and fifty-six times. **It is, however, significant that “grace” is mentioned so frequently, and from so many perspectives, yet has not found its way into a prominent place in many sectarian vocabularies.**

“Grace” is presented as the exclusive means through which salvation is brought to us, and it is obtained “by faith.” Whether we are speaking of initially obtaining salvation, or of maintaining it to the end, the rule is consistently *“by grace through faith”* (Eph 2:8). It is a reproach to Jesus, and borders on blasphemy, to remain silent about the grace of God, or to diminish its centrality by majoring on what men do.

If “the grace of God” is not primary, then this verse has no genuine or beneficial meaning. The very phraseology that is employed requires that *“grace”* occupy a prominent place in our thinking. **If there is no hope of being saved without it, a view that tends to neglect it, or leave people fundamentally ignorant of it, has come from the devil himself.** Such an approach is also calculated to pull men away from God, and exclude them from His *“great salvation.”*

Accommodating Views of Grace

Accommodating views of grace are views that make **some** room for grace, but only for convenience sake. In this perspective, grace is not seen as dominating or fundamental. It is only acknowledged because it is so clearly emphasized in Scripture, but a primary place is **not** made for it. It is not seen as a real deterrent to sin, but is considered to be morally weak and inconsistent, tending to give the advantage to sin.

The Scriptures teach exactly the opposite on the subject, promising that those who have grace will gain dominion over sin. As it is written, *“For sin **shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace”*** (Rom 6:14). Grace actually reigns, so that the individual who is partaking of it becomes

practically, as well as judicially, righteous. Therefore it is written, *“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom 5:21).

Divine favor, therefore, is

change, which is at the very root of salvation. If God really loves people just as they are, in precisely what sense are the eyes of the Lord upon *“the righteous”* and His ears open to their cry (Psa 34:15)? How is it that God’s love is consistently represented as being in Christ, and because of our reception of

LORD kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance” (Psa 106:40).

God warned Israel not to live after the manner of the heathen who lived in Canaan prior to them. *“And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them”* (Lev 20:23). Again it is written, *“Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD saw it, He abhorred them, because of the provoking of His sons, and of His daughters”* (Deut 32:18-19).

Now the Spirit will reason with about the avoidance of a condition that stifles the grace of God – a circumstance in which the love of God is no longer a protecting refuge. **If such a state is not possible, then we can reject this word as being spurious – a mere delusion that is to be declined and thrown down to the ground.** However, I must add that anyone taking such a view is worst than a fool, being devoid of all reason and within the grip of the wicked one. The mind of such a person has been infected, and is not incapable of sound thought.

RECEIVING GRACE IN VAIN

“that ye receive not . . . in vain.” Other versions read, *“not to accept the grace of God in vain,”* ^{NRSV} *“not to . . . to no purpose,”* ^{BBE} *“not to let your acceptance . . . come to nothing,”* ^{NJB} *“not to reject,”* ^{NLT} *“not to toss aside,”* ^{LIVING} *“don’t waste it,”* ^{IE} *“not to be found to have received . . . to no purpose,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“not to accept . . . and throw it away,”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“do not receive it to no purpose,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“not to fail to use.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

To receive the grace of God *“in vain,”* is for the grace of God to cease to bring any advantage to the individual. **Whatever grace does is no longer done in such a person – even though it was once received.** If salvation is really *“by grace through faith,”* then this is a staggering consideration. In such a case, salvation becomes impossible, for if grace no longer works, all hope of being saved is lost.

This speaks of a condition

Divine favor, therefore, is actually a framework within which men are able to deny sinful inclinations and bring their bodies into subjection. The only way for this not to happen is for grace to somehow be frustrated or voided by the stance of the individual – something like quenching or grieving the Spirit.

actually a framework within which men are able to deny sinful inclinations and bring their bodies into subjection. The only way for this **not** to happen is for grace to somehow be frustrated or voided by the stance of the individual – something like quenching or grieving the Spirit. This, of course, is the purpose of this very passage – to awaken us to the possibility of receiving the grace of God *“in vain,”* so that it does not do the work it is intended to do.

A Blow to “Unconditional Love”

These days, the psychiatrists have foisted upon the church the erroneous concept of “unconditional love.” This phrase has become a part of the modern Christian vocabulary, even though it is never found or suggested in the Scriptures. Our text throws down the notion of “unconditional love,” and does so with characteristic Kingdom violence. **It would not be possible – not even remotely so – to receive the grace of God “in vain” if Divine love was without conditions.** Love is most prominent in *“grace,”* which speaks of favor and preference.

God Does Not Love You “Just As You Are”

Further, the common notion that God loves you “just as you are” also is at variance with this text. **Such a circumstance removes the need for**

Him, if our condition has no bearing on the case? Jesus said, *“and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21). And again, *“If a man love me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him”* (John 14:23). Jesus said of God’s love, *“For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God”* (John 16:27).

God can be brought to abhor the very people He has, through love, chosen. This is confirmed in Israel. Moses plainly affirms God’s deliberate love for Israel: *“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt”* (Deut 7:7-8). That love was not placed upon them in spite of their moral condition, but because of the promise He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the *“fathers.”* **Yet, even then, Israel so provoked the Lord that He moved to abhor, or abominate, them.** As it is written, *“Therefore was the wrath of the*

that was started, but not completed – even though Jesus is “*the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (Heb 12:2). It is so even though “*He which hath begin a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ*” (Phil 1:6). Here is a condition that comes to pass even though Jesus “*ever liveth to make intercession*” for us (Heb 7:25). Although the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, and makes intercession for us according to the will of God (Rom 8:26-27), yet those who **have** received grace are admonished **not** to receive it “*in vain*,” so that the objectives of grace are not realized. **There is, therefore, a condition subsequent to receiving Christ that adversely impacts upon the effectiveness of the grace of God.** This is an exhortation to zealously avoid that condition.

The Necessity of Further Cleansing

Although we are “*washed*” when coming into Christ (1 Cor 6:11), believers are to take an aggressive approach to practical moral and spiritual purity. “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (2 Cor 6:17-7:1). Whatever a person may think about falling away, these are certainly arresting words. They set forth God as receiving His people conditioned upon their separation from defiling influences, and being clean from all defilement. These are conditions that are only possible through the grace of God, which effectually teaches us to fulfill this word (Tit 2:11-13). **However, it is clear from this text that life can be lived in such a manner as causes the work of grace to cease.** That is receiving the grace of God in vain.

Work it Out!

The grace of God effectively works in a certain context – a context that finds the child of God active. “*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both*

to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12-13). While the basis, or foundation, of our salvation was completely independent of any input from us, the realization of that salvation involves our sanctified activity. This is not purely human activeness, but is actually God working with us to both “*will*” and “*do*.” **That working, however, is accomplished within the context of spiritual sensitivity, and through the appointed channel of faith.** If there is no responsiveness to God’s “*work*,” it will cease. Working out our own salvation with fear and trembling is **not** receiving the grace of God in vain. This is going on to perfection (Heb 6:1), and growing up into Christ in all things

When Paul and Barnabas came to Antioch of Pisidia, they taught extensively in the synagogue. Following the gathering “*many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas*.” They had heard words of life, and were drawn to them. They had, in fact, been subjected to the grace of God! The Scriptures say that Paul; and Barnabas spoke to these people and “*persuaded*” them to “*continue in the grace of God*” (Acts 13:43). That is the same as **not** receiving the grace of God in vain!

Frustrating the Grace of God

It is possible to “*frustrate*,” set aside, or nullify, the grace of God. Paul said he did not do this by adhering to a

To frustrate the grace of God is to receive it in vain. It is to revert to some form of Law in order to appropriate Divine favor. In such a case, even though a person once received the grace of God, that grace will cease to work, and salvation thus becomes impossible.

(Eph 4:15). There is no hope that the grace of God will work in the person who fails to do this.

Make Your Calling and Election Sure

It is written, “*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*” (2 Pet 1:10). This postulates that once confidence is obtained that God has, in fact, called and elected us, we will live and walk in the light. **Where, however, this confidence is not possessed, efforts will eventually wane, for it is not possible to serve God with a contaminated or defiled conscience.** Thus it is written, “*How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*” (Heb 9:14). In this case, serving the living God is **not** receiving the grace of God in vain.

Continuing in the Grace of God

system of law, stubbornly seeking to appropriate the righteousness of God by doing instead of believing. He confessed, “*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*” (Gal 2:21). **The grace of God, then, will not work within the context of Law.** It rather functions within the framework of the Gospel of Christ and the promises of God.

To frustrate the grace of God is to receive it in vain. It is to revert to some form of Law in order to appropriate Divine favor. In such a case, even though a person once received the grace of God, that grace will **cease** to work, and salvation thus becomes impossible.

Failing of the Grace of God

It is written, “*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled*” (Heb 12:15). There is also such a thing as “*failing of the grace of God*” – that is “*come short of the grace of God*,”^{NASB} The AMPLIFIED BIBLE reads, ““*Exercise*

foresight and be on the watch to look [after one another], to see that no one falls back from and fails to secure God's grace (His unmerited favor and spiritual blessing), in order that no root of resentment (rancor, bitterness, or hatred) shoots forth and causes trouble and bitter torment, and the many become contaminated and defiled by it—" (Hebrews 12:15).

To "fail" or "come short" of the

Grace cannot work in such an environment. When we first "knew the grace of God in truth," we were sorely discontent with sin, and "fled for refuge" to Christ, "to lay hold on upon the hope set before us" by the Gospel of Christ (Heb 6:18). Grace worked effectively under such circumstances, for our wills had been brought into accord with the will of God – i.e. we were "willing in the day of His power" (Psa 110:3). However, when a person leaves the environment in

righteously, and godly in this present world," it is because the grace of God has **not** taught them to do so. And, if grace has not taught them to do this, it is only because it has been "frustrated" by the preference for other things. There is no other acceptable explanation for spiritual retardedness, moral failure, and a lack of spiritual appetite. **Grace does not fail to work where people live by faith and "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12).** However, where faith is not maintained, and men are not living "by every word of God" (Lk 4:4), grace ceases to work. Whatever that grace may have done initially, and however great the deliverance it wrought may appear, when grace stops working, it has been "received in vain."

THE OTHER SIDE OF PREACHING

Paul has declared two sides to his ministry – and both were delivered by the same person. First, there was reconciliation to God. Second, there was a responsibility to not receive God's grace in vain. In my judgment, there has been a serious omission of this word in our time. Pulpits have become sympathetic sounding boards, a means of resolving social issues, and a place for counseling people on personal and domestic issues. It all may appear very wise, but it represents a serious departure from the work of God.

Something to be Seen

Those who work together with God must do more than deliver sound doctrine to the people. **They must accompany that sound doctrine with earnest beseechments** to not receive the grace of God in vain, work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and fight the good fight of faith (2 Cor 6:2; Phil 2:12; 1 Tim 6:12). There are to be pleas to be steadfast and unmoveable, lay hold on eternal life, and not come short of the promised eternal rest (1 Cor 15:58; 1 Tim 6:12; Heb 4:1). The people are to be challenged to go on to perfection, despise not prophesying, and run with patience the race that has been set before them (Heb 6:1; 1 Thess 5:20; Heb 12:1-2). If the revealed purpose of God is that we "grow up into Christ in all things," and be "filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph 3:19; 4:15), **then believers must be put in remembrance of such necessities.** If it is possible to "depart from the faith," "fall away," and believe only "for a while"

This accounts for the remarkable level of sin that is found in the modern American church. It is why moral plummets are found within the professed ministry. It accounts for the outbreak of divorce, and all manner of enslavement to defiling practices.

grace of God is to receive it in vain. **It is all circumstances into our lives in which the grace of God will not work.** To put it another way, it is to live at a distance from God's grace, so that it cannot work within us. Some examples are to be "carnally minded" (Rom 8:6), walk according to sight instead of "by faith" (2 Cor 5:7), quenching or grieving the Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19), not resisting the devil by being steadfast in the faith (1 Pet 5:7-8), and not setting our affection on things above (Col 3:1-2).

The result of failing "of the grace of God" is that all manners of bitterness and carnality can break out among the people, defiling "many." This is because "grace" has a keeping and sustaining as well as that of removing us from transgression. **When that work is opposed by a worldly mind-set, or by failing to ingest the Word of God, and walking by faith, grace will not finish its work.**

When professing believers insist on walking according to the flesh, focusing their attention on things that are "seen," and living at a distance from God, "the grace of God" will do them no good.

which grace sets him, returning like a dog to its vomit, and a sow that was washed to its wallowing in the mire (2 Pet 2:20-22), they have "received the grace of God in vain." **That means grace no longer teaches them "to reject and renounce all ungodliness (irreligion) and worldly (passionate) desires, to live discreet (temperate, self-controlled), upright, devout (spiritually whole) lives in this present world, Awaiting and looking for the [fulfillment, the realization of our] blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed One)"**^{AMPLIFIED} (Titus 2:12-13). **That work will NOT be accomplished in a person who insists on returning to the domain from which he was once delivered.**

This accounts for the remarkable level of sin that is found in the modern American church. It is why moral plummets are found within the professed ministry. It accounts for the outbreak of divorce, and all manner of enslavement to defiling practices. **Where people are not rejecting ungodliness and worldly lusts, it is only because the grace of God has been "received in vain."** If men are not living "soberly,

(1 Tim 4:1; Heb 6:6; Lk 8:13), then diligence must be given to “*preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present*

every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col 1:28).

Wherever there is a religious

environment in which such things are **not** being uttered, it is **not** likely that grace will continue its indispensable work. It is more likely that grace will cease to work.

I HAVE HEARD THEE IN AN ACCEPTED TIME

“^{2a} For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted . . . ”

Here, in obvious contradiction of the thrust of much of the religion around us, the Spirit moves Paul to write concerning a text that spoke of the salvation to be brought by Jesus Christ. Although the text has an obvious reference to our initial deliverance from the power of darkness, Paul is going to deliver this word to the church of the living God. **He is going to buttress his word concerning not receiving the grace of God in vain by pointing them to “the day of salvation.”** He will announce to them that there is more to this “day” that our initial deliverance from sin. That “day” involves more than “reaching the lost,” or initially turning to God. Here we will be exposed to a word that is being sinfully withheld from the modern church – a church that is not familiar enough with the Word of the Lord to know that this message has been delivered to them.

FOR HE SAITH

“*For He saith . . .*” Paul will **not** turn our attention to something that men have said. His exhortation has been too weighty to prop it up with thoughts that were conceived by the will of man. **The issues are of such magnitude that we need to hear what “the mouth of the Lord” has spoken.** These are not words of human analysis, but words that holy men spoke as they were moved along by the Holy Spirit of God (2 Pet 1:20-21).

I HAVE HEARD THEE

“*. . . I have heard thee . . .*” Other versions read, “*I have heard you,*”^{NKJV} “*I listened to you,*”^{NASB} “*I hearkened unto thee,*”^{ASV} “*I have given ear to you,*”^{BBE} “*Your cry came to Me,*”^{LIVING} and “*I have listened to and heeded your call.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

The text is taken from the prophesy of Isaiah: “*Thus saith the*

LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee . . .” (Isa 49:8a). The 49th chapter of Isaiah foretells the coming Messiah, and is rich with promise.

- **The promise of the Messiah’s birth.** “*Listen, O isles, unto Me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called Me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of My name*” (Isa 49:1).
- **The Messiah would speak with power, and would be an effective instrument in the hands of the Lord.** “*And He hath made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid Me, and made*

• **The nation of Israel would be too small of a reward for the Messiah. God would also give Him the Gentiles.** “*And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth*” (Isa 49:6).

• **Although rejected by His own people, the Messiah would rise to unquestionable prominence.** “*Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of*

The time when God is hearing is the time of which Isaiah prophesied. It is nothing less than the reign of the Lord Jesus, during which He is bringing many sons to glory.

Me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He hid Me” (Isa 49:2).

- **The Messiah would be the Lord’s special “servant” – the premier offspring of Israel.** “*And said unto Me, Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified*” (Isa 49:3).
- **The Messiah would be rejected by His own people, and it would appear as though His work was in vain.** “*Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God*” (Isa 49:4).

rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose Thee” (Isa 49:7).

The time when God is hearing is the time of which Isaiah prophesied. It is nothing less than the reign of the Lord Jesus, during which He is bringing many sons to glory.

The postulate of the verse is that God has **not** always heard in the sense that He now does. The prophets, for example, earnestly sought “*to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within*

them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow”^{NASB} (1 Pet 1:11). Yet God did not hear them as He hears us now, but told them, “that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look”^{NASB} (1 Pet 1:12).

Prior to Christ, God had “heard” His people in their cries for temporal deliverances. The Lord “heard” the cries of despised Leah who longed for a child (Gen 29:32-33). He “heard” the cries of suffering that emitted from Israel who was in bondage in Egypt (Ex 2:23). He heard the cries provoked by their harsh taskmasters (Ex 3:7,9). He heard David’s cries for deliverance from his enemies

All times are not the same? There is such a thing as “a time accepted,” or “an acceptable time.” Jesus warned some who heard Him, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24). And again, “Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come” (John 7:34). The prophets spoke of a season when God could, in fact, “be found.” “Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near” (Isa 55:6).

“A time accepted” is literally “a time of good pleasure,” when God is pleased to receive the people. This is speaking of “the day of salvation” in which the deliverance of the captives is announced, and release from the bondage and guilt of sin. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus announced that this time

This was the time when God would be proclaimed to be “just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). It was a day that would be marked by the putting away of sin (Heb 9:26), the plundering of principalities and powers (Col 2:15), the ending of the Law as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4), and the destruction of the devil (Heb 2:14). It was the time when Christ would “receive” men “to the glory of God” (Rom 15:7) – a time when the conscience would be “purged from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:14). The “time accepted” is the time of a “better covenant which is established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6).

Wherever there is a humble and contrite spirit, this is the time of Divine acceptance – the time when men may “call upon the name of the Lord” with the confident expectation of being “saved” (Acts 2:21). The promise of remission and acceptance is held out to the Jews – those who are near – and the Gentiles, who are “afar off” (Acts 2:39).

A “time accepted” is the time when reconciliation has been accomplished and can be realized. It when the remission of sins, peace with God, and the new creation is within the reach of humanity. It is as though the heavens were opened to hear the calls of those who have a desire to taste and see that the Lord is good.

This day will not always be in place. There is an appointed time when the “door” of salvation will be shut. In one of His stirring parables Jesus associated this time with His coming. “And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: **and the door was shut**” (Mat 25:10). He said the door would not be re-opened for those who sought diligent entrance: “Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matt 25:11-12).

I can remember when there was considerable preaching concerning the present day of salvation, and the appointed shutting of the door. However, such preaching has all but disappeared from the pulpits of the land. Instead, men

remarkable though they may be, are nothing to compare with the hearing of which our text speaks. This is speaking of greater petitions. greater deliverances, and greater gifts. And, remember, this is a word to the church!

(Psa 6:8-10). He heard Samuel when he “cried unto the Lord for Israel” (1 Sam 7:9). He heard “the voice of Elijah” who asked Him to raise a young boy from the dead (1 Kgs 17:22).

However, these instances, remarkable though they may be, are nothing to compare with the hearing of which our text speaks. This is speaking of greater petitions. greater deliverances, and greater gifts. And, remember, this is a word to the church!

IN A TIME ACCEPTED

“ . . . in a time accepted . . . ”

Other versions read, “In an acceptable time,”^{NKJV} “At the acceptable time,”^{NASB} “In the time of My favor,”^{NIV} “I have given ear to you at a good time,”^{BBE} “In a favorable time,”^{ESV} “At the right time,”^{IE} “At a time of welcome,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “In the time of favor (of an assured welcome).”^{AMPLIFIED}

had arrived. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, **to preach the acceptable year of the Lord**” (Luke 4:18-19). Having read this text from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus “closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down.” The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were upon Him. Never had they heard the Scriptures read with such power and confidence.

He then “began” to open the text to the people. His beginning words were, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Lk 4:20-21). That is, the “time accepted” had finally arrived – the time when reconciliation, remission, and justification would be experienced without the forfeiture of a single Divine quality.

have chosen to speak of this time as the time of problem solving, realizing a better life upon the earth, and living above inconvenience and deprivation. **Jesus did not die in order that such a life might be realized.** God has already judged the entire universe, consigning it

to mortality, or *“the bondage of corruption”* (Rom 8:21). He has repudiated *“the flesh,”* affirming that it *“profits nothing”* (John 6:63), and that it cannot produce anything outside the realm of the curse John 3:6). No good thing is found in the flesh (Rom 7:18).

The *“time accepted”* is a time when men can be liberated from *“the flesh.”* It is a time when they can be raised up and *“made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places”* (Eph 2:6). This day is a most unique day, and men are summoned to give heed to it.

SUCCORED IN THE DAY OF SALVATION

“ 2b . . . and in the day of salvation have I succored thee . . . ”

It is not by coincidence that the Spirit here associates deliverance from sin with acceptance, and *“salvation”* with nurture, or the life of faith. **If the purpose of God is to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29), and to thus make us perfectly compatible with an immortal body (2 Cor 5:1-5), then getting into Christ is not the primary thing!** Winning souls cannot be the fundamental work. The premier work cannot be one from which one can fall, and in which the greatest diligence must be exercised. The **beginning** of the state in which we are to *“fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life”* (1 Tim 6:12) cannot be the point of **emphasis**. If the *“prize”* is out ahead of us (1 Cor 9:24; Phil 3:14), how can beginning the race possibly be the most important thing? How can beginning to build a house be more important than finishing it (Lk 14:28-30). How can birth be more important than maturity? Is it possible that being *“turned to God”* is a greater work than growing up into Christ *“in all things”* (Eph 4:15)? Is the firstfruit harvest of more significance than the final ingathering?

There is a lot of religious folklore that has risen since Jesus ascended into glory with the clouds as His chariot, and winds as His steeds. **One of the chief of them is the supposition that the most important work in all of the world is that of converting people to Christ.** This is, indeed, an important and essential work – and let none deny or diminish that importance. However, as we will see, the burden of current Divine effort has to do with **perfecting the life** that is commenced with the new birth.

THE DAY OF SALVATION

... and in the day of salvation. . . ”

Other versions read, *“ . . . and on a day of salvation , ”*^{NRSV} *“in a day of salvation, ”*^{BBE} *a day when salvation was being offered, ”*^{LIVING} and *“the day of deliverance (the day of salvation). ”*^{AMPLIFIED}

The word *“salvation”* is exceedingly broad. The word itself comes from the Greek word *σωτηριας* (so-tay-ree-aas). Lexically it means, *“salvation, preservation, safety, and deliverance, ”*^{THAYER} *“salvation, deliverance, rescue from danger, ”*^{FRIBERG} *“deliverance, preservation, release, ”*^{UBS} *“to rescue from danger and restore to a former state of safety and well being – to deliver, to rescue, to make safe, ”*^{LOUW-NIDA} *“a saving, deliverance, preservation, safety, keeping safe. ”*^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

A Word About Salvation

The various aspects of salvation include at least the following.

• **DELIVERANCE.** The emphasis here is upon removing someone from an oppressive environment – like Israel from Egypt (1 Sam 10:18), AND Joseph from all of his afflictions (Acts 7:10). In Christ Jesus we are *“delivered”* from the Law (Rom 7:6),

this present evil world (Gal 1:4), the power of darkness (Col 1:13), the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10), and from bondage (Heb 2:15).

• **RELEASE.** In *“release,”* the emphasis is on freedom from what had encumbered us – like debtors in Israel were freed from debt every seven years (Deut 15:1-3; 31:10). In Christ we are free from sin (Rom 6:7), and free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2).

• **PRESERVATION.** This has to do with keeping us from reverting to an unacceptable condition, or being overcome again by the enemies who once held us – like God kept Israel alive, even during their wilderness wanderings (Deut 6:24). In Christ Jesus, God can *“preserve blameless”* our wholoe spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23), and *“preserve”* us *“unto His heavenly kingdom”* (2 Tim 4:18). He can *“keep us from falling”* (Jude 24), keep our hearts and minds (Phil 4:7), and keep us from evil (2 Thess 3:3).

• **SAFETY.** This has to do with Divine security – protecting us, so that our



foes cannot do us in, or gain the dominance over us – like God kept Israel safe from their enemies (1 Sam 12:11). In Christ safety involves being “kept by the power of God” (1 Pet 1:5), no man being able to pluck us out of the hand of Christ and of God (John 10:28-30), the devil not being able to touch those born of God (1 John 5:18), and nothing “by any means” causing us ultimate “hurt” (Lk 10:19).

All of these, and more, are involved in “salvation,” and “the day of salvation” is **when** they are being accomplished.

The “day of salvation” has been in place for over two thousand years. Here, the Spirit will associate it with the

“... have I succored thee.” Other versions read, “I have helped you,”^{NRSV} “and helped you,”^{RSV} “did I succor thee,”^{ASV} “I have been your Helper,”^{BBE} and “I helped you.”^{LIVING}

This statement is taken from the prophecy of Isaiah. “. . . and in a day of **salvation have I helped thee**” (Isa 49:8b). Other versions read, “And in the day of salvation I have helped you,”^{NKJV} “And in the day of salvation I have helped you,”^{NASB} “And in the day of salvation I will help you,”^{NIV} “and I have been your Helper in the day of salvation”^{BBE} “and in the day of salvation I have succored thee.”^{SEPTUAGINT}

As used in Isaiah, the word “helped” means “succor, support, and to be helped.”^{STRONG’S} Technically, Isaiah applies this word to the coming Messiah Himself,

sustained Him will sustain them. Just as Jesus Himself “lived by every word of God” (Lk 4:4), so will they.

Paul is now moved to take us higher, showing that the work of salvation is by no means finalized when we are born again. Here, however, “the day of salvation” has to do primarily with the nurturing of those who have been accepted. There are a number of terms that are used by the Spirit to denote this process of succoring. They all have to do with the maintenance and perfection of spiritual life.

• **EDIFICATION.** “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11-12).

• **SANCTIFICATION.** “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thess 4:3-4).

• **GROWTH.** “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:15-16).

• **PERFECTION.** “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

• **FAITH TO FAITH.** “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17).

• **GLORY TO GLORY.** “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed

The day of salvation would, therefore, be one of great effectiveness. The Savior Himself would be sustained in order to the completion of His mission, so that He could effectively say to the prisoners, “Come Out” and “Be Free!”

development and sustenance of spiritual life. This is an association that is not common in our time. The preservation of spiritual life is rarely mentioned today, and little is offered in the name of Christ that contributes to this end. This is, however, a facet of salvation to which holy men devote themselves.

When most “church” people hear the word “salvation,” they connect it only with the initial acceptance of men in Christ Jesus. According to many, it has to do exclusively with being born again, initial repentance and faith, being baptized into Christ, etc. In this passage, however, Paul associates our entrance into Christ with Divine acceptance – although acceptance is not limited to the beginning of the newness of life. Now, let us behold what God is said to be accomplishing in “the day of salvation.”

I HAVE SUCCORED THEE

presenting God as sustaining and upholding the Savior in His work: “. . . I will preserve Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that Thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places” (Isa 49:9). **The day of salvation would, therefore, be one of great effectiveness.** The Savior Himself would be sustained in order to the completion of His mission, so that He could effectively say to the prisoners, “Come out!” and “Be Free!”^{NIV}

In our text, these wonderful words are applied to the ones who are “being saved.” They will, in fact, be sustained the same way the Savior was sustained. They were buried with Him, raised with Him, and seated with Him (Rom 6:4; Col 3:1; Eph 2:6). Now, the same power that

into the same image **from glory to glory**, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18).

☛ **FEEDING.** “*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind*” (1 Pet 5:2).

How important is “succor,” or the feeding of the flock of God? Is not this the time where Jesus “*nourishes and cherishes*” the church (Eph 5:29)? Is this not the day of “*the great Shepherd of the sheep*” (Heb 13:20). Have not “*all things*” pertaining to “*life and godliness*” been

provided (2 Pet 1:3)? Has not God “*blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph 1:3). **What possible reason can be adduced for a host of anemic “Christians?”** How is it possible to account for weak and faltering church members who cannot stand against the wiles of the devil, and are constantly in a state of spiritual confusion? **This is “the day of salvation,” when God is committed to helping and succoring His people according to His own promise!**

What would we think of a mother who gave birth to a child, nursed it until it could eat on its own, then abandoned

the child in order to have another one? What would we think of a mother who said, “The most important thing is to have children,” yet did not care for the ones she had? How would we feel about a mother who had plenty of resources, and the means of procuring them, yet let her children starve to death in her own house?

This is the day, or time, when succor is being realized by those who are living by faith and walking in the Holy Spirit. If professing believers are not growing, and are not being sustained, it is **not** because of the time, for this is “*the day of salvation.*”

NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME

“^{2c} . . . behold, now is the accepted time . . .”

When it comes to salvation, in all of its glorious aspects, **this is the time for it to be realized in refreshing fulness.** This is a word for all who remain under the control of the devil. It is also a word for all who are in Christ Jesus. It is a word for all seekers. This is a message to be declared to all who are seeking to know the “*good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (Rom 12:1-2). It is a word that will, when believed, bring confidence and assurance to souls who are weary with “trying.” This is something to be boldly affirmed to those who are fighting the good fight of faith, and for those who are, “*for a season, if need be, in manifold temptations*” (1 Pet 1:6). **This is not something about which we philosophize or even argue. It is not a theme for speculation or a summons to supposition.** This is a word faith can grasp, and when it does, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit will be realized.

NOW

“ . . . behold, now . . . ” Other versions read, “*I tell you, now,*”^{NIV} “*See, now,*”^{NRSV} “*See, now,*”^{BBE} “*now,*”^{DARBY} “*well, now is the time of real favor,*”^{NJB} “*right now,*”^{NLT} and “*Listen, now,*”^{ISV}

Behold

“ . . . behold . . . ” Coming from the

Greek word ἰδοὺ (i-doo), this word is used two hundred and eight times from Matthew through Revelation. This is a “demonstrative particle,” an expression that gives “a peculiar vivacity to the style of bidding the reader or hearer to attend to what is said.”^{THAYER} Something that is “*vivacious*” is alert, animated, keen, spirited, and vibrant. **It is a word that is characterized by exuberance, as compared to a lecturing tone, and high-spiritedness, as compared with casualness and half-heartedness.** Lexically, the word means to observe or consider with special attention because what is said is new, unexpected, and

from this word. It is a word that affirms something that **must** be seen – something that **must** be comprehended or understood.

I have long been discontent with dreaded lecturing tones when the things of God are being declared or expounded. When Peter announced the commencement of the day now being declared, he “*lifted up his voice*” (Acts 2:14). When God sent the prophet Isaiah to announce a salvation was coming, He said, “*O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift*

There is a note of urgency in the word. All casualness is stripped away from this word. It is a word that affirms something that must be seen – something that must be comprehended or understood.

seems impossible.^{THAYER} Other lexical meanings are, “pay attention, see, look, listen! Remember! Consider!”^{FRIBERG} and “lo! Behold! See there! And there! Take it!”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

There is a note of urgency in the word. All casualness is stripped away

up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” (Isa 40:9). The prophet also said this kind of speech was going to characterize the speakers when the Lord brought Zion: “**Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice**

together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion”(Isa 52:8). When summoning the people to repentance, God told the prophet, “**Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins**” (Isa 58:1).

Jesus is frequently said to have

physical experiences and sensations, it is necessary to draw attention to the nature of the “*new creature,*” or “*new creation.*” The “*new man,*” we are told, is “*renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*” (Col 3:10). One version reads, “*renewed to a true knowledge.*”^{NASB} Jesus said eternal life consisted of **knowing** “*the only true God and Jesus Christ*” (John 17:2). The new birth itself

understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17). The marvelous things that are provided for us in Christ Jesus are described as “*the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col 2:3). When describing the will of God, Paul said it was that He would “*have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:4). Believers are admonished to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet 3:18).

Much preaching and teaching lacks the sound of urgency. It does not sound important enough to heed. It seems to me that our voices should be employed in their best and strongest form when calling upon men to behold the wondrous things of God.

True spiritual life demands the presence of understanding. When I consider the miserable level of understanding that exists in the professed church, it causes me to tremble before the Lord. We are living in a time of gigantic contradiction. There has been a remarkable dumbing down of what is said from the pulpit and sung from the pews. Religious literature is too often more like grade-school stories than expressions that challenge the mind and make men discontent to remain ignorant of God and the things of God.

“*cried out*” – an expression meaning to call aloud, or exclaim. “**Then cried Jesus in the temple as He taught, saying, Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not**” (John 7:28). And again, “*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink*” (John 7:37). And again, “**Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on Me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent Me**” (John 12:44).

is described as God shining into our hearts “*to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6). John spoke of knowing that we “**know Him**” (1 John 2:3). Paul warned of an approach to religion in which the “*understanding*” was not “*fruitful*” (1 Cor 14:14,19), admonishing the saints, “**but in understanding be men**” (1 Cor 4:20). He said it was shameful for those within the church to not have “*the knowledge of God*” (1 Cor 15:34).

When men know more about the things of this world than the “things of the Spirit of God,” we are living in perilous times. Wherever there is a person who is speaking in the name of the Lord, there must be a clear and evident summons for men to know something – to comprehend, discern, and become mature in their thinking concerning heavenly realities. **Those who profess faith in Christ will be no more stable than they are understanding.** If they cannot understand what God is saying, they will not be able to live for Him. What is more, the essential resources He has provided for them will not be realized. **All spiritual advantages are forfeited when men choose to remain in ignorance.** As it is written, “*According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue*” (2 Pet 1:3).

Much preaching and teaching lacks the sound of urgency. It does not sound important enough to heed. It seems to me that our voices should be employed in their best and strongest form when calling upon men to behold the wondrous things of God. I realize that there is no room for making laws on this point, and that each person must speak within the framework of the gifts and abilities they have received. **However, let every soul bring their voice into accord with the nature of the message that is being proclaimed.**

The sweet smelling savor that is being disseminated by those who are working together with God is “*the savor of His knowledge*” (2 Cor 2:14). Inimical forces and influences are not those that attack out feelings or emotions, but those which exalt themselves “*against the knowledge of God*” (2 Cor 10:5). Paul prayed that the people of God would be given “*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*” (Eph 1:17). He stated that the objective of God for His children is that they “*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 passes all knowledge.*” The aim of that is that we might be “*filled with all the fulness of God*” (Eph 3:18-19).

It is not possible to possess what has been provided if the vehicle through which it is experienced is rejected.

Something to be Discerned

The word “*Behold!*” indicates that there is something to be discerned – understood and comprehended. In a time when a considerable amount of religion majors on feelings, possessions, and

Candidly, believers are told, “*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but*

Now
“*... now ...*” Faith takes hold of

what God has done in the past, but lives in the NOW. In hope, faith reaches forward to what God has prepared for those who love Him, yet lives in the NOW.

The point that will now be made, is that “NOW” is the time when the blessing of the Lord can be appropriated.

THE ACCEPTED TIME

“ . . . is the accepted time . . . ”

Other versions read, “*is the acceptable time,*”^{NASB} “*is the time of God’s favor,*”^{NIV} “*is the good time,*”^{BBE} “*the well-accepted time,*”^{DARBY} “*is the favorable time,*”^{GENEVA} “*the time of real favor,*”^{NJB} “*God is ready to help,*”^{NLT} “*God is ready to welcome you,*”^{LIVING} “*the right time,*”^{IE} “*the time of loving welcome,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*is really the right time,*”^{ISV} “*the time of welcome is here,*”^{WILLIAMS} and “*is truly the time for a gracious welcome and acceptance [of you from God].*”^{AMPLIFIED}

The Time of Divine Acceptance

The time of Divine acceptance is the time when God receives and justifies men. **This time has not always been in place – and there is coming a time when it will be withdrawn.**

This acceptance is owing to the putting away of sin, which was the inhibiting factor. Jesus is said to have taken away the sins of the world (John 1:29,36) and put away sin (Heb 9:26). Because sin was removed, Satan was consequently “*destroyed*” (Heb 2:14), and principalities and powers plundered (Col 2:15). As Paul has said earlier, God was “*in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (2 Cor 5:19). A very real peace was made “*through the blood of His cross*” (Col 1:20). **These things are what has opened the door of Divine acceptance.**

Men are not accepted because they have managed to do enough, or because they are excellent in their works. Rather, God has received them because “*now is the accepted time!*” It only remains for men to comprehend this as it is announced by the Gospel. Once seen, they will call upon the name of the Lord, being willing to do whatever He requires. Even that willingness is owing to the time – “*the acceptable time.*” As it is written,

“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth” (Psa 110:3).

When the attention of people is turned toward their achievements or obligations, “the acceptable time” is hidden in the clouds of doubt. That is why it must be shouted out, alerting people to the fact that THE TIME takes the precedence over human

things belong to “*times past*” (Rom 11:30), **but not to this time!** This is the time when God’s “*laws*” are put into men’s minds, and written in their hearts, producing a glorious accord between God and man (Heb 8:10). It is a time when everyone in Christ knows the Lord, and none are ignorant of Him (Heb 8:11). This is the time when God does not remember the iniquities of the people anymore, for they have been effectively “*put away*” by Christ, and a new nature has been

It is a reproach of the greatest magnitude when the professing church is marked by inconsistency, unfaithfulness, instability, and drawing back. These are not marks of those who are in Christ Jesus. There is nothing about “the time accepted” that contributes to such conditions.

accomplishments or worthiness. **In other words, God has found satisfaction from another Source.** He is constrained to accept men upon the basis of the attainments of another, even the Lord Jesus Christ. As it is written, “*He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied*” (Isa 53:11).

The Time of the Promises

“*The accepted time*” is the time during which the precious promises of God are being realized. Now, in Christ Jesus, “*all the promises of God are Yea*” (2 Cor 1:20). Now, they are the appointed means by which we become “*partakers of the Divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4). In the discernment of these promises, we can cleanse ourselves of “*all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord*” (2 Cor 7:1). “*Now,*” in this time, this can be done!

The Time of the “Better Covenant”

“*The accepted time*” is the time of the “*better covenant which is established upon better promises*” (Heb 8:6). This is **not** the time when believers respond to God as Israel did in the wilderness! This is **not** the time when the people of God are at variance with God – a time when their thoughts and ways are **not** like His. Such

received that hates sin.

The Time of the “New Creation”

“*The time accepted*” is the time of the “*new creation,*” when people are “*born again*” by the incorruptible Seed of the Word of God (1 Pet 1:23). This is the time whatever is “*born of God sinneth not,*” and the wicked one “*toucheth him not*” (1 John 5:18). This is the time of “*newness of life*” (Rom 6:4), when those in Christ have received a “*new heart and a new spirit*” (Ezek 36:26).

The Time of Spiritual Consistency

“*The time accepted*” is a time of spiritual consistency, when the redeemed do not vacillate as Israel did. This is the time when steadfastness and immovability can be realized (1 Cor 15:58). It is the time when the race can be finished (Heb 12:1-2), men can “*endure to the end*” (Matt 10:22), and we can “*hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*” (Heb 3:6). **It is a reproach of the greatest magnitude when the professing church is marked by inconsistency, unfaithfulness, instability, and drawing back.** These are not marks of those who are in Christ Jesus. There is nothing about “*the time accepted*” that

contributes to such conditions. This is not the manner of “newness of life,” and is not characteristic of “the new man.” It is time for religious men to cease trying to explain the presence of these traits. **They are to be purged from the church**, for they are a cause for condemnation.

All Comers Will Be Received

“The time accepted” is the time when “whosoever will” may come, expecting to be received. This is the time when the invitation is being sounded out by both the Holy Spirit and the bride of Christ. “And the Spirit and the bride say,

Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17).

This is the time when Jesus cries out, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). And again, “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). And again, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

Those who are waiting for an appropriate time to come to Jesus are deceived. “Now is the time accepted!” When men ponder whether or not they should “receive” Christ (John 1:12), “come” to Him (John 3:21; 6:35), and believe on Him (1 Tim 3:16), they are in the grip of the devil. He is assaulting them with all manner of erroneous thoughts, for “now is the accepted time.” God is drawing men to Jesus (John 6:44). Jesus is drawing men to Himself (John 12:32). The Holy Spirit is convincing men of sin, righteousness, and judgment John 16:8-11). “Now is the time accepted!”

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION

“^{2c} . . . behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Through the Spirit, Paul is confirming the total unacceptability of carnality within the church. **A failure to advance in the faith and grow up into Christ can in no way be justified** – regardless of the fanciful explanations that are offered by men.

NOW

“ . . . behold, now . . . ” Other versions read, “Now,”^{NJB} “Today,”^{NLT} “lo, now,”^{YLT} “right now,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “this very day.”^{PHILLIPS}

Not only does the word “now” accent **the present time**, from our perspective, it also affirms the time from God’s perspective – a time that fulfills Divine objectives.

- ☛ “NOW” that Jesus had died, putting away sin (Heb 9:26).
- ☛ “NOW” that Jesus is risen from the dead for our justification (Rom 4:25).

- ☛ “NOW” that Jesus has been exalted, and given a name “that is above every name” (Phil 2:9).
- ☛ “NOW” that angels, and authorities, and powers have been made subject to Jesus (1 Pet 3:22).
- ☛ “NOW” that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us, and is “able to save to the uttermost” those who come to God by Him (Heb 7:25).
- ☛ “NOW” that God has reconciled the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:18-19).
- ☛ “NOW” that God has anointed His people and given them the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor 1:21-22).
- ☛ “NOW” that His people are being “led by the Spirit” (Rom 8:13-14).
- ☛ “NOW” that peace has been made through the blood of Christ’s cross (Col 1:20).
- ☛ “NOW” that the devil has been

- destroyed through Christ’s death (Heb 2:14).
- ☛ “NOW” that principalities and powers have been “spoiled,” Christ triumphing over them in His cross (Col 2:15).
- ☛ “NOW” that we have a “better covenant established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6).
- ☛ “NOW” that God has written His laws upon our hearts, and put them into our minds (Heb 8:10; 10:16).
- ☛ “NOW” that a “new and living way” has been consecrated for us (Heb 10:20).
- ☛ “NOW” that we have been “called into the fellowship” of God’s Son (1 Cor 1:9).
- ☛ “NOW” that we have been given “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3).
- ☛ “NOW” that Jesus has ended the Law as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4).
- ☛ “NOW” that we are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19).
- ☛ “NOW” that God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in

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heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3).

- ☛ **“NOW”** that we have *“access by faith into this grace wherein we stand”* (Rom 5:2).

Behold what advantages have been given to us in this day – *“now,”* the *“time accepted.”* This is also *“the day of salvation.”*

THE DAY OF SALVATION

“ . . . is the day of salvation.”

Other versions read, *“Today is the day of salvation,”*^{NLT} and *“He is ready to save you.”*^{LIVING}

The Spirit has already affirmed, *“in the day of salvation have I succored thee.”* This has particularly to do with the present ministry of the exalted Christ. It is said of Him, *“For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted”* (Heb 2:18). Other versions read, *“He is able to aid those who are tempted,”*^{NKJV} *“He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted,”*^{NASB} *“He is able to help those who are being tempted,”*^{NIV} *“He is able to help those who are being tested,”*^{NRSV} *“He is also able instantly to help those who are tempted and tried,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“He is able to give immediate help to any that are tempted,”*^{WILLIAMS} and *“He is able [immediately] to run to the cry of (assist, relieve) those who are being tempted and tested and tried [and who therefore are exposed to suffering].”*^{AMPLIFIED}

This has to do with growing up into Christ in all things, for just as Jesus did, we *“learn obedience”* by the things that we suffer (Heb 5:8). It is in the crucible of suffering that we make advancement in the faith, for *“tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope”* (Rom 5:3-4). This is the result of having *“this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”* (2 Cor 4:7). This is why it is written, *“My strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Cor 12:9), and *“when I am weak, then am I strong”* (2 Cor 12:10).

“Succor” by Other Names

David alluded to *“succor”* when he wrote, *“Thou preparedst a table before me in the presence of mine enemies”* (Psa 23:5). Paul referred to it when He said

Jesus *“nourisheth and cherisheth”* the church (Eph 5:29). Peter wrote of it when he told the elders, *“Feed the flock of God which is among you”* (1 Pet 5:2). Jesus spoke of it to Peter when He said, *“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”* (Luke 22:32). Paul referred to succoring when he wrote to Corinth, *“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church”* (1 Cor 14:12). This is the point of all spiritual gifts: *“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Eph 4:12).

HOLY OBJECTIVES

There are certain holy objectives that God has established. He Himself is active to this end, working all things together for the ultimate good of His people (Rom 8:28). The exalted Christ is working to this end, bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). The Holy Spirit is also working to this end, changing us from, glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18). The Word of

salvation.”

- ☛ Open eyes, turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 26:18).
- ☛ Conform us to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29).
- ☛ Call, justify, and glory (Rom 8:30).
- ☛ Be rooted and grounded in love and able to comprehend and know the greatness of salvation and the love of Christ (Eph 3:17-18).
- ☛ Be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph 3:19).
- ☛ Grow up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15).
- ☛ Fill you with all joy and peace in believing (Rom 15:13).
- ☛ That from this time forward, we not

Everything about salvation is calculated to accomplish the revealed objectives of God. Nothing about salvation inhibits the realization of God’s purpose, or makes it more difficult to perceive and experience.

God is designed to meet this objective, for it is *“able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32).

Everything about salvation is calculated to accomplish the revealed objectives of God. Nothing about salvation inhibits the realization of God’s purpose, or makes it more difficult to perceive and experience. Although we have stated these things many times, it will be of profit to again mention certain texts in which God has established what He is doing by means of His *“great*

live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again (2 Cor 5:15).

- ☛ To preserve our *“whole spirit and soul and body”* blameless unto *“the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thess 5:23).
- ☛ That we should live the rest of our time *“to the will of God”* (1 Pet 4:2).
- ☛ That we might be *“found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless”* (2 Pet 3:14).

• That we “*sin not*” (1 John 2:1).

These are a very meager sampling of what has been revealed on this subject. These are the things that flow out from the faith that comes “*by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom 10:17). **As we grow in Christ we are actually being oriented for glory, becoming more and more familiar with both the Person and purpose of God.** Additionally, we are becoming more and more like Him, becoming “*partakers of the Divine nature*” by means of His “*exceeding great and precious promises*” (2 Pet 1:4).

The Day of Salvation

Now is the day of salvation. That is, this is the time when these objectives are being realized. **It is the time when God’s revealed purpose is being**

purpose for which Jesus died is not being realized. It ought to be obvious that such things cannot be.

Now, the difficulty is found in the near-total absence of these workings within the professed church. How is it that divorce is on the increase in the American church? Why are so many Christian leaders falling? Why are such things as unmarried “teen-age pregnancies,” enslavement to pornography, indecent attire, and defiling habits found in increasing numbers within the church. Why is there such a high level of spiritual ignorance, and such an alarming lack of acquaintance with the ways of God found among professing believers? Why does such a thing as elders who can scarcely find a book of the Bible exist within the church? Why is such a staggering degree of disinterest in the

expression of such things?

Just how is it that such traits can show themselves among those who have been “baptized into Christ?” Is it because they have believed? Is it because they are walking by faith? Is it because they are walking in the Spirit? Come now, let the self-appointed counselors give us an answer to these questions! Do unacceptable patterns of thought and behavior come because we are resisting the devil? Do they rush upon us while are seeking to know Christ, the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His resurrection? Do they follow being filled with all joy and peace in believing? Do they express themselves while we are living by every word of God?

Do any of these uncomely and condemned traits flow out of spiritual maturity? Are they the result of growing up into Christ in all things? Is it possible that they come while we are fighting the good fight of faith and laying hold on eternal life? Does “*spiritual understanding*” produce such things? Is it possible for them to be found in us while we are in fellowship with Jesus? Do they spring out of a pure heart or a good conscience?

Ah, but it is at once obvious that none of these questions can be answered in the affirmative! The most simple soul does not dare to say that anything given to us by God will result in such things – not His salvation, His grace, His gifts, or anything else that comes down to us from heaven!

These are ALL evidence of “the flesh,” for all that is “of the flesh” comes from “the flesh” itself (John 3:6). At the very best, they evidence spiritual childhood, when, by reason of time, there should be spiritual manhood. Such people are NOT strong in the faith. They are NOT fighting the good fight of faith, resisting the devil, or running with patience the race that is set before them. **They do NOT love the Lord with all of their hearts, for such a love will not allow the entrance of such things.** It seems to me that such situations are ever to be approached properly, this must be acknowledged.

Defiling the Temple of God

As we grow in Christ we are actually being oriented for glory, becoming more and more familiar with both the Person and purpose of God. Additionally, we are becoming more and more like Him, becoming “partakers of the Divine nature” by means of His “exceeding great and precious promises”

worked out. If what God has revealed as His will is **not** being done, therefore, it is NOT because this is not the proper time. This IS the proper time, and let there be no doubt about it.

Some Questions

These statements are more than mere academic points. They are not cold statements of a theological position. Rather, these are clear and concise statements about what God is doing in Christ Jesus. They are what His great salvation accomplishes. They are where spiritual life is the point, and where it is advancing. **Where Jesus is in view, this is what is taking place in the individual.** Where the Holy Spirit resides, these are the things that are being accomplished. Where faith is possessed, advancement is being made in these areas. **If this is not so, then salvation is ineffectual, and the**

things of God found among those who say they are “Christians?” Why is there such an emphasis on “counseling?” Why is there such a need for ministries of “recovery” among those professing to have faith?

Is there something – anything – about salvation that contributes to such conditions? Does the grace of God allow for the surfacing of such circumstances? In all of His work, does the Holy Spirit ever lead a person into such manners of life? Is it possible for faith to nurture the growth such things? Does hope make provision for them? Can a person really be “*looking unto Jesus,*” and fall into such manners? Is it remotely possible to seek the things that are above, and set your affection upon them, and yet have these characteristics rise to prominence? When the “*word of Christ*” dwells in us “*richly,*” will it allow for the

In order for unacceptable people to be found within the professed church, something that is fundamentally wrong has taken place. It is possible that the truth has been declared with power and insight, yet has been rejected by certain people. That happened with Jesus, and with the Apostles as well. However, it did not occur among those who remained with Jesus, cleaving to Him purpose of heart. Nor, indeed, did it take place among those who faithfully remained with the Apostles, drinking in their words, and working out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

The kind of circumstance that we have on our hands is one that is being sustained, and even growing all the worse. Further, there does not seem to be a conviction among church people about the seriousness of the situation. It is that circumstance that I will now address.

The Lord is sensitive about His church, and of the kind of people that men attempt to bring into it. God has spoken to this issue, so there is no room for speculation on it. The third chapter of Corinthians speaks with power to this subject.

- Paul was laboring together with God, knowing that the Corinthians were God's "building". "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (3:9).
- Being made by the grace of God a "wise masterbuilder," Paul had put down a foundation that was solid, and would surely support the "building" of God. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation" (3:10a).
- Others would build upon that foundation, making disciples, and intending to "add" them to the church: "and another buildeth thereon" (3:10b).
- However, every person endeavoring to build upon this foundation was to build with care, keeping the purpose for the building in mind: "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (3:10c).

- There as no option for building on any other foundation. Only one foundation exists, and it is Jesus Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11).
- The quality of the one being placed on this foundation was critical. There were some that would be without value, and would eventually be expendable, while others who would be precious and last. "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble" (3:12). This refers to people who are "converted."
- The true value of every convert will eventually be made known. That is, the kind of people that were placed on

(Gal 4:11).

- The laborer himself will also have to pass the test of "eternal judgment:" "but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (3:15a).
- The sanctity of the church of God is to be comprehended by all saints – especially those who work to build upon the foundation. This is where God and the Spirit dwell, and that is not to be forgotten. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (3:16).
- Those who are prone to forget these sobering realities are reminded that God will destroy any and every laborer who defiles His building, the

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the foundation will be fully revealed. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (3:13).

- If the work the laborer has "built" upon the foundation survives the day of judgment, he will receive a reward. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" (3:14).
- If any man's converts do not survive, he will "suffer loss." That is, his labor on them will have been expended in vain. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss" (3:15a). This is why Paul was "afraid" of the Galatians, for he considered that their condition suggested he may very well have labored in vain among them

church. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (3:17). Other versions read, "God will destroy him," NKJV/NASB/NIV "God will destroy that person," NRSV "God will put an end to him," BBE "God will bring ruin upon," NLT "him God shall waste," YLT "him God will mar," WEYMOUTH "God will tear him down," MONTGOMERY and "God will do hurt to him and bring him to the corruption of death and destroy him." AMPLIFIED

Allow me to fasten your attention on this last verse – "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." **I do not believe it is possible to read this verse in any way and conclude that it is not of a most serious nature.**

God Is Clear About This

God is clear about the condition of which He speaks – **defiling His temple with inferior materials.** He is clear about what He will do to the person who dares to do such a thing, whether he was willing to do so or not – **God will destroy that person.** He is also clear about why He will do this – **the temple of God is holy.** He is clear about what constitutes the temple of God – the people themselves: *“you are that temple.”*^{NIV}

God is **not**, therefore, speaking about the deeds that people do, for the temple consists of people – *“living stones”* – and not mere deeds. He is not speaking about putting certain doctrines or teaching in the temple, for the temple consists of people, not teachings.

Unacceptable people within

the deeds that people do, for the temple consists of people – “living stones” – and not mere deeds. He is not speaking about putting certain doctrines or teaching in the temple, for the temple consists of people, not teachings.

the professed church are the product of someone’s work. They are the result of a certain kind of preaching, a certain stress, and a certain approach to making supposed disciples. Let it be clear, **the Gospel itself does not produce inferior materials** – *“wood, hay, and stubble.”* The Gospel is *“the power of God unto salvation,”* and, when believed, can **only** produce acceptable fruitage – *“gold, silver, and precious stones.”*

The Holy Spirit does not produce “wood, hay, and stubble,” nor does “the truth,” of which the church is “the pillar and the ground” (1 Tim 3:15). Jesus has given no *“gifts”* to the church – be they Apostles, prophets, evangelists, or pastors/teachers (Eph 4:11) – that produce *“wood, hay, and stubble.”* The *“wisdom that is from above”* does not produce that kind of people – people who burn up in the fire of Divine judgment! They are not the result

of preaching *“the Word”* (2 Tim 4:2), preaching *“the cross”* (1 Cor 1:18), or preaching *“Christ”* (Rom 16:25). The grace of God does not result in *“wood, hay, and stubble.”* When *“the Gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24) is preached, it does **not** produce those kind of products.

Therefore, if “wood, hay, and stubble” is found within the church, it is not the result of the working of God! Jesus did not do this! The Holy Spirit did not do this! The Gospel of Christ did not do this! What, or who, is it, then, that put these unacceptable people within the framework of the church? **Paul traces it back to a person who, by what he said and did, “defiled the temple of God.”** Such people were *“of the world,”* and therefore spoke *“of the world,”* and *“the world”* heard them (1

John 4:5). They gloried in *“their shame,”* and are described as those who *“mind earthly things”* (Phil 3:19). These men were not sent from God, and He gave them no word to say to the people – for God does not send forth His servants to place *“wood, hay, and stubble”* within His temple, the place in which He dwells by the Spirit (Eph 2:20). **Such men are nothing more than “ministers” of the devil himself, who drape over themselves the cloth of the cleric, pretending to be servants of God.** As it is written, *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Cor 11:14-15). Only Satan and his workers produce *“wood, hay, and stubble,”* attempting to place them upon the foundation that God has put into place – and they have done it during *“the day of*

salvation.”

Corrupt and Bad Trees

Jesus was quite clear about this matter, and there is no reason for any believer to be ignorant of what He has 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. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matt 7:17-20).

And who are these *“corrupt”* trees that produce *“evil fruit?”* Jesus said they were *“false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”* (Matt 7:15). They do not look like false prophets. In fact, they have every appearance of being the people of God – *“sheep.”* **But they do not serve up sheep’s food.** They do not nurture the people of God or feed the flock. They have their own peculiar form of food, and it produces sick and deformed people – *“wood, hay, and stubble.”* **It is what they preach and teach that makes their constituents what they are.** It may come across as sound psychological advice and counsel, but it only yields *“wood, hay, and stubble.”* It may come in the form of the message of an historical movement, but it still yields *“wood, hay, and stubble.”* It may come in the form of *“worship and praise,”* community assistance, or reaching a particular social segment, but it still yields *“wood, hay, and stubble.”*

Wherever “wood, hay, and stubble” are prominent, and are always showing up in the church, a person and a message can be found that is producing such people. Those people may be highly educated, seminary-trained, and excellent administrators. But if they are defiling the temple of God with *“wood, hay, and stubble,”* they are slated for destruction – like *“brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed”* (2 Pet 2:12)!

Him Will, God Destroy

And what of the person who tears the church apart with controversy over inconsequential matters. What will God do with the person who introduces any form of corruption within the church,

seeking his own way, and with a complete disregard for eternity? **God will destroy him, and that is a promise!** Church wreckers will take their place along side those who have spewed poisonous teaching that caused “*wood, hay, and stubble*” to flourish in the church.

The word from which “*destroy*” is translated (φθερεῖ) is unquestionably strong. It means “to be destroyed, to perish,” THAYER “ruin, corrupt, cause harm to,” FRIBERG “causing something to be corrupt and thus cease to exist,” LOUW-NIDA and “to ruin, waste, spoil, destroy, to go to ruin, perish.” LIDDELL-SCOTT **One will search in vain to find one element of mercy or grace in this word.** Nothing good is held out to the person who defiles the temple of God. In fact, there is not even the hope of recovery set forth for such an

one, although I do not deny that such a thing is possible. However, when dealing with sins of this magnitude, recovery is not the point being made.

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

Why have I taken the time to deliver this fulmination, or denunciation? Because of the nature of the time in which we are living: **“behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”** (2 Cor 6:2). This is the time when God is delivering men from “*the power of darkness*,” and translating them “*into the Kingdom*” of His dear Son (Col 1:13). **Flawed, inferior, and corrupting messages are always wrong, but even more so when they are delivered during the time when “glad tidings of good things” have**

been given to declare! It is quite true that men have come up with an approach to “Christianity” that fills the churches, produces impressive careers, and heaps praise upon men. But in the end, what they are doing is not reconciling men to God. It is not freeing them from the shackles of sin, nor is it moving men into a condition where they are being changed “*from glory to glory*.”

Anyone who cannot see the state of the American church is in bad condition – one that is closely related to “*wood, hay, and stubble*.” **Now, in the time of acceptance, and the day of salvation, “better things” are expected of the people.** It is woefully wrong to be unacceptable in the time of acceptance!

GIVING NO OFFENCE IN ANYTHING

“^{3a} *Giving no offence . . .*”

Paul will further account for his labors, showing **why** he took great care not to stand in the way of what the Lord is doing in Christ Jesus. He will confirm why he did **not** preach a message that had the world and the world’s values in it.

NO OFFENSE

“*Giving no offence . . .*” Other versions read, “*We give no offense*,”^{NJKV} “*giving no cause for offense*,”^{NASB} “*We put no stumbling block*,”^{NIV} “*We are putting no obstacle*,”^{NRSV} “*giving no occasion of stumbling*,”^{ASV} “*Giving no cause for trouble*,”^{BBE} “*giving no manner of offence*,”^{DARBY} “*We cause no one to stumble*,”^{NAB} “*We try to live in such a way that no one will be hindered from finding the Lord*,”^{NLT} “*giving any cause of offense*,”^{YLT} “*We try to live in such a way that no one will ever be offended or kept back from finding the Lord*,”^{LIVING} “*We endeavor to give people no cause for stumbling*,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*We put no obstruction*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

An “*offense*” is something that causes one to stumble or fall. In this case, it is something that would cause one to draw back from believing and obeying the Gospel of Christ. **It is something that would appear to justify living aloof**

from the Lord, or living close to the world, or indulging in the works of the flesh. This speaks of an “*occasion of stumbling*” – something that leads one into error or sin. It may be a word or a deed, a manner or an appearance, a particular doctrine or an emphasis.

In particular, an “*offense*” is

in the desert of the flesh, instead of entering into the safety of the fold.

IN ANYTHING

“*. . . in anything . . .*” Other versions read, “*. . . in giving no occasion of stumbling in anything*,”^{ASV} “*Giving no cause for trouble in anything*,”^{BBE} “*We cause no one to stumble in anything*,”^{NAB}

An “offense” is something that causes one to stumble or fall. In this case, it is something that would cause one to draw back from believing and obeying the Gospel of Christ. It is something that would appear to justify living aloof from the Lord, or living close to the world, or indulging in the works of the flesh. This speaks of an “occasion of stumbling” – something that leads one into error or sin.

something that would cause a person to **not** take advantage of “*the accepted time*” – to continue to live in an unacceptable manner. It is something that would influence a person to remain “*lost*” in “*the day of salvation*,” choosing to wander

“*by the way we act*,”^{NLT} “*in nothing*,”^{YLT} “*which might hurt someone*,”^{IE} “*in anybody’s way*,”^{WILLIAMS} and “*in anyone’s way*.”^{PHILLIPS}

There are a variety of ways in

which people can be caused to stumble, moving them to walk in the dark. There are disarming habits that lead people to believe the world and its “*fashion*” (1 Cor 7:19) is not so bad after all. Paul was careful to consider the scope of life, and how his entire life would be viewed. He did not take for granted that people understood what motivated him, and so he made sure it was clearly defined and expressed in everything he said and did.

Allow me to briefly develop this thought without getting into too many details, and thus obscuring what is here proclaimed.

How does a slovenly, slipshod, and

us with all of their pretentious scholarship? Have they brought the advantage to us, or cast us upon the flimsy foundation of human research and analysis?

And what may we say of those who teach us to evaluate people by psychological principles? How are we to respond to those to speak of the deep differences between male and female, the effect of stress upon a person, and all manner of addictions and childhood disadvantages? Precisely what is it that such approaches do for us? Do they clarify the things of God, or emit a fog that makes them more difficult to discern?

are stumbling blocks not being thrown in the path of the people?

The Thoroughness of Spiritual Life

There is a thoroughness in spiritual life that cannot be denied. It does not allow for segmentation – where life is divided into neat little compartments that have no relation to each other. **“Newness of life” includes all of life, and unless it is approached in that manner, it will soon die out.** That is why we are told, *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him”* (Col 3:17). And again, *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”* (1 Cor 10:31). And again, *“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).

There is no such thing as a part of life that is not to be governed by faith. Walking and living by faith does not refer to a certain part of life, but to the **whole** of it. When we read *“the just shall live by faith,”* we are reading of the **entirety** of life, and not a mere aspect of it. In another place Paul speaks of this matter: *“Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God”* (1 Cor 10:32). How wide is the scope of spiritual attention! We must have in our minds to not throw down a stumbling block to those without, as well as those within the fold of Christ.

The *“time accepted”* and *“the day of salvation”* do not provide for a part of life that is conducted **outside** the circumference of being *“the sons of God”* (1 John 3:1). **Those who live by faith – and only those who do so – will be able to give no occasion of stumbling in anything!** It is good to get the *“anything”* and everything factors into our lives.

How are we to regard a preacher or a teacher who majors on minors, and minors on majors. When they speak more of life in this world than the world to come, what does it really do for us? When earthly families are presented as superior to the family of God, and worldly possessions upstage “spiritual blessings,” are stumbling blocks not being thrown in the path of the people?

sloppy appearance testify to those about us? What does it say to the people, and how will it be viewed? I realize we are living in the time of the casual appearance, and I do not intend to speak in condemnation of every casual appearance. But what does this manner testify to the people. Is it more akin to a foundation or a stumbling stone, to an advantage or an offense?

What of those who cause us to question the integrity of the Scriptures. They point to their footnotes, and speak of the better manuscripts, and the flaws in the text. And, what have they done for

What may we say of those who, like the Pharisees, *“say, and do not”* (Matt 23:3). Does it really help us when they attempt to speak for the Lord, all the while maintaining an obvious love for the world – even though God said not to do so (1 John 2:15-17)?

How are we to regard a preacher or a teacher who majors on minors, and minors on majors. When they speak more of life in this world than the world to come, what does it really do for us? When earthly families are presented as superior to the family of God, and worldly possessions upstage *“spiritual blessings,”*

THAT THE MINISTRY BE NOT BLAMED

“^{3b} . . . that the ministry be not blamed.”

Paul is acutely aware that he is a *“Minister of Christ”* and a *“steward of the mysteries of God”* (1 Cor 4:1). He had

received *“dispensation of the grace of God”* (Eph 3:2), and was charged with fulfilling *“the word of God”* toward the

people (Col 1:25). He did not think in terms of a religious career – something he had already cast away from himself like the filthy garment that it was (Phil 3:4-8). How strongly this comes across in his writings, and how sorely this frame of mind is needed in our day – a day marked by remarkable religious corruption.

THE MINISTRY

“... that the ministry...” Other versions read, “that our ministry,”^{NKJV} “our work,”^{BBE} “our work of service,”^{NJB} “with us,”^{LIVING} “lest the work we are doing,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “the ministry God has given us.”^{PHILLIPS}

Paul had been put “into the ministry,” and knew he was responsible for bringing no reproach upon it. When Peter spoke to the disciples concerning filling the position from which Judas “by transgression fell,” he said Judas had “obtained part of **this ministry**” (Acts 1:17). When they prayed for Divine guidance in the matter, they asked God to make known to them whom He had chosen to “take part of **this ministry**” (Acts 1:25). When Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem, it was “when they had fulfilled **their ministry**” (Acts 12:25). Paul referred to his work as “**the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus**” (Acts 20:24). When Paul went before James, “he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by **his ministry**” (Acts 21:18-19).

Earlier, in chapter five, Paul said God had given to them “**the ministry of reconciliation**” (2 Cor 5:18). Archippus was admonished to “take heed to **the ministry**” that he had “received in the Lord, and fulfill it” (Col 4:17). Timothy was exhorted “make full proof of **thy ministry**” (2 Tim 4:5).

What is “the ministry?” This is an appointed work, or service, in which the commands and will of the Lord are executed. A “minister” is one who is fulfilling the agenda of the One who appointed, called, and sent him. “The ministry” is the appointed work itself, together with those who have been called to do it. In this text, it is the work that Jesus Himself has established – “the ministry of reconciliation.”

BE NOT BLAMED

“... be not blamed.” Other versions read, “be not discredited,”^{NASB} “so that no fault may be found,”^{NRSV} “so that no one man be able to say anything against,”^{BBE} “should not be reprehended,”^{GENEVA} “so that no blame may attach,”^{NJB} “so that no one can find fault with us and blame it on the Lord,”^{LIVING} “should fall into discredit,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “nor do we wish to bring discredit.”^{PHILLIPS}

count their own masters worthy of all honor; **that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed**” (1 Tim 6:1). The ministry is not to be blamed!

Young men are told, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12). The ministry was not to be blamed.

Every backslider causes a wound on “the ministry of reconciliation,” bringing reproach upon Christ and His great salvation. Every person who was once zealous for Jesus, yet returned to the world, leaving His work because of a love for that world, has caused “blame” to be heaped upon the “ministry.”

The word “blamed” means to find fault with or mock. This is the thing against which believers are warned. When David sinned with Bathsheba, this was the very point upon which he was judged by God: “Howbeit, because by this deed **thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die**” (2 Sam 12:14). The ministry was blamed.

Paul told some wayward and thoughtless people in the church at Rome, “For the name of God is **blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written**” (Rom 2:24). The ministry was blamed.

Younger women are admonished, “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, **give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully**” (1 Tim 5:14). They were not to provide an opportunity for the ministry to be blamed. Wives are told, “To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, **that the word of God be not blasphemed**” (Titus 2:5).

Servants are exhorted, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke

Who is able to adequately measure the effect of religious scandals, fallen leaders, and moral corruption within the church, upon “the ministry.” The historical bloody crusades that were waged in the name of Christ have caused “blame” to be registered against “the ministry.” Every backslider causes a wound on “the ministry of reconciliation,” bringing reproach upon Christ and His great salvation. Every person who was once zealous for Jesus, yet returned to the world, leaving His work because of a love for that world, has caused “blame” to be heaped upon the “ministry.” What person has not heard the lament of Paul ringing in his ears: “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim 4:10).

Let all disciples conduct themselves with all purity and holy objectivity before the Lord. Let there be no cause for shame found in those who wear the name of Jesus. Let none dabble in the world as though such things were not seen in heaven and observed upon earth! Let the ministry not be blamed! Let no ones conduct leave the impression that salvation is unimportant or ineffective. A great price has been paid for what we have in Christ Jesus. See to it that each one of us adorns the doctrine!

CONCLUSION

The greatness of “*the time accepted*” and “*the day of salvation*” has been greatly obscured by modern Christendom. A variety of emphases have upstaged the “*salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*” (2 Tim 2:10). **In the context of these doctrinal thrusts a number of things and**

and election sure (2 Pet 1:10).

- Working out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12).
- Running with patience the race that is set before us (Heb 12:1-2).
- In your faith adding virtue,

resurrection of the dead, an eternal inheritance, the mediation and intercession of Jesus, the crucifixion of the flesh, and the hope of glory --to name a few.

Why are such themes so rarely declared and expounded in the churches? It is because the agenda that is being promoted does not require such affirmations and expositions. **The program of the average congregation can be easily executed without ever mentioning a word about such things.** People can subject themselves to an extensive theological education without learning very much by these matters. The very expressions “*the time accepted*” and “*the day of salvation*” have a strange ring among no small number of professing Christians.

If ever a person is to stand confidently before the judgment seat of Christ, these things must make their way into the heart and mind, and be found upon the tongue. If this does not happen, someone has been negligent in the matter of God’s work, and the ministry will be blamed.

However, when it comes to what God is doing, all of these are central, and are the subjects of affirmation and lengthy development. **If ever a person is to stand confidently before the judgment seat of Christ, these things must make their way into the heart and mind, and be found upon the tongue.** If this does not happen, someone has been negligent in the matter of God’s work, and the ministry will be blamed. God has no laborers who are not conversant with such matters.

expressions are largely out of place in the average congregation. Although pivotal matters in the Word of God, consider how infrequently the following things are mentioned in the contemporary church. It is a most uncomely situaion!

knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (2 Pet 1:5-7).

- Living and walking by faith (Heb 10:38; 2 Cor 5:7).
- Walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16,25).
- Seeking the things that are above (Col 3:1).
- Setting your affection on things above (Col 3:2).
- Giving diligence to make your calling

- Holding fast the confidence and “*rejoicing of the hope*” firm unto the end (Heb 3:6).
- Realizing the “*full assurance of hope*” unto the end (Heb 6:11).
- Being “*steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*” (1 Cor 15:58).

Consider the near-total absence of preaching and teaching on subjects like justification, sanctification, the coming of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, the end of the world, the

There is no such thing as a valid “ministry” that can be fulfilled while ignoring, and remaining fundamentally ignorant of, the time of Divine acceptance and the day of salvation. A perception of this is key to every Kingdom work. May God send laborers forth with this knowledge.



The sixteenth annual Refreshing Waters Renewal promises to be a time of great spiritual benefit. The theme, “Divine Glory,” focuses on a subject that will yield much edification and comfort. Make your plans to join us for this grand occasion.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/13/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The twenty-seventh lesson will cover verses four through 10 of the sixth chapter: **"OBTAINING PROPER APPROVAL."** The manner in which the servants of God are "approved" is quite different than it is with worldly men. Approval is consonant with the nature of the "day of salvation," and what God is doing during that time. 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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