

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 #27

COMMENTARY ON: 6:4-10

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

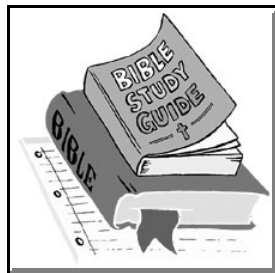
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

OBTAINING PROPER APPROVAL

What approves a man to proclaim "the word of reconciliation," and participate in "the ministry of reconciliation?" What is it that confirms the individual has, in fact, been called and sent forth by the Head of the church? This text will focus on the character of the individual, and of his reaction to the circumstances that arise because of his ministry. Paul now provides a most remarkable commentary on the result of having a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel. As men work "together with God" an extremely diverse network of experiences results – experiences that are, in a way, painfully contradictory to one another.

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 27



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 Standard 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 -----

OBTAINING PROPER APPROVAL

"^{6:4} But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, ⁵ In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; ⁶ By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, ⁷ By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, ⁸ By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; ⁹ As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; ¹⁰ As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor 6:4-10)

INTRODUCTION

What qualifies a person to work together with God? Or, are there any qualifications at all? Having once escaped from highly organized, professionalized, and stilted religion of the "Dark Ages," the blight of institutionalism has again overgrown Christendom. It is not confined to the old form of ornate cathedrals, a highly structured and visible hierarchy of religious authorities – although over one billion professed Christians have maintained that form, which is growing in popularity. Now, of the professed

Christian population of over two and one-half billion people, there are burgeoning numbers that have embraced a seemingly less formal style of religion. They still maintain their theological schools, which are generally nothing more than citadels in which sectarian views are maintained and perpetrated. But there is a new kind of purported religious freedom that de-emphasizes the Word of God, has little regard for holiness, and is seeking to blend the admixture of godliness and entertainment.

In this setting, religious leaders are a kind of end of themselves. Their value is largely measured by their institutional success, and the number of people that join the roles of their supporters. In America, this is the era of the mega-church, when size is everything. Little place is made for doctrinal content or personal purity. In this environment, the qualifications for a church leader really have little to do with whether or not the individual is approved of God. A considerable amount of weight is placed

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on professional theological training. A success in impacting large numbers of people also ranks very high. Expertise in counseling, administration, and reaching special people-groups is also highly touted. How effectively the person communicates the Word of God is not seen as significant, or if the person is characterized by unquestionable godliness.

All of this may sound like nothing more than a tirade from a grumbling soul. But that is not the case. It has a great deal to do with the text that is before us. Here is a passage that deals with approval – the approval of someone professing to be working together with God. We are being exposed to a person who affirms God is speaking through him: *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God”* (2 Cor 5:20). Here is a person who affirms he has been given *“the ministry”* and *“word of reconciliation”* (2 Cor 5:18-19). He is working together with God (2 Cor 6:1), and is calling upon the people to come into accord with God – to be reconciled to Him, and not to receive His grace in vain (2 Cor 5:20; 6:1).

What can possibly justify such claims? He has declared that he is *“an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God”* (2 Cor 1:1).

BOLD AFFIRMATIONS

He has affirmed that both *“the sufferings”* and the *“consolation”* of Christ abound in him (2 Cor 1:5). He has

further testified that God has, does, and will deliver him (2 Cor 1:10). He has said that his conscience testifies to his integrity (2 Cor 1:12). Boldly he announces that God is making known *“the savor of His knowledge”* through the message that he is preaching (2 Cor 2:14), and that **the reactions of people to his preaching are actually their reactions to Christ Himself** (2 Cor 2:15-16).

Paul tells the Corinthians that he is not like many *“who corrupt the word of God.”* He rather speaks sincerely, before God, and in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 2:17). He states that is *“sufficiency is of God”* (2 Cor 3:5), and that God has made him an *“able minister of the new testament”* (2 Cor 3:6). He testifies that God Himself, using the message that he is preaching, shines into the hearts of men to give them *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus”* (2 Cor 4:6). Both the *“dying”* and the *“life of Jesus”* are being accomplished in him (2 Cor 4:10-11). Freely he states that his sufferings for working for him *“a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (2 Cor 4:17). Boldly he affirms that he is willing, and actually prefers, to be *“absent from the body and present with the Lord”* (2 Cor 5:8).

I understand many of these qualities to be common to all members of *“the household of faith”* (Gal 6:10). However, **I want to view them in particular regard to those who profess to be serving the Lord in some leadership capacity.** Such things are to be found in them in special measures, for leaders cannot bring people where they themselves have not come.

The manner in which Paul has been speaking does not blend well with contemporary claims of Christian

leadership. Few, if any, “pulpit committees” have ever interviewed a proposed “candidate” who spoke in such a manner. This simply is not the way the modern religious leader speaks. He generally sites other things as particularly qualifying him.

CONFIRMING DIVINE APPROVAL

Paul does not let the matter rest by siting these things about himself. He will now set out to show **how** he has been *“approved”* before God. **Technically, these will be confirmations of God’s approval.** In the ultimate sense, Paul, like all believers, obtained approval in Christ Jesus, in whom we are *“accepted”* (Eph 1:6). **However, that acceptance reflects itself in the lives of the accepted ones.** There is really no such thing as *“newness of life”* that is not lived out in the crucible of life in this world. The person who is truly **“born again”** does not live as though he was **not “born again.”** The person who is **“dead with Christ”** does not live in concert with the world. The one who is **“risen with Christ”** does not maintain a preference for the things of *“this present evil world.”* The one who is **“washed”** does not walk about in a state of defilement. A person who has been **“delivered from this present evil world”** does not remain enslaved to it. If the individual has been **“reconciled to God,”** he does not remain in a state of practical enmity against Him. If we have been **“made free from sin,”** we do not continue to serve it. All of this is quite elementary.

As evident as this may appear, this is not the common view of life in Christ Jesus – or, as is commonly preferred, being “a Christian.” It is to be understood that people can **“fall”** from the state of blessedness in Christ. This very passage begins with a fervent plea to *“receive not the grace of God in vain”* (6:1). **Should**

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such a thing occur, all of the benefits of grace are also forfeited. If a person denies the faith (1 Tim 5:8), that person **cannot** possibly continue to enjoy the benefits of faith. If one turns his ear “away from the truth” (2 Tim 4:4), he **cannot** continue to realize the freedom and sanctification that truth brings. The individual who “draws back” from God will **not** be treated by the Lord as though he was drawing near (Heb 10:38-39). If the Holy Spirit is quenched, who imagines that all of the benefits that come from the Spirit will remain with the person (1 Thess 5:19). The one who chooses to “grieve” the Holy Spirit will **not** be treated by that Spirit as though he had submitted to Him (Eph 4:30). If an “evil

coming Messiah could be seen in Him – in His words and deeds, or the totality of His life. He also pointed to His works as confirmation of who He really was: “If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, **believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him**” (John 10:37-38). Again He boldly affirmed, “*the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of Me*” (John 10:25).

Contradicting Conduct

Jesus also pointed out that conduct inconsistent with the nature of true spiritual life confirmed the absence of that life. “*He that is of God heareth*

saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). “*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*” (1 John 4:20).

A Confirmation of this Principle

Our text is a confirmation of the principle that I have just mentioned: namely that **genuine spiritual life produces effects that confirm its presence. Where the effects of life are absent, it is only because the life itself is not present.** In association with our text, where the confirmations of a godly ministry are **not** found, it is only because either a ministry has **not** been given, or, at the very best, the person is an **unfaithful** steward. Neither state is an enviable or acceptable one.

Paul will now show us five areas in which his claim of being a worker together with God will, be confirmed. He will emphasize his reaction to these five strata of human experience: (1) adversity, (2) by consistent expressions of life, (3) evidences of character, (4) stewardship of Divine provisions, and (5) experiences resulting from his ministry. Although there are special measures of these things associated with the apostolic ministry, all of them do apply to all of the ministries within the body of Christ. **These are areas in which genuine Divine approval is made known. Failure in these areas cast the shadow of doubt upon any profession of working together with God.** I also should add that a person involved in religious work who does not say he is working with God is altogether excluded from any form of identity with a work that God will bless. Such a person is an obvious impostor, and is not to be heeded. Whatever he is doing is nothing more an encroachment, for no one works for God in whom God is not working.

It is not enough to make claims concerning being received by God, loving Him, serving Him, and being part of His work. Such claims must be matched by a life that vindicates, or confirms, the affirmation. This is fundamental to sound theology. A life that contradicts one’s profession negates the profession.

heart of unbelief” rises in us, we will **not** be viewed by the Lord as though we were “strong in faith,” giving glory to Him (Heb 3:12).

It Is Not Enough

It is not enough to make claims concerning being received by God, loving Him, serving Him, and being part of His work. Such claims must be matched by a life that vindicates, or confirms, the affirmation. This is fundamental to sound theology. **A life that contradicts one’s profession negates the profession.** Jesus Himself lived by this rule. He said the Scriptures themselves testified of Him: “*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me*” (John 5:39). That is, what they said concerning the

God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, **because ye are not of God**” (John 8:47). And again, “*But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*” (John 10:26-27). Once Jesus accounted for the theological errors of the Sadducees: “*And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?*” (Mark 12:24).

In his First Epistle, John also drew attention to this kingdom trait – namely, that **newness of life does not produce contradicting manners of life.** “*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and His word is not in us*” (1 John 1:10). And again, “*He that*

APPROVING OURSELVES

It might be imagined that a confirmation of approval is not even

necessary – that people are to take for granted that all claims of being a

representative of God are valid. The children of God must not indulge

themselves in such foolishness. **If the Lord of glory Himself challenged people to test His claims by what they saw in Him and heard from Him, how can it be that those who serve Him are not to do the same?** Jesus said, *“The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord”* (Mat 10:24). This is why Paul now takes up the doubts of some of the Corinthians that he was, in fact, a genuine apostle. He will show them in controvertible proof that his profession was true. He will not use the proofs of a Grecian philosopher, which are nothing more than words. Knowing that *“the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power”* (1 Cor 4:20), **Paul will point to matters that require the power of God.** These are things that cannot be done in the energy of the flesh, or simulated by those lacking the power.

APPROVING OURSELVES

“^{6:4a} But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God . . .”

In a godly manner, Paul throws the spotlight of consideration upon himself. He will not accent his exploits, but rather **how he reacted** under a variety of circumstances. He will show us how he lived, and what he did when confronted with all manner of opposition.

In All Things

“But in all things . . .” Other versions read, *“But in everything,”* ^{NASB} *“Rather . . . in every way”* ^{NIV} *“On the contrary, in everything,”* ^{NAB} *“in everything we do,”* ^{NLT} *“In fact, in everything,”* ^{LIVING} *“Instead, in everything,”* ^{IE} and *“whatever we have to go through.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

The apostle will **not** extract but a portion of his life, and put it under the microscope of consideration. He will **not** approach his life as though it was comprised of spiritual and secular facets. He knows true spiritual life impacts upon *“everything.”* He knew very well that Divine enrichment was experienced *“in everything”* (1 Cor 1:5). Believers *“abound in everything”* (2 Cor 8:7), are *“enriched in everything”* (2 Cor 9:11), and *“in everything give thanks”* (1 Thess 5:18). He knew that God is working *“all things together for our good”* (Rom 8:28), and that *“all things”* are *“of Him, and*

through Him, and to Him” (Rom 11:36). He knew that in Christ Jesus *“all things”* become new (2 Cor 5:17). Those in Christ grow up into Him *“in all things”* (Eph 4:15). They are *“instructed in all things,”* and can *“do all things”* through Christ who strengthens them (Phil 4:12-13). *“All things”* are to be proved, or tested (1 Thess 5:21), and faithfulness is to be found *“in all things”* (1 Tim 3:11). To the pure, *“all things are pure”* (Tit 1:15), and the person who labors with God is to show himself a pattern of good works *“in all things”* (Tit 2:7), and *“adorn the doctrine . . . in all things”* (Tit 2:10).

Therefore, Paul will **not** point our attention to “some” preferred things. He

together, to set in the same place, to bring or band together . . . to set one with another i.e. by way of presenting or introducing him, i.e. to commend” ^{THAYER} Other lexical definitions are, “as making known one’s approval, comment, recommend,” ^{FRIBERG} and “to indicate approval of a person or event with the implication that others adopt the same attitude – ‘to recommend.” ^{LOUW-NIDA} In other words, **Paul is going to take the responses of his life and lay them along side of the calling of God, showing there is no disharmony with that calling in his actions.** They are in perfect accord with the ministry to which he has been called.

By saying *“approving ourselves,”* or *“commending ourselves,”* Paul is not seeking to promote his own interests. He

Therefore, Paul will not point our attention to “some” preferred things. He will not isolate some favored segment of life, or point to special times when he managed to act in the most befitting manner. He will place the viewing scope over the entirety of his life, showing that the whole of his life is an expression of newness of life.

will not isolate some favored segment of life, or point to special times when he managed to act in the most befitting manner. **He will place the viewing scope over the entirety of his life, showing that the whole of his life is an expression of newness of life.**

Approving Ourselves

“. . . approving ourselves . . .”

Other versions read, *“we commend ourselves,”* ^{NKJV} *“commending ourselves,”* ^{NASB} *“we have commended ourselves,”* ^{NRSV} *“making it quite clear,”* ^{BBE} *“let us exhibit ourselves,”* ^{DOUAY} *“we prove ourselves,”* ^{NJB} *“we try to show,”* ^{NLT} *“we try to conduct ourselves,”* ^{IE} *“we demonstrate,”* ^{ISV} *“I am trying,”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“I am striving to commend myself,”* ^{MONTGOMERY} and *“we want to prove ourselves.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

The word *“approving”* comes from the Greek word *συνιστάντες* (soon-is-tone-tez) which has the root meaning, “to place

is rather unveiling the areas in which God Himself tests His servants, confirming their loyalty to Him, and showing they are His chosen. Confirming that he labored to avoid having *“the ministry”* blamed – the *“apostle of the Gentiles”* (Rom 11:13) – he now shows how his conduct under a variety of circumstances is sufficient to confirm that he had, in fact, been commissioned and enabled by the Lord of glory. He extended himself to live in strict consonance with both the nature of life in Christ Jesus, and the commission for which he had been called. He not only labored so the ministry would not be blamed, but deliberate responded in faith to every circumstance of life.

As the Ministers of God

“. . . as the ministers of God . . .”

Other versions read, *“as servants of God,”* ^{NASB} *“as God’s ministers,”* ^{DARBY} *“that we are true ministers of God,”* ^{LIVING} *“as true servants of God,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“genuine*

ministers of God.” PHILLIPS

Here is the occupation, or calling, with which Paul will compare his reactions and expressions: “*the ministers of God.*” **That is, the ones who have been called to serve God’s interests in the doing of His work, and the carrying out of His will.** These are

employed in “*the ministry of reconciliation.*” A “*minister,*” as we have said elsewhere, is one who is carrying out the commands and will of another. In this case, it is the person who is active in fulfilling the will of the Lord. That is, he is devoted to fulfilling the revealed purpose of God. The words “*true*” and “*genuine*” are implied in the word

“*ministers,*” or “*servants,*” as used in the Living Bible, and Phillips New Testament. **These are not theoretical “ministers,” or those who are aspiring to such a work, but those who are actually engaged in serving the Lord.** Like it or not, all other professed “*ministers*” are false. Those who serve not God are not His ministers.

IN ADVERSITY

The first area in which Paul sites validation of God’s approval of him is that of adversity, trial, and trouble. This will confirm that the person who is blessed of God, and is serving Him acceptably, is by no means living a trouble-free life. Triumph (2 Cor 2:14) and victory (1 Cor 15:57) are not to be equated with riding on the crest of an experiential wave. Prevailing and enduring postulate trouble, they do not exclude it. **It is not possible to experience triumph and victory unless a battle is fought.**

The adversity of reference is not

(*Christ’s*) sufferings” (Phil 3:10) – when men “*suffer with Him*” (Rom 8:17). **This is the adversity that is understood, and is embraced, because it is perceived as being the result of the world’s enmity against God and those who work together with Him.**

Among other things, this means there is no need to faint in the day of adversity, as though you were unequal to the occasion. As it is written, “*If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small*” (Prov 24:10). **Men do not “faint,” giving up and quitting,**

with God.

By nature, men tend to equate peace with blessing, and the lack of trial with approval – but this is not a proper assessment. Sometimes men are sorely tested **because** they have been singularly blessed. As Paul himself said, “*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure*” (2 Cor 12:7).

Also, by virtue of our separation from the world in Christ Jesus, we experience opposition from it. This is why Jesus said, “*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (John 15:19). And again He said, “*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33). Following His enthronement in glory, those with faith saw this with greater clarity and admonished believers, “*to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). Paul taught the saints to expect trouble. “*For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know*” (1 Thess 3:4).

Therefore, if a person is in Christ, and working together with Him, the issue is not whether or not adversity will be experienced, but

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that or ordinary life – as with man being “*born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward*” (Job 5:7). This is **not** life as viewed by Solomon in Ecclesiastes: “*All things are full of labor . . . For what hath man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart . . . All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness*” (Eccl 1:8; 2:22; 5:17). This is not even adversity like that which Job experienced, which adversity was, for a time, most mysterious to him (Job 3:11-12; 7:20-21). Rather, this is adversity that is experienced **as a result of being a worker together with God.** It is the experience of “*the fellowship of His*

because their trials were too great, but because their strength was too small! Both good and bad times come from the Lord, and are areas in which we are tested. Again it is written, “*In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other.*” (Eccl 7:14). Godly men have always known this. In his unique affliction Job reasoned, “*What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*” (Job 2:10). James reminds us that the prophets are “*an example of suffering affliction, and of patience*” (James 5:10). That is, they are an example of suffering affliction **because** of working together

HOW the individual reacts to it. Now Paul will testify of how he reacted to adversity. The words that follow are all confirmable, else they would carry no weight. Many of them are corroborated in the book of Acts by Luke, who traveled with Paul in many of his labors. Timothy also bore witness to these responses, as well as others (2 Tim 3:10).

MUCH PATIENCE

“^{4b} . . . *in much patience* . . .”

Other versions read, “*in much endurance*,”^{NASB} “*in great endurance*,”^{NIV} “*through great endurance*,”^{NIV} “*in quiet strength*,”^{BBE} “*by resolute perseverance*,”^{NJB} “*patiently endure*,”^{LIVING} “*we must endure much*,”^{IE} “*unwearied endurance*,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*by tremendous endurance*,”^{ISV} “*by steadfast endurance*,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “*patient endurance*.”^{PHILLIPS}

Although Paul experienced an extraordinary measure of adversity, he did not faint, quit, or lapse into periods of inactivity. His sufferings only made him more resolute, more determined, and more driven to finish his course, fulfilling his ministry faithfully and without wavering.

“*Much patience*” is uncommon endurance. **It is continuing to run the race when the course seems impossible to negotiate.** The word “*much*” means “abundant, plentiful.”^{THAYER} It includes the idea of great variety, or many different kinds. The word “*patience*” means “steadfastness, constancy, endurance.”^{THAYER}

There are several vivid pictures presented in the expression “*much patience*.”

- ☛ A person running a course that is strewn with all manners of obstacles, yet he stays on course without swerving off of it.
- ☛ An individual running through a driving rain or storm, who is slowed down, yet continues to relentlessly press forward.
- ☛ A servant on a mission who encounters aggressive enemies along the way, yet fights through them faithfully fulfilling his charge.
- ☛ A laborer who encounters repeated

and diverse oppositions and hindrances, yet keeps his eye fixed on the objective, and alert to all advantages that can be received and open doors into which he can enter.

Such a person places his commission above his experience. He counts the prize that has been set before him as worthy of whatever must be endured to obtain it. **This is the individual who does not place a high priority on life in this world, the acceptance of men, or freedom from want.**

Now, the “*much patience*,” or “*resolute perseverance*,”^{NJB} is **not** made known in favorable times, but unfavorable ones. It is **not** realized when the road is clear, but when it is rough, and strewn with all manners of obstacles. It is **not** accomplished in peaceful and tranquil environs, but in troublesome times, when the thunder of opposition is heard, and the sound of clashing swords and shouts of the enemy are ringing in the ears.

Paul will now cite the various afflictions **in which** he maintained “*much patience*.”

GENERAL CATEGORIES



IN AFFLICTIONS

“^{4c} . . . *in afflictions* . . .” Other versions read “*in tribulations*,”^{NKJV} “*in troubles*,”^{NIV} “*times of hardship*,”^{NJB} “*suffering*,”^{LIVING} “*in the midst of difficulties*,”^{ISV} “*in sorrows*,”^{WILLIAMS} and “*tribulation and suffering*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “*afflictions*” comes from the Greek word *θλίψω* (thlips-es-in), which means “a pressing, pressing together,

pressure . . . oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits.”^{THAYER} Other lexical meanings are, “trouble brought on by outward circumstances,”^{FRIBERG} “hard circumstances,”^{UBS} and “trouble involving direct suffering.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

This is when great pressure and suffering comes from the outside, being exerted upon the “earthen vessel.” It is enough to note here that these are oppressive circumstances over which the servant of God has no power. They bring great pressure to bear upon the inner man, doing so from without. Those who imagine that the child of God has control over the circumstances are only living in delusion. Whatever power or authority they may conceive themselves to possess, they are not able to control the outward circumstances to which they are subjected. **If they did possess control, there would be no such thing as “afflictions,” in which the child is “pressed” as though under a heavy and oppressive rock.** This is why Paul said of one period of time, “*we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life*” (2 Cor 1:8). That is a most vivid description of “*affliction*.”

And what did Paul do during such times? How did he respond to such oppression? He was noted for “*much patience*,” or “*resolute perseverance*.”^{NJB}

IN NECESSITIES

“^{4d} . . . *in necessities* . . .”

Other translations read, “*in needs*,”^{NKJV} “*in hardships*,”^{NASB} “*difficulties*,”^{NJB} “*during hard times*,”^{IE} “*helplessness*,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*troubles*,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “*hardships and privations*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “*necessities*” comes from the Greek word *ἀνάγκαις* (anag-kais), which means “necessity imposed by external conditions, or by some law.”^{THAYER} Other lexical meanings are, “compulsion, force, compelling obligation.”^{FRIBERG}

This is a category of affliction in which all resources are depleted, and the individual is deprived of what is needed for the body. These will also be mentioned in detail later. **Here, it is enough to say that those who suppose such things as famine, hunger, and various forms of deprivation cannot come**

upon the saints of God, need to rethink their view, for it cannot possibly be true. Numerous saints have suffered from deprivation, even wandering “in deserts, and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11:38). Here, Paul affirms that he persevered, keeping the faith and pressing forward toward the mark during such occasions. Were it not possible for God’s servants to experience such times, this would be a very foolish testimony.

IN DISTRESSES

“^{4e} . . . in distresses . . .” Other versions read, “calamities,” ^{NIV} “in sorrow,” ^{BBE} “in straits,” ^{DARBY} “constraints,” ^{NAB} “calamities of every kind,” ^{NLT} “trouble of every kind,” ^{LIVING} “when we are having problems,” “helplessness,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “difficulties,” ^{WILLIAMS} “in sore straits and calamities,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “or even disasters.” ^{PHILLIPS}

The word “distresses” comes from the Greek word στενοχωρία (sten-ox-or-iais), which means, “narrowness of place, a narrow space; dire calamity, extreme affliction.” ^{THAYER} Other lexical meanings are, “narrowness, tight or narrow place,” ^{FRIBERG} “a set of difficult circumstances.” ^{LOUW-NIDA}

Whereas “afflictions” were like a heavy rock being placed upon us, creating great pressure, “distresses” are like being caught in a narrow passage, with oppressing walls pressed tightly against us from both sides. Such a condition is described in the expressions, “troubled on every side” (2 Cor 4:8; 7:5a), and “without were fightings, within were fears” (2 Cor 7:5b).

Is it possible for someone who is working “together with God” to be hemmed in by circumstances, like a ship being caught in rocky straits? Indeed, it is. And how did Paul conduct himself when he was surrounded by hindering influences that chaffed against his soul and pained his body? He maintained the posture of “much patience,” faithfully running the race that had been set before him, pressing toward the mark, and fulfilling his ministry.

Keep in mind, these are areas in which the servant of God realizes Divine approval, as well as confirmation of that approval before men. **It ought to be**

evident that a trouble-free life does not blend with that manner of approval. Nor, indeed, does large-scale religious “success,” as is so common in the church of our day. I would go so far as to say that this passage has no place in spiritual “Babylon” – that fabrication of the devil that emulates “the church of the living God,” but actually has no part in it.

DETAILED CATEGORIES

Paul will now provide the details involved in “afflictions,” “necessities,” and “distresses.” Once again, these are associated with the “ministry” that Paul had “received” (2 Cor 4:1). In working with God in “the ministry of reconciliation,” and delivering “the word of reconciliation,” the following things were experienced. These were not the result of civil disobedience, marching with placards in protest of social injustices, or delivering formal complaints for infringement on political liberties. As

many men actually died.

Later Paul says he received “stripes above measure,” or a flogging that was even “more severe” ^{NIV} than normally administered to supposed offenders (2 Cor 11:23). He states that he was beaten “five times” with “forty stripes save one,” and “three times” he was “beaten with rods” (2 Cor 11:24-25). In Philippi, for example, they “laid many stripes” upon Paul and Silas (Acts 16:23).

“IN” the many stripes that were administered to him, Paul confirmed that he was working “together with God.” **As severe as they were, they did not move him to quit, modify his message, or make any effort to appease his tormenters with some form of compromise.** Further, these stripes were delivered because of his preaching, yet they had no adverse impact upon that preaching.

These were not the result of civil disobedience, marching with placards in protest of social injustices, or delivering formal complaints for infringement on political liberties. As important as some of those things may be, they are not the area in which God’s servants obtain approval. A person can be a spiritual or moral reprobate and participate in such campaigns.

important as some of those things may be, **they are not the area in which God’s servants obtain approval.** A person can be a spiritual or moral reprobate and participate in such campaigns.

IN STRIPES

“^{5a} In stripes . . .” Other versions read, “in beatings,” ^{NASB} “in blows,” ^{BBE} “when we are flogged,” ^{NJB} and “We have been beaten.” ^{NLT}

The word “stripes” comes from the Greek word πληγαις (plag-ais), and means “a blow, stripe, a wound, a deadly wound, a public calamity,” ^{THAYER} “a blow laid on by a whip-like instrument . . . plural beating,” ^{FRIBERG} and “to hit, to strike, to beat.” ^{LOUW-NIDA} This refers to harsh, repeated, and public blows from which

IN IMPRISONMENTS

“^{5b} . . . in imprisonments . . .” Other versions read, “in prisons,” ^{DARBY} “sent to prison,” ^{NJB} “been put in jail,” ^{NLT} and “when we are in jail.” ^{IE}

The word “imprisonments” comes from the Greek word φυλακαις (ful-a-kais), and means “enclosure, confinement, guard, and watch,” ^{THAYER} and “a place of detention – jail, prison.” ^{LOUW-NIDA} **The places in which Paul was incarcerated were not always commodious, with amenities provided.**

Often Paul was “bound” in prison, even being held by a “chain.” Once he was bound “with two chains” (Acts 21:33). Another time he appeared in court in

chains (Acts 28:20). He commended brethren who were not ashamed of his chain (2 Tim 1:16). Paul was put into the “inner prison” in Philippi (Acts 16:23,24), and was even known as “Paul the prisoner” (Acts 23:18). On another occasion he was “kept in Herod’s judgment hall” (Acts 23:35). Porcius Festus left Paul bound in prison for “two years” (Acts 24:27). He testified before Agrippa while he was bound (Acts 16:28-29). In Rome, although allowed to dwell by himself, a soldier remained with him (Acts 28:16). He stated that was “in prisons more frequent” (2 Cor 11:23). When he wrote to the Ephesian brethren, he greeted them as “Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:1), and “the prisoner of the Lord” (Eph 4:1). When writing to Timothy, he referred to himself as the Lord’s “prisoner” (2 Tim 1:8). When writing to Philemon he introduced himself as “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Phile 1:1,9).

And how did Paul react to his many imprisonments? **In them, he gained approval, confirming he was, indeed, a worker “together with God.”** He begat Onesimus in Christ while he was in prison (Phile 1:10). All those who dwelt in the palace in Rome were made knowledgeable of Paul and his labors in Christ (Phil 1:13). The Epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Second Timothy were written while Paul was in prison (Eph 3:1; Phil 1:7; Col 4:3,18; Phile 1:9, 2 Tim 1:8).

In these imprisonments Paul confirmed the reality of his calling and the legitimacy of his ministry. He stood the test of confinement!

IN TUMULTS

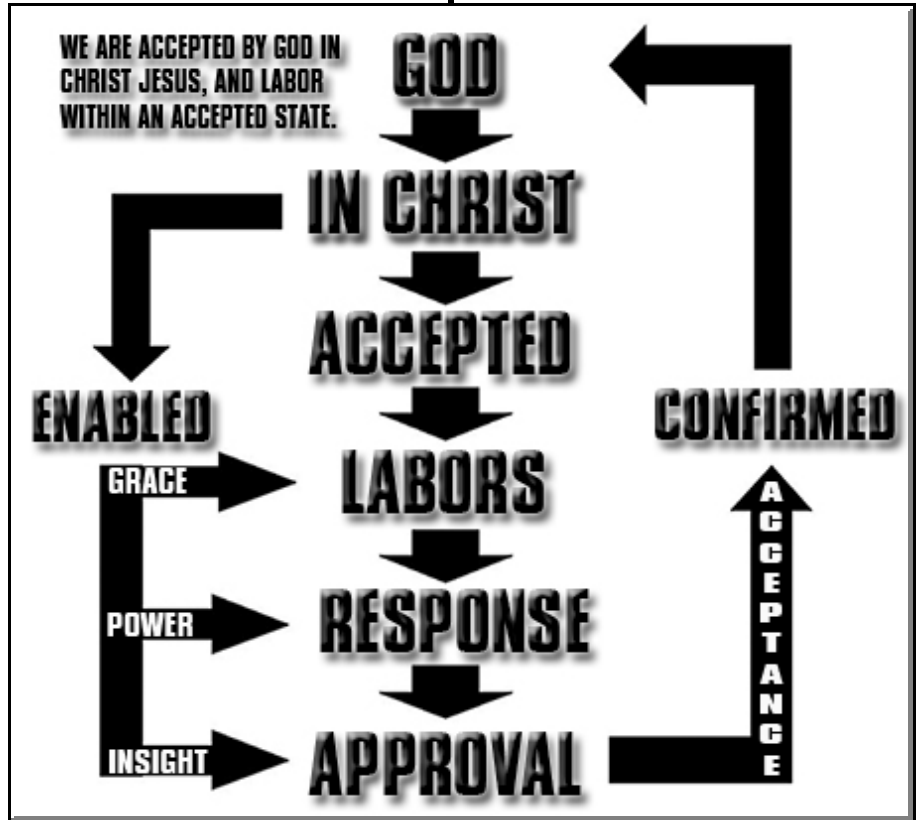
“^{5c} . . . **in tumults** . . .” Other versions read, “riots,”^{NIV} “in attacks,”^{BBE} “in seditions,”^{DOUAY} “mobbed,”^{NJB} “faced angry mobs,”^{NLT} “in insurrections,”^{YLT} and “during riots.”^{IE}

The word “tumults” comes from the Greek word ἀκαταστασία (aka-tas-tasi-ais) which means, “instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion,”^{THAYER} “turmoil, revolution, insurrection,”^{FRIEBERG} “maltreatment by mob violence,”^{USB} and “to rise up in defiance of authority.”^{LOUW-NIDA} Here it refers to **public riots** that were brought on because of Paul’s consistent preaching.

It was when a group of people rioted that Paul was stoned in Lystra (Acts 14:19). In Thessalonica the whole city was set “on an uproar,” assaulting the house of Jason (Acts 17:5-7). In Corinth, “the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul” (Acts

true minister of God. He maintained his spiritual poise, spoke with confidence and in truth, and kept the faith.

The frequent presence of “tumults” confirm the words spoken by Jesus Himself. “Think not that I am come



18:12). In Ephesus, after the merchants who made idols saw their business dissipating because of Paul’s preaching, a crowd of agitated people gathered in such turmoil “the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.” The tumult was so significant that the people cried out “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” for two solid hours (Acts 19:32-35). Once, when in the temple in Jerusalem, some Jews stirred up a riot against Paul saying that he had “polluted” the Temple, then “went about to kill him” (Acts 21:27-31). Another time in Rome, a “great dissension” arose because of Paul, and it appeared they were going to “pull Paul in pieces” (Acts 23:7-10).

And how did Paul conduct himself during all of this disruptions and turmoil? In the tumults he was “approved” as a

to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Mat 10:34-36). **When the Gospel is preached and expounded, and tumult arises, it confirms that the world is at variance with God, and will not receive the truth.** When those professing to labor for the Lord are not moved by such oppositions, but remain steadfast in the ministry, they have gained approval.

ACCEPTED AND APPROVED

It is necessary to add a word here concerning the way in which I am using “accepted” and “approved.” In our labors for the Lord, we are **not** endeavoring to

gain His acceptance. He does not receive us upon the basis of our work. Rather, we are **“made accepted in the Beloved”** (Eph 1:6). We actually labor for the Lord, or serve Him, from within the framework of acceptance in Christ Jesus. Through Christ, the Father enables us to work with Him, imparting grace and power for the fulfillment of His purpose. **Valid kingdom labors can only be accomplished with the power that is given to those God has received in the Son.**

However, spiritual life is not approached from a mere philosophical level, nor are men to speculate about the validity of their labors. Rather, it is necessary for us to **“examine”** ourselves to see if we are **“in the faith”** (2 Cor 13:5).

While this examination takes a variety of forms, there is a particular facet of it that is being addressed in this text. **The validity of our position and work is discovered in godly responses to the circumstances produced by our various ministries.** As we engage our whole persons in the ministries we have been given, it will arouse the world, and certain opposition will come against us. It is certain that if we are actually living by faith and walking in the Spirit, our responses to affliction will bring glory to God, and bear witness to the genuineness of our faith. It is certainly not my aim to cause doubts and fears to arise in those who are working for the Lord. **However, if our responses do not glorify God, it is not possible that our work is doing so!** If, upon examination, we find

this to be the case, then we must avail ourselves of the Advocate, confess our sins, receive cleansing, and revenge our disobedience. It is out of order to make an attempt to justify uncomely responses of faintheartedness, fleshly anger, bitterness, and withdrawing from the work. If God has, in fact, given us a work to do, then it is to be done at all cost, for we will be held accountable for how we managed our stewardship.

If, on the other hand, the spirit of Christ is found in your responses, you can take hold of confidence like a sword, and sally forth in the good fight of faith, assured that you will do well. This is an area in which progress is possible, for salvation is tailored for these things.

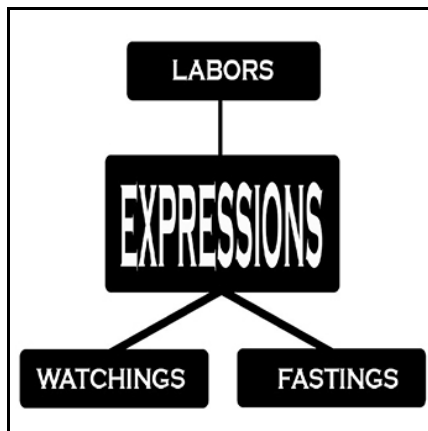
IN EXPRESSIONS

The first area in which Paul was confirmed to be true was that of adversity – bitter experiences that came to him because he was working together with God. Being yoked with Christ, he received the same treatment from the world as the Master received. Jesus once said to His disciples, **“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name’s sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth Me hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father”** (John 15:20-24). Notice the extent of what is revealed when men are confronted with the word and works of Jesus.

- The world persecuted Jesus.
- The world persecutes those who work with Jesus.
- Those who kept the sayings of Jesus would keep the sayings of those

whom He sends.

- When the world does harm to Christ’s servants, they do so for His **“name’s sake”** – that is, because they are representing Him and bearing His message.
- The world opposes those who speak Christ’s message because they do not know the Father, who sent Jesus.
- The coming of Jesus in Person, or the coming of Him through the Gospel causes sin to erupt within the rejected ones. Until that time, they may even appear to be good.



- Once men are exposed to Christ, sin can no longer be covered.
- The one who hates, or despises, Jesus, also hates the Father.
- The world’s hatred of the Father is made known when He is proclaimed through the Gospel.

Keep in mind that a considerable amount of the opposition Paul experienced came from religious people. The Jews hounded him because his message obviously clashed with what they had embraced (Acts 21:21). Some professing Christians opposed him because of his emphasis on grace (Rom 3:8). **Those who opposed what Paul preached were never credited with being honest or sincere, for such qualities are not found in those who spurn the truth of the Gospel.**

In our time, a considerable amount of opposition comes to us from the professed church. It comes in differing forms, but it amounts to a denigration of what is taught, and a malignment of our character. Our responses to such treatment will reveal whether or not we have the message of Christ and were sent

by Him.

Now, Paul will deal with approval as attained within, or during, his own experiences – what he did in regards to the message he was sent to proclaim, and the solemn commission to *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me [Christ]”* (Acts 26:18). How much of himself did he put into this good work?

IN LABORS

“^{5d} . . . **in labors** . . .” Other versions read, *“in hard work,”* ^{NIV} *“laboring,”* ^{NJB} *“worked to exhaustion,”* ^{NLT} *“while working hard,”* ^{IE} and *“having to work like slaves.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

The word *“labors”* comes from *κόποις* (kop-ois), which means *“intense labor united with trouble, toil,”* ^{THAYER} *“exhausting physical and mental toil, labor, work,”* ^{FRIBERG} *“hard work,”* ^{UBS} *“to engage in hard work, implying difficulties and trouble,”* ^{LOUW-NIDA} *“weariness, fatigue.”* ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Paul excelled in exhaustive labors

continual flow of life, revealed in marvelous insights. In him the saying of the Lord Jesus was fulfilled, *“He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:38). The waters gushed from him in the synagogues (Acts 13:15-41), the marketplace (Acts 17:17), schools of learning (Acts 19:9), before gatherings of scholars (Acts 17:19-31), among the disciples (Acts 20:7), before rulers (Acts 24:24-26; 26:2-23), before his enemies (Acts 23:1-7), and while he was in prison (Eph 3:12 Tim 1:8; Phile 1:1).

The kind and manner of Paul’s labor testified to the truth of his message, and was an area in which he was approved.

One of the great reproaches of our time is the manner in which professed representatives of Christ spend their time. There is too much leisure in their schedule, too much listening instead of speaking, and too much idleness. It is difficult, indeed, to find a preacher or teacher who actually labors *“in the word and in the doctrine”* (1 Tim 5 :17), or

A Tribute to My Father

I am compelled to take this occasion to pay tribute to my departed father, whose works now follow him. From the time he was a young man (in his early twenties) until he was past his 80th year, he was known for his prodigious labors in the kingdom of God. He always found an outlet through which to express the various insights that he received. He used articles in the church bulletin, wrote a monthly periodical called *“The Apostles’ Doctrine,”* published a two-volumn set of books under the same name, and revised and updated them both. He edited *“The Banner of Truth”* for around twenty-five years, and was always preaching and teaching. In all of his labors, his beloved wife, and my mother, was a faithful and thoughtful co-worker, forfeiting many of her own desires in the interest of, what she perceived to be, better things.

All of this was done while my father maintained a demanding job in the printing industry – a line-o-type operator, in which he set type for newspapers and books. When I was between the ages of six and eleven, my father maintained two jobs in order that we might eat and cover expenses involved in preaching in North Dakota, 200 miles from where we lived in Moorehead, Minnesota. I never knew this was inconvenient or demanding. It was simply what we did, and it was done with joy and thanksgiving.

I remember my father standing before a typewriter, and writing during nearly every free moment he had. Some kingdom laborer was nearly always in our home, being cared for by my godly mother, and engaging in holy conversation and discussion. Our home was a place of Divine service. After we had attended the evening services on each Lord’s day, my father would gather with several other ministers to discuss the good word of God and share kingdom insights. As a child, I was privileged to accompany him to many of these sessions.

How is it that my father, brother Fred O. Blakely, was such a remarkable worker for the Lord? **It was because he had actually received something from the Lord, and was sent forth and duly empowered by Him.** That is why he labored *“more abundantly.”* Further, he was approved by his labors.

The work of the Lord was always in Paul’s mind. From him there issued a continual flow of life, revealed in marvelous insights. In him the saying of the Lord Jesus was fulfilled, “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”

for the Lord – and yet did not experience, what is now called, *“burn out.”* In truth he said of his work, *“I labored more abundantly than they [the other apostles] all”* (1 Cor 15:10). *“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant . . .”* (2 Cor 11:23). Again, he wrote to the Colossians, *“Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily”* (Col 1:29).

The work of the Lord was always in Paul’s mind. From him there issued a

gives himself to *“prayer and the ministry of the Word”* (Acts 6:3). Of course, these are areas that cannot be corrupted by institutionalism. You cannot teach a course or give a degree in these areas. **They both require more of God, faith, and grace.** That is why they are areas in which approval can be realized.

Suffice it to say, the labors of a person testify to whether or not he has a message from God and has been sent by God. Neither of these are to be taken for granted.

I have no tolerance for lazy, ignorant, and idle men who claim to be ministers of God. Such men are not ministers at all, unless it is the Satan's "ministers" (2 Cor 11:15). In my opinion, if all of the false ministers were to be suddenly plucked from the religious scene, there would be such a collapse within Christendom as would stagger us all. We are living in a time when churches are being sustained by men who have no real word from God, no insight, and no Divine power. It is something that causes the most spiritual among us to "marvel with great amazement," as when John saw the great whore, "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Rev 17:6).

IN WATCHINGS

"^{5e} . . . in watchings . . ." Other versions read, "in sleeplessness," ^{NKJV} "sleepless nights," ^{NRSV} "vigils," ^{NAB} "endured sleepless nights," ^{NLT} "sleepless nights of watching," ^{LIVING} "by sleepless watching," ^{WEYMOUTH} and "having to go without . . . sleep." ^{PHILLIPS}

The word "watchings" comes from the Greek word ἀγρυπνία (ag-roop-ni-ais), which means "sleeplessness," ^{THAYER} "lack of sleep, sleepless nights," ^{FRIBERG} and "the state of remaining awake because of not being able to sleep, whether from anxiety or because of external circumstances." ^{LOUW-NIDA}

Paul also refers to this sleeplessness in chapter eleven: "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often . . ." (2 Cor 11:27). Sometimes circumstances forbade the apostle to sleep, as when he and Silas were in confined in stocks, their flesh smarting from a vicious beating. At that time they sang instead of sleeping (Acts 16:25). On another occasion, he was awake during the night when in the midst of a tumultuous storm, with the ship about to be destroyed. At that time, an angel stood by him during the night, informing him that all was going to be well, and that he was going to appear before Caesar (Acts 27:23-24). **There were no doubt times when he was deeply troubled at the condition of the churches, for which he had such a heart, and to whom he ministered.** He said of such occasions, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care [deep concern ^{NKJV}] of all the

churches" (2 Cor 11:28).

Once Paul was let down over a wall in a basket – "by night" – escaping from those who were determined to kill him (Acts 9:25). Another time, in Philippi, "The brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night," when their lives were again threatened (Acts 17:10). Still another time, when certain Jews had bound themselves with a curse not to eat

The word "fastings" comes from the Greek word νηστεία (nace-ti-ais) which means, "a voluntary abstinence from food," ^{THAYER} "a refusing to eat for religious purposes," ^{FRIBERG} and "to go without food for a set time as a religious duty." ^{LOUW-NIDA}

Here, "fastings" does not emphasize doing without food, but what is done with the time in which eating and drinking would be

For those who live by faith, the night hours are frequently times of special blessing, when the sound of the world and the distracting influence of ordinariness subside. The measure of a person's approval is revealed in this aspect of life – "Watchings," or periods of sleeplessness.

until they had killed Paul, "Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris" (Acts 23:31).

There is no doubt that Paul had the same spirit as David who wrote, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" (Psa 63:5-6). And again, "My eyes are awake through the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word" ^{NKJV} (Psa 119:148). Sleeplessness is not always due to anxiety, fear, or deep concerns. **For those who live by faith, the night hours are frequently times of special blessing, when the sound of the world and the distracting influence of ordinariness subside.** The measure of a person's approval is revealed in this aspect of life – "Watchings," or periods of sleeplessness. Involvement with God impacts upon fleshly convenience.

IN FASTINGS

"^{5f} . . . in fastings . . ." Other versions read, "in hunger," ^{NASB} "going without food," ^{BBE} "starving," ^{NJB} "by hunger and thirst," ^{WEYMOUTH} and "having to go without food." ^{PHILLIPS}

customary. This is not speaking of assigned seasons of fasting, or with a mere disciplined approach to fasting. The idea here is that the labors of Paul, and his deep commitment to them, often overshadowed the desire for food. Later in this same book, he refers to repeated "fastings" – "in fastings often" (2 Cor 11:27). There, however, such times were forced upon him by circumstance, when he was deprived of food.

This was an experience Jesus had when He was tempted by the devil for forty days and forty nights. It was not until "afterward" that He became hungry (Matt 4:2). On another occasion, when He was teaching a certain Samaritan woman, His disciples returned with some food, for they had not eaten in some time. When they besought Him, "Master, eat!" He replied, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (John 4:30-31). When the disciples questioned whether or not someone had brought Him something to eat He replied, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). **His natural appetite had been diminished because of the great satisfaction and refurbishment that He realized in doing the will of God.**

There were many times when the

work of the Lord was so pressing, or the experience of grace was so refreshing, or the quest for mercy was so demanding, that the natural appetites were suppressed. Those who have labored for the Lord in truth know of such times, when food actually loses its appeal, and

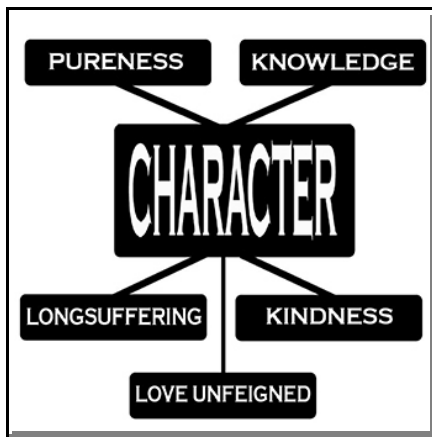
the soul is swept into the invigorating stream of living water. If waters flow out from us, they must first flow in.

I know of many professed “*ministers of God*” who give no evidence of ever having such times. **Just as surely**

as the lack of such experience proves the person is without a message, and has not been sent by God, so the presence of this voluntary time of “fastings” confirms the validity of one’s person and works.

IN CHARACTER

In all of the various facets of spiritual life, character is a critical matter. This is because regeneration, or the new birth, involves a transformation of one’s character. The obstinate and calloused heart (a stony heart) is replaced by a tender and supple one (a heart of flesh) – Ezek 11:19; 36:26). A mind that was once hostile toward God is replaced by one into which the law of God is placed (Heb 8:10). The “*new man*” is truly “*created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph 4:24), and thus “*all things become new*” (2 Cor 5:17).



Under no circumstances, therefore, is flawed character acceptable in Christ Jesus. It will disqualify a person from Divine employment! In Scripture “character” is referred to in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is called “*virtuous*,” ^{KJV} “*excellence*,” ^{NASB} “*character*,” ^{NIV} or “*worthy*” ^{NRSV} (Ruth 3:11). Other times it is called “*good manners*,” ^{KJV} “*good habits*,” ^{NKJV} “*good morals*,” ^{NASB} or “*good character*” ^{NIV} (1 Cor 15:33). In English, the word “*character*” means “*moral excellence and firmness*.” ^{MIRRIAM-WEBSTER}

Jesus referred to character He said, “*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh*” (Luke 6:45). Solomon spoke of character when he wrote, “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*” (Prov 4:23).

Character speaks of the true nature of a person – what he or she really is. That is precisely what is changed when a person is “*born again*” (John 3:3,7; 1 Pet 1:23). They are brought to a point where they think differently. Their assessments, loves, and hates are brought into conformity with the Divine nature, of which they are made “*partakers*” (2 Pet 1:4). **It is not possible to be “in Christ” and yet one’s character remains unchanged.** Religious men often extend themselves to explain why those professing Christ are unacceptable in character. However, there is no satisfactory explanation for such a condition, for it denies the reality of the new birth. I understand this does not suggest flawlessness exists in the believer. **However, sin is always an intrusion in the righteous.** Thus it is written, “*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*” (1 John 2:1).

Now, let us behold how Paul’s character showed itself during his ministry, whether in times of opposition or of great refreshing. **This will confirm whether or not he was a genuine servant of the Lord.** Further, what follows speaks of qualities that were **consistent** in the life of Paul, and

represent the bent of his character.

BY PURENESS

“^{6a} **By pureness . . .**” Other versions read, “*by purity*,” ^{NKJV} “*in purity*,” ^{NASB} “*In a clean heart*,” ^{BBE} “*In chastity*,” ^{DOUAY} “*We have proved ourselves by our purity*,” ^{NLT} “*our wholesome lives*,” ^{LIVING} “*by purity of life*,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “*through my personal purity*,” ^{WILLIAMS} “*By innocence and purity*,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “*All this we want to meet with sincerity*.” ^{PHILLIPS}

The word “*pureness*” comes from the Greek word ἀγνότητι (hag-note-ati), which means, “*purity, uprightness of life*,” ^{THAYER} “*a quality of life that is morally clean purity, sincerity, blamelessness*,” ^{FRIBERG} “*the quality of moral purity – to be without moral defect*,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} and “*chastity*.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

For the servant of God, pureness, or the absence of defilement, is to be found in every facet of life. This is the opposite of “*uncleanness*,” against which we are solemnly warned. “*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints*” (Eph 5:3). And again the saints are reminded, “*For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness*” (1 Thess 4:7).

If suffering – as “*in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses*” – is not accompanied by “*pureness*,” it has no value. **There is no fellowship in “the sufferings of Christ”** (Phil 3:10; 2 Cor 1:5) **by those who themselves are not pure.** Purity involves integrity, holiness, and goodness.

The child of God is to occupy his mind with things that are “*pure*” (Phil

4:8). The objective of the command is “charity out of a **pure heart**” (1 Tim 1: 5). The mystery of the faith is to be held in “a **pure conscience**” (1 Tim 3:9). Young people are admonished to be examples of the believers “in **purity**” (1 Tim 4:12). Paul admonished Timothy, “keep thyself pure” (1 Tim 5:22).

Purity is the absence of moral and spiritual defilement. It is the result of putting to death “the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13), and setting one’s affection on things above, “and not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2). A person who is **not** pure is, by virtue of that condition, disqualified from all kingdom labors. If such a person presumes to embark on some form of supposed Christian ministry, **it is all in vain.**

Pureness also denotes sincerity, which is a state of clearness, or the absence of contamination – incorruption.

Paul’s purity confirmed God’s approval of himself and his message. It **validated** his ministry. A holy message cannot be contained by an unholy vessel.

BY KNOWLEDGE

“^{6b} . . . by knowledge . . .”

Other versions read, “understanding,”^{NIV} “knowledge and spiritual insight,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “with insight.”^{PHILLIPS}

The word “knowledge” comes from the Greek word γνῶσις (gno-seye), which means “intelligence, understanding . . . Is simply intuitive . . . applies chiefly to the apprehension of truths,”^{THAYER} “what is known, knowledge, as the result of Divine enlightenment, understanding, insight,”^{FRIBERG} “esoteric knowledge,”^{UBS} “to know, to know about, to have knowledge of, to be acquainted with,”^{LOUW-NIDA} “acquaintance . . . a knowing, recognizing.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

The knowledge of reference is not a library knowledge, or one obtained from books. It is “intuitive” because it is directly apprehended from God. No person should balk at this as though this involved ignoring the Scriptures. The Spirit has spoken to this subject with refreshing clarity. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to **GIVE the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**” (2 Cor 4:6). This is,

then, an illuminating knowledge – a knowledge that sheds light on everything else. It has chiefly to do with the comprehension of God Himself – “the knowledge of the glory of God” – as it is revealed in the Person of Christ – “in the face of Jesus Christ.”

This is the “knowledge” that opens the Scriptures, and enables sound reasoning. It brings confidence and assurance, because it is deeply rooted in the heart, our basic person – God “hath shined in our hearts.” It also makes a person capable of “rightly dividing” or “handling accurately the word of truth”^{NASB} (1 Tim 2:15). **Those possessing such knowledge are in fundamental agreement with the word of God, for God has “written” His laws upon their hearts and “put” them into their minds** (Heb 8:10).

☛ “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3).

☛ “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

Those possessing this kind of knowledge recognize the truth when they are submitted to it. They are not offended or confused by the truth. When they minister, they do so with confidence, being assured of the realities of which they speak. When uncertainty becomes dominate, the truth is **not** “known,” in the sense of our text. Faith, by its very nature, produces confidence.

A person who is not pure is, by virtue of that condition, disqualified from all kingdom labors. If such a person presumes to embark on some form of supposed Christian ministry, it is all in vain.

The following texts confirm that this knowledge comes to us.

☛ “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins” (Luke 1:77).

☛ “That in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge” (1 Cor 1:5).

☛ “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6).

☛ “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).

This is a “knowledge” that cannot be acquired from men, or within an institutional setting. It is not subject to the analysis or approval of one’s peers. It is related to knowing God and Christ (John 17:3), knowing the things that are freely given to us by God (1 Cor 2:12), and knowing “the hope of His calling” (Eph 1:18). Paul associated it with knowing Christ (Phil 3:8). John related it so knowing we have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

No person lacking this “knowledge” has evidence of Divine approval, or of being sent by God. Furthermore, the possession of this knowledge is confirmed by the message delivered by its possessor.

BY LONGSUFFERING

“^{6c} . . . by longsuffering . . .”

Other versions read, “in patience,”^{NASB} “forbearance,”^{RSV} “in long waiting,”^{BBE} and “longsuffering and patience.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “*longsuffering*” comes from the Greek word μακροθυμία (makroth-oo-mee-ah), and, as used in this text, means “patience, forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs,” THAYER “constraint exercised towards others, forbearance, patience,” FRIEBERG and “a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation.” LOUW-NIDA

Here Paul is referring to patience and endurance in the midst trials. Although he was confronted with all manners of wrong treatment, provocation, and hostile forces, yet he was not thrown off the course on which his feet were set by God’s grace. **He kept on the way, not deterred by experiences that caused deep hurt and moved the flesh to call out for retaliation and revenge.**

This is the longsuffering that is

(1 Cor 11:28).

- The opposition of Alexander the coppersmith (2 Tim 4:14).
- The abandonment of some who labored with him (2 Tim 4:10).
- The failure of brethren to stand with him when he was giving a defense of his conduct before judicial courts (2 Tim 4:16).
- The defection of the Galatians (Gal 4:19-20).
- The withdrawal of John Mark at a critical time of the ministry (Acts 15:37-38).

None of these occasions caused fleshly anger to rise in Paul. **He rather maintained a godly disposition, even**

BY KINDNESS

“^{6d} . . . *by kindness* . . .” Other versions read, “*in being kind*,” BBE “*in sweetness*,” DOUAY and “*by sheer kindness*.” PHILLIPS

The word “*kindness*” comes from the Greek word χρηστότητι (kray-stot-aa-tie), which means, “benignity (showing kindness and gentleness, a mild manner), kindness,” THAYER “a gracious attitude, goodness, kindness,” FRIEBERG “that which helps people or that which proves good for people,” LOUW-NIDA and “goodness of heart, kindness.” LIDDELL-SCOTT

This is the “*kindness*” of First Corinthians thirteen: “*Charity . . . is kind*” (13:4). It is also a trait that all believers are admonished to “*put on*” (Col 3:12). Peter admonishes us to add “*brotherly kindness*” to “*godliness*” (2 Pet 1:7). The church is exhorted, “*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Eph 4:32).

This is the kind of quality that moved Paul to receive John Mark back, after he had once defected (2 Tim 4:11). It is what compelled him to avoid going to Corinth when he was in a state of agitation over their condition (2 Cor 2:1-2). “*Kindness*” is what enabled Paul to labor in travail for the Galatians, patiently travelling in pain for them until Christ was formed in them (Gal 4:19).

Gentleness is inherent in “*kindness*” – the kind of spirit that avoids doing harm whenever possible. That is why Paul exhorted the Corinthians “*by the meekness and gentleness of Christ*” (2 Cor 10:1). He possessed the trait of which Solomon wrote when speaking of a virtuous woman – which virtue is not confined to womanhood: “*She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness*” (Prov 31:26).

This blessed quality is not to be confused with indifferent tolerance, that allows all manner of sin to continue without being rebuked and checked. I do not doubt that Jesus did not come across to the Pharisees as being “*kind*.” But He was – even to them, who were richly deserving of even more harsh treatment than they so realized from the Savior they so

Here Paul is referring to patience and endurance in the midst trials. Although he was confronted with all manners of wrong treatment, provocation, and hostile forces, yet he was not thrown off the course on which his feet were set by God’s grace. He kept on the way, not deterred by experiences that caused deep hurt and moved the flesh to call out for retaliation and revenge.

mentioned in reference to true charity, or love: “*Charity suffereth long*” (1 Cor 13:4). The AMPLIFIED version reads, “*Love endures long and is patient.*” In Paul’s case, this was related to a number of provocative things he endured as a direct result of his ministry. In all of them, he patiently endured, not being provoked to act unwisely, prematurely, or in a carnal defense of his own rights. The following are examples of what he endured, maintaining a godly attitude.

- Slanderous reports that misrepresented his preaching (Rom 3:8).
- The daily concern for the churches that was produced by their retarded and uncomely responses to the Gospel

though such things caused deep hurt and produced great concern. His response to these, and similar, matters confirmed that he was, in fact, a messenger from God with a message given by God.

It is one thing to suffer for doing wrong. **That is suffering that is deserved, and longsuffering in the midst of it is not noteworthy before the throne of God.** As Peter wrote, “*For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God*” (1 Pet 2:19-20).

vigorously and consistently opposed.

Our society, because of its self-centeredness, does not promote kindness. That is one reason why this quality is not common in American churches. There is a certain abrasiveness that accompanies carnality, or when the heart of a person is wed to *“this present evil world.”* This accounts for much of the inconsideration and cruelty that exists among professing Christians. Where men respond to offenses and testings without kindness, it is only because they are dominated by the mind of the flesh. Such a mind cannot be dignified, for it is hostile against God. **However, where the “kindness” of Christ is found, it lends credence to both the messenger and his message.** This, of course, is not the only test of religious validity, but it is not something that can be excluded, nor can its absence be offset by other seemingly spiritual qualities.

BY LOVE UNFEIGNED

“^{6f} . . . by love unfeigned . . .”

Other versions read, *“by sincere love,”* NKJV *“in genuine love,”* NASB *“true love,”* BBE *“In charity unfeigned,”* DOUAY *“in a love free of affectation,”* NJB and *“truly loving.”* LIVING

Unfortunately, there is a religious *“love”* that is *“feigned,”* or is nothing more than a sham and pretension. Feigned love is the kind that is based upon church affiliation, fleshly camaraderie, and kindred worldly preferences. It is found within the context of sectarianism and religious indifference. It is common where people maintain a form of godliness, yet do not give themselves to edification and bringing spiritual advantages to the saints.

The word *“unfeigned”* comes from the Greek word ἀνυπόκριτος (anew-pok-rei-tow), which means *“unfeigned, undisguised,”* THAYER *“literally without hypocrisy, hence, genuine, sincere,”* FRIBERG *“pertaining to being genuine and sincere, and hence lacking in pretense or show,”* LOUW-NIDA and *“without dissimulation.”* LIDDELL-SCOTT

The Love of the Brethren

This refers specifically to the love of the saints – the children of God. Although we are to *“love”* our enemies,

“bless them” that curse us (Matt 5:44), *“do good unto them”* that despitefully use us (Lk 6:27), and even *“lend”* to them *“hoping for nothing again”* (Lk 6:35), this is not the distinguishing love to which our text refers.

Referring to this unique expression of love Jesus said, *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:34-35). And again He said, *“This is my*

flesh in it an actual preference for the saints of God is **not** developed, nor can such a preference, if possessed, be maintained in the flesh. Institutionalized religion centers in the organization, thereby placing minimal value on individuals themselves. That is why it is not uncommon to find all manner of hurt being ministered within the professed church, together with the glaring neglect of feeding the flock of God.

The *“unfeigned”* love of the brethren is the result of the Spirit’s own work. As it is written, *“Seeing ye have*

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commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

The Apostle John also took up this matter, emphasizing the centrality of loving the people of God. *“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him”* (1 John 2:10). And again, *“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another”* (1 John 3:11). And again, *“And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment”* (1 John 3:23). And again, *“And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”* (1 John 4:21). And again, *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him”* (1 John 5:1).

Lifeless religion – or form without Divine power – is conducive to hypocrisy. Because there is so much

purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet 1:22). This is something into which the Holy Spirit leads us.

Confirmation of Unfeigned Love

Paul’s consistent and unfeigned love of those *“begotten of God”* was confirmed in his unwavering in indefatigable efforts to edify, build up, and strengthen them. He refused to have *“dominion”* over their faith, but rather chose to be *“helpers of their joy”* (2 Cor 1:24). The things that were revealed to him were faithfully delivered to the people – so much so that those with even a casual familiarity of him had *“heard of the dispensation of the grace of God”* that had been given to him (Eph 3:2-5). **The entirety of his ministry justified his claim:** *“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry”* (1 Tim 1:12). No one who chose to remain in Paul’s presence remained ignorant of the Lord Jesus, His accomplishments, what He is doing at the

right hand of God, and that He was coming again.

There is no question about it: in character Paul evidenced that he was

approved of God. Grace left an undeniable impact upon his person.

IN DIVINE PROVISIONS



What a person has received from God tells whether or not they are truly His servant. **God has no servants to whom He has given no expressible benefits.** By “expressible benefits,” I mean gifts of grace by which others can be edified and profited in the faith. While there is a sense in which such benefits are given to every child of God, there are special measures of these graces given to those who truly “*labor in the Word and in the doctrine*” (1 Tim 5:17). It is in these various areas that one’s approval is confirmed, or made more clear. **Any supposed spiritual leader that is not actually profiting the people of God by means of the things that follow cannot possibly be a servant of Christ.** Where these things are not evident, it is only because they are not present. It is ever true that “*a city set in a hill cannot be hid*” (Matt 5:14). Likewise, the individual who possesses what is here identified will give evidence of their possession. I understand that the Spirit can be resisted and the faith denied – but that is not the subject under consideration in this text.

BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

“^{6c} . . . by the Holy Ghost . . .”

Other versions read, “*by the Holy Spirit,*” NKJV “*holiness of spirit,*” NRSV “*in a holy spirit,*” NAB “*the power of the Holy Spirit,*”

NLT “*filled with the Holy Spirit,*”^{LIVING} and “*with the Holy Spirit.*”^{IE}

Some versions represent this as referring to the human spirit that is in a state of holiness: i.e., “*holiness of spirit.*”^{NRSV} “*in a holy spirit.*”^{NAB} Nearly all other versions translate the phrase as denoting the Holy Spirit.

First, the notion that this refers to the human spirit is altogether false. **The phrase “Holy Spirit” is used ninety-three times in the Greek New Testament** (Matt 1:18,20; 3:11; 12:32; 28:19; Mk 1:8; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11; Lk 1:15,35,41,67; 2:25,26; 3:16,22; 4:1; 11:13; 12:10; John 1:33; 7:39; 14:26; 20:22; Acts 1:2,5,8,16; 2:4,33,38; 4:8,31; 5:3,32; 6:3,5; 7:51,55; 8:15; 17,18, 19; 9:17,31; 10:38,44, 45,47; 11:15,16,24; 13:2,4,9,52; 15:8,28; 16:6; 19:2,6; 20:23, 28; 21:11; 28:25; Rom 5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13,16; 1 Cor 2:13; 6:19; 12:3; 2 Cor 6:6; 13:14; Eph 1:13; 4:30; 1 Thess 1:5,6; 4:8; 2 Tim 1:14; Tit 3:5; Heb 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15; 1 Pet 1:12; 2 Pet 1:21; 1 John 5:7; Jude 1:20).

It would take an exceedingly creative imagination to make any of those texts apply to the human spirit. There is **no justification** whatsoever for assuming this text differs from all of the others where this expression is used, representing the human spirit as being holy. It is true that God has chosen us in Christ that we might be “*holy and without blame before Him in love*” (Eph 1:4). Our holiness, however, is the result of being made “*partakers of His holiness*” (Heb 12:10). **We are not holy by nature, but by grace.** On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is intrinsically holy. That is his nature. He has never been anything but “*holy.*” **In this text, as in others using this terminology, this is the Holy Spirit of God.**

The Holy Spirit Is Given to Us

The Holy Spirit is given to those who are in Christ Jesus – all of them!

Peter promised that those who repented and were baptized would “*receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38). Paul stated that, as other believers, he had received “*the Spirit which is of (from) God*” (1 Cor 2:12). God is said to have given us “*the earnest of the Spirit*” (2 Cor 1:21; 5:5). He is also said to have “*given us His Holy Spirit*” (1 Thess 4:8). We also know that He abides in us “*by the Spirit which He has given us*” (1 John 3:24). It is also affirmed, “*Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit*” (1 John 4:13).

Like God and Jesus, the Holy Spirit is known for what He does. He too is a prodigious Worker. There is “*the fruit of the Spirit,*” which includes “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance*” (Gal 5:22-23). The Spirit also causes us to “*abound in hope*” (Rom 15:13), so that we can confidently go through life with all of its difficulties and trials. Peace and joy are also the result of the Spirit’s good work (Rom 14:17). Success in mortifying the sinful inclinations of the body are the effect of the Spirit’s leading (Rom 8:13). The ability to patiently “*wait for the hope of righteousness*” is owing to the working of the Spirit (Gal 5:5). The Spirit also enables us to obey the truth, and love the brethren with an unfeigned love (1 Pet 1:22).

Where these evidences are prominent, the individual is approved by the Holy Spirit as a “minister of God.” Where they are missing, the acceptability of the person and the validity of their ministry is not yet confirmed.

BY THE WORD OF TRUTH

“^{1a} *By the word of truth . . .*”

Other versions read, “*in the word of truth,*” NASB “*in truthful speech,*” NIV “*truthful speech,*” NRSV “*In the true word,*” BBE “*We have faithfully preached the*

truth,^{”NLT} “We have been truthful,^{”LIVING} “with a true message,^{”IE} “By the proclamation of the truth,^{”WEYMOUTH} “by a true preaching,^{”MONTGOMERY} “By [speaking] the word of truth,^{”AMPLIFIED} and “speaking the plain truth.^{”PHILLIPS}

There are two approaches to this text, and the various translations use both of them. First, that truthfulness was the trait of the speaker – that is, he spoke truthfully and without any deceptiveness. Second, that the message delivered was itself the truth – the truth given by God that liberates those who know it.

While both of these are true, the emphasis is to placed on the latter – **what was actually said**, versus the manner in which it was said. Elsewhere this word is called “*the word of the truth of the Gospel*” (Eph 1:13). It is also called “*the word of truth*” in Second Timothy, where stress is placed on the manner in which it is handled (2:15). This is “*the word of truth*” by which we are begotten of God (James 1:18).

The “*seed*” of the kingdom, by which all valid things grow, is “*the word of God*” (Luke 8:11). The heart and kernel of that seed is “*the Gospel of Christ*,” which is God’s power “*unto*,” or in order to, “*salvation*” (Rom 1:16). In this passage this “*word*” is referred to as “*the word of reconciliation*” that is fundamental to “*the ministry of reconciliation*.” **That is, it is the word, or message, through which reconciliation to God is realized.**

Any word that centers in the resolution of fleshly, or human, difficulty, is **not** “*the word of truth*.” Jesus did not lay down His life to make us more amiable with our relatives and friends, although that will be the invariable result of being reconciled to God. Any and all unjust actions and reactions among men are directly owing to a deficient relationship with God. As you must know, there are all kinds of gospels being preached today. There is the Gospel of the Spirit, the Gospel of prosperity, the Gospel the family, the Gospel of the church, and host of other core messages. **A message that does not have Jesus as its heart, depend solely upon Jesus, and major on what Jesus has done and is doing, cannot possibly be “the word of**

truth.” That a Christless gospel is being preached is evidenced by a fundamental ignorance of the Person, accomplishments, and present ministry of Jesus that exists within the professed church. **The presence of a deficient message confirms that the messenger has not been sent by God, for God sends no one with an erroneous or flawed message.**

For example, the **absence** of “*the word of truth*” is attested by the current change in the missionary thrust. A remarkable shift of emphasis to relief work now dominates the world of American missions. It is certainly not wrong for relief to be ministered to the needy of the world. However, when this is the driving force behind missions, an erroneous emphasis has been adopted. God’s messengers are noted primarily for what they preach and teach. Other ministries **accompany** that primary thrust, and are never allowed to supplant

“^{7b} . . . by the power of God.” Other versions read, “*in the power of God*,”^{NASB} “*and the power of God*,”^{NRSV} “*God’s power has been working in us*,”^{NLT} “*with God’s power helping us*,”^{LIVING} “*and with God’s power*,”^{IE} “*and Divine power*,”^{ISV} “*and an energy Divine*,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “*and living by the power of God*.”^{PHILLIPS}

The “*power of God*” is necessary for the work of God. As used in this text, the word “*power*” means “*strength, ability, power*,”^{THAYER} “*able to produce a strong effect: power, might, strength . . . a capacity for something: ability, capability*,”^{FRIEBERG} “*the ability to perform a particular activity or to undergo some experience – ‘ability, capability*,”^{LOUW-NIDA} “*the ability to do a thing that is beyond one’s strength*.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

The “power of God” is devoted to the fulfillment of Divine objectives. It is never merely for display, nor is it ever disassociated from Christ and the Gospel. You have probably heard someone say that the Scriptural word

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it. Divine approval is confirmed by delivering “*the word of truth*” to the people. That is the means by which they are born again (1 Pet 1:23), made free (John 8:32), and by which hope is spawned within the heart (Col 1:5). The “*belief of the truth*” (2 Thess 2:13) and “*the love of the truth*” (2 Thess 2:10-12) are at the very center of spiritual life. The “*knowledge of the truth*” is what the Lord desires for “*all men*” (1 Tim 2:4). The church itself is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15). This is why “*the word of truth*” is so vital. It is why those who faithfully deliver it confirm they are approved of God.

BY THE POWER OF GOD

“*power*” comes from the Greek word “*dunamis*,” from which the word “*dynamite*” is derived. First, the word is a translation of the Greek word “*dunamis*” (δυναμις). However, “*dynamite*” is not an appropriate translation of that word. Dynamite destroys, causing things to blow apart from the center of the explosion. That is not, however, the effects of “*the power of God*.” Here the word “*power*” is more related to “*dynamo*,” which is a productive use of power.

The “*power of God*” achieves the greatest of all moral accomplishments – “*salvation*” (Rom 1:16). The “*preaching of the cross*” is said to be “*the power of*

God,” rescuing men from the state of perishing (1 Cor 1:18). Christ Himself is “made unto us,” by God, “the power of God” (1 Cor 1:24) – thereby enabling us to do the will of God from the heart. One place it is written that our faith stands, or rests upon, “the power of God” (1 Cor 2:5) – that is, we depend upon **His** ability. Paul confessed that he was able to endure a remarkable number of persecutions and afflictions “according to the power of God” (2 Tim 1:8). Furthermore, those in Christ are “kept by the power of God through faith unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5).

It has been revealed that “the exceeding greatness of His power” is “to us-ward who believe” – that is, it is “for us” (Eph 1:19). **That power effectively works within those who are working together with God, accomplishing the will of God in and through them** (Eph 3:7).

See, the “power of God” causes the purpose and will of God to be accomplished among men. That “good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” is not realized through the wisdom of men, or their natural abilities. The idea of “authority” is also seen in “the power of God.” This is a “power” to which inferior powers yield.

An example of this is seen in Paul’s testimony concerning His own experience of this power. “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction” (2 Cor 13:10). And again, “For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed” (2 Cor 10:8).

How is it that some have the ability to strengthen our faith, clarify our vision, and awaken a strong hope? It is that they are ministering in “the power of God.” **That circumstances confirms they are approved, have been sent by God, and are declaring His message.** Christ’s “sheep” hear such ministers, and grow in grace and truth through their ministry. That is the manner of the Kingdom.

BY THE ARMOR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“ . . . by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.”



There is a sense in which those who work together with God are invincible until their ministry is finished, and their course is completed. This does not mean they are not “troubled on every side.” It does not suggest they are never “perplexed,” “persecuted,” or “cast down” (2 Cor 4:8-9). **However, the enemy is not able to remove them from the field of battle.** If they are troubled, yet they are **not** distressed. If they experience perplexity, they do **not** despair. If they are persecuted, they are **not** forsaken. If they

are cast down, they are **not** destroyed. They come back from seeming defeats, and surface again when they are pushed beneath the wave of trouble.

The Armor of Righteousness

“ . . . by the armor of righteousness . . . ” Other versions read, “by the weapons of righteousness,” NASB “with weapons of righteousness,” NIV “with the arms of righteousness,” BBE “by the armor of justice,” DOUAY “by using the weapons of uprightness,” NJB “We have righteousness as our weapon,” NLT “All of the godly man’s arsenal,” LIVING “We have used weapons of good,” IE “with the weapons of right-doing,” WILLIAMS and “a life of integrity.” PHILLIPS

The entire spiritual arsenal is appropriately described as of “righteousness.” **No part of our weaponry, whether offensive or defensive, is ungodly or at variance with holiness.** The person who wears the armor and wields the weapon is himself righteous. The means of warfare are righteous. The purposes are righteous. **There is no place for unrighteousness in the work of the Lord or in the life of faith – no, not so much as the tiniest provision!** Noplace is made for worldly wisdom, the mind of the flesh, or the expressions of the “old man.” If any such thing arises within the framework of the work of the Lord, it was not put there by God, and He will not in any way support it. Ungodly methods and manners are **always** wrong, but never are they more wrong than when they are associated with the work of the Lord, or those who profess to be His servants. Men may be tolerant of such things, but God is not! **When unrighteousness erupts among those who profess to labor with God, an enormous amount of ungodly thinking and manners have preceded it!** The offender has drifted from God, thrown off the “whole armor of God,” quenched the Spirit, and focused on things that are seen, rather than on those that are not seen.

The word “armor” signifies more than protection against attacks. The “whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11,13) is precisely that – the **WHOLE armor of God.** It is provided by God, and thoroughly equips the child of God for

spiritual warfare in all of its various facets. This “armor” includes the following.

- **Consistency** (the belt of truth, which holds, or secures the armor in place – Eph 6:14a). Nothing about this warfare is slipshod. No aspect of it has been overlooked. Absolute reality and integrity hold every piece of the armor in place. Nothing is imaginary or fictitious. Nothing is out of synch with the revealed will of Gods, or disassociated from the Gospel of Christ Jesus.
- **Protection of the heart and soul, our vital parts** (the breastplate of

- **An offensive weapon** (the sword of the Spirit – Eph 6:17b). The kingdom laborer presses the battle, making inroads into territory that is dominated by the wicked one. It is the Word of God that cuts through delusion, exposing the thoughts and intents of the heart, and deciphering between the soul and the spirit.
- **Constant communion with God** (praying always with all prayer and supplication – Eph 6:18). No war is fought for God that excludes the need for Him. There is no valid work that does not require constant recourse to the Living God, and regular supplication for others who are

the other. This is an expression denoting offense and defense. **To be more particular, a godly offense and a godly defense.** That is, an offense that is launched with the weapon provided by the Lord – the Word of God. Also, a defense that is accomplished by the Divine weaponry of hope, righteousness, faith, and peace.

As we will see, Paul launched effective kingdom initiatives, and effectively repelled attacks by the wicked one and his host. He promoted sound spiritual thinking, and cast down imaginations and thoughts that competed with the Kingdom of God. He did not promote an institutional agenda, but aggressively made known what had been revealed to him. In that work he repelled conflicting and competing reasonings and doctrines, and promoted sound thought and holy cogitations.

Examples

Taking the offense, Paul declared the truth of the Gospel, expounding it, and opening it to the understanding of men – making them “see” (Eph 3:9). He declared what took place behind the scenes when Jesus died (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Col 2:11-15), and what was involved in His resurrection and ascension (Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-10). He also unfolded the purpose of God, clarifying it to the minds of those who believe (Eph 1:5-11; 3:10-11).

Taking the defense, Paul threw down the notions that men are justified by works (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16), or that man could in any way gain Divine approval by means of a law (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:21; 3:11; 5:4). He also cast down the imagination that unrighteousness is in any way acceptable to God (Rom 6:13; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:9; 2 Cor 6:14-18).

The righteousness that was imputed to Paul through faith pervaded every part of his being. He was able to reckon himself to be dead indeed into sin, and alive unto God (Rom 6:11). That proved to be an impenetrable protection against the devices of the devil. The “armor of righteousness,” obvious in all of his prodigious activities confirmed Paul’s approval – **that God had sent him with His own message.** It sanctioned his claim of apostleship.

tends to emphasize specialty, the kingdom of God stresses versatility and dexterity. The servant of God must be efficient in both defense and offense. There were no “specialized” prophets or Apostles. The notion of specialization, however wise it may appear, is more appealing to the flesh than to the Spirit.

righteousness – Eph 6:14b). Provision is made for the protection of the inward man, so that no corruption of character can occur.

- **Stability and dexterity** (feet shod with the Gospel of peace – Eph 6:15). There are times when the spiritual warrior must hold his ground, even when footing appears unsure, and great dexterity of movement is required.
- **A solid defense** (the shield of faith – Eph 6:16). A constant barrage of fiery darts, or flaming arrows, is being hurled at the one who is working together with God. He needs a means to extinguish these arrows so that they will not hurt him.
- **Protection for the mind** (the helmet of salvation – Eph 6:17a). The “ministry of reconciliation” demands sound-mindedness and an unwavering hope. Where these are not found, defeat is certain.

working in the Lord’s vineyard.

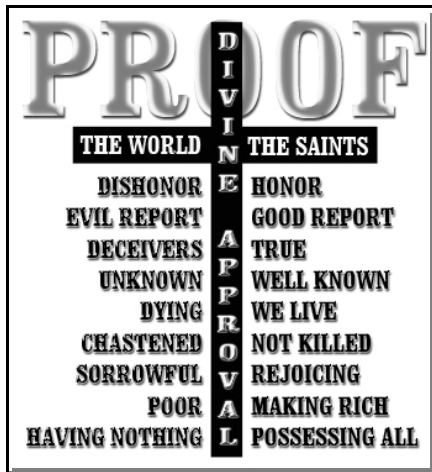
While the religion of this world tends to emphasize specialty, the kingdom of God stresses versatility and dexterity. The servant of God must be efficient in both defense and offense. There were no “specialized” prophets or Apostles. The notion of specialization, however wise it may appear, is more appealing to the flesh than to the Spirit.

On the Right Hand and On the Left

“... on the right hand and on the left.” Other versions read, “in the right hand and in the left,”^{NIV} “for the right hand and for the left,”^{NRSV} “for attack and defense,”^{NJB} “both to attack and defend ourselves,”^{NLT} “weapons of defense, and weapons of attack,”^{LIVING} “for the right hand [to attack] and for the left hand [to defend],”^{AMPLIFIED} and “Our sole defense, our only weapon.”^{PHILLIPS}

The phrase “on the right hand and on the left” signifies the use of both hands – i.e., a shield in one hand, and a sword in

IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE



Paul is confirming the validity of his ministry – not as a kind of promotion of himself, but because he has said he is an apostle, chosen by God and sent forth by Christ. **A claim of that magnitude is not to taken on the basis of a word alone.** Even the Son of God appealed to what He said and what He did as proof of His Person and mission. *“Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?”* (John 8:46). *“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not”* (John 10:37).

Anyone or anything that is genuinely from God will hold up under scrutiny. No man will be able to find a flaw in what God has said or what He has done. If a person comes to us in the name fo the Lord, and demands that we receive him simply because he has claimed to come from God, and affirms that he is delivering the word of God, that is not enough! It is not enough for a person to say he has heard this or that from the Lord. If the claim is true, it will be confirmed by the response of the claimant to the various trials and experiences of life. **Like it or not, in the kingdom of God, if the messenger cannot stand the test, his message is not to be received as being from God.** This is precisely why Paul is taking the time to cite his confirmed experiences.

Paul will now present two classes of experience. One comes to him from the unsawew, and one from the saved; one

from the world, the other from the church; one from the goats, the other from the sheep. These are responses in which he will find approval. That is, his claims of being an apostle sent by Jesus, working together with God, and speaking a God-ordained message will be **justified** in these responses to his ministry.

HONOR AND DISHONOR

“^{8a} . . . By honor and dishonor . . .”

The first category of responses has to do with how people regarded his own person. After hearing what he said, how did the people regard him? How did they react to him personally?

Honor

“ . . . By honor . . . ” Other versions read, *“by glory,”* ^{NASB} *“through glory,”* ^{NIV} *“in times of honor,”* ^{NJB} *“We serve God whether people honor us,”* ^{NLT} *“We stand true to the Lord whether others honor us,”* ^{LIVING} *“amid honor,”* ^{MONTGOMERY} and *“whether we meet honor.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

The word *“honor”* means “praise, honor, glory,” ^{THAYER} “as an excellent reputation,” ^{FRIBERG} and “estimation, reputation, credit, honor, glory.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Paul did not seek this kind of honor, or glory. This was not the objective of his ministry. As he said elsewhere, *“Nor of men sought we glory”* (1 Thess 2:6). **Yet, those who perceived the truth of what he preached gave him honor and glory in a lawful sense, associating him with the Lord.** Thus we read, *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Thess 2:13). And again, *“And my temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus”* (Gal 4:14).

Luke reported the reception of certain barbarians on the island of Melita,

when Paul was shipwrecked there. After he had ministered to many of that island, healing the father of the *“chief man”* of the island, together with many of their sick, it is written, *“Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary”* (Acts 28:10).

Dishonor

“ . . . and dishonor . . . ” Other versions read, *“and by shame,”* ^{BBE} *“or disgrace,”* ^{NJB} *“whether . . . people despise us,”* ^{NLT} and *“and ignominy.”* ^{WEYMOUTH}

The word *“dishonor”* means “disgrace, and the loss of civil rights,” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} disgrace, shame, a manner of speaking that is slightlying, in a foolish and disparaging way,” ^{FRIBERG} “humiliation,” ^{UBS} “disrespect,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} and “dishonor, ignominy, disgrace, treated with contempt, and by way of disparagement.” ^{THAYER}

Others treated Paul as though he was a despot, agitator, and source of trouble. In Philippi he was charged with troubling the city, beaten publically, openly condemned, and cast into prison (Acts 16:20-23,37). He was stoned at Lystra (Acts 14:19), and often beaten with stripes and with rods (2 Cor 11:24-25). Paul reminded the Philippians that when he first came to them, he was *“shamefully entreated,”* *“mistreated,”* ^{NASB} and *“insulted”* ^{NIV}

Just as the honor given to him consistently came from Christ’s brethren, so the dishonor heaped upon him came from those who hated Christ, and did not believe on Him.

Thus it is confirmed, *“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”* (2 Cor 2:15-16). In these things, he was approved.

EVIL REPORT AND GOOD REPORT

“^{8b} . . . by evil report and good report . . .”

Not only was Paul treated in contradicting manners, the reports that were given of him and his labors were both good and evil.

Evil Report

“ . . . by evil report . . . ” Other versions read, “bad report,”^{NIV} “ill repute,”^{NRSV} “an evil name,”^{BBE} “through slander,”^{ESV} “insult,”^{NAB} “blame,”^{NJB} “whether they slander us,”^{NLT} “whether they criticize us,”^{LIVING} “sometimes having a good reputation,”^{IE} “through calumny,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “in defaming and evil report.”^{AMPLIFIED}

An evil report is a slanderous one in which the person is misrepresented. You have probably heard someone praised because no one ever said anything bad about them. Paul did not fall into that category. Those who do are generally not known for delivering the message of the Gospel with great power.

Some “slanderosly reported” that Paul was preaching, “Let us do evil, that good may come” (Rom 3:8). Others said of him, “For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). Still others charged that Paul taught “customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans” (Acts 16:21). On one occasion a formal charge was brought against him that said, “thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs” (Acts 21:21).

Good Report

“ . . . and good report . . . ” Other versions read, “and a good name,”^{BBE} “praise,”^{ESV} “or praise us,”^{NLT} “or commend us,”^{LIVING} “and sometimes having a good one,”^{IE} “good repute,”^{WILLIAMS} and “and in praise and good report.”^{AMPLIFIED}

John the beloved spoke of men who obtained a “good report . . . of the truth itself” (3 John 1:12). Those who had received “the love of the truth” spoke well of Paul because of the message he delivered. While he did not strive to obtain such reports, those who were advantaged and informed by his message

“were glad and glorified the word of the Lord” when they heard him (Acts 13:48).

For the second time, it is confirmed, “For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor 2:15-16). In these things also, he was approved.

AS DECEIVERS, YET TRUE

“^{8c} . . . as deceivers, and yet true . . . ”

Deceivers

“ . . . as deceivers . . . ” Other versions read, “yet regarded as impostors,”^{NIV} “we are treated as impostors,”^{NRSV} “as untrue, and still true,”^{BBE} “We are treated as deceivers,”^{NAB} “taken for impostors,”^{NJB} “but they call us impostors,”^{NLT} “as leading astray,”^{YLT} “but they are liars,”^{LIVING} “as people who fool people,”^{IE} “We are looked upon as impostors,”^{WEYMOUTH} “[We are branded] as deceivers (impostors),”^{AMPLIFIED} and “Called ‘impostors’”^{PHILLIPS}

This was either a charge of being, or being treated as, an imposter, untrue, and leading people astray. The same charge that was leveled against the Lord Jesus Himself was also brought against Paul: “that deceiver,” and “He deceiveth the people.”

This was either a charge of being, or being treated as, an imposter, untrue, and leading people astray. The same charge that was leveled against the Lord Jesus Himself was also brought against Paul: “that deceiver” (Matt 27:63), and “he deceiveth the people” (John 7:12).

Such charges had no doubt been leveled at him from some of the Corinthians themselves, who denied there was a resurrection of the dead – something Paul consistently preached (1 Cor 15:12-13). In such charges, the motives of Paul were questioned, and the message he delivered rejected. It revealed a basic flaw in those who so spoke.

Yet True

“ . . . and yet true . . . ” Other versions read, “genuine,”^{NIV} “and yet are true,”^{NRSV} “as untrue, and still true,”^{BBE} “and yet are truthful,”^{NAB} “and yet we are genuine,”^{NJB} “We are honest,”^{NLT} “We are honest,”^{LIVING} “but we tell the truth,”^{IE} “and yet are true men,”^{WEYMOUTH} “and [yet vindicated as] truthful and honest,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “we must be true.”^{PHILLIPS}

Being “true” involves being truthful and honest, yet includes much more than this. **While the integrity of the messenger is important, it is the message of the Gospel that has the power, not the truthfulness of the messenger.** I take the words “yet true” to mean what Paul preached and taught was regarded as the truth of God. Paul was not only true to his conscience, and constrained by “godly sincerity” (2 Cor 1:12), he was faithful to the One who called, empowered, and commissioned him (1 Cor 4:2; 7:25; 1 Tim 12). Those who considered him “true,” saw him in this way.

For the third time, it is confirmed,

“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor 2:15-16). In these things also, he was approved.

AS UNKNOWN, YET WELL KNOWN

“^{9a} As unknown, and yet well known . . . ”

Paul continues to show **how** he was regarded by those who heard him, and heard **of** him. This has to do with what he preached, and not with his personal manners alone, which were also

above reproach. These are the effects of Paul's person and message upon the people. It will at once be evident that these very impressions remain to this day, both regarding Paul himself, and those who have embraced and proclaim the "glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Cor 4:4).

Unknown

"As unknown . . ." Other versions read, "regarded as unknown,"^{NIV} "unnoted,"^{BBE} "unrecognized,"^{NAB} "We are treated as unknown,"^{NLT} "The world ignores us,"^{LIVING} "as if no one knows who we are,"^{IE} "as obscure persons,"^{WEYMOUTH} "obscure,"^{WILLIAMS} "[We are treated] as unknown and ignored [by the world],"^{AMPLIFIED} and "called 'nobodies,'"^{PHILLIPS}

The word "unknown" means, "men unknown, obscure . . . disregarded . . . not to understand,"^{THAYER} "refusal to pay attention, ignore,"

just as though he never existed. They do not know what marvelous things he taught about grace, justification, and being joined to the Lord. They are more acquainted with the writers of contemporary literature than with Paul's writings. That is only because they consider him to be "unknown," without significance and unimportant to the realization of their objectives.

Well Known

" . . . and yet well known . . ." Other versions read, "known,"^{NIV} "but still kept fully in mind,"^{BBE} "and yet acknowledged,"^{NAB} "recognized,"^{YLT} "but we are known to God,"^{LIVING} "and [yet we are] well-known and recognized [by God and His people],"^{AMPLIFIED} and "we must be in the public eye."^{PHILLIPS}

Any person who is walking by

"^{9b} . . . as dying, and, behold, we live . . ."

Here is an aspect of spiritual life that Paul has mentioned before – dying and living. **These are the two sides of the coin of reconciliation, and both serve to approve the messenger in whom they are taking place.**

Dying

" . . . as dying . . ." Other versions read, "dying,"^{NIV} "as near to death,"^{BBE} "We live close to death,"^{NLT} "as at death's door,"^{MONTGOMERY} and "never far from death."^{PHILLIPS}

There is a two-fold sense in which "dying" was being experienced by Paul. First, he was becoming less and less sensitive to "this present evil world" (Gal 1:4). He was mortifying his flesh regularly, denying ungodliness, and putting to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5; Tit 2:12-13). This was "the dying of Jesus" that was taking place within Him, as he was being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), and being "changed from glory to glory" (2 Cor 3:18).

The second sense in which Paul was "dying" was in his constant subjugation to the threat of death. This was owing to the hostility of the world without. Thus he confessed he stood "in jeopardy every hour" (1 Cor 15:30), being subjected to all manners of perils (2 Cor 11:26). This included the suffering of persecution (Gal 5:11), and being hunted down as though he was a wild animal (Acts 23:21).

Behold, We Live

" . . . and, behold, we live . . ." Other versions read, "behold we live,"^{NKJV} "yet behold, we live,"^{NASB} "and yet we live on,"^{NIV} "and see – we are alive,"^{NRSV} "but here we are,"^{LIVING} "but, look, we are still alive,"^{IE} "and yet, strange to tell, we live,"^{WEYMOUTH} "and yet – as you can see – very much alive,"^{ISV} "and yet I go on living,"^{WILLIAMS} "and yet, here we are alive."^{AMPLIFIED}

There are again two sides to living. First, he remains "alive unto God" (Rom 6:11), enjoying the benefits of redemption, and maintaining the fellowship with the Son into which God had called him (1 Cor 1:9). All of the oppositions and threats that were leveled at him did not separate

As used in this text, the word has more to do with deliberately refusing to recognize. It is not that the people of reference were totally ignorant of Paul, not knowing that he existed or was a prominent teacher. Rather, it is that they did not recognize him as a valid teacher, treating him as a "nobody" – just as though he did not exist at all.

FRIBERG "to be unaware of,"^{LOUW-NIDA} and "not to perceive, not recognizing."^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

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These were people, for example, who assigned more weight to Jewish tradition than to the teaching of Paul (Acts 15:1; 21:21).

To this day there are still those who treat Paul as a "nobody" –

faith and living in the Spirit regards Paul very highly. To them, he is "well known" – well known for his insight, his experience, his teaching, and his prodigious labors. He is even well known in the regions of darkness – not in a favorable way, but in a way that provokes fear and trembling. On one occasion a demon acknowledged, "Paul I know" (Acts 19:15).

For the fourth time, it is confirmed, "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor 2:15-16). In these things also, he was approved.

AS DYING, YET LIVING

him from the love of God (Rom 8:35-39).

Second, he was preserved through all of the harrowing experiences that were, by the powers of darkness and the men dominated by them, intended to terminate his life. The *“life of Jesus”* was being made known in his *“mortal flesh,”* which Satan and his children were trying to destroy (2 Cor 4:10-11).

For the fifth time, it is confirmed, *“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”* (2 Cor 2:15-16). In these things also, he was approved.

AS CHASTENED, YET NOT KILLED

“^{9c} . . . as chastened, and not killed . . .”

Chastened

“ . . . as chastened . . . ” Other versions read, *“as punished,”* ^{NASB} *“beaten,”* ^{NIV} *“as undergoing punishment,”* ^{BBE} *“as disciplined,”* ^{DARBY} *“as chastised,”* ^{NAB} *“scourged,”* ^{NJB} *“We have been beaten,”* ^{NLT} *“we have been injured,”* ^{LIVING} *“as if we are beaten men,”* ^{IE} *“as under God’s discipline,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“as chastened by suffering,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“always going through it.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

Here, some of the translations are very weak, treating the word *“chastening”* as though it has only to do with the sufferings administered by men: *“beaten,”* ^{NIV} *“scourged,”* ^{NJB} and *“we have been beaten.”* ^{NLT} While the oppressions of men are involved here, they are not the real point. **This is the high view of grief heaped upon us by men.**

Paul looks at his sufferings and sees them as the chastening of the Lord. **This is not necessarily punishment for sin, but training for righteousness.** As it is written, *“For they [our fathers ^{9j}] verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”* (Heb 12:10-11).

There is a chastening that comes to the children of God because they do not judge themselves, putting sinful tendencies from them (1 Cor 11:32). There is also a chastening associated with making advancement in the faith – getting further from the world and more conformed to the Divine image (Heb 12:10). **There comes a time when we**

Cor 1:10). It was certainly **not** Satan’s aim for Paul to live – but he did. His enemies did **not** intend for him to remain alive either – but he did. It is true that on one occasion Paul *“despaired even of life”* (2 Cor 1:8). Yet, even in such dire circumstances he was *“not killed.”*

“Not killed” means more than

The cup of suffering – unjust suffering – is made the sweeter and more tolerable when it is connected with the chastening of our Father in heaven. Sensitive souls will also have no difficulty in seeing their need for such discipline. How is it possible for Satan to win when the thorns and hurt that he delivers to us are considered as coming from the Lord who is perfecting us?

must advance beyond where we are, moving, as it were, to a higher plateau of faith and hope. In one place, this is called moving on *“to perfection”* (Heb 6:1-2). That, in my judgment, is the chastening of reference in this text.

The cup of suffering – unjust suffering – is made the sweeter and more tolerable when it is connected with the chastening of our Father in heaven. Sensitive souls will also have no difficulty in seeing their need for such discipline. How is it possible for Satan to win when the thorns and hurt that he delivers to us are considered as coming from the Lord who is perfecting us?

Not Killed

“ . . . and not killed . . . ” Other versions read, *“yet not put to death,”* ^{NASB} *“but not executed,”* ^{NJB} *“within an inch of our lives,”* ^{NLT} *“but kept from death,”* ^{LIVING} *“but we’re not dead yet,”* ^{IE} *“and yet we are not deprived of life,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“yet never going under.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

This underscores the severity of the chastening, else there would be no need to praise God for survival. This equates to not being *“destroyed,”* although *“cast down”* (2 Cor 4:9). It is yet a higher view of deliverance. As it is written, *“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us”* (2

being alive in the flesh. It also means his faith did not die, his hope did not wane, and his joy was not eradicated. If it is true that the objective of Christ’s death is that *“they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again”* (2 Cor 5:15), **then not being killed also has to do with the maintenance of that kind of life.** Paul was not merely kept alive, but alive to live *“for Him”* who died for him *“and was raised again.”* ^{NIV}

For the fifth time, it is confirmed, *“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”* (2 Cor 2:15-16). In these things also, he was approved.

AS SORROWFUL, YET ALWAYS REJOICING

“^{10a} As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing . . .”

Now we come to conflicting experiences within the person himself. While these are often attended by outward circumstances, they stand in a category by themselves.

Sorrowful

“As sorrowful . . . ” Other versions read, *“As full of sorrow,”* ^{BBE} *“as grieved,”* ^{DARBY} *“as sorrowing,”* ^{GENEVA} *“in pain,”* ^{NJB}

“Our hearts ache,”^{NLT} *“like men who are supposed to be sad,”*^{IE} *“as sad,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“As grieved and mourning,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“We know sorrow.”*^{PHILLIPS}

The word *“sorrowful”* comes from a word meaning, “to make sorrowful; to affect with sadness, cause grief; to throw into sorrow . . . in a wider sense, to grieve, offend,”^{THAYER} “pain, grieve, made sad . . . become distressed or sorry,”^{FRIBERG} “injure,”^{UBS} “to cause someone to be sad, sorrowful, or distressed,”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “to give pain to, to pain, distress, grieve, vex, annoy.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

This is not speaking of erratic fits of melancholy, where the emotions rise and fall like the waves of the ocean.

written, *“And when He came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation”* (Luke 19:41-44).

For those of tender heart, there is much sorrow that attends labors for the

“making many rich,” and *“possessing all things.”*

Even though periods of deep sorrow are experienced, yet those times do not interrupt rejoicing. This is because rejoicing is experienced at a higher level, and can even be experienced in the midst of sorrow. It is as though sorrow comes from looking down, and rejoicing from looking up. Sorrow results from things happening in the earth, and rejoicing because of heavenly realities.

This is why we are admonished, *“Rejoice in the Lord **alway**: and again I say, Rejoice”* (Phil 4:4). Put yourself to the test on this matter. For this reason we are taught, *“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and **the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”*** (Heb 3:6).

When sorrow has gripped your heart and is pushing tears from your eyes and squeezing life from your spirit, ponder your condition in Christ Jesus. In faith say with the perception of that faith, “I am accepted!” “I am forgiven!” I am a child of God!” God will not impute sin to me!” “God is keeping me by His great power!” “God has made a way of escape for me!” “I will be delivered from this body of death!” “Jesus will come again and receive me unto Himself!” “I have an inheritance that is reserved for me in heaven!” “The Lord is able to keep me from falling, and present me faultless before His presence with exceeding joy!”

Do not such thoughts cause joy to kindle within your heart – even in the midst of great sorrow? Sorrow is inferior to joy, because, for the child of God, it is temporal, and joy is *“everlasting”* (Isa 35:10; 55:11; 61:7).

AS POOR, YET MAKING MANY RICH
^{10b} . . . *as poor, yet making many rich . . .*

Right here we come into conflict with a lot of modern day prosperity teaching. The point is strong, being affirmed twice for special emphasis.

As Poor
“ . . . as poor . . . ” Other versions read, *“poor,”*^{NIV} *“as needy,”*^{DOUAY} *“We are*

This is not speaking of erratic fits of melancholy, where the emotions rise and fall like the waves of the ocean. Rather, this is sorrow that is brought on by people or things outside of one’s own self. It is a sorrow that is caused from without. By its very nature, this is an especially strong sorrow, for it is more rational than raw emotion, for which no account can be given.

Rather, this is sorrow that is brought on by people or things outside of one’s own self. It is a sorrow that is **caused** from without. By its very nature, this is an especially strong sorrow, for it is more rational than raw emotion, for which no account can be given. **This is a sorrow that is brought on by a discerning spirit and a sensitive heart.** Some examples will serve to illustrate this point.

The miserable condition of the Corinthians was so unsettling to Paul that he wrote to them *“out of much affliction and anguish of heart . . . with many tears”* (2 Cor 2:4). The unbelieving condition of his Jewish kinsmen caused Paul much sorrow: *“That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart”* (Rom 9:2). When Epaphroditus nearly died while in prison with Paul, his healing spared Paul from having *“sorrow upon sorrow”* (Phil 2:27,28). Who can forget the heavy heart of Jesus Himself when came near to Jerusalem. It is

Lord. This is not owing to the labor itself, but because of the slowness of certain people to believe, or the hardheartedness of others, or the great trials through which kindred spirits are caused to pass. Make sure that you yourself are not a source of sorrow to those who are working together with God!

Always Rejoicing
“ . . . yet always rejoicing . . . ”
 Other versions read, *“but ever glad,”*^{BBE} *“yet always full of joy,”*^{NJB} *“but we always have joy,”*^{NLT} *“but at the same time we have the joy of the Lord,”*^{LIVING} *“but we are always happy,”*^{IE} *“but we are always joyful,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“but always glad,”*^{MONTGOMERY} *“yet, we are always rejoicing,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“yet our joy is inextinguishable.”*^{PHILLIPS}

Note the difference in this particular set of dichotomies. **The favorable experiences are larger and more consistent than the unfavorable ones: “always rejoicing,”**

poor,"^{NLT} "as beggars,"^{IE} "as poor [ourselves],"^{AMPLIFIED} and "We have nothing to bless ourselves with."^{PHILLIPS}

The word "poor" comes from the Greek word πτωχοὶ (Pto-khoi), which means, "poor, needy . . . in a broader sense, destitute of wealth, influence, position, honors, lowly, afflicted,"^{THAYER} "literally, of one dependent on others for support, poor, destitute,"^{FRIEBERG} "poor, pitiful or inferior,"^{UBS} and "pertaining to being poor and destitute, implying a continual state."^{LOUW-NIDA}

This Greek word is used thirty-five times in Scripture (Matt 5:3; 11:5; 19:21; 26:9,11; Mk 10:21; 12:42,43; 14:5,7; Lk 4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13,21; 16:20,22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:3; 12:5,6,8; 13:29; 15:26; 1 Cor 13:3; 2 Cor 6:10; Gal 2:10; 4:9; James 2:2,3,5,6; Rev 3:17; 13:16). Only three of those times is the word clearly used to describe something other than an impoverished state, as ordinarily understood. One has to do with being "poor in spirit," another with the "weak and beggarly elements" of the Law as a means to justification, and the other of a miserable spiritual condition (Matt 5:3; Gal 4:9; Rev 3:17). In those cases, the context makes quite clear that financial, or earthly poverty, is not the subject under consideration. The remainder of the texts, however, clearly refer to ordinary understanding of "poor."

It might very well be offensive for some to perceive Paul as being "poor," or destitute – particularly since he had been made a partaker of special insights from the Lord. Such poor souls equate "abundant life" with many earthly benefits, and an existence that is free of want – even though such a view is not clearly declared by any inspired person. **There is no need for confusion on this matter, for Paul has spoken considerably about this experience.**

- He realized approval "in necessities," or "needs"^{NKJV} (2 Cor 6:4).
- He was instructed "to be hungry" and to "suffer need" (Phil 4:11).
- He knew what it was like to "hunger, and thirst," and to "have no certain dwelling place" (1 Cor 4:11).
- Coming on him "from without," he experienced "hunger and thirst," and

"cold and nakedness" (2 Cor 11:27).

- One time when he was in prison, he wrote to Timothy, asking him to bring "the cloak" that he had left in Troas with Carpus (2 Tim 4:13).
- There were times when he had to labor with his "own hands," providing

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his own "necessities" (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Cor 4:12) – sometimes even working "night and day" (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8).

Keep in mind, these are all experiences that resulted from Paul working together "with God." These were not the result foolishness, neglect of duty, and laziness. In the course of his ministry, he experienced being "poor." And yet, because his affection was not fastened upon the earth, this experience did not turn him from the path upon which Jesus had placed his feet.

Making Many Rich

" . . . yet making many rich . . ."

Other versions read, "but giving wealth to others,"^{BBE} "but enriching man,"^{DARBY} "but we give spiritual riches to others,"^{NLT} "we give rich spiritual gifts to others,"^{LIVING} "yet we make many people rich,"^{IE} "but we bestow wealth on many,"^{WEYMOUTH} "[yet] bestowing riches on many,"^{AMPLIFIED} and "yet we bless many others with true riches."^{PHILLIPS}

Paul once said of Jesus, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor 8:9).

What a remarkable deprivation Jesus underwent in order that we

might be saved! He who created and maintained all things, and for whom they were made, "humbled Himself," taking upon Himself the restricting "form of a man," and becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:8). Throughout His ministry, He was **not** noted for His wealth. Certain women are mentioned (Mary Magdalene, Joanna

the wife of Chuza Herod's household manager, and Susanna), regularly ministered to Jesus "of their substance" (Lk 8:3). Jesus said of Himself, "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." or "have no home of my own – no place to lay My head"^{LIVING} (Mat 8:20). He had no boat of His own, but used Peter's to minister to the people (Lk 5:3). Yet, the world has never been the same since He walked among men. **He had things to give that could not be quantified by the merchant's scale or an accountant's summation.**

Paul partook of the same spirit as Jesus. From one point of view, he had nothing. Yet, from another, he has marvelously enhanced the lives of countless believers. What are earthly possessions to compare with the marvelous riches that Paul has made accessible to us?

- The "riches of His goodness" (Rom 2:4).
- The "riches of His glory" (Rom 9:23).
- "The riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom 11:33).
- The "riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7).

- The “riches” of His “mercy” (Eph 2:4).
- The “riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8).
- “All riches of the full assurance of understanding” (Col 2:2).
- Being “rich in good works” (1 Tim 6:18).
- Being “rich in faith” (James 2:5).

There is something distracting about worldly possessions. They are not of themselves sinful, but can only be properly maintained when they are held lightly, and with a preference for the things that are above.

In this matter of being poor in this world, yet making many rich, Paul was

means “to own, possess . . . external things, such as property, riches, furniture, utensils, goods, food,” ^{THAYER} and “to have or hold, possess.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

The second word means “none . . . nothing i.e. not at all, in no respect,” ^{THAYER} and “not one thing, nothing,” ^{FRIBERG} Grammatically, there is no question about the meaning of the expression.

Like Jesus, he had no dwelling place. As Paul stated it, “no certain dwelling place” (1 Cor 4:11). Paul did not have a bank account – he was “penniless.” ^{PHILLIPS} He possessed no real estate – “we own nothing.” ^{NLT} When the early church was faced with the challenging presence of thousands of brethren from other countries, there were many who were “possessors of lands or houses,” who “sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,” laying them at the Apostles’ feet (Acts 4:34-35). Paul did not have either lands or houses. Barnabas had

life” (Matt 19:29). Paul saw something in Jesus that was worth the forfeiture of everything else.

Yet Possessing All Things

“ . . . and yet possessing all things.” Other versions read, “and yet possessing everything,” ^{NIV} “but still having all things,” ^{BBE} “and yet owning everything,” ^{NJB} “and yet we have everything,” ^{NLT} “and yet we enjoy everything,” ^{LIVING} “and yet we securely possess all things,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “but really possessing everything,” ^{WILLIAMS} “and [yet in reality] possessing all things,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “and yet, in reality, we have everything worth having.” ^{PHILLIPS}

There is a two-fold sense in which this text is to be understood. First, there was a higher order of “things” that were now possessed by Paul. **They were accessed and owned by faith, and none of them were excluded.** These are the “blessings” of which it is written, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). From another perspective, these are referred to as “all things that pertain to life and godliness” – all of the resources required to be godly, and to live in the presence of the Lord (2 Pet 1:3). These are the “all things” that are “freely” given to us through Jesus Christ (Rom 8:32). What is to be compared with these glorious realities? And, Paul possessed them all – that is, they all belonged to him, and were his for the taking. They were not, and still are not, things to be warehoused, but things required in the good fight of faith.

There is another sense in which Paul possessed all things. This has more to do with the practical side of life. When Jesus spoke of those who abandoned all for His sake and the sake of the Gospel, He was very precise in His statement of Divine compensation. “And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-

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approved as a minister of God.

AS HAVING NOTHING, YET POSSESSING ALL THINGS

“ ^{10c} . . . as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

Here again, Paul accentuates that his faith in Christ had not given him all manner of worldly advantage. In spite of claims of religious men to the contrary, Paul was not a wealthy man, even though there were times when he learned “how to abound” and how to “be full” (Phil 4:12).

As Having Nothing

“ . . . as having nothing . . . ”

Other versions read, “We own nothing,” ^{NLT} “penniless,” ^{WILLIAMS} and “we are penniless.” ^{PHILLIPS}

The expression “having nothing” is translated from two words. The first

some land, Paul did not – although Barnabas sold his land and contributed the funds to the needs of the brethren (Acts 4:37). Ananias and Sapphira had “a possession,” Paul did not – although Ananias and Sapphira did not do well in the selling of their possession (Acts 5:1).

If, when he was known as Saul of Tarsus, Paul had possessions, he must have abandoned them at some time. Perhaps they were among the “all things” that Paul counted “loss for Christ,” (Phil 3:7), considering them to be but “dung.”

Although we do not know the particulars, Paul fell into a certain category of people of whom Jesus spoke. “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting

30). Lest men think incorrectly about this whole matter, the Lord affirms that what is received “*now in this time*” will be attended “*with persecutions.*”

The way this is stated clarifies that Jesus is not merely speaking about possessions. The cluster of benefits is bounded by “*houses*” and “*lands.*” What is sandwiched between these has nothing whatsoever to do with riches – which strongly suggests that “*houses*” and “*lands*” are not in that category either. Also, although leaving a wife is mentioned in the first part, gaining wives is not included in the second. Of course, the precise identity of these things is not the point, and it will serve no good to address the text as though it was.

The point is that when we come into Christ, we are joined to the entirety of His body, becoming “everyone members one of another” (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25). Now the “*houses*” and “*lands*” of others can become havens for the faithful who have forsaken everything for Christ and the Gospel. Just as the home of Martha became an abode for Jesus (Luke 10:38), so Paul was

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welcomed into the house of the converted Philippian jailor (Acts 16:34), and the house of Lydia as well (Acts 16:15). The mother of Rufus, a Roman, became Paul’s as well (Rom 16:13). When Paul was in Thessalonicas, and stood in need, the brethren from Philippi became his helpers, sending him aid “*again and again when*” he was “*in need*”^{NIV} (Phil 4:16).

Although Paul had no children of his own, having forgone the right of having a wife (1 Cor 7:8; 9:5), yet he had

many children in the Lord – Timothy (2 Tim 2:1), Onesimus (Phile 1:10), Titus (Tit 2:14), the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:15), etc.

Paul did not see himself as having truly lost anything in Christ Jesus. He rather perceived himself as gaining great spoil and remarkable advantages – and was grateful for it. There is nothing he really needed that he did not have in Christ Jesus. His supplies were complete and abundant.

CONCLUSION

This remarkable approach to justifying one’s ministry is filled with perspective, teaching, and exhortation. It is appropriate for holy men and women to ponder how Paul reasons, and with what holy zeal he presents his case.

This presentation stands in stark contrast to an academic or “success-factor” approach to ministry approval. Neither does it blend well with an institutional agenda, nor will it serve the purposes of the flesh. **Notwithstanding that contrast, this passage unveils the real manner in which the servants of God confirm the validity of their ministry.** At the foundation of this reasoning there are several suppositions. They are developed further throughout Scripture

• First, the field in which we labor, and the building upon which we work,

belong exclusively to the Lord. It is His harvest, and the church is His building (Matt 9:28; 1 Cor 3:9).

• Second, God alone can send laborers into His harvest (Luke 10:2).

• Third, God places the members in the body as it has pleased Him (1 Cor 12:18).

• Fourth, those who work for God are stewards of what He has given them (1 Cor 4:2; 1 Pet 4:10).

• Fifth, the purpose of the various ministries is to “*perfect the saints for the work of the ministry*” (Eph 4:11-12).

• Sixth, the Seed of the kingdom, and the only thing that can produce spiritual life, is the Word of God (Lk

8:11).

• Seventh, when it comes to kingdom labors, the grace of God makes men what they are (1 Cor 15:10).

• No work is valid that has pleasing men as its fundamental aim (Gal 1:10).

While the above thoughts are only introductory, they confirm why Paul wrote as he did in this passage. The confirmation of his choosing, sending, and message were based upon these underlying premises. Our current “church” environment, however, makes Paul’s reasoning sound strange. You will be hard-pressed to find anyone who would take such an approach to validating one’s ministry. Notwithstanding that situation, any ministry that cannot stand up under these tests cannot possibly be a valid one.

A Ministry for Hungry Saints, Series on Second Corinthians, Lesson #27, Meeting #311

EARTHEN VESSEL – THINGS THAT ARE SEEN	TEXT	THE HEAVENLY TREASURE – THINGS THAT ARE NOT SEEN
<p>The approval of those who minister in the name of the Lord is found in five basic areas: (1.) In Adversity, (2.) In their Various Expressions, (3.) In their Character, (4.) In their Stewardship of Divine Provisions, and (5.) In their Personal Experience. True spiritual life will react to these matters in a way that brings glory to God. Faith also shows itself in particular ways in all of these things. Those who obtain genuine approval, thus confirm that their ministry is from, and supported by, the Lord Jesus Christ by the way they respond to the experiences.</p>		
Troubled on every side	2 Cor 4:8a	Yet not distressed
Perplexed	2 Cor 4:8b	But not in despair
Persecuted	2 Cor 4:8c	But not forsaken
Cast down	2 Cor 4:8d	But not destroyed
Outward man is perishing	2 Cor 4:16	Inward man renewed daily
Light and momentary affliction	2 Cor 4:17	Eternal weight of glory
Seen things are temporal	2 Cor 4:18	Unseen things are eternal
Afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watchings, fastings.	2 Cor 6:4-5	Patience
	2 Cor 6:6	Purity, knowledge, longsuffering, kindness, love unfeigned.
	2 Cor 6:6b-7	Holy Spirit, Word of truth, power of God, armor of righteousness.
Dishonor	2 Cor 6:8a	Honor
Evil report	2 Cor 6:8b	Good report
Deceivers	2 Cor 6:8c	Yet true
Unknown	2 Cor 6:9a	Well known
Drying	2 Cor 6:9b	Behold we live
Chastened	2 Cor 6:9c	Not killed
Sorrowful	2 Cor 6:10a	Yet always rejoicing
Poor	2 Cor 6:10b	Yet making many rich
Having nothing	2 Cor 6:10c	Yet possessing all things

The unique manner in which those who work together with God are approved— by Given O. Blakely

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/27/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The twenty-eighth lesson will cover verses eleven through eighteen of the sixth chapter: **“A FERVENT PLEA.”** Because the life of faith is lived out in the arena of moral conflict, fervent pleas are made for the people to God to separate themselves from all wickedness and unequal yokes. This text is a sterling example of such a plea. 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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COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>