

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 #29

COMMENTARY ON: 7:1-4

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

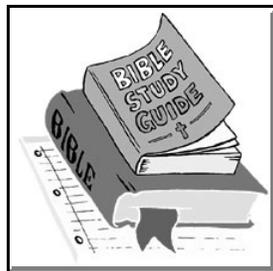
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

A PROPER RESPONSE

With great fervency and spiritual candor, Paul has admonished believers to come out of the company of unbelievers, be separate, and touch not the unclean thing (6:17). As an incentive, he has said that God will "receive" those who do such things, being a Father to them, and receiving them as His own sons and daughters. What is the appropriate response to such an admonition? Is this something to merely be taken into consideration – perhaps added to our official church creed? This text will develop how the saints are to respond to the admonition delivered to them. This is the only acceptable response.

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 29



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO BUILDING THE FAITH AND ENHANCING THE HOPE OF THOSE WHO ARE WORKING OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

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), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), 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), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakh (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TNK = JPS Tanakh (1985), 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

AN EPISTLE WRITTEN TO A CHURCH THAT WAS MOVING AWAY FROM ITS CARNALITY, YET LACKED MUCH INSIGHT. HERE IS A STRONG APPEAL TO PERFECT HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

A PROPER RESPONSE

“ 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. ² Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. ³ I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you. ⁴ Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.” (2 Cor 7:1-4)

INTRODUCTION

Speaking through the Spirit, Paul is in the midst of a powerful call to holiness – to separation from the world TO the living God. This is only reasonable, for Christ “died for all, that they which live *should not* henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). **There is no place for self-centeredness in the kingdom of God** – the kingdom which we have “received” (Heb 12:28), and the place to which we “are come!” Christ is the heart and core of everything. Whatever is not, in some way,

connected to Him, is destined to perish, passing away with the world. That is the reasoning behind our call to holy separation. That is why Jesus, according to the will of God, “delivered us from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). We have now been joined to a kingdom that is eternal. As it is written, “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the

spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24). **Those are all things that are not in any way characterized by mortality!** They are all free from taint, corruption, and the curse of God. Ponder the magnitude of the environment into which you are come in Christ Jesus.

☛ **Mount Zion.** This is the heavenly parallel to Sinai, the mountain from

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which the Law was given (Deut 4:48). Here the Lamb of God is seen with the saved, governing His kingdom (Rev 14:1).

- ☛ **The City of the living God.** This is a term denoting the realm where God remains. It is compared with earthly Jerusalem, which was called *“the city of God”* (Psa 46:4; 87:3). But this is the *“city of the LIVING God”* – His permanent abode, around and within which nothing corrupting can be found.
- ☛ **The heavenly Jerusalem.** This is the Jerusalem *“which is above”* (Gal 4:26), that is free and unencumbered with the entailments of the flesh. It is the place of heavenly commerce and fellowship.
- ☛ **An innumerable company of angels.** These are spirits that *“cannot die”* (Lk 20:36). As compared with men, they *“excel in strength,”* always *“doing His commandments,”* and *“hearkening to the voice of His word”* (Psa 103:20).
- ☛ **The general assembly and church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven.** This is the church from heaven’s point of view. It is comprised of all of the redeemed.

They are recognized and honored in heaven, their names being recorded on the register of heavenly citizens.

- ☛ **God the Judge of all.** This is the one true God who not only has *“created us”* (Mal 2:10), but to whom we will ultimately give a full and untainted account (Rom 14:12).
- ☛ **The spirits of just men made perfect.** These are the redeemed that are no longer *“in the body”* – they are *“absent from the body”* and *“present with the Lord”* (2 Cor 5:6,8). They no longer live under the constraints of mortality.
- ☛ **Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.** This is the Savior who is presently administrating the New Covenant. Through the Holy Spirit, He is putting the laws of God into our hearts, and writing them upon our minds. He is acquainting us with God, so that we *“know”* Him. In Him God becomes **our** God, and we become **His** people (Heb 8:10-13’ 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15).
- ☛ **The blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.** This is the effective blood of Christ that brings justification (Rom 5:9), redemption (Eph 1:7), nearness to God (Eph 2:13), forgiveness (Col 1:14), peace (Col 1:20), boldness to enter God’s presence (Heb 10:19), and redemption from vain living (1 Pet 1:18-19).

Is there any room for *“flesh”* or *“self”* in these realities? **What is there in them that would make for placing a high value on the things of this world, or fleshly gratification, or**

living for ourselves? How does self-indulgence, fulfilling the lust of the flesh, and the love of the world blend with them? It is abundantly evident that all of these realities are in **separation** from this world. That is precisely why we must be delivered from the world to obtain them. Further, if we do not obtain them, there is no hope of being saved.

This is the fellowship to which we have come. This is precisely where **every** person who is *“born again”* is brought. **There are no “saved” people who have not come to these things.** How can carnality possibly fit in with this situation? And, who is able to conceive of a salvation that is unrelated to **all** of these realities?

Because we have now been united with an eternal order, we must sever any permanent bond with the temporal order. That is the reasoning that permeates our text. Although it is enough to simply declare these things, we are also told of the nature and effects of *“the flesh”* in order to give us a greater incentive to crucify its affections and lusts (Gal 5:24).

- ☛ The *“flesh”* is associated with *“the motions of sin”* (Rom 7:5).
- ☛ *“Carnal”* involves being *“sold under sin”* (Rom 7:14).
- ☛ The *“carnal mind is enmity against God”* (Rom 8:7a).
- ☛ The *“carnal mind . . . is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Rom 8:7b).
- ☛ They *“that are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom 8:8).

Is there any room for “flesh” or “self” in these realities? What is there in them that would make for placing a high value on the things of this world, or fleshly gratification, or living for ourselves? How does self-indulgence, fulfilling the lust of the flesh, and the love of the world blend with them?

- If we live after “*the flesh*,” we “*will die*” (Rom 8:13).
- The “*flesh lusts against the Spirit*” (Gal 5:17).
- The “*works of the flesh*” exclude one from “*the kingdom of God*” (Gal 5:19-21).
- Those who “*sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption*” (Gal 6:8).
- Fleshly lusts “*war against the soul*” (1 Pet 2:11).

When Paul writes, he does so with these things in mind – knowing the total unacceptability of the flesh, and the vanity of living for its gratification. This is

not a call to a higher form of discipleship – like a “full-time servant.” This is a call to the **only** kind of discipleship that Christ receives. If a person does not “*forsake all*,” he cannot even be a disciple of Christ. Thus Jesus says, “*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:33).

This is not a matter in which men are to become judges of one another, and the teaching of this section will make that quite clear. **This responsibility is laid upon everyone who claims identity with Christ – everyone who wears His name. Each person is to take these words and work out their own “salvation with fear and trembling.”** This is to be done knowing that their

efforts are not theirs alone, “*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*” (Phil 2:12-13).

These words will also be presented as something more than mere duty – although we **are** obligated, by the very nature of God and His salvation, to do them. **There will also be a strong appeal to our reasoning – reasoning that has been sanctified by faith, and thus is not after the manner of this world.** The Spirit will confirm that this is, in fact, the **only** reasonable and good thing to do. He will also hold before us the precious promises of God in order to pull us into the holy activity of cleansing ourselves from all manner of defilement in flesh and spirit.

HAVING THESE PROMISES

“^{7:1a} *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved . . .*”

The Apostle is now moved by the Spirit to exhort us upon the basis of the

sin. The extent of this bondage is staggering to consider.

Circumstances Introduced by Sin
Ponder what happened when “*sin*

with God,” although I do not question that He did to some limited extent. However, a point is never made of this in Scripture. **He is noted more for sin than anything else** (Job 31:33; Isa 43:27; Rom 5:14,16,20,21). Additionally we read of the following.

The “truth of God” targets the freedom of humanity from the intellectual, moral, and spiritual shackles imposed upon it by sin. The extent of this bondage is staggering to consider.

truth that he has just declared. **That is the Divine manner: affirm the truth, then move the people to come into accord with that truth.** The “*truth*” as it “*is in Jesus*” (Eph 4:20) is not primarily addressed to the human intellect. It is not intended to merely increase our scope of knowledge, or provide us with a ground for speculation and wandering thoughts. The “*truth of God*” targets the freedom of humanity from the intellectual, moral, and spiritual shackles imposed upon it by

entered into the world” (Rom 5:12). Every indication is that it “*entered*” very early in human history – perhaps right after the seventh day. **It removed men from the presence of God and His enriching fellowship.** Precious little was heard from Him from that point to Abraham – and even with Abraham, the revelations of God were quantitatively small, and very limited in detail.

It is never said that Adam “*walked*

- God’s intention to make man (Gen 1:26).
- The actual creation of Adam (Gen 1:27; 2:7; 5:1-2).
- God brought the beasts and fowls of the air to Adam to “*see what he would call them*” (Gen 2:19-20).
- The creation of Eve from Adam’s rib (Gen 2:21-22).
- God gave Adam and Eve coats of skin to cover their nakedness (Gen 3:21).
- God expelled them from the garden (Gen 3:22-24).
- Adam fathered Cain, Abel, and many others (Gen 4:1-2,25).
- When he was 130 years old, Adam beget Seth in his own likeness (Gen 5:3).

- Adam lived 800 years after he had begotten Seth, and begat “sons and daughters”(Gen 5:4).
- Adam lived 930 years (Gen 5:5).

Ponder the recorded words that God spoke TO Adam.

- “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth*”(Gen 1:28).
 - “And God said, *Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so*”(Gen 1:29-30).
 - “And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, *Where art thou?*” (Gen 3:9).
 - “And He said, *Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*” (Gen 3:11).
 - “And unto Adam he said, *Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*” (Gen 3:17-19).
- Ponder the record of the words spoken BY Adam.**
- “And Adam said, *This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she*

shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”(Gen 2:25).

- “And he said, *I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself*” (Gen 3:10).
- “And the man said, *The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat*” (Gen 3:12).

This is all we know of a man that lived seventy years short of a millennium – nine hundred and thirty years! How

exhortations. We have just such an exhortation before us.

HAVING THEREFORE

“Having therefore . . . ” Other versions read, “*Since we have,*”^{NIV} “*Because God, then,*”^{BBE} “*Seeing then we have,*”^{GENEVA} “*Seeing, therefore, we have,*”^{MRD} “*have been made for us,*”^{NJB} “*Because we have,*”^{NLT} and “*with.*”^{PHILLIPS}

In Christ Jesus, we have entered the place of possession – “having.” It is not possible to make too much of this.

Owing to the influence of spiritual Babylon, Satan’s fabrication of the church of God, **a form of preaching and teaching has been introduced that sharply conflicts with that of the Apostles, in whose “doctrine” we are to**

This is all we know of a man that lived seventy years short of a millennium – nine hundred and thirty years! How does it compare with what we know of Abraham (who lived 175 years), or David (who lived seventy years)? Comparatively, how very little from God was actually possessed by Adam and succeeding generations!

does it compare with what we know of Abraham (who lived 175 years), or David (who lived seventy years)? Comparatively, how very little from God was actually possessed by Adam and succeeding generations!

However, this is emphatically not the case now! When Jesus entered into the world, He was “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14). Now the children of God are becoming familiar with “*life more abundantly*” (John 10:10), “*full assurance*” (Col 2:2; Heb 6:11; 10:22), “*the riches of His grace*” (Eph 1:7), “*the riches of His glory*” (Eph 3:16), an “*abundance of grace*” (Rom 5:17), and “*the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col 1:3). There is a Divine plentitude realized in Christ Jesus that becomes the basis for fervent admonitions and

“*continue*” (Acts 2:42). Because it handily blends with the psychological approaches of the day, believers are often addressed as though they had **never** been born again, were **never** reconciled to God, **never** received new hearts, and as though, for them, all things had **not** become new. **They are spoken to as though they were at a fundamental variance with God, had recalcitrant natures like the Israelites, were frolicking and undisciplined children, and required rigid rules and accountability relationships to keep them in line.** I do not question that there are people like this within the professed church, but they are certainly not examples of the “*new creation.*” They do **not** represent the generation that God has created in Christ Jesus – a generation created “*unto good works.*”

To be sure, the Apostles dealt with waywardness and woeful deficiencies within the church. It is the WAY they did it that particularly appeals to me. **They appealed to the “new man,” showing what had actually been received in Christ Jesus, and urging the people to avail themselves of those things.** They called the people higher. Here are some of the realities believers are said to possess.

☛ *“Therefore being justified by faith, we **HAVE peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1).*

God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1).

☛ *“**HAVING therefore these promises**, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1).*

☛ *“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out **our liberty which we HAVE** in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (Gal 2:4).*

☛ *“**We HAVE also a more sure word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet 1:19).*

☛ *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, **we HAVE fellowship one with another**, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).*

☛ *“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).*

☛ *“But the anointing which ye **HAVE received of Him** abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:27).*

☛ *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that **ye HAVE eternal life**, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13).*

It is the solemn obligation of all who take it upon themselves to address the saints of God to do so within the proper context of who they are in Christ Jesus. No matter what is required – whether edification, comfort, exhortation, rebuke, or instruction in righteousness – it is never in order to speak to those who are in Christ Jesus as though they were primarily of Adam.

☛ *“By whom also we **HAVE access by faith into this grace wherein we stand**, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2).*

☛ *“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we **HAVE now received the atonement**” (Rom 5:11).*

☛ *“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we **HAVE the mind of Christ**” (1 Cor 2:16).*

☛ *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the **Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye HAVE of God**, and ye are not your own?” (1 Cor 6:19).*

☛ *“But we **HAVE this treasure in earthen vessels**, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor 4:7).*

☛ *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we **HAVE a building of***

*☛ “In whom we **HAVE redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7).*

☛ *“In whom also we **HAVE obtained an inheritance**, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11).*

☛ *“Seeing then that we **HAVE a great High Priest**, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (Heb 4:14).*

☛ *“Which hope we **HAVE as an anchor of the soul**, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb 6:19).*

☛ *“We **HAVE an altar**, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Heb 13:10).*

☛ *“Pray for us: for we trust we **HAVE a good conscience**, in all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:18).*

It is the solemn obligation of all who take it upon themselves to address the saints of God to do so within the proper context of who they are in Christ Jesus. No matter what is required – whether edification, comfort, exhortation, rebuke, or instruction in righteousness – it is never in order to speak to those who are in Christ Jesus as though they were primarily of Adam. Whatever is thought of wayward tendencies, they are not found in Christ, or the “new man” who is **joined** to Him. If we expect those tendencies to be crucified, as they must be (Rom 8:13), the saints must be reminded that they **have** in their possession “*all things pertaining to life and godliness*,” and **can** do what the Lord requires of them. They **CAN** “*do all things through Christ*,” who strengthens them (Phil 4:13).

THESE PROMISES

“... these promises ...” Other

versions read, “such great rewards,”^{BBE} “such promises,”^{TNT} “such great promises,”^{LIVING} “such promises as these,”^{WILLIAMS} “these [great] promises,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “these promises ringing in our ears.”^{PHILLIPS}

The Spirit now reminds us of the particular promises that have been placed before us – **conditional promises.**

sThe Conditions

The conditions have been clearly articulated. They have been reasonable, and in strict harmony with the nature and intent of God’s great salvation.

- ☛ **“Come out from among them.”** That is, sever unequal yokes with

The Promises are remarkably personal, and laden with benefits that are obvious to the tender heart.

- ☛ **“I will receive you.”** That is, God Himself will extend a hearty welcome to us, and not be ashamed to be called our God.
- ☛ **“I will be a Father unto you.”** That is, He will supply all of our need according to His riches in glory. We will have ready access to Him, His eye will be upon us, and His ear will be open to our cries.
- ☛ **“Ye shall be my sons and daughters.”** That is, we will have access to the household benefits and privileges. All the plenitude of Divine provision will become ours.

When the individual is immersed in “*this present evil world*,” none of these promises appear to have any value. The “*world and the lusts thereof*” cause a spiritual stupor to envelop the soul, so that all awareness of Divine benefits fades from view. **This is the great jeopardy of unduly investing oneself in the things that are passing away.**

However, when the heart is tender, and the world is seen for what it really is, these promises are like honey from the honeycomb, and are strongly desired. There is no price that is too great to pay in order to experience them. That is precisely why such a strong appeal is made to them in this text.

DEARLY BELOVED

“... *dearly beloved*...” Other versions read, “*beloved*,”^{NKJV} “*dear friends*,”^{NIV} “*dear brothers*,”^{BBE} “*my beloved*,”^{MRD} and “*beloved friends*.”^{WEYMOUTH}

Paul does not speak to the Corinthians as though they were primarily of the world – even though, in some ways, that may have appeared to be the case. Instead, he shouts into their inward parts, and refers to **who they are** in Christ Jesus: i.e. “*dearly beloved*.”

This is not a term of fleshly endearment, but of spiritual affinity. They were not “*beloved*” to Paul because they had the same temperament as him, or because they had especially assisted him during times of duress. **It was their association with Christ that so endeared them to Paul. In his epistles to them, Paul often referred to this association.**

- ☛ **“That in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge”** (1 Cor 1:5)
- ☛ **“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”** (1 Cor 1:30).
- ☛ **“... ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building”** (1 Cor 3:9).
- ☛ **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”** (1 Cor 3:16).
- ☛ **“... but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”** (1 Cor 6:11).
- ☛ **“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”** (1 Cor 12:27).
- ☛ **“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart”** (2 Cor 3:3).

In NOT knowing the children of God “*after the flesh*” (2 Cor 5:16), **it is equally essential that they be known for what they ARE in Christ Jesus, for that is who they REALLY are.** The failure to so consider the people of God is the mother of all manner of division, inconsideration, and, lack of fervent love for one another. Where a preference for the people of **God is not found, hearts have been contaminated with the virus of unbelief.**

These were the things that made the Corinthians “*beloved*” to Paul. The thing that made them “*dear*” to him was



unbelievers, and come away from close and unprofitable associations with them.

- ☛ **“Be separate.”** That is, be separate from the world and those who are living in consonance with it, becoming sanctified unto God.
- ☛ **“Touch not the unclean thing.”** That is, have no unnecessary contact with defiling things – things that contaminate the spirit, stain the soul, and make us reprehensible to God.

Until these conditions are taken seriously, the promises that follow have no meaning whatsoever. They will not be perceived as “*exceeding great and precious*” (2 Pet 1:4), and will exert no power upon the individual.

that **they were the results of his own labors**. They were his own “children” in the faith (2 Cor 6:13), his own “work” (1 Cor 9:1), and an epistle of Christ that he himself had “ministered” (2 Cor 3:3).

Thus the apostle now addresses

them as those who have been “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified.” He also speaks to them as those in whom, he has invested considerable of his own person. This is no casual plea, but is driven by an awareness of who these people were in Christ Jesus, and how they had been the

products of the Gospel he himself had preached. Judging from outward appearances, and the miserable things that existed among them, one might never have supposed these things were true. But Paul knew they were, and thus speaks within the greater context of God’s work.

LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES

“^{1b} . . . **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit . . .**”

The exhortation that follows is a summons to bring their lives into conformity with the salvation they professed to have. Initial salvation is not an end of itself, and is not to be treated as though it was. Following our entrance into Christ, much remains to be done. It is something like Israel entering the promised land. At that time, the land was not empty, but was actually filled with inhabitants – inhabitants that had to be driven out. Each tribe was given an inheritance, as the land was divided by lot. Larger tribes received a larger portion, and smaller tribes a smaller one. As it is written, “*And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man’s inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit*” (Num 33:54).

However, whether the inheritance was large or small, the mandate was to drive the existing inhabitants out of the land. If they failed to do this, these inhabitants would become a source of pain to them, and eventually cause Israel themselves to be driven from the land. Thus, when they entered into the land, it was said to them: “*But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them*”

(Num 33:55-56).

Very rarely will you hear such an exhortation today. Yet, this is precisely the kind of admonition that is now before us. This is not a mere suggestion, or a summons for a selected few to rise to greater prominence within the body of Christ. This has to do with God **receiving** us, being a **Father** to us, and we being his **sons** and **daughters**. I hardly see how anything could be more relevant, or require a more diligent response. Divine acceptance and recognition. What could possibly rank

the armor of light” (Rom 13:12).

- ☛ “**LET US** therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom 14:19).
- ☛ “If we live in the Spirit, **LET US** also walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25).
- ☛ “**LET US** not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thess 5:6).
- ☛ “**LET US** labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the

However, whether the inheritance was large or small, the mandate was to drive the existing inhabitants out of the land. If they failed to do this, these inhabitants would become a source of pain to them, and eventually cause Israel themselves to be driven from the land.

higher?

LET US

“ . . . let us . . . ” Other versions read, “we should,”^{NJB} and “may we.”^{YLT}

In order to confirm that this is not a special word for the Corinthians, Paul uses the expression “let us.” This is family language, and applies to all of the members of the “household of faith” (Gal 6:10). **It is imperative that we embrace a “let us” mentality.**

- ☛ “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: **LET US** therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on

same example of unbelief” (Heb 4:11).

- ☛ “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, **LET US** go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb 6:1).
- ☛ “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, **LET US** lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1).

We have not been called out

of the world into a state of spiritual inactivity. We must therefore zealously avoid any teaching that leaves us imagining there is nothing left for us to do. While there is a sense in which everything has been accomplished by Jesus, it is equally true that there is a sense in which it has not. The basis, or foundation, of our acceptance has been accomplished by Jesus. **However, as we will see, we have been called into the work as well as into the realm.**

When we are born again, *“all things become new”* (2 Cor 5:17), and yet the remnants of sin remain in us, like the Canaanites remained in Canaan. There is

described as *“washed”* (1 Cor 6:11). That condition is to be maintained throughout the entirety of our lives. If being unclean separated us from the Lord in the first place, who would imagine that it would not do so again? **No person of sound mind would say that life in Christ sanctifies uncleanness, or makes defilement acceptable.** Yet, the person who does not purge himself from defilement is actually making a statement that this is what he believes, whether he acknowledges it or not.

Who would dare to say that the death, burial, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus makes sin

(Psa 24:3-4).

As I will develop later, this is in perfect harmony with *“The apostles’ doctrine.”*

There are at least three ways in which this personal cleansing is approached in Scripture. I only intend for the following to be representative of our personal involvement.

Putting Away From Us

First, we are to put *“put away,”* or *“lay aside”* the encumbrances of sin. Thus it is written, *“Wherefore **putting away lying**, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another”* (Eph 4:25). And again, *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be **put away from you, with all malice”**”* (Eph 4:31). And again, *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us **lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us”**”* (Heb 12:1). And finally, *“Wherefore **laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings”**”* (1 Pet 2:1).

First, this is spoken to believers, not unbelievers. It presumes an initial cleansing, and subsequent access to all of the resources required for this work. Let it be clear, that this is essential if we are to enjoy Divine fellowship – something without which we cannot be saved.

the *“old man”* as well as the *“new man”* (Col 3:9-10), and the *“flesh”* as well as *“the Spirit”* (Gal 5:16-17). There is *“the law of sin”* within us (Rom 7:23), as well as *“the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus”* (Rom 8:2). **This complication introduces the potential of sin – and it had taken hold of the Corinthians.**

Because the Corinthians were not alone in this condition, the word is addressed to all believers down through the ages. **We must rid ourselves of the remnants of sin** – the fruit of the *“old man,”* or the expressions of *“the flesh.”*

CLEANSE OURSELVES

“ . . . cleanse ourselves . . . ”

Other versions read, *“purify ourselves,”* ^{NIV} *“make ourselves clean,”* ^{BBE} *“wash ourselves clean,”* ^{NJB} *“turn away,”* ^{LIVING} and *“let us keep clear of.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

The children of God must not learn to live with contamination. They began *“newness of life”* by having their sins *“washed away”* (Acts 22:16). Their condition was appropriately

acceptable? Where is the one willing to affirm that life in Christ Jesus allows for the expression of iniquity, and the presence of impurity?

This is a matter that must be pressed upon us, for there is too much at stake to ignore it. We are speaking of something having to do with God **receiving** us, being a Father unto us, and we being His sons and daughters. Here, the word is to *“purify ourselves,”* ^{NIV} *“make ourselves clean,”* ^{BBE} and *“wash ourselves clean.”* ^{NJB}

First, this is spoken to believers, not unbelievers. **It presumes an initial cleansing, and subsequent access to all of the resources required for this work.** Let it be clear, that this is essential if we are to enjoy Divine fellowship – something without which we **cannot** be saved. David had a sense of this when he wrote, *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? **He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully”**”*

That is, the **expression** of such things is to stop. We are to cease allowing the outbreak of these things in our lives. It is obvious that this will require a hearty effort. It is also obvious that there is grace to help us in this matter. This can be like stretching out a withered hand, or like a paralyzed man picking up his bed and walking. However, when we reconcile ourselves to the fact that this must be done, the Spirit will assist us in *“mortifying the deeds of the body”* (Rom 8:13). A very real cleansing us to result from our efforts in this matter.

Confessing Our Sins

Personal cleansing also involves the confession of sin – a confession that is made to God through Jesus Christ. Thus it is written, *“**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”**”* (1 John 1:9). Note that the effects of true confession go beyond forgiveness, or the expiation of guilt: *“**AND to purify us from all unrighteousness.”**”* ^{NIV} That is the protection against the reoccurrence of the

sins for which we receive forgiveness. This is essential to the cleansing of ourselves. In this case, **we** are said to do the cleansing, not by personally scrubbing ourselves, so to speak, but by **acknowledging** our sin to God.

Walking in the Light

Note the three levels to which we are exposed in this matter. First, we personally enter into the work by ridding ourselves of sinful expressions. Second, we address the matter less directly by going to the Father and confessing our sins. **Now we see a cleansing that takes place indirectly – as a result of devoting ourselves to the proper emphasis.** *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son **cleanseth us from all sin**”* (1 John 1:7).

Those who do, in fact, walk in fellowship with Christ – a fellowship into which they were *“called”* (1 Cor 1:9) – experience a **continual cleansing**. That is one of the marvelous benefits of salvation.

Thus, by these means, and any other ones that are available in redemption, the child of God is to **maintain cleanliness** before the Lord. This is sustained while we are in a defiled world, yet walking with Him who is the embodiment of all purity – Jesus Christ.

Living In Hope

Hope plays a critical role in the matter of cleansing ourselves. We are, after all, *“saved by hope”* – **by the anticipation what we shall be.** It is written, *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him **purifieth himself, even as He is pure**”* (1 John 3:2-3). This is, then, the manner of those who live in anticipation of the coming of the Lord. **Should we imagine that this does not impact directly upon our eternal destiny, we are reminded Jesus will “appear the second time without sin unto salvation” only to those who are looking for Him** (Heb 9:28).

ALL FILTHINESS

“ . . . from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit . . . ” Other versions read, *“all defilement of flesh and spirit,”* ^{NASB} *“everything that contaminates body and spirit,”* ^{NIV} *“every defilement of body and spirit,”* ^{NRSV} *“all evil of flesh and spirit,”* ^{BEBE} *“every pollution of flesh and spirit,”* ^{DARBY} *“everything that can defile our body or spirit,”* ^{NLT} *“from everything wrong, whether of body or spirit,”* ^{LIVING} *“from anything that might pollute the body or the spirit,”* ^{IE} *“from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} *and “of anything that smirches body or soul.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

An understanding of the concept of “filthiness” is not common in the modern church. There appears to be an underlining supposition that purity, or cleanliness, is merely a

yet *“attained,”* neither are we yet *“perfect”* (Phil 2:12-13). In this state, the saints cannot truthfully say, *“We have no sin.”* To do so reveals we have deceived ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:7). Although we do not desire the condition, we presently *“find another law”* in our members, *“warring against the law of”* our *“mind,”* and *“bringing”* us *“into captivity to the law of sin which is in”* our *“members”* (Rom 7:23). **Therefore, we still need a Savior, an Intercessor, the help of the Spirit, the grace of God, and all of the spiritual amenities required to get us from earth to glory, and from time to eternity.**

In Christ Jesus

The latter view – *“in Christ Jesus”* – declares us to be separate from sinners. This is owing to a very real new

An understanding of the concept of “filthiness” is not common in the modern church. There appears to be an underlining supposition that purity, or cleanliness, is merely a gracious view of redeemed humanity by God. Somehow He sees us as being undefiled, even though the condition does not really exist.

gracious view of redeemed humanity by God. Somehow He sees us as being undefiled, even though the condition does not **really** exist. This is the perception that some have of the grace of God. Therefore we hear such trite sayings as: *“All men are sinners, but those in Christ are forgiven.”* There is an element of truth to this thoughtless enunciation, but it is, at the best, only the fringe of the truth, and not the heart of it.

Two Different Views

There are two different views of the saints in Scriptures. One has to do with them being in a corruptible body, and the other with being in Christ Jesus.

In the Body

In the former view – *“in the body”* – we are seen as those who have **not yet “apprehended that for which”** we *“have been apprehended.”* We have **not**

birth, in which **a nature was received from God that cannot sin** (1 John 3:9), and which the devil cannot touch (1 John 5:18). Therefore, we are to **have served** sin formerly, and **not** presently (Rom 6:17,20). We *“were dead in trespasses and sins,”* for have now been made alive in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:1). We *“were sometime alienated and enemies in”* our minds *“by wicked works, yet **NOW** hath He reconciled”* (Col 1:21).

Our text takes both of these conditions into consideration. We are being addressed as saints who have been *“made accepted in the Beloved”* (Eph 1:6), **yet dwell within a frail tabernacle that is morally and spiritually weak.** We are in a fallen world, walking about in a *“vile body”* (Phil 3:20-21), and hounded by a fierce and crafty adversary who walks about, *“seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Pet 5:8-9). We have a *“new man”* that was

“created after the image of Him that created him” and “in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). **But that is not presently our only part.** We also have an “old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts” (Eph 4:22). He has certain “deeds” that must be “put off” (Col 3:9). Indeed, there is a part of us, called “the flesh,” in which “dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18).

No believer can afford to be naive about this situation. To be simple-minded in this area makes one vulnerable to the devil. In our time, in an supposed effort to reach the people, overly simplistic theologies have been developed that **understate** the real condition of the person who is in Christ Jesus. Some affirm our present condition unalterable, so that no matter what we do, God will still receive us because He

grace of God is largely nothing more than a theological novelty.

Like a surgical spiritual knife, our text cuts through all of this religious sham, and goes strait the matter of dealing with personal sin. **Sin – personal sin – is always to be viewed with alarm.** It always introduces the potential of being thrust from the presence of the Lord.

The objective is to rid ourselves of “all filthiness” – everything that contaminates. **Nothing – absolutely nothing – that has a polluting impact upon our persons is to be allowed to remain.** It is quite possible that, owing to neglect or spiritual slovenliness, such defilements will be found in us. But they must not stay, being received as friends, and nurtured and fed as though they

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loves us. Others concede there are certain things about us that are not ideal, but declare that God understands, and is able to tolerate us in a weakened moral and spiritual state, even though it is not the best condition. Therefore, things like anger – even being angry with God – and outbursts of carnality not of any real concern. It is all covered by a sympathetic God who views us something like a frolicking infant in the playpen of life.

In both of these views, no extensive effort is made to properly portray the devil, principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places, “the flesh,” the “carnal mind,” or “the law of sin” with which those in Christ grapple (Eph 4:27; 6:11-12; 1 Pet 5:8; Rom 7:25; 8:13; 7:23). As a direct result of this failure, a high premium is not placed upon faith, and the

brought benefit to us.

Of Flesh

The filthiness of the “flesh” is contamination that has **worked itself out in deeds, or action.** It is when Achan took a golden wedge, a garment, and some pieces of silver from Jericho (Josh 7:21). It is when David committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:4). It is when Ananias and Saphirra conspired to lie to the Holy Spirit about what they were giving to the Lord’s cause (Acts 5:1-8). It is when Demas forsakes the work of the Lord because of a love for “this present world” (2 Tim 4:10).

This is what James referred to as “the superfluity of naughtiness” (James 1:21). “Superfluity” is an “overflow”^{NKJV} of sin – when what is inside boils over into outward deeds. **It is the outgrowth of sin, which begins as a seed within,**

and finally sprouts and blooms into outward expressions: words, and/or deeds.

And what is to done with these bodily, or fleshly, expressions? We are to “*cleanse ourselves*” from them ALL! Thus we are solemnly admonished: “*But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds*” (Col 3:8-9). **All of these are outward expressions, and they are to be abruptly halted among God’s people.**

We are told to “*put away lying*” (Eph 4:22), and **all “clamor, and evil speaking”** (Eph 4:31). “*Fornication, “foolish talking” and “jesting, which are not convenient,*” are not to be named a single time among us– “**let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints**” (Eph 5:3-4). Peter reminds us that “*all . . . hypocrisies and evil speakings*” are to be laid aside (1 Pet 2:1).

None of us are to be simple in this matter. **The expression of sin is strictly forbidden among those who are in Christ Jesus.** When such expressions occur, they are to be “*put off,*” “*put away,*” and “*cleansed.*” We are not seeking to merely correct human behavior, but to **eliminate** “*all filthiness*” of “*the “flesh.”*” No honest person is ready to admit that he is beyond the need for this. This is an ongoing work, and we will not be finished with it until we are “*absent from the body.*” As long as we are “*in the body*” (Heb 13:3), we are solemnly charged to keep it clean, not allowing sin to erupt through its members. There is grace to do this, and it will surely be given “*in the time of need*” when we diligently seek to appropriate it (Heb 4:16).

Of Spirit

“*Filthiness of the spirit*” is **inward contamination.** If defilement is not cleansed within, it will eventually express itself outwardly. Jesus told the Pharisees that this was the secret to being clean without – to **first** cleanse within. “*Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also*” (Matt 23:26). This is also equivalent

Serious and consistent faith must attend our labors, because we will face debilitating circumstances– by Given O. Blakely

to making the tree good, so that good fruit may result: *“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit”* (Matt 12:33). James referred to it as purifying the heart: *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”* (James 4:8).

There are inward defilements that must be addressed and cleansed. Considerable is said concerning this matter. *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger . . . be put away from you, with all malice”* (Eph 4:31). And again, *“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice . . .”* (Col 3:8). *“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth . . . inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Col 3:5). And again, *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God”* (Heb 3:12). And again, *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”* (Heb 12:15).

These are all inward contaminants, and have the potential of causing enslavement to sin, and the eventual fall into an irretrievable state. It must ever be remembered that **all sin has the potential of bringing us into a state from which we cannot recover.** That is precisely why the solemn warning of Hebrews 6:1-8 is issued.

In summary, all *“filthiness of spirit”* comes under the heading of **carnal mindedness, or the mind of the flesh.** It is said of such a mind, *“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Rom 8:6-7). For this reason, all manner of lusts, or unlawful desires, are resident in such a mind, which readily receives and nurtures them. Such things are to be *“mortified,”* or put to death in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13). The reason for this mandate is not simply that they are wrong – although they surely are precisely

that. **However, these inward contaminates have a separating effect, driving a wedge between man and God, shutting off heavenly resources, and opening the floodgates to things that exclude people from the kingdom of heaven.**

This is not intended to produce fleshly fear, so that the individual lives more in dread of falling away than of in anticipation of the coming of the Lord.

This whole manner of thought has been popularized by the religiously educated, who have been married to the world in their thoughts. Borrowing their knowledge from corrupt men like Sigmond Freud, August Comte, Herbert Spencer, and the likes, these corrupters have spued their perceptions within the church.

Rather, this is intended to produce sobriety and alertness among believers, so that Satan does not catch them unawares, subverting them.

AN OBSERVATION

One of the serious deficiencies of current modern religious trends toward entertainment and carnal joy, is **their lack of sobriety and spiritual alertness.** This is precisely why there are such difficulties in the church with outbreaks of immorality, and a general disinterest in the insightful and stabilizing expositions of the Gospel. It is why so many counselors are needed. It is why there is so much emphasis on the “how-to” aspects of religion.

What has happened is that, instead of the Lord Jesus Christ, **man has become the locus of religious emphasis.** The resolution of his difficulties has now become the **preeminent** thing. Instead of seeking those with an excellent understanding of Christ and His accomplishments, men are being trained to be imagined experts in humanity and its failings and potentials.

Religious men are being taught that if they can understand the human

constitution, both mentally and physiologically, they will be able to solve the problems of men and women – or at least lead them in that direction. We therefore hear much about the distinctions between men and woman, various ethnic groups, and those who are impacted by their social circumstances.

However, this is a wholly erroneous assessment. You cannot draw living water from a polluted

well – and human nature is a contaminated well. In fact, that is the very reason for salvation, and its premier exhibit, which is *the “new creature”* (2 Cor 5:17). The critical factor that is somehow overlooked, is that none of the distinctions, upon which the emphasis is being placed, even exist in Christ Jesus. **They only are extant outside of Him.** As it is written, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal 3:28).

This whole manner of thought has been popularized by the religiously educated, who have been married to the world in their thoughts. Borrowing their knowledge from corrupt men like Sigmond Freud, August Comte, Herbert Spencer, and the likes, these corrupters have spued their perceptions within the church. Their views and their thrust have even spawned new religious careers and not-for-profit institutions. **However, what they have actually done is brought in things from which the church must now be cleansed – something involving considerable effort.** They have only complicated an already difficult life. It all falls into the category of *“filthiness of*

spirit,” and that is something from which we are admonished to “*cleanse ourselves*.”

If this all seems to be too strong, let me assure you that it is really **too** weak. The contaminating effects of this outrageous flood of carnal thinking nearly transcends all ability of expression. The

respect that is being given to this trend boggles the mind of the thoughtful, and grieves the heart of the godly. I hardly believe a person who is “*strong in faith*” can be found who is not troubled by this circumstance, even though they may not be able to express it in satisfactory words.

The whole thing is evidence of tares that have been sown among the wheat. How well the words of Jesus are fulfilled: “*An enemy hath done this*.” Now, in living by faith and walking in the Spirit, we must cleanse ourselves of what is left.

PERFECTING HOLINESS

“^{1c} . . . *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*.”

The nature of spiritual life demands more than the removal of what

spirit,” our work is **not** finished. **That cleansing work, however arduous it may be, is only preparatory.** True fruitfulness does not proceed from what we are NOT, but from what we **are**. God

execute, complete,” ^{THAYER} “to finish, end, successfully complete what has been begun,” ^{FRIBERG} and “bring an activity to a successful finish, to end, to accomplish.” ^{LOUW-NIDA} Here are some illustrations of an ongoing work – something started by God, in which He went on to involve men.

The nature of spiritual life demands more than the removal of what is not acceptable. It is not enough to simply stop doing what is wrong. That is why small and limited thinking is always revealed when people ask, “Is there anything wrong with . . .” People tend to think if something is not wrong, it must be right.

is not acceptable. **It is not enough to simply stop doing what is wrong.** That is why small and limited thinking is always revealed when people ask, “Is there anything wrong with . . .” People tend to think if something is not wrong, it must be right. But this is too simplistic a notion to be found in our minds. **There are things that are not wrong, yet neither are they right.** As it is written, “*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Cor 6:12). **It is wrong to be dominated by anything or any one other than Jesus.** And again, “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not*” (1 Cor 10:23). When we are among God’s people, whatever does not “*edify*” is inappropriate.

Here, however, we rise to an even higher level. **After** we have cleansed ourselves of “*all filthiness of flesh and*

is not served by NOT doing certain things, but by **engaging** in matters pertaining to life and godliness. In fact, the new birth is in order to our involvement in the works of God. As it is written, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph 2:10). What follows is included in those “*good works*” for which we have been created, and which were Divinely ordained for our involvement.

PERFECTING

“ . . . *perfecting* . . . ” Other versions read, “*making . . . perfect*,” ^{NRSV} “*becoming completely*,” ^{BBE} “*bringing . . . to completion*,” ^{ESV} “*and finish*,” ^{GENEVA} “*and let us work*,” ^{MRD} “*work toward complete*,” ^{NLT} “*grow up to full*,” ^{PNT} “*our consecration*,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “*let us prove*” ^{PHILLIPS}

The verb “*perfecting*” is translated from the Greek word *ἐπιτελοῦντες* (ep-ee-tel-oon-tes), which means, “to bring to an end, accomplish, perfect,

- ☛ God “*planted a garden Eastward in Eden*,” then placed man in it to “*dress and keep it*” (Gen 2:8,15).
- ☛ God revealed to Noah the dimensions, material, method of preparing the wood, and the levels of the ark, then had Noah build it “*to the saving of his house*” (Gen 6:14-16; Heb 11:7).
- ☛ God revealed the dimensions, materials, and furniture of the tabernacle, then gifted men to build it (Ex 25:1-40:38).
- ☛ God gave Israel a land for their own, told them He was going to drive out the inhabitants of it, then had them drive out those who were occupying it at the time (Ex 23:28, 31; 33:2; 34:11; Deut 9:3).
- ☛ God provided the means for a widow to pay a debt that was greater than her resource, then had her fill her house with all manner of vessels, and fill them from a miraculous supply of oil (2 Kgs 4:3-7).

This is, then, a Divine manner – to call His people into the work He has begun, using their own efforts to complete it, and thereby bring Him glory. It is quite true that the strength and ability came from the Lord, but it was made effective by means of the involvement of His people.

Thus, when the Spirit says, “*He which hath begun a good work in you will*

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perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6), and that He, “after that ye have suffered a while,” will “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5:10), **He does not mean the work will be performed independently of our involvement.** He has never represented Himself as doing such a thing. **It is in the process of our participation by faith that the work is brought to its intended completion.** Thus it is written, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13).

We carry the fight forward to completion by putting on the whole armor of God, resisting the devil, fighting the good fight of faith, and standing fast in the faith (Eph 6:11; James 4:7; 1 Tim 6:12; 1 Cor 16:13).

In this case, “perfecting” has to do with using the resources provided in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:3; 2 Pet 1:3), and growing up into Christ “in all things” (Eph 4:15). Just as surely as Jesus left some “sufferings” in which we participate (Col 1:24), so He has also assigned us some work related to our own preparation for glory. We do well to heed this admonition, which focuses on one of the great essentials in spiritual life.

HOLINESS

“ . . . holiness . . . ” Other versions read, “become completely holy,”^{BBE} “sanctification,”^{DOUAY} “work righteousness,”^{MRD} “purity,”^{NLT} and “consecration.”^{WILLIAMS}

Here we must distinguish between the holiness which God gives us, and that which we perfect. While they are related, they are not synonymous. The “new man” is “created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). We played no active role in this creation. The creation was wholly of God, for creating is beyond our ability.

The “holiness” of this text has to do with bringing the “holiness” inherent in the new man to dominate all of our expressions. That is involved in the admonition to “put on the new man” (Eph 4:24). This “perfection” of holiness is referred to in

the sixth chapter of Romans. “. . . as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19). That is, **this effort is to be characterized by the same willingness and initiative with which we devoted ourselves to sin.** Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord is also expressed as a benefit we reap by serving the Lord. “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life”



(Rom 6:22). Holiness, in turn, results in eternal life – that is, eternal life in its fullness.

How essential is this perfection of holiness – i.e. through the Spirit, and in the energy of faith, bringing holiness to the point of maturity, where God intends that it should be? Is there any provision in God’s “so great salvation” (Heb 2:3) for ignoring this word? Once God has created the “new man” in “righteousness and true holiness,” has His “eternal purpose” really been fully served? Is the objective of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus to merely get us into Christ, with everything following that being nothing more than an option, or something special that is not really integral to the redemption itself? When Jesus said “I will build My church” (Matt 16:18), was He **only** speaking of increasing its numbers? **Are the spiritual caliber and attainments of the members of no consequence?**

If all we have to consider is the professed church, one might be led to suppose such conclusions are the truth. However, that is not all that we have to

consider! There is also this word: “Follow peace with all men, **and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord**” (Heb 12:14).

If, in God’s “eternal purpose,” He has chosen us in Christ to the end “**that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love**” (Eph 1:4), **how then can those who do not “perfect holiness” expect to be in that number?** If the people of God are, by Divine design, growing into “**a holy temple in the Lord**” (Eph 2:21), precisely what place is there for a person who

is not perfecting holiness? If the God of heaven has said, “**But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy’**” (1 Pet 1:15-16), what will be said to the person who ignores that word, quenches the Spirit, and refuses to “perfect holiness.”

The answers to these questions are all obvious, and require no further elaboration. If God demands this from us, and has supplied everything required to do it, together with the personal involvement of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13), and the tutelage of His own matchless grace (Tit 2:11-12), **the failure to heed this word is a monumental act of stupidity, and confirms the dominance of unbelief.** It negates any and all profession, and throws the whole matter of one’s salvation into question.

IN THE FEAR OF GOD

“ . . . in the fear of God.” Other versions read, “reverence for God,”^{NIV} “in God’s fear,”^{DARBY} “showing respect for

God,"^{IE} and "in the [reverential] fear of God."^{AMPLIFIED}

What is to be our frame of mind as we go about perfecting holiness – working it out into all of our expressions? It is to be done "in the fear of God." **When there is "no fear of God before their eyes" (Psa 36:1; Rom 3:18), men become wanton, catering to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17).** That is a condition in which people conduct their lives just as though there was no God. If men were really intended **not** to

with reverence and godly **fear**" (Heb 12:28). All believers are urged, "**Fear God**" (1 Pet 2:17). Even when we answer those who inquire concerning the reason for our hope, we are to so "with meekness and **fear**" (1 Pet 3:15).

It is understood that, from another perspective, God has **not** "given us the spirit of fear" (2 Tim 1:7). It is also true that perfect love "**casteth out fear**" (1 John 4:18). Also, we read "For ye have **not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba,**

impact our conduct. Knowing that we are going to confront God, and be judged by Him, will most certainly have a calculated effect upon our manner of life.

WHEN RELIGION IS A HANDICAP

There is no greater handicap than a religion that leaves one with an improper view of the Lord. When the Lord is represented as tolerant of aberrant behavior, or lenient toward a life that is not lived unto and for Him, sin is at once given the advantage. **When our involvement with God is primarily emotional, and our understanding of Him is childish, we are tottering on the precipice of eternal disaster.**

When the primary aim is to recruit disciples, rather than to "know" Christ, the fear of God recedes into the background, and personal holiness is not perceived as essential. In order to emphasize what I am saying, **I will purposefully distort some Scriptural texts to read in such a way as to fit in with current church thrusts. They will, of course, be most absurd.**

There is no greater handicap than a religion that leaves one with an improper view of the Lord. When the Lord is represented as tolerant of aberrant behavior, or lenient toward a life that is not lived unto and for Him, sin is at once given the advantage.

die or ever stand before the judgment seat of Christ, such people would live no differently than they are right now.

Whatever one may think about being reconciled to God, being His child, having their name written in the Lamb's book of life, and having access to God, **the "fear of God" is indispensable to spiritual life, especially while we remain in this world.** Solemnly we are told to work out our own salvation "with **fear and trembling**" (Phil 2:12). Servants are admonished to serve their masters "with **fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ**" (Eph 6:5). If we "call on the Father," we are admonished to "pass the time of your sojourning here in **fear**" (1 Pet 1:17). Those in the body of Christ are exhorted to submit themselves "one to another in the **fear of God**" (Eph 5:21). Pondering the experience of the Israelites of old we are told, "Let us therefore **fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it**" (Heb 4:1). And again we hear the word, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably

Father" (Rom 8:15). **This is not the fear that is mentioned in this text.** The "fear" we have **not** received pertains to us being afraid to draw near to God. The "fear" we **are** to have is related to living in this world. It is prompted by our sensitivity to the corrupting influences of this world, the weakness of our own flesh, and the fierceness of our adversary. It is the result of knowing if God does not **hold us up, we will not stand, and if He does not sustain us through our faith, we will revert to the state from which we were delivered.**

The failure to live in this manner – perfecting holiness "in the fear of God" – is owing to a lack of awareness of the Lord, and a deficiency in ones knowledge of the Lord's Person and ways. That such an awareness and knowledge has a restraining effect upon men cannot be denied. Even the awareness of a small child can cause a person to alter their conduct, so as not to lead the child astray. Often, the presence of ones mother, or a woman who is held in high regard, will cause one to approach certain matters with great caution. **How much more will the consideration of the Almighty and holy God of heaven**

- ☛ Corruption #1: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I am endeavoring to win as many souls as I can" – rather than "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13-14).
- ☛ Corruption #2: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to win as many souls as you can" – rather than "to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet 1:10).
- ☛ Corruption #3: "God is faithful, by whom ye were saved to save others, and won to win others – rather than "were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 1:9).
- ☛ Corruption #4: "And beside this, giving all diligence, reach the community, stabilize the families, and have a ministry for the youth" – rather than "add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness

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charity(2 Pet 1:7).

☛ Corruption #5: *“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, let the community know you are there to help them – rather than Feed my lambs . . . Feed my sheep . . . Feed my sheep”* (John 21:17).

☛ Corruption #6: *“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how to reach and keep the youth, for they are the church of tomorrow” – rather than “know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1

Tim 3:15).

Of course, all of this sounds ridiculous, because it is. **Yet, these are precisely the things the modern church is emphasizing.** Our text places the stress on what really counts – preparing yourself for the Lord – to stand before Him, be judged by Him, and hear His final word concerning your eternal destiny.

For those who think this approach does not cover matters like preaching the Gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15), letting your light shine before men (Matt 5:16), being salt and light in

the world (Matt 5:14), and properly influencing the young (1 Tim 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15; Tit 2:6), let them think again! True spiritual life successfully addresses all of those matters.

How is it possible to be in right relation with God, and yet conduct our lives wrongly in this world? How can one give attendance to holiness, and yet live in an unholy manner? How is it possible to walk in fellowship with Christ, and yet not be involved in what He is doing? How can you “walk in the Spirit,” and yet contract Him in your life? Our text stands precisely as it is stated!

RECEIVE US!

“² Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.”

To me, this is a very difficult text – not because it is hard to understand, or challenging to the intellect, but **because it reveals the deplorable attitude of the Corinthians toward the apostle Paul.** Their own approach to religion had brought gross deficiency to their spirits. There was a certain arrogance in them that moved them to question, and even despise, the very one who was used by Christ to open the door of faith to them.

Divisions Among Them

The Corinthians were a classic example of sectarianism. Paul said of them, *“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”* (1 Cor 3:3). And again, *“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it”* (1 Cor 11:18).

Division is a *“work of the flesh”* – a product of carnality, and the effect of the carnal mind. As it is written, *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these . . . seditions [divisions], heresies [sects]”* (Gal 5:19-20). For this reason we are admonished, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them*

which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom 16:17). But alas, Corinth had not done this, and, as a result, eventually shut Paul out of their lives. He has already challenged them to open their hearts to him,

When Jesus beheld the rejecting city of Jerusalem, He did not grow angry, but wept: *“And when He was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it”* (Luke 19:41). Their rejection of Himself was going to bring great judgment upon them. As He wept, Jesus lamented,

Let no one imagine for a moment that servants of God lose sensitivity toward how they themselves are received. The fact that they will not alter their message to please the people, or that they must often speak with sternness, does not mean they have no inward feelings.

enlarging themselves to take him in (2 Cor 6:11).

How tragic that any man of God should have to speak in this manner, especially in view of his willingness to *“gladly spent and be spent”* for the people (2 Cor 12:15). **Let no one imagine for a moment that servants of God lose sensitivity toward how they themselves are received.** The fact that they will not alter their message to please the people, or that they must often speak with sternness, does not mean they have no inward feelings.

“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 19:42-44).

There is a similar weeping tone in the words Paul now addresses to the Corinthians. He pleads with them to receive him, and reasons with them on the matter. This is not because he craves attention, or is egocentric. Rather, he speaks in view of his apostolic commission to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). He no doubt recalled the word Jesus spoke to him years earlier, when he first came to Corinth: *“For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city”* (Acts 18:10). Following that, Paul stayed with them *“a year and six months”* (Acts 18:11). Now, he will summon them to remember his presence among them.

RECEIVE US

“Receive us . . .” Other versions read, *“Open your hearts to us,”* ^{NKJV}

liberty to receive or reject such a person – to question his integrity, deny his message, and even treat him with despite. But they are **not** free to do such things, for they will be held in strict accountability for their reception of such a Christ-sent person.

When Paul says *“receive us,”* he means to **receive them in the capacity in which Jesus as sent them** – as preachers and teachers, and expounders of the Gospel. When he says *“receive us,”* he is referring to himself and Timothy, from whom this epistle is sent (2 Cor 1:1).

When Paul says *“receive us,”* he means *“Make room for us in your hearts,”* ^{NASB} enlarging themselves to include him in their thoughts, preferences, love, and concerns. They had fallen into a state where they could do without Paul. He was

with him, they have become sectarian, just like the Corinthians. Among them, it was said, *“I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ”* (1 Cor 1:12). Such an attitude was not laudatory, and thus Paul rebuked them for it, showing how utterly unreasonable it was (1 Cor 3:13-17).

Paul is pleading with the Corinthians to receive him because Jesus sent him to them. He has a liberating and stabilizing message that they need to hear. He has been given insight into what they need to know. He also, as he will now show, has confirmed that he possessed a heart for them, in both the past and the present, and thus refused to exploit them.

WE HAVE WRONGED NO MAN

“ . . . we have wronged no man . . .” Other versions read, *“We have wronged no one,”* ^{NKJV} *“we wronged no one,”* ^{NASB} *“We have done no man wrong,”* ^{BBE} *“we have injured no one,”* ^{DARBY} *“we have done evil to no one,”* ^{MRD} *“we have hurt no man,”* ^{TNT} *“not one of you has suffered wrong from us,”* ^{LIVING} *“We have not treated anyone unjustly,”* ^{ISV} *“I have not wronged or harmed,”* ^{WILLIAMS} and *“Not one of you has ever been wronged . . . by us.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

To *“wrong”* someone is to sin against them *“in some respect.”* ^{THAYER} Reuben advised his brothers not to *“sin against”* the young boy Joseph by taking his life (Gen 42:22). Paul said if a person *“sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience,”* they were sinning *“against Christ”* (1 Cor 8:12). In such cases, one person puts another at a disadvantage, taking something from them that they have no right to take, or causing confusion and hurt that cannot be justified. No person was hindered or harmed as a result Paul’s presence of teaching. Alexander the coppersmith did *“much evil”* to Paul, but Paul did evil to no man. He treated no one unjustly, nor made it his aim to gain relief for himself by bludgeoning them. No one could rise to testify against him, saying he had caused them harm.

Rather than wound them, he confessed, *“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God,*

Jesus had also said of those He sent, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me” (John 13:20). If this is true, and it surely is, then the Corinthian’s rejection of Paul actually constituted a rejection of Christ, and of God as well!

“Make room for us in your hearts,” ^{NASB} *“Bear with us,”* ^{MRD} *“Keep a place for us in your hearts,”* ^{NJB} *“Please open your hearts to us,”* ^{NLT} *“Understand us,”* ^{PNT} *“Open up to us,”* ^{IE} and *“Do open your hearts to us again [enlarge them to take us in].”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Remember, Paul was sent to them by Jesus Himself. Jesus had also said of those He sent, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me**”* (John 13:20). **If this is true, and it surely is, then the Corinthian’s rejection of Paul actually constituted a rejection of Christ, and of God as well!** When God gives a *“minister”* to someone, through whom they may believe (1 Cor 3:5), it is their business to receive him. It may appear on the surface that they are at

no longer of any consequence to them. What he had to say was not seen as essential. Now, he must reason with them about receiving him.

Of course, there are still people within the professed church who feel this same way. Although the burden of the New Covenant writings came from Paul, they feel free to **neglect** what he has written. I have known Christians who actually preferred the writings of Solomon to those of Paul. Others, choose the expressions of James over those of Paul. Still others had rather read the book of the Revelation without a single consideration of what Paul has said on those subjects. It is not that any of the Scriptures are unworthy of our preference, and that is not my point. However, when men pit other Scriptures against Paul’s affirmations, and treat them as though they were in competition

we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward" (2 Cor 1:12).

WE HAVE CORRUPTED NO MAN

"... we have corrupted no man . . ." Other versions read, "no man has been damaged by us,"^{BBE} "or ruined anyone,"^{NAB} "We have not led anyone astray,"^{NLT} "no one did we waste,"^{YLT} and "we have betrayed or corrupted no one."^{AMPLIFIED}

Hymenaeus and Philetus taught things that ate at men's hearts and minds "like a canker"—their words "spread like cancer"^{NKJV} (2 Tim 2:17). But no such word ever came from Paul. He was never the source of corruption or spiritual damage. No one had to overcome his words in order to arrive at the truth.

Speaking for myself, there are several teachings that I have had to overcome. Some were distorted emphases. Some were wholly erroneous teachings concerning the coming of the Lord, the free will of man, salvation by faith versus salvation by works, the nature of the New Covenant, and a minimization of the enthronement, Mediatorship, and Intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These flawed teachings corrupted my thinking, and sent me down tributaries of theological diversion, rather than down the "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God" (Psa 46:4). **Through these experiences, I have found that unlearning is far more difficult than learning.** To divest oneself of the corruption that is caused by flawed doctrine is no small task — yet, it must be done.

Nothing that Paul preached was corrupt. No one ever had to recover from embracing the word he delivered. **This is a marvelous circumstance, and ought to be the determined aim of everyone who speaks for the Lord.**

"Corrupt communication" is speaking that tends to erode spiritual understanding, and open the door for the devil to work in one's mind. People become the worse for hearing such speech, for it is like a robber to the soul. No such speaking proceeded from Paul.

What we preach or teach must never be a mere novelty, or the expression of a private opinion. It ought to fall into the kind of speaking of which it is written, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph 4:29). "Corrupt communication" is not to be equated with vulgarity or moral crudeness, although that is included in the expression. **"Corrupt communication" is speaking that tends to erode spiritual understanding, and open the door for the devil to work in one's mind.** People become the worse for hearing such speech, for it is like a robber to the soul. No such speaking proceeded from Paul.

WE HAVE DEFRAUDED NO MAN

"... we have defrauded no man." Other versions read, "we have cheated no one,"^{NKJV} "we took advantage of no one,"^{NASB} "we have exploited no one,"^{NIV} "we have made no profit out of any of you,"^{BBE} "we have made gain of no one,"^{DARBY} "we have overreached no man,"^{DOUAY} "we have exploited no one,"^{NIB} "not one over whom we have gained selfish advantage,"^{WEYMOUTH} and "we have cheated or taken advantage of no one."^{AMPLIFIED}

To "defraud" a person is to exploit them, using them to gain personal advantage. It is to view people as a means of making profit, whether it is craftily taking from them something they would

not give of their own accord, or cheating them by delivering less than was promised. Among the Corinthians, there were some who took their brethren to the law to gain some kind of unjust advantage from them. Paul said of such people, "Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren" (1 Cor 6:8).

There is also a kind of defrauding that withholds what rightly belongs to an individual. Thus Paul said of marital involvements, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency" (1 Cor 7:5).

Solemnly we are told that God Himself will settle all matters of defrauding. "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that **the Lord is the avenger of all such**, as we also have forewarned you and testified" (1 Thess 4:6).

The truth of the matter is that there is an enormous amount of defrauding taking place in the Christian community. Who has not been a victim of it at one time or another? **Paul could honestly say, and no one could contradict it, that he had defrauded no one.** He never misrepresented, exploited, or took wrongfully from anyone. This was because he lived according to heaven's agenda.

NOT TO CONDEMN

"^{3a} **I speak not this to condemn you . . .**" Other versions read, "I do not say this to condemn you,"^{NKJV}

"It is not with the purpose of saying this that I judge you,"^{BBE} "I am not saying this to condemn anybody,"^{NJB} "I'm not saying

this to scold or blame you,"^{LIVING} "I do not say this to imply blame,"^{WEYMOUTH} "I do not say this to reproach or blame [you],"

AMPLIFIED and “I don’t say this to condemn your attitude.”^{PHILLIPS}

Jesus once said, “. . . for I came not to judge the world, but to save the

become guilty before God” (Rom 3:19). Now, in Christ, the fundamental intent is not to show that man is wrong. That was the indispensable ministry of the Law. **The aim of the Gospel is to announce**

that I declare unto you **I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse**” (1 Cor 11:17). And again, “What shall I say unto you? Shall I praise you in this? **I praise you not**” (1 Cor 11:22). He had stated **without equivocation, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”** (1 Cor 3:3). They were richly deserving of rebuke in these matters.

His purpose is not to heap condemnation upon the Corinthians, but to draw them back into the circumference of hearing, and the place of Divine approval and blessing. That, after all, is what the whole matter of salvation is about.

Yet, when it came to their conduct toward himself, Paul did not speak harshly with them. He rather pleaded with them, **not making himself the real issue.** He saw that it was necessary to clear his own name, for he was the representative of Christ. **But he would not clear his name by heaping reproach on someone else.** He would not seek honor for himself by besmirching the name of others. He will not seek honor for his name at the expense of denigrating theirs.

world” (John 12:47). Again Jesus said, “For God sent **not** his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17). In this word, Paul is exhibiting the same spirit reflected in those sayings. **His purpose is not to heap condemnation upon the Corinthians, but to draw them back into the circumference of hearing, and the place of Divine approval and blessing.** That, after all, is what the whole matter of salvation is about.

that God has a remedy for the situation – a remedy that is not only effectual, but righteous as well. This fact, like a fragrant perfume, permeates all effective preaching and teaching.

The tenderness of Paul, and the purity of his heart, is seen in him avoiding anything that would cause dishonor or disgrace for the Corinthians. His great heart had been touched by the grace of God, and it impacted upon the way he ministered. It is true that they were at fault, as Paul freely declared elsewhere: “**Now there is utterly a fault among you**” (1 Cor 6:7). And again, “**Now in this**

This is an area of spiritual life that cannot be resolved by legislation, or the imposition of a disciplined or procedural approach. It is enough to peer into the manner in which Paul speaks, and then seek grace to speak in that way to those who are “out of the way” (Heb 5:2; 12:13).

The Law was designed to “stop” every mouth, and cause “all the world to

DIE AND LIVE WITH YOU

“^{3b} . . . for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.”

In the work of the Lord, motives are a critical factor. There is such a thing as approaching the people of God in “the spirit of meekness,” which was Paul’s confessed preference (1 Cor 4:21). In fact, when seeking to restore “a man overtaken in a fault,” the spiritual person is to do so “in the spirit of meekness” (Gal 6:1). Our speech is to be “always with grace, seasoned with salt” (Col 4:6). When approaching those who “oppose themselves,” the servant of God is to instruct them “in meekness” (2 Tim 2:25). The Savior set the tone for dealing with

human deficiencies among those who have faith – even if it is only a small spark. “A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench” (Matt 12:20; Isa 42:3)

This is precisely the attitude that is seen in Paul’s words. With great gentleness and meekness he writes to the Corinthians, assuring them that his motives are noble and his intentions honoring. It may appear that such expressions are not necessary, **but it is the manner of the kingdom to speak in this way.** If Jesus spoke to His disciples of His interest in them (John 15:11; 16:33), then we do well to speak in the same manner.

I HAVE SAID BEFORE

“ . . . for I have said before . . . ” Other versions read, “for I have already said,”^{DARBY} “as I have already told you,”^{NJB} and “for I have showed you before.”^{TNT}

Paul has already spoken to them as to those who were precious to him. “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged” (2 Cor 6:11). **He looked at his own difficult experiences as occurring for their sakes** – for their “consolation and salvation” (2 Cor 1:6). He told them he had “confidence” in them (2 Cor 2:3), and that his love was “more abundantly toward” them (2 Cor 2:4).

His desire for their betterment

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was not a guarded secret. He had spoken clearly of it, and made it abundantly known in both the manner and content of his speaking and writing.

YOU ARE IN OUR HEARTS

“ . . . that ye are in our hearts...”

Other versions read, “that you have such a place in our hearts,”^{NIV} “that you are treasured in our hearts,”^{MRD} “that you are in our hearts forever,”^{NLT} “I hold you in my heart,”^{MONTGOMERY} “that you are [nested] in our hearts,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “you live in our hearts.”^{PHILLIPS}

This is a most tender expression: “You are in our hearts.”^{NKJV} That is, “We think of you, seek your betterment, and give thanks for the work of God in you.” Earlier in this epistle he said of them, “Ye are our epistle *written in our hearts, known and read of all men*” (2 Cor 3:2). **His affection for them, therefore, came from the Lord Himself, who alone can write upon the heart!** Later Paul wrote again of having them in his heart: “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Cor 12:15).

His love, therefore, having been given to him by God, was not a response to their love, for the more he said to them, the less they loved him. Now, Paul is laboring to correct that situation, in order that glory might be brought to the Lord, and more benefits might be realized by them.

Paul stated this in a different way to the Philippians: “Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, **how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ**” (Phil 1:7-8). Although expressions like this are not common today, sensitive souls can play a key role in making them more familiar. They will contribute to the joy of

the saints of the Lord.

TO DIE AND LIVE WITH YOU

“ . . . to die and live with you.”

Other versions read, “to die together and to live together,”^{NKJV} “that we would live or die with you,”^{NIV} “for life and death together,”^{BBE} “so that together we live and together we die,”^{NJB} “We live or die with you,”^{NLT} and “[and you will remain there] together [with us], whether we die or live.”^{AMPLIFIED}

not go, if they would but listen to him. This is what he meant by the expression “And I will very gladly spend (“live”) and be spent (“die”) for you” (2 Cor 12:15). In fact, there he went so far as to say he was willing to do this “though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”

The spirit that is revealed here is that Paul took his commission so seriously, that he did not even think of it in terms of

It appears that there never was a church less worthy of such love as is expressed in this verse. Having lavished himself upon them, and taught them with diligence and extensiveness, he received nothing but scorn and rejection in return. Yet, in Christ Jesus, those upon whom we expend our labors still become endeared to us.

It appears that there never was a church less worthy of such love as is expressed in this verse. Having lavished himself upon them, and taught them with diligence and extensiveness, he received nothing but scorn and rejection in return. Yet, in Christ Jesus, those upon whom we expend our labors still become endeared to us. We find it difficult to simply thrust them out of our minds. That is precisely why Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; **how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!**” (Luke 13:34).

The idea here is that Paul was willing, for their benefit, to live out the rest of his life with them, and die there as well. He was willing to put himself among them if it would mean their full recovery. There was no length to which he would

convenience, fleshly comforts, and adequate provisions. He was consumed by the work of the Lord, even as the Lord Jesus, of whom, it is said, “The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up” (John 2:17; Psa 69:9).

This is a frame of mind that cannot be taught, learned by rote, or developed through a disciplined approach to life. **Such things can only encourage habits, they cannot change character – and the expression of our text is a matter of character.**

To what extent are you willing to expend yourself to give the saints of God eternal advantages? How much of yourself are you willing to invest? Is it tedious for you to minister to them? Is your true food to do the will of God? The answers will confirm what you have seen of God’s “great salvation.”

BOLDNESS OF SPEECH

“^{4a} **Great is my boldness of speech toward you . . .**” Other versions

read, “Great is my confidence in you,”^{NASB} “I have great confidence in you,”^{NIV} “I

have great pride in you,”^{NRSV} “My words to you are without fear,”^{BBE} “I am acting

with great boldness toward you, ^{ESV} “I have great assurance before you,” ^{MRD} “I can speak with the greatest frankness to you,” ^{NJB} “I have the highest confidence in you,” ^{NLT} “I am very bold over you,” ^{PNT} “great is my freedom of speech unto you,” ^{YLT} “Great is my faith in you,” ^{MONTGOMERY} “I have great boldness and free and fearless confidence and cheerful courage toward you,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “to your face I talk I talk to you with utter frankness.” ^{PHILLIPS}

Paul will now elaborate on his

unreservedness in speech, openly, ²frankly, without concealment, without ambiguity or circumlocution, free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, ³the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous or secures publicity,” ^{THAYER} “in speech boldness, plainness, outspoken, ²in public work openness, ³in the presence of high-ranking persons courage, confidence, boldness,” ^{FRIBERG} and “freespokenness, openness, frankness.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

In the form in which it is used here, this Greek word occurs sixteen times in Scripture (Matt 8:32; John

new creation – that it will respond in a proper manner to what he has said. However, this is **not** the point that he is making. **The words that follow confirm that he is comparing how he speaks directly to them with how he speaks about them to others.**

Here the wisdom of God is seen as being in sharp contrast with that of the world. In the world, candidness is sometimes seen as being inhibitive. Thus people seek to dull the abrasiveness of their words by couching them in soft words and gentle tones. Thus beguilers are said to speak in such a manner: “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and **by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple**” (Rom 16:18).

However, this not the manner in which Paul has spoken to the Corinthians. He has told them to refuse to be “yoked together with unbelievers” – to “*come out from among them, and be ye separate*” (2 Cor 6:17). He has reminded them that light and darkness cannot be joined together, nor can righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and Belial, or the temple of God and idols. He has told them that separation is a condition upon which God will receive them, and now he is urging them to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

There are a myriad of church people who have never been so challenged. They have never in their entire lives been challenged to separate from the world, and admonished to associate that separation with being received by God, Him being their Father, and they being His sons and daughters. **But that is precisely how Paul has spoken to the Corinthians, coming strait to the point.** If it is true that God receiving us is contingent upon our separation from the world, then we must speak frankly about the matter. This is not a subject to be addressed with vagueness and unimposing generality. **“Boldness of speech”** – being emphatic and to the point – is essential.

The point he is making is that he has spoken to them with unveiled candor – frankly, and even sometimes sharply. He has come to grips with their condition, and has not thrown the cloak of obscurity over what he said, dulling its impact upon them.

deep affection for the Corinthians, in whom he had invested so much of his time and person. **This will involve how he speaks directly to them, what he has to say about them to others, and the effect of their faith upon him personally.**

He will now refer to them as a new creation in Christ Jesus. He is addressing the “*new man*,” and making known how he speaks to that part of their person. There were other times when he spoke to them as men: “*are ye not carnal, and walk as men*” (1 Cor 3:3). Now, however, he goes to the reason for his speaking.

GREAT IS MY BOLDNESS OF SPEECH TOWARD YOU

“Great is my boldness of speech toward you . . .”

The expression “*boldness of speech*” is translated from the Greek word **παρρησία** (par-rhay-see-ah), which has a variety of meanings, ¹“freedom in speaking,

7:4,13,26; 10:24; 11:14,54; 16:25,29; 18:20; 2 Cor 3:12; 7:4; Eph 6:19; Phil 1:20; 2:15; 1 John 5:14). **Most of the time is its use has to do with openness and frankness.** At least once (1 John 5:14) it has to do with praying confidently.

In this text, its use is modified by the words “*toward you*.” That is, Paul is going to compare **how** he speaks to the Corinthians, with how he speaks **about** the Corinthians to others.

The point he is making is that he has spoken to them with unveiled candor – frankly, and even sometimes sharply. He has come to grips with their condition, and has not thrown the cloak of obscurity over what he said, dulling its impact upon them. They have been brutally frank in speaking about him, and he has spoken with “*utter frankness*” ^{PHILLIPS} to them. Translations that emphasize his confidence in them in this verse do well to capture the spirit in which he speaks, but miss the point of the text itself. It is true that he speaks candidly because he has confidence in the

MY GLORYING OF YOU

Serious and consistent faith must attend our labors, because we will face debilitating circumstances– by Given O. Blakely

“^{4b} . . . **great is my glorying of you . . .**” Other versions read, “**great is my boasting on your behalf**,” ^{NKJV} “I often **boast about you**,” ^{NIV} “I am full of pride on account of you,” ^{BBE} “**great my exulting in respect of you**,” ^{DARBY} “I rejoice greatly in you,” ^{GENEVA} “I can speak with the greatest pride about you,” ^{NLT} “very loudly do I boast of you,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “I speak most highly of you,” ^{WILLIAMS} “great is my cheerful assurance of you,” ^{MONTGOMERY} and “**behind your back I talk about you with deepest pride**.” ^{PHILLIPS}

Here we are introduced to another kingdom manner – **a way in which the saved speak of their brothers and sisters to others.**

Such Speaking Was Not Confined to “Others”

In actual practice, Paul did not confine this kind of talk to others. He often spoke to wayward churches of their comely parts, as well as their uncomely ones.

- ☛ To the Corinthians he said: “*I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor 1:4). And again, “*For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many*” (2 Cor 9:2).
- ☛ To the backsliding Galatians he wrote: “*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).
- ☛ To the Colossians, who were being thwarted by false teachers, he wrote: “*Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints*” (Col 1:4).
- ☛ To the Thessalonians, who had some among them who were walking disorderly, and were confused about the second coming of Christ, he wrote: “*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).

This glorying, or boasting, had to do with what God had done in them. It related more to their aptitude than of their present accomplishments.

Even when the Lord Jesus Himself addressed the churches in Asia who had serious deficiencies, He commended them for their virtues (Rev 2:2-3,13,19; 3:12). **What has come from God, even when it remains but a remnant, is commended.** It is like a smoldering flax that the Lord refuses to quench, choosing to fan it once again into a flame.

Speaking About the Corinthians

Concerning a collection that was being gathered from Gentile churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Acts 11:29; 24:17; Rom 15:25-26 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15), Paul boasted of the Corinthians, even though they had not carried through with their commitment to the cause. “*Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf*” (2 Cor 8:24). And again he wrote, “*For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready*” (2 Cor 9:2-3).

Paul had also boasted of the Corinthians to Titus. “*For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth*” (2 Cor 7:14).

This glorying, or boasting, had to do with what God had done in them. It related more to their aptitude than of their present accomplishments. Further, by referring to his forwardness to boast of them, **he is paving the way to introduce his response to the good report of them that was delivered to him by Titus**

(7:5-7).

This is an area in which considerable improvement can be realized in many of God’s people. There is a certain proneness to emphasize the failings of the people of God when speaking to others. This is not wise, nor does it reflect the nature of the new creation. In this regard, it is said of charity that it “*thinketh no evil*” (1 Cor 13:5).

Peter was speaking of the practice of **not** demeaning the saints when he wrote, “*And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins*” (1 Pet 4:8). He did not mean that charity never exposes corrupting error – like that of Hymanaeus and Philetus (2 Tim 2:17-18). He rather write of speaking reproachfully of those in whom God had worked, yet who required some corrective teaching.

In addressing the matter of sin, there are two things to be noted.

- ☛ **First, the one who is sinning is to be personally addressed.** That is what Paul did in the case of the Corinthians. He spoke directly and candidly to them about their failings, showing their unreasonableness, and urging the people to move forward. The fact that they may not have wanted to hear such things had no bearing whatsoever on the subject.
- ☛ **Second, the saints are to be warned about particular individuals who deliver corrupting doctrines** which cause divisions and departures from the faith (Rom 16:17; Gal 3:1; Phil 3:2; Col 2:8; 2 Tim 3:5; 4:14).

Therefore, this subject is to be addressed in wisdom, and not with

unbecoming simplicity. **The ultimate objective is to glorify God, and give**

the advantage to the saints. Those are indispensable objectives.

FILLED WITH COMFORT

^{4c} . . . **I am filled with comfort . . .** Other versions read, “I am greatly encouraged,”^{NIV} “I am filled with consolation,”^{NRSV} “I am filled with encouragement,”^{DARBY} “You have greatly encouraged me,”^{NLT} “I am very much encouraged,”^{ISV} “I am filled [brimful] with the comfort [of it],”^{AMPLIFIED} and “the thought of you has filled me with

profitable. This is the purpose for the “new creation” – to walk in the “good works” which God has “before ordained” (Eph 2:10).

It is possible to be blissfully ignorant of this nature of things, and thus respond to such things in an unbecoming and spiritually damaging manner. **You**

said the brethren in Rome were “full of goodness,” and “filled with all knowledge” (Rom 15:14).

- ☛ **The fulness of God.** The objective of God is said to be that we be “filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:19).
- ☛ **The Spirit.** We are admonished to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18).
- ☛ **The fruits of righteousness.** There is a condition described as being “filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Phil 1:11).
- ☛ **The knowledge of His will.** Paul prayed that saints would be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9).
- ☛ **Joy.** There is such a state as being “filled with joy” (2 Tim 1:4).

The capacity of the “new man” to be “filled” is staggering to consider. It speaks of a condition that is much like a vessel being filled up to the brim, so that the contents spill over the side. Ponder the spiritual substance with which the redeemed can be “filled.”

comfort.”^{PHILLIPS}

It is most confusing to the flesh to ponder how a people could cause such a variety of apparently conflicting effects. On the one hand, the Corinthians caused him “sorrow” and “grief” (2 Cor 2:3,5), and on the other great joy (2 Cor 7:7). What concern must have been generated in his heart when he “heard” there was a fornicator among them (1 Cor 5:1), and were “divisions” among them as well (1 Cor 11:28). Yet, he “rejoiced the more” to hear of their progress in some of those very areas (2 Cor 7:7). The flesh cannot comprehend such things.

These diverse reactions were caused by the expression of both the “old” and the “new” man. The locution of the “old man” caused grief for two reasons. First, all such expressions are wrong. Second, the “old man” is to be “crucified,” not given license to both speak and act.

The expressions of the “new man” bring great joy to those who are spiritual, for they are always right and

can see great wisdom in Paul’s response – a wisdom that opened the door for spiritual advancement, and closed the door to retrogression.

FILLED

“ . . . I am filled . . . ” The capacity of the “new man” to be “filled” is staggering to consider. It speaks of a condition that is much like a vessel being filled up to the brim, so that the contents spill over the side. Ponder the spiritual substance with which the redeemed can be “filled.”

- ☛ **Wisdom.** When but a lad, Jesus was “filled with wisdom” (Luke 2:40).
- ☛ **Wonder and amazement.** Those who witnessed the healed lame man, knowing what “had happened to him,” were “filled with wonder and amazement” (Acts 3:10).
- ☛ **Joy and the Holy Spirit.** When Paul and Barnabas came to Iconium, the disciples were “filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52).
- ☛ **Goodness and knowledge.** Paul

To be “filled” equates to being dominated by the quality or benefit of reference. It speaks of a condition where the flesh is pushed out by the powerful effects of the blessing. The conduct and expression of the person are altered to reflect the prevailing presence of the virtue with which he is filled. Thus, when Peter was “filled with the Holy Spirit,” he spoke as an oracle of God (Acts 4:8). When men are filled with “the knowledge of His will,” they conduct their lives “in all wisdom,” and are noted for their “spiritual understanding” – the understanding of “the things of the Spirit of God” (Col 1:9; Rom 8:5).

This is a rational experience, not merely an emotional high. Some who say they have been “filled with the Spirit” have nothing profitable to say, and can only report some sensational or physiological phenomenon that happened to them. Being “filled” has been associated with fainting, thrashing about on the floor, laughing uncontrollably, and speaking something that no one understands. Thus a rational mind is

Serious and consistent faith must attend our labors, because we will face debilitating circumstances – by Given O. Blakely

filled with confusion, and one who is made in the image of God acts uncontrollably and unintelligibly. **Such representations are dishonoring to the Lord, and misrepresent His great salvation.**

Such things as “wisdom,” “joy,” “the Holy Spirit,” “goodness,” “knowledge,” “the fulness of God,” “the fruits of righteousness,” and “the knowledge of His will,” are associated with the loftiest human expressions. **They have to do with the realization of certain Divine qualities that are never associated with confusion, raw emotion, ignorance, or irrationality.**

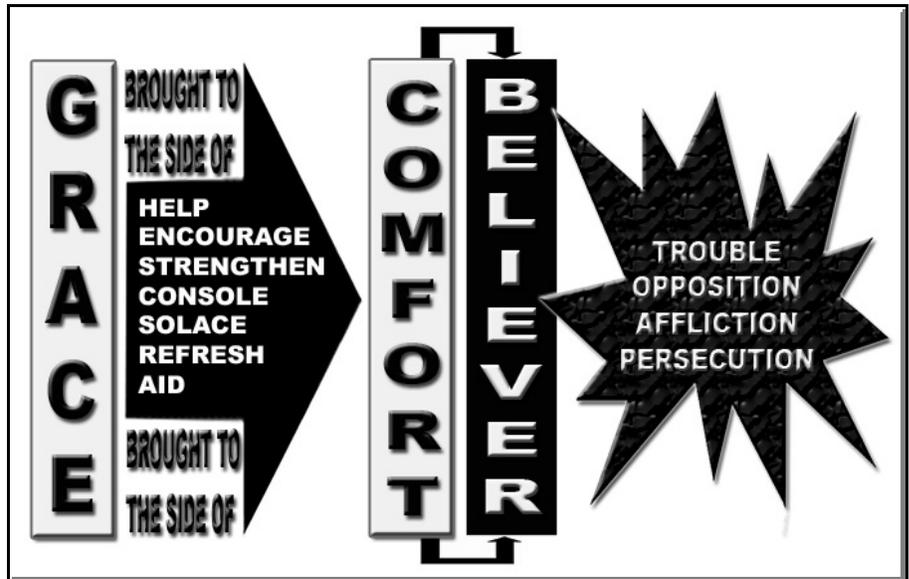
Now, Paul will confirm the effect of “newness of life” in others upon his own spirit. He will refer to something that is rational, beneficial, and able to be expressed in words.

WITH COMFORT

“... with comfort...”

The word “comfort” is translated from the Greek word παρακλησει (paraklaa-sei), which means: “a calling near, summons for help . . . consolation, solace . . . refreshment,” THAYER “encouragement, help, encouragement,” UBS “to cause someone to be encouraged or consoled,” LOUW-NIDA and “a calling to one’s aid, summons, encouragement.” LIDDELL-SCOTT

The act of “comforting” presumes a state of difficulty and agitation. Within the circumference of difficulty and agitation we find such things as “peril,” “persecution,” “trouble,” “opposition,” “fightings without,” “fears within,” being “perplexed,” being “cast down,” being pressed “beyond strength,” and “despairing of life” (2 Cor 1:8; 4:8,9; 7:5,6; 11:26). That is why “comfort” carries the connotation of help, encouragement, aid,



and refreshment.

The Lord is said to be “a very present help in the time of trouble” (Psa 46:1). How is that “help” realized? How does it get to the child of God who has encountered great difficulty while involved in the work of the Lord? What of those who are “persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Matt 5:10)? Or, those who “do well and suffer for it” (1 Pet 2:20)? **How is the comfort delivered to them?** When Paul speaks of the Lord in this regards he testifies, “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” (2 Cor 1:4). What causes this magnanimous comfort and consolation to come to our side when we are surrounded by “trouble.”

Paul testified of his life, “Even unto this present hour we both **hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labor, working with**

our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are **made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day**” (1 Cor 4:11-13). **How do you get “comfort” to a person like that, who seems to be in a place that cannot be reached by solace, encouragement, and help?**

Paul not only says he was “comforted,” but that he was “filled with comfort.” As he will develop in verses five through seven, **it was by means of a brother who reported progress among the saints at Corinth.** In the capacity of “the Head of the body,” Jesus ministered consolation and strengthening encouragement to this weary soldier by means of the brethren – the members of His body.

The comfort was delivered by a believer – a faithful servant sensitive to the Lord. That is **how** Jesus strengthens His people (Eph 4:15-16; Col 2:19).

JOYFUL IN TRIBULATION

“^{4d} . . . I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.”

Paul continues to articulate the impact that the recollection of the

Corinthian’s initial conversion and recent progress has had upon him. He has not only spoken frankly with them, but commendably about them to others – “great is my glorying of you.” It has

brought encouragement to him – “I am filled with comfort.” Now he speaks of the impact the work of the **Lord in them has had upon him in** the hardships he had endured for the sake of the Gospel.

EXCEEDING JOYFUL

“... I am exceeding joyful...”

Other versions read, “I am overflowing with joy,”^{NASB} “my joy knows no bounds,”^{NIV} “I am overjoyed,”^{NRSV} “I overabound in joy,”^{DARBY} “I exceedingly about in joy,”^{DOUAY} “and am exceeding joyous,”^{GENEVA} “joy greatly aboundeth to me,”^{MRD} “you have made me happy,”^{NLT} “I am overjoyed,”^{ISV} “My cup is running over with joy,”^{WILLIAMS} “my heart is overflowing with joy,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “the thought of you has filled me . . . with deep happiness.”^{PHILLIPS}

The Nature of Spiritual Life

Being joyful is one thing, being “**exceedingly joyful**” is something else. In this experience, joy is found with a characteristic that pervades the whole of the Kingdom of God – **exceeding!**

Ponder the various expressions of the Spirit regarding this trait of going beyond and abounding.

- **“Much more.”** (Rom 5:9,10,15,17; 2 Cor 3:11; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:7).
- **“Abound.”** (Rom 5:20; 15:13; 2 Cor 1:5; 9:8; Phil 1:9; 4:17; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:1; 2 Thess 1:3; 2 Pet 1:8).
- **“Fill/Full.”** (Rom 15:13,14; Eph 3:19; 5:18; Phil 1:11; Col 1:9; 2:2; 2 Tim 1:4; Heb 6:11; 10:22; James 3:17; 1 John 1:4).
- **“Fulness.”** (Rom 15:29; Eph 1:23; 3:19; 4:13).
- **“Abundant.”** (John 10:10; Rom 5:17; Eph 3:20; 1 Tim 1:14; Tit 3:6; 1 Pet 1:3; 2 Pet 1:11).
- **“Exceedingly.”** (2 Cor 3:9; 7:13; 2 Thess 1:3).
- **“Excel/Excellence”** (1 Cor 12:31; 14:12; 2 Cor 3:10; 4:7; Phil 1:10; 3:8).
- **“Increase.”** (1 Cor 3:6-7; 2 Cor 9:10; Eph 4:16; Col 1:10; 2:19; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:10).

In Christ Jesus, there is a **total separation from mediocrity and averageness**. Everything is thrust into a category in which growth,

advancement, and increasing change are realized. That is why we read of God’s “**great love**” (Eph 2:4), “**great zeal**” (Col 4:13), “**great boldness**” (1 Tim 3:13; “**great gain**” (1 Tim 6:6), the “**great God**” (Tit 2:13), “**great joy**” (Phile 1:7), a “**great salvation**” (Heb 2:3), our “**great High Priest**” (Heb 4:14), “**great recompense**” (Heb 10:35), the “**great Shepherd of the sheep**” (Heb 13:20), and “**exceeding great and precious promises**” (2 Pet 1:4).

This is the manner of the Kingdom. **As we walk in the light, and in fellowship with the Father and the Son, every facet of our lives passes beyond the border of the normal.** How can anything that is touched by a great God be anything but surpassing? The more faith dominates, the more excellence and abundance rises to the surface of our lives. **On the other hand, the more men attempt to mingle the world into their lives, the more things gravitate to spiritual mediocrity.** This is the precise reason for the failure of some to advance, and experience the abundance that characterizes the whole of life in Christ Jesus (John 10:10).

What Is “Joy”

What is this marvelous spiritual commodity called “joy?” **As you look into it, you will find it is not so easy to explain.** Like all of the “*fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal 3:22-23), this “joy” is of another order – it is not of this world.

gladness . . . great happiness.” LOUW-NIDA

Even in the English language, “joy” has an exalted meaning: “the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires.”^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} That is, “joy” is the **RESULT** of what has been **PERCEIVED**, not what has merely been experienced. For this reason, it is said to come from faith, of be the result of believing. As it is written, “*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost*” (Rom 15:13). And again, “*And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith*” (Phil 1:25). **This is a ration joy that is associated with understanding, insight, and discernment.** It is more spiritual than soulish, brings glory to God, and yields strength to the one possessing it. This is a joy that makes us better.

Paul associated joy with faith in his poignant statement to the Corinthians: “*Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: FOR by faith ye stand*” (2 Cor 1:24). Thus, Paul knew by helping their joy, there would be a corresponding impact upon their faith. Peter did the same thing when he wrote, “*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1 Pet 1:8).



“Joy” comes from the Greek word χαρά (kha-raa), which means, “gladness,”^{THAYER} “a feeling of inner happiness, rejoicing, gladness, delight,”^{FRIBERG} and “a state of

“Joy” comes when the good things of God are made more clear to us. This can be the result of considering the “*exceeding great and precious promises of*

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God.” It can also be realized through the contemplation of Himself. Thus, we are said to “*joy in God*” (Rom 5:11). We also “*rejoice in hope of the glory of Glory*” – that is, in the anticipation of our participation in that glory (Rom 5:2).

In every case, “*joy*” is **not** merely feeling happy, or responding to something humorous. It is **not** the result of being entertained, or the result of everything going well in the flesh. “*Joy*” is ever “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal 5:22), and the Holy Spirit desires “*against the flesh*” (Gal 5:17), neither gaining nor producing from the cursed realm.

Exceeding Joyful

Being “*exceedingly joyful*” is having a joy that, like eternal life itself, springs up, overflowing in expression, and into the circumstances of life. This kind of joy is referred to as “*all joy*” with which the Spirit Himself fills us (Rom 15:13). It is, therefore, “*the joy of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Thess 1:6). It is referred to as “*great joy*” (Phile 1:7), and “*greater joy*” (3 John 1:4). It is a “*joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1 Pet 1:8).

Joy is the result of perceiving the association of circumstances with the working of the Lord. In particular, Paul’s “*joy*” had to do with the recovery and advancement of the Corinthians. Later Paul says the report he received concerning that recovery caused him to be “*more joyed*” (2 Cor 7:13). I will deal with this more extensively when covering verse thirteen.

Suffice it to say, this is a joy that cannot be quelled. It can sing at midnight, when backs have been beaten, and feet are in stocks (Acts 16:25).

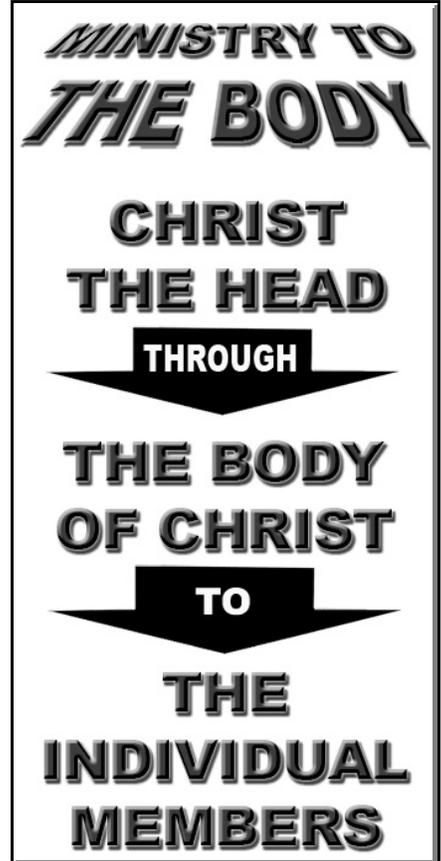
IN ALL OUR TRIBULATION

“ . . . *in all our tribulation.*” Other versions read, “*in all our affliction,*”^{NASB} “*in all, our troubles,*”^{NIV} “*with all our affliction,*”^{RSV} “*under all our affliction,*”^{DARBY} “*in all our hardship,*”^{NJB} “*despite all our troubles,*”^{NLT} “*in spite of all my suffering,*”^{LIVING} “*through all kinds of trouble,*”^{IE} “*amid all our affliction,*”^{ISV} “*in the face of all my sorrow,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*with all our tribulation and in spite of it,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*Whatever troubles I have gone through.*”^{PHILLIPS}

The superiority of “*the joy of the Lord*” (Neh 8:10) is seen, in part, in the circumstances in and during which it is realized. Here Paul says he not only was “*joyful,*” but was “*exceeding joyful.*” This was not experienced in the midst of ideal outward circumstances, but, he says, “*in all our tribulation.*” **All of the wisdom of this world cannot produce such a joy.** The world offers a joy that requires you to get away from the normalities of life – perhaps in a secluded area, where there are less interruptions, and conflicting influences are reduced to a minimum. That we often long for such environs cannot be denied. Our heart frequently cries out, “*Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest*” (Psa 55:6).

Here, however, is a joy that was realized in an exceeding measure “*IN all our tribulation.*” What a marvelous experience! It is one that Paul earnestly sought for every member of the body of Christ. The desire was expressed to the Colossians. “*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, UNTO all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness*” (Col 1:9-11).

“*Patience and longsuffering*” have to do with conduct under stress, opposition, and all manner of trouble. “*Patience*” relates to making progress during the storm of trial. “*Longsuffering*” is being able to endure pain and hurt for lengthy periods without fainting or quitting. **Being able to be patient and longsuffering is challenging enough. But what of doing it with “all joyfulness?”** It is no wonder that such an attainment is said to be the result of being “*strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power.*” Such strength is also described in these words: “*strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man*” (Eph 3:16). The saints of the Lord can still confess in truth, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Phil 4:13).



Being able to be “*exceeding joyful in all our tribulations*” is certainly the result of being empowered, or strengthened, by the Lord. But how does the Lord get the strength to us. What is there that causes faith to generate such a rare, yet needful, joy? In this text, Paul relates such joy with the Corinthians themselves. There were certain things wrought in them that were obviously from the Lord. **The knowledge of those things were used by God to bring joy to the heart of Paul while he was in the midst of tribulation.** Furthermore, this benefit was **not** realized in only certain kinds of difficulty, but “*in all our tribulation.*”

Right here we come to grips with the manner in which the Lord strengthens and edifies His people. Some might imagine that everything that comes from the Lord to us is on a one-to-one basis, with the Lord dealing with us personally, in separation from any other personalities. However, this is not at all the case.

God, who “*setteth the solitary in families,*” has placed the saved – all of them – in a group – the body of Christ. As it is written, “*But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him*” (1 Cor 12:18). Now, it is by means of that “*body*” that Jesus ministers nourishment and needed supplies to His people.

This is not an interpretation of Scripture, but a reality that is particularly taught by the Spirit – **namely that Jesus ministers to the saints through His people.**

☛ **Jesus “gave gifts unto men” in the person of people;** “*Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men . . . And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*” (Eph 4:8-11). Thus, He who is speaking from heaven (Heb 12:25), does so through those whom He has placed in the body.

☛ **The growth that is realized by the members of the body is absolutely essential.** Further, it is brought to

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

☛ **It is as each member of the body clings to the Head, that the Head ministers through them to the other members of the body.** “*And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*” (Col 2:19). Therefore, personal growth and “*increase*” is realized as we come into contact with those who are holding to the Head, who is Christ, and from whom the nourishment originates.

Thus, by means of the working of the grace of God in the Corinthians, the

Lord had ministered joy to an afflicted Apostle, sending a sweet elixir of comfort through those who at times caused him great concern. What a marvelous advantage! Who but the Lord can do a thing like that?

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BODY

How marvelous, that we have been placed in an environment in which the Lord of glory consistently and effectively works! The love of the brethren makes a lot of sense in the light of this wonderful reality.

Do you imagine that you can willingly distance yourself from the people of God and still receive help from Christ? Do not be so foolish as to entertain such a vain notion. The “*members*” of Christ’s body are the vehicles of comfort. They are the appointed means through which He ministers to His people. This is woven into the very concept of the expression, “*the body of Christ*” (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12). It is the functioning and intra-involvements of the members that is emphasized in this view of the redeemed – “*His body*” (Eph 1:23; 5:30).

CONCLUSION

The spiritual wisdom and expertise with which Paul, writes corroborates that he had, indeed, received mercy “*to be faithful*” (1 Cor 7:25). It also confirms that he faithfully and properly used the “*power*” and “*authority*” he had received to edify the saints (2 Cor 10:8; 13:10). His faith enabled him to do what he had been called to do, and to do it well. Follow his marvelous reasoning.

☛ He powerfully communicates the nature and superiority of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3).

☛ He skillfully affirms the stabilizing effects of concentrating on things that are not seen (2 Cor 4:16-18).

☛ He affirms that God has “*wrought us*” to inhabit our “*house which is from heaven*” – the resurrection body (2 Cor 5:1-5).

☛ With power he declares that the purpose for which Jesus died, and the reason for our reconciliation, is that we might “*be made the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor 5:18-21).

☛ He confirms that we are living in “*the day of salvation*” and “*the accepted time,*” and that he has conducted his ministry within an acute awareness of this reality (2 Cor 6:1-13).

☛ He draws their attention to the fact that their own affections have been hindering them, and that this is the reason they have not received him as they should – in the capacity of an Apostle (2 Cor 6:12).

☛ He calls upon the Corinthians to not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14a).

☛ He expounds not only the requirement of this posture, but the reasonableness of it (2 Cor 6:14b-16a).

☛ He declares that God’s reception of them, being their Father, and they being His sons and daughters, is conditioned upon their separation (2 Cor 6:16b-18).

☛ He pleads with them upon the basis of these wonderful promises to cleanse themselves of all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1).

☛ He reminds them that they have not experienced any disadvantages because of him, or what he has said (2 Cor 7:2).

☛ He declares that although he has spoken candidly and frankly with them, he had also gloried in them

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before others, and derived much joy in the recollection of God's work within them (2 Cor 7:4).

Truly, in Paul the words of Solomon were fulfilled: "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd"(Eccl 12:11). With the pen of a "ready scribe" (Ezra 7:6), he awakened them to their deficiencies, then gently led them into green pastures where they could be nourished by the Lord. All of this was driven by Paul's keen understanding of the nature of salvation

and the glory of the New Covenant. His insight enabled him to speak in harmony with Divine objectives, and thus to tap into the inexhaustible reservoir of Divine wisdom and strength.

Now, what possible reason can be adduced for failing to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. How can any justification for continued carnality be presented? See, he has thrown down their imaginations, and established to them that being godly is really the only way to prepare for

eternity.

In my judgment, this kind of reasoning is unusually rare in our time. We are living in a day of great delusion, when men have been led to believe that God not only tolerates, but actually accepts, fundamentally ungodly and uninformed people. If this imagination has not been embraced intellectually, the spirit of it has been adopted. **That is the only satisfactory explanation for people failing to grow up in Christ in all things.**

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COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

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

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 6/24/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The thirtieth lesson will cover verses five through seven of the seventh chapter: **"THE MACEDONIAN EXPERIENCE."** Labors for the Lord are not necessarily attended by pleasant and encouraging circumstances. There are times when opposition surrounds the one who works together with God on every side, and fears come within as well. It is good that we have a proper view of such experiences. 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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