

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 #30

COMMENTARY ON: 7:5-7

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

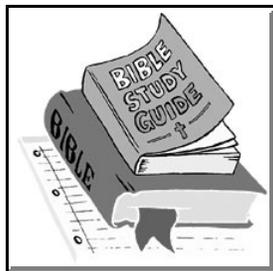
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

THE MACEDONIAN EXPERIENCE

When Paul was in Macedonia, his experience was not pleasant – even though he was busy about his Father's business. From the outward perspective, he had no rest, surrounded by trouble on every side. Inwardly he had to grapple with "fears." According to the flesh, he experienced one trial after another – a continual barrage of difficulties, challenges, and inconvenience. Nevertheless, in the midst of it all, God sent some refreshment to Paul by means of Titus, who brought a good report of the spiritual progress being made among the Corinthian brethren. Now, in the midst of the trouble, he was set to rejoicing in the Lord.

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 30



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 Tanakj (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 -----

THE MACEDONIAN EXPERIENCE

“ 7:5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. ⁶ Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; ⁷ And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.” (2 Cor 7:5-7)

INTRODUCTION

As we are exposed to ¹the mind-set of the early church, ²in the wake of the newness of life, ³the empowerment of the Spirit of God, and ⁴the direction of the Lord, we at once sense the priority of spiritual life. **Let me be clear about this, a person cannot be alive toward God and indifferent to His truth, or oblivious of His will.** Empty profession and lifeless procedures are **not** found where there is fellowship with the Father and with the Son (1 John 1:3; 1 Cor 1:9). This should not surprise us, for righteousness and unrighteousness cannot blend, and there is no concord

between Christ and Belial. The thoughts and ways of the world cannot merge with the “*pure river of the water of life*” (Rev 22:1).

Certain traits immediately surfaced when the hearts of the those early believers were touched – when the Gospel first began to be preached.

• **IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE.** “*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls*” (Acts 2:41).

• **STEADFASTNESS.** “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42).

• **SOBRIETY.** “*And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles*” (Acts 2:43).

• **SELFLESSNESS.** “*And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted*

While laboring for the Master, Paul experiences great trouble, and great comfort as well-- by Given O. Blakely

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them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:44-45).

- ☛ **CONTINUANCE.** *“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart”* (Acts 2:46)
- ☛ **EXPRESSIVE AND VISIBLE.** *“Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47).
- ☛ **DEPENDENCY UPON GOD.** *“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is”* (Acts 4:24).
- ☛ **UNITY.** *“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of*

one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32).

- ☛ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD.** *“And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things”* (Acts 5:11).
- ☛ **SPREADING THE WORD.** *“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4).

The question is whether or not these responses were unusual – unique to the reception of *“the newness of life.”* Were these the kind of reactions that sort of kick-started the church, but were not intended to continue. What about Kingdom beginnings? **Is the greatest and most advanced evidences of spiritual life at the first? Are initial bursts of life the superior ones?** Were these glorious beginnings revealing the real nature of spiritual life itself, or were they excessive demonstrations of Divine power?

Does spiritual life begin at its apex, then gradually wane until it is in a state of utter mediocrity and religious normalcy? **Is there really a sort of plateau in spiritual life, beyond which the rank and file of believers are not intended to go?** Is it the nature of the church to retrogress, so that the beginnings must be realized over and over again?

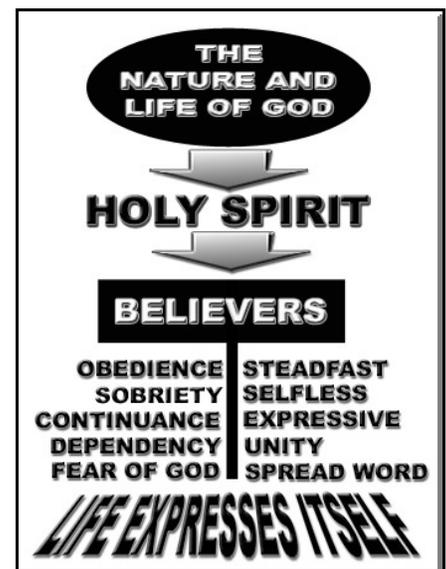
When we receive spiritual life, is it the life of God and of Christ? Is it not referred to as *“the life also of Jesus”* that is *“made manifest in our body,”* or *“our mortal flesh”* (2 Cor 4:10-11). Indeed, *“we are made partakers of Christ”* (Heb 3:14), and that is a very real participation! Let no one suppose for a moment that the *“new man,”* which is *“created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph 4:24), **can express himself** in worldly or carnal ways. Who would dare to postulate such an absurdity, when we are categorically told *“whosoever is born of God sinneth not. . .*

and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18). **Thrust from you the imagination that this means whoever is born of God does not sin continually or habitually, as though the life that comes from God can sin a little, or occasionally.**

That this is, in fact, the prevailing attitude in the professed “church world” is obvious, and cannot be denied. It is, however, a wholly erroneous view, and ought to be abandoned wherever it is entertained, either philosophically or by deliberate position. Further, this condition is the reason why the things taught in our text must be declared and embraced with determination.

You may be sure of this, the Christ of whom you have been made partakers does not sin in you, any more than He did when He walked among men! He will certainly not promote the sin that required Him to die, being made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), and made a curse for us as well (Gal 3:13).

What, then, is the cause of sin among God’s people? It does **not** come from the Holy Spirit! It is **not** the result of the light that God commanded to *“shine in our hearts with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God”* (2 Cor 4:6). It is **not** the outcome of being *“joined to the Lord”* (1 Cor 6:17), or being made *“partakers of the Divine nature”* (2



While laboring for the Master, Paul experiences great trouble, and great comfort as well– by Given O. Blakely

Pet 1:4). When God gave “unto us His Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 4:8), that Spirit certainly did **not** cause sin, carnality, or a defection from God to occur in us! Living beneath the privileges we are afforded in Christ Jesus is **not** the result of the Word of Christ dwelling in us “richly” (Col 3:16). The Scriptures themselves do **not** contribute to morally or spiritually flawed lives, but were given in order that we might be made mature, and “thoroughly furnished for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). If we are, in Christ, “the workmanship of God, created unto good

- ☛ “Your lusts that war in your members.”
- ☛ Desiring the wrong thing: “desire to have and obtain not.”
- ☛ Failure to pray: “Ye have not because ye ask not.”
- ☛ Praying amiss: “Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”
- ☛ Unfaithfulness to God: “Ye adulterers

of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor 15:34).

- ☛ “Wherefore come out from among them, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and **touch not the unclean thing**; and I will receive you” (2 Cor 6:17).
- ☛ “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).
- ☛ “That ye **put off concerning the former conversation the old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph 4:22).
- ☛ “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, **let it not be once named among you**, as becometh saints” (Eph 5:3).

This is precisely why holy men of God always considered sin within the church to be a most serious matter. With unwavering consistency they summoned the people of God to separate themselves from iniquity.

works” (Eph 2:10), that “workmanship” can certainly **not** exhibit itself in sinful works or expressions.

What, then, causes sin to erupt among professed believers, as it did in Corinth? Why is it found within the church? We are not left to wonder about this. When James discovered uncomely traits among the people of God, he was straightforward in his explanation of them. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? **come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God**” (James 4:1-4). How sobering to ponder these words of inspired explanation. Sin is traced back to:

- ☛ Enemies of God because friends of the world: “Know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity against God.”

This is precisely why holy men of God **always** considered sin within the church to be a most serious matter. With unwavering consistency they summoned the people of God to separate themselves from iniquity.

- ☛ “**Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof**” (Rom 6:12).
- ☛ “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore **cast off the works of darkness**, and let us put on the armor of light” (Rom 13:12).
- ☛ “**Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us**” (1 Cor 5:7).
- ☛ “Awake to righteousness, and **sin not**; for some have not the knowledge

- ☛ “**Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry**” (Col 3:5).
- ☛ “**Abstain from all appearance of evil**” (1 Thess 5:22).
- ☛ “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).
- ☛ “Wherefore **lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness**, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).
- ☛ “Wherefore **laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings**” (1 Pet 2:1).
- ☛ “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as

strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11).

The matter of sin is not approached academically in Scripture, as though definitions and suggested solutions were a sufficient manner in which to deal with it. Sin is rather approached with its nature in mine. It separates from God (Isa 59:2), alienates from Him (Col 1:21), and excluded one from the Kingdom of God (Eph 5:5). **The notion that sin – which required the incarnation, humiliation, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, enthronement, and intercession of Jesus – makes any allowance for continuing in it betrays not only an abysmal ignorance of God, but a certain hardness of heart and deadness of spirit.**

This is the reason for the fervent and thorough manner with which sin is treated in Scripture. This very manner confirms that returning to the bondage of sin will **not** be tolerated by the Lord. And, be sure of this, if a person who was once delivered from sin is again found in its clutches, that person *"returned"* to it. As it is written, *"But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'"*^{NKJV} (2 Pet 2:22). That can **only** be done deliberately and willingly.

Our text is a confirmation of this fact, for Paul is calling the Corinthians back into the state of true spiritual normalcy – being *"changed from glory to glory"* (2 Cor 3:13), walking in new creatureship where old things have passed away and all things have become new (2

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Cor 5:17), and living a life of separation from unequal yokes and defiling influences. These are not idealistic goals for which believers are to strive, thinking they will probably never be realized. Rather, this is what is **essential** to God receiving us, being a Father to us, and we being His sons and daughters (2 Cor 6:16-7:1). There is no room for philosophy on this point. It is stated with great clarity.

THE CORINTHIAN RECOVERY

Our text is the beginning of Paul's response to the recovery of the Corinthians from their miserable state. As he will affirm, the report of their progress brought great joy and refreshment to him.

In all of my years of ministry (over fifty years now, as of 6/2005), and of my extensive involvement with the churches, **I do not know that I have every heard of a church recovering from a fall into iniquity.** I know I have never heard of any congregation recalling a minister they had maligned and rejected, or mourning over their past failures and disobedience in respect to that servant of the Lord. It may very well be that such churches exist, but they have managed to be well hidden. In fact, there are not many of them unveiled in Scripture.

Among other things, this confirms that great difficulty that is associated with recovering from the snare of the devil. If escape from his hold was easy to accomplish, the servants

of God would not be warned about the manner in which such fallen souls are to be approached.

- *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"* (Gal 6:1).
- *"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will"* (2 Tim 2:24-26).
- *"Snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh"*^{NIV} (Jude 1:22-23).

We will now hear of a faltering church that was recovered by a letter – an epistle. **It was a church that had to give heed to what was written to them.** The secret to their recovery was this: **when the truth was written to them by an understanding man with a tender heart, the Lord Himself empowered that word, and they received it.**

OUR FLESH HAD NO REST

^{7:5a} **For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest . . ."**

This verse resumes the dialog

concerning his itinerary that was suspended in 2:13: *"I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia"* (2 Cor

2:13). There is another independent series of thoughts developed from 2:14 through 7:4, and it is of remarkable length. Let me briefly rehearse how extensive that word was.

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- ☛ God caused Paul to triumph under all manner of opposition (2:14-16).
- ☛ Paul establishes his integrity in the work of the Lord, confirming his

(6:14-7:1).

- ☛ He urges the Corinthians to receive him, and not reject him or what he is doing (7:2-4).



Let me underscore the manner of the kingdom. This way of talking or writing reflects the inner involvements of the works of the Lord. **Experience and personal character are wed to Divine purpose or objective, and do not stand independent of it.** What God is doing, and what His servants are experiencing are not divided. Paul was able to see this, and spent time to ensure that the Corinthians also saw it as well.

Paul now tells the circumstances that preceded the good news he had received about the Corinthian brethren.

Something I want to draw to your attention now, and will address later, is the nature of the communications of Paul. **They consistently centered around the work of the Lord.** Personal experiences were related when they had to do with that work. His letters were not mundane, dealing with political and social affairs, and matters of mere novelty.

Introductory Thoughts

While I speak of this matter with cautious deliberation, **I am growing in my persuasion that the tendency of the modern church to become involved in issues of the day has greatly neutralized its power and influence.** I understand that some strong arguments can be presented for believers having a responsibility to be the “salt” and “light” of the world. However, I am not at all convinced that those arguments are built upon a solid foundation.

The Word of the Lord does not give us a mandate to shine, but announces that those who live by faith **do**, in fact, “*shine as lights in the world*” (Phil 2:15). That “*light*” is perceived because of its sharp contrast with the darkness that

characterizes the world. The **focus** of the believers is what is made known in their conduct. They are, after all, in quest of “*a better country*” (Heb 11:16). Having received “*exceeding great and precious promises*,” and been “*persuaded of them*,” they have “*embraced them*” and confess “*that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth*” (2 Pet 1:4; Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11).

In this posture, they cannot become embroiled in “*the affairs of this life*” (2 Tim 2:4), for they are convinced that it is true, “*the fashion of this world passeth away*” (1 Cor 7:31).

Ponder political and social environments in which early believers found themselves. I mention these to establish that cultural and political issues were never an emphasis in the apostolic doctrine and writings.

experiences were not a form of punishment for wrongdoing (2:17).

- ☛ He establishes that the Corinthians were the result of his own ministry (3:1-5).
- ☛ The superiority of the New Covenant is established (3:6-18).
- ☛ He declares that his ministry is in perfect accord with the nature of the New Covenant and the objectives of God (4:1-6).
- ☛ Paul provides a view of the result of having a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel (4:7-18).
- ☛ He affirms that God has wrought us for the world to come, where we will put on immortality. It ought not to surprise us, therefore, when we experience trouble in this world (5:1-13).
- ☛ The reality and nature of reconciliation is made known (5:14-21).
- ☛ Paul cites the areas in which he has been approved as a minister of God (6:1-13).
- ☛ He pleads for the Corinthians to separate themselves from the world

- ☛ **Different countries or regions:** Cyprus (Acts 4:36), Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23), Asia (Acts 16:6), Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8:1), Lycaonia (Acts 14:6), Achaia (2 Cor 11:10), Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21), Spain (Rom 15:24,28), Bithynia (Acts 16:7), Macedonia (2 Cor 9:2), Italy (Acts 27:1; Heb 13:24), Greece (Acts 20:2), Phenicia (Acts 21:2), Lycia (Acts 27:5), Pontus and Cappadocia (1 Pet 1:1), and others.

- ☛ **Different islands:** Claudia (Acts 27:16); Melita (Acts 28:1-9).

- ☛ **Different cities:** Jerusalem (Acts 1:4), Samaria (Acts 8:5), Joppa (Acts 11:5), Philippi (Acts 16:12), Thyatira (Acts 16:14), Myra (Acts 27:5), Lasea (Acts 27:8), Damascus (2 Cor 11:32), Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:13), Iconium (Acts 14:4), Ephesus (Acts 19:35), Corinth (Acts 18:1), Colosse (Colo 1:2), Acts 17:1), Salamis (Acts 13:5), Rome (Rom 1:7), Babylon (1 Pet 5:13), Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:6), Berea (Acts 17:10-13), Caesarea (Acts 18:22), Athens (Acts 17:22), and others.

All of these cities, and many more,

are mentioned in the Word of God – particularly in Acts and the Epistles. They represented vastly differing cultures, and differing rulers, laws, and customs. **Yet, if you were to seek from Scripture to know of the then-current social and political issues of those locations, you would not find them.** If you made a diligent search to identify the various cultural customs and trends in those areas, you would also find very little information, if, indeed, you were fortunate to find any at all.

Although there were Grecian and Roman sports and games, you read of no reference to any of the better known participants. If there were military campaigns under way, there is no reference to them. Famous teachers and philosophers of that time are not mentioned, or military men, or government officials. **When an earthly dignitary is mentioned, it is because of related to matters pertaining to God’s people** – i.e. *“And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them”* (Acts 18:2). Men like Felix and Agrippa are mentioned **only** because of their association with Paul (Acts chapters 23,24,25). The same is true of *“Caesar”* (Acts 25:8,11,12,21,32; 27:24; 28:19; Phil 4:22).

This somewhat lengthy diversion is intended to be a foundation for the remarks that follow.

We are living in a day when Christianity has been secularized. The word “secularized” means “to make secular; to transfer from the ecclesiastical to civil or lay use, possession, or control; to convert to or imbue with secularism.” MERRIAM-WEBSTER The word “secularism” means “indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations.” MERRIAM-WEBSTER

Religion has been “secularized” when **this** world becomes the primary one, and life *“in the flesh”* becomes fundamental. **In such a case, “heaven” is given only a token place in men’s**

thinking, and is generally viewed philosophically rather than as the place of our citizenship. An *“eternal inheritance”* becomes of little consequence, and *“death”* and *“the day of judgment”* are rarely considered. An interceding Christ and the *“exceeding great and precious promises”* of God are not principle considerations, and the resurrection of the dead is thought to be a subject of little relevance. **Living in the world is more important than getting through the world, and living for the present overshadows living by hope.**

The result of this distorted approach to life is reflected in the manner of communication. **When, for example, the things of God are the subject, a strange silence descends upon such people, and their interest fades.** When, particularly in a “church” setting, the things of this world are the subject, no matter how elementary they may be, the tongues of the dumb are loosed, their eyes are brightened, and we hear of all manner of their experiences and interests.

Paul’s Testimony

In this intensely personal testimony of Paul, it will become apparent that the work of the Lord took the precedence over fleshly indulgence and pleasure. **The difficult circumstances that he encountered were directly related to his labor in the Lord.** A mind-set is being reflected that is the result of the dominance of faith and hope. For those who have been duly initiated in the “church world,” this kind of perspective on life is exceedingly rare. It does not take into consideration current social crises or governmental corruption. Worldly fads and trends, or topics that dominated worldly minded people, have no place in such a dialog. Possessing and maintaining faith and joy in the Lord is everything.

COME INTO MACEDONIA

“ 7:5a For, when we were come into Macedonia . . .” Other versions read,

“For indeed, when,” ^{NKJV} *“For even when,”* ^{NASB} *“For even when we have come,”* ^{NRSV} *“For also, when we were come,”* ^{BBE} *“after we came,”* ^{MRD} *“When we arrived in,”* ^{NLT} and *“for also we, having*



come.” ^{YLT}

Macedonia was the original kingdom of Philip and Alexander the Great. The rise of this great empire formed by Alexander the Great was revealed to the prophet Daniel (Dan 8:3-8), and was also revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream of a great statue (Dan 2:39). This was the Grecian empire, described by Daniel as the third of the great world kingdoms, and characterized as one of brass (Dan 2:39). It was also described as swift leopard to whom dominion was given (Dan 7:6). Additionally, it was also depicted as a he-goat with one *“notable horn”* that crushed the Persian empire (Dan 8:3-8).

In the time of Paul, Alexander’s kingdom had been crushed by the Romans, and the region of Macedonia had become a Roman province. **Yet, the remnants of the spiritual powers that ruled that region under the spiritual “prince of Grecia”** (Dan 10:20) **remained.** Now, instead of the Romans invading the political entity of Macedonia, a heavenly prince, the Apostle Paul, was invading it with the Gospel of Christ. **He would engage in throwing down imaginations, high thoughts, and the spiritual principalities and powers of that region would fight back.**

The Background for Coming Into Macedonia

Originally, Paul was called into Macedonia by a vision. Prior to that call, the Gospel was rapidly spreading throughout the world. However, the Holy Spirit forbade them to go into Asia. Then, when the disciples made every effort to go into Bithynia, the Spirit did not allow them to do so. It was at that time that *"a vision appeared to Paul in the night."* In that vision, *"There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us."* Immediately after that, and after due consideration of the vision, the brethren concluded that the Lord had called them *"to preach the Gospel"* to that region (Acts 16:6-10).

Philippi

During that initial visit to this area – once dominated by an evil spiritual principality, and which was the citadel of the spread of the Grecian empire with its false gods – much was accomplished. When they came to the city of Philippi, they found a gathering of holy woman at a river, where they were praying. There the Lord *"opened"* Lydia's heart, she was baptized together with her household, and Paul and company spent some time in her home. Following that, Paul confronted the woman with a *"spirit of divination,"* who *"brought her masters much gain by soothsaying."* For *"many days"* she followed Paul, crying out, *"These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."* Being grieved with this devilish testimony, Paul commanded the evil spirit to come out of the woman, *"and he came out the same hour."* As a direct result of that incident, Paul and Silas were arrested, falsely charged, grievously beaten, and thrown into jail. It was at that time, following a Divinely focused earthquake and the opening of the prison, that the very jailor who had charge of them was converted, together with his household. They were finally released, and departed from Philippi, going to Thessalonica, which was also in Macedonia (Acts 16:19-40).

Thessalonica

In Thessalonica Paul reasoned in the local synagogue *"for three days,"* *"opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead."* The outcome of it all was that the unbelieving Jews gathered together a company of *"lewd fellows"* and *"set all the city on an uproar."* The house of Jason was assaulted at that time, and the brethren *"sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea,"* another city in Macedonia.

Berea

In Berea certain *"noble"* people *"received the word with all readiness of mind,"* and *"many of them believed,"* including some *"honorable women which*

clean: from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles." Following that *"Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."* Later, in a *"night vision,"* the Lord appeared to Paul saying, *"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."* (Acts 18:1-). As a consequence, Paul remained in Corinth *"for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."* Thus the church at Corinth was birthed under the ministry of Paul. From there, Paul went to Syria, and ultimately began preaching in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19). Eventually,

Even the first trip was related to all manner of disruption and trouble. I take it that this was like the death throes of the spiritual hosts that had so long dominated that region – first through the Grecians, and, at the time of Paul, through the Romans.

were Greeks, and of men, not a few." However, the Jews from Thessalonica, upon hearing of Paul being in Berea *"stirred up the people."* The brethren then sent Paul away, with Silas and Timotheus remaining in Berea. Paul then went to Athens, where he confronted the local philosophers. From there, Paul went to Corinth (Acts 17:10-34).

Corinth

In Corinth, Paul found Aquila and Priscilla and abode with them, working with them as a tentmaker. Every Sabbath, he reasoned in the synagogue, *"persuading the Jews and the Greeks."* Soon *"Silas and Timotheus"* came *"from Macedonia,"* joining Paul in Corinth. It was then that Paul, *"pressed in the spirit,"* devoted himself exclusively to testifying to the Jews *"that Jesus was Christ."* The Jews opposed Paul and blasphemed him. It was then that Paul *"shook his garment, and said unto them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am*

Paul "stayed in Asia for a season" (Acts 19:22).

Ephesus

During Paul's stay at Ephesus, he encountered the silversmiths of the area, who earned their living by making idols of Diana, goddess of the Ephesians. These men caused a great tumult in the city because Paul's preaching was impacting upon their trade. At that time, *"the whole city was filled with confusion,"* and a great gathering was called against Paul. This is when *"all with one voice cried out, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.'"* Finally *"the town clerk"* toned the people down, telling them they would be *"called in question"* for the uproar, and that they ought to proceed in a more orderly fashion. It is then written, *"And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia"* (Acts 20:1). This is the point in time that is now being referenced by Paul.

En Route to Macedonia

Before actually entering into Macedonia, Paul traveled throughout that area, giving the people “*much exhortation.*” He then “*came into Greece*” (Acts 20:2). He remained there for “*three months.*” When he found that the Jews “*laid wait for him, as he was about to sail to Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia*” – or, “*decided to go back through Macedonia.*”^{NIV} His trip took him through Troas, where he remained seven days, and preached to them on the first day of the week (Acts 20:3-7). Later, he met the company he had originally taken with him in Assos, a seaport-town in Asia. Then coming to Miletus, he called for the elders of Ephesus, exhorting them, and bidding them farewell, for he knew he would never again see them face to face (Acts 20:8-38).

Other References to the Occasion

door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia” (2 Cor 2:13).

I mention this only to underscore that this does not refer to Paul’s first trip to Macedonia, which was related to initial conversion of the Corinthians and the formation of their congregation. Even the first trip was related to all manner of disruption and trouble. **I take it that this was like the death throes of the spiritual hosts that had so long dominated that region – first through the Grecians, and, at the time of Paul, through the Romans.**

OUR FLESH HAD NO REST

“*. . . our flesh had no rest . . .*” Other versions read, “*our bodies had no rest,*”^{NKJV} “*this body of ours had no rest,*”

Paul and company experienced relentless attacks from the wicked one. Here, he focuses particularly upon those that were external, having to do with “*our flesh*” – the body, or “*the earthly house of this tabernacle*” (2 Cor 5:1,4). Peter also referred to the body as “*this tabernacle,*” and spoke of the prospect of putting it off (2 Pet 1:13-14). Elsewhere Paul spoke of living in this world as being “*in the body*” (2 Cor 5:6; 12:2-3; Heb 13:3).

The Body – Our Flesh

While our earthly frame is, indeed, a “*vile body*” (Phil 3:21), and “*the body of this death*” (Rom 7:24), **it still belongs to the Lord, having been purchased by Him.** As it is written, “*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? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (1 Cor 6:19-20). Again it is written, “*Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body*” (1 Cor 6:13). And again, “*Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?*” (1 Cor 6:15).

Living In Prospect of Change

We love in the prospect of our bodies being redeemed at the time of the resurrection, when we will receive a body like unto Christ’s glorious body. As it is written, “*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself*” (Phil 3:20-21). **The resurrection is the time when we will “put on immortality,” and have done with living in a frail and temporal body** (1 Cor 15:53). That is the time when death will be “*swallowed up in victory*” (1 Cor 15:54). It is the time when “*we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2). Then we will experience the promised “*redemption of the body*” (Rom 8:23), also referred to as “*the redemption of the purchased possession*” (Eph 1:14).

It is imperative that we have a proper view of our bodies. They are not the focus of the New Covenant, nor are the benefits of the New Covenant fulfilled in the body of flesh itself.

It is apparently this trip to Macedonia (Acts 20:1) to which our text refers. Paul also referred to this trip when writing to Timothy: “*As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine*” (1 Tim 1:3).

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul referred to this trip: “*Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia*” (1 Cor 16:5). Earlier he mentioned it in this same epistle: “*And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea*” (2 Cor 1:16). And again in chapter two: “*Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a*

^{NIV} “*our flesh had no relief,*”^{ASV} “*there was no rest for our body,*”^{MRD} “*there was no rest for us,*”^{NLT} “*no relaxation hath our flesh had,*”^{YLT} “*our bodies had no rest at all,*”^{IE} “*my frail human nature could find no relief,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*our bodies had no ease or rest,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*we had a wretched time.*”^{PHILLIPS}

Paul has already reminded the Corinthians what he experienced in Asia (2 Cor 1:8). In his first Epistle he mentioned how, after the manner of men, he fought with beasts in Ephesus (1 Cor 15:32). He has spoken of his restlessness in Troas, when he did not find Titus (2 Cor 2:12-13). **Now, he says the trouble and agitation continued in Macedonia, perhaps even in increased levels.** This evidences the dominance of that area by the devil.

A Proper View of the Body

It is imperative that we have a proper view of our bodies. **They are not the focus of the New Covenant, nor are the benefits of the New Covenant fulfilled in the body of flesh itself.** Let me remind you of the precise wording of the New Covenant. This does relate to our subject, for Paul is teaching within the context of the New Covenant, which is the covenant of greater and more excellent glory (2 Cor 3:10-11) – the “*ministration of the Spirit*” and “*the ministration of righteousness*”(2 Cor 3:8-9).

- **THOUGHTS IMPACTED.** “*I will put my laws into their minds.*”
- **AFFECTIONS ALTERED.** “*I will . . . write them in their hearts.*”
- **A PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD REALIZED.** “*... for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest.*”
- **PROVISION FOR REMISSION AND CLEANSING.** “*I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses.*”
- **THE RECORD OF SIN CLEARED.** “*Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*” (Heb 8:8-13; Jer 31:31-34).

That is a revealed summation of the New Covenant – promised through Jeremiah, and confirmed and expounded by Paul. In both the articulation and exposition of this covenant of greater glory, **our present bodies are never the focus.** The hope of a new and glorified body is set before us. A charge to maintain our present bodies in a state of holiness is delivered to us. **But there is no promise of the body being the focus of blessing in the New Covenant – none whatsoever!** Rather, it is declared to be the place of fierce inner warfare (Rom 7:14-25; Gal 5:16-17), and the part of us that we must control (1 Cor 9:27).

While this may appear quite clear to some, there is a considerable amount of

corrupt theology within the professed church that actually places a focus upon the body – the part of us that is characterized by corruption, and that is targeted for replacement. Let me mention three of these doctrinal emphases.

- **The “Baptism of the Spirit,”** or “the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues” – as some say. **Neither expression is used in any standard version of the Scripture.** Aside from that arresting consideration, this doctrine focuses almost exclusively on a bodily experience, ranging from sensations to unintelligible expressions. Whatever may be said about texts

single reference to “health” – 3 John 1:2: “*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth*” (3 John 1:2). Even then, the matter of “*health*” is tied to the prosperity of the soul – the inward man – and is not a guarantee, but a desire.

- **Promise of prosperity in the body.** These days, much is being made of the supposed promise of “*prosperity*” – particularly in affluent societies. There is a single verse in the Epistles that expresses a desire for any believer to “*prosper*.” It is the same verse that mentions “*health*,”

If Jesus died to make our bodies well, then why is that fact not affirmed to the churches? Why are not believers apprised of such a singular benefit? If being delivered from “the curse of the Law” means we are delivered from poverty, then why is that matter not declared and expounded to the churches? Why didn’t Jesus charge His disciples to preach that?

that seem to infer such things, being “*baptized with the Holy Spirit*” (Matt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16) is never presented in a doctrinal form that contains such teachings – **never!** The emphasis is rather placed upon being “*endued with power from on high*” (Lk 24:49) – “*power*” that was related to being Christ’s insightful witnesses (Acts 1:5,8).

- **Inordinate emphasis on healing.** While no person of understanding will contest the reality of healing, and the presence of such a benefit in Christ Jesus, **healing is not integral to the New Covenant.** By that I mean the New Covenant offers no guarantee of soundness of bodily health. **The major translations of the Scriptures (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV) contain a**

and is also tied to the prosperity of the soul (3 John 1:2). Paul said he had “*learned*” how “*to live in prosperity*”^{NASB} – but he had also learned “*how to get along with humble means*”^{NASB} (Phil 4:12). Paul instructed the Corinthian brethren concerning the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, “*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come*” (1 Cor 16:2).

There is not a syllable of Apostolic doctrine that suggests health and prosperity are promises within the New Covenant, or that they are tokens of special advantage or blessing. James goes so far as to say the Lord has “*chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*

which He hath promised to them that love Him” (James 2:5). Consider the following. Within the writings of those who lived under the blazing light of the New Covenant (Matthew through Revelation):

- ☛ No one was ever commended for having consistently good health.
- ☛ No one was ever rebuked for being in bad health.
- ☛ No one was ever commended for prospering or being wealthy.
- ☛ No one was ever rebuked for not

that these conditions could exist if Christ’s vicarious death had purchased such things for us. If Jesus died to make our bodies well, then why is that fact not affirmed to the churches? Why are not believers apprised of such a singular benefit? If being delivered from “*the curse of the Law*” means we are delivered from poverty, then why is that matter not declared and expounded to the churches? Why didn’t Jesus charge His disciples to preach that? Why is there not so much as a single word on this matter in letters to individual believers (Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Gaius [3 John] and “the

- ☛ Blessed when coming in, and blessed when going out (Deut 28:6).
- ☛ Their enemies would be totally and thoroughly frustrated (Deut 28:7).
- ☛ The Lord would command a blessing upon their storehouses, everything they set their hand to do (Deut 28:8).
- ☛ All the people of the earth would see they were blessed, and would be afraid of them (Deut 28:10).
- ☛ The Lord would so bless their provisions that they would lend, and never borrow (Deut 28:12).
- ☛ The Lord would make them “*the head, and not the tail,*” and they would be ONLY above, and never beneath (Deut 28:13).

The promises were not contingent upon trying to do better. The whole of Law had to be done, always, at all times, and in every way. No grace or assistance was offered to the people to fulfill their obligation. They had to do it on their own, all of the time, and without a single deviation.

That God can, in fact, do all of these things is not to be questioned for one moment. **The issue here is whether or not this is the manner of the New Covenant** – whether or not Jesus died to secure these benefits for those who are in Him.

prospering, or being poor.

- ☛ There is not a solitary promise from Jesus, or those who wrote to the churches, that affirms “health” to be integral to the New Covenant.
- ☛ There is not a solitary promise from Jesus, or those who wrote to the churches, that affirms “prosperity” in this world is part of the New Covenant.
- ☛ There is no exposition of the advantages of “health” or “prosperity” by Jesus of the Apostles.
- ☛ In Christ there is no promise of a trouble-free life – not do much as a hint that this condition is available.
- ☛ In Christ there is no promise of freedom from opposition or persecution.

These are just the rudimentary facts of the matter. **It is inconceivable**

elect lady” [[2 John]]? Why is there no record of preaching and teaching on health, wealth and the trouble-free life in the book of Acts?

Promises Under the Law

Even though we have been “*delivered from the Law,*” we still have professing Christians telling us the promises found within that Law are now being fulfilled in Jesus. Here are some of them:

- ☛ The Lord would “*take away*” “*all sickness*” from the people, and none of the diseases God placed upon Egypt would be placed upon Israel (Ex 15:26; Deut 7:15).
- ☛ Blessed in the city and field; blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, ground, the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine [oxen], and the flocks of thy sheep, thy basket, and thy store [kneading bowls] (Deut 28:3-5).

A Qualifying Consideration

All of these promises were very real, and reflected the nature of the Old Covenant. **The fulfillment of them was not conditioned upon what Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did.** They were not associated with the promise God to Abraham bless the whole world through his Seed, which seed is Christ (Gal 3:16). Rather, these promises were strictly contingent upon **the total and unflawed obedience of Israel** – without so much as a single deviation. “*And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep ALL His statutes . . . Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them . . . And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I*

command thee this day . . . if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in His ways . . . if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and do them: and thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them” (Ex 15:26; Deu 7:12; 28:1,9,14).

Those were the Old Covenant conditions. **There was no reference to believing, only to doing.** The doing could not be sporadic or seasonal, but had to be consistent, and at all times. The promises were not contingent upon trying to do better. The **whole** of Law had to be done, always, at all times, and in every way. No grace or assistance was offered to the people to fulfill their obligation. They had to do it on their own, all of the time, and without a single deviation.

The Dread of Law’s Curse

One other caveat: **if the people did not thoroughly and consistently obey, they did not merely miss the blessings, they got all of the curses!** *“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee” (Deut 28:15).* The curses were an exact reversal of all of the blessings (Deut 28:16-46). The staggering curses were followed by these words: *“Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He have destroyed thee. . .” (Deu 28:47-57).* He continued, *“If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy*

seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. Moreover He will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God. And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do

shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you” (Deu 28:29-68).

Does this sound like an appealing covenant to you? This is emphatically NOT the covenant that is given to us in Christ Jesus! If people balk at this statement, it is only because of their own ignorance! God has said of the New Covenant, it is **“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them**

Why take the time to say such things? I will tell you why. Because the nature of the passage before us contradicts the notion that physical well being is integral to the New Covenant, or that hardship, sickness, opposition, poverty, and the likes are always the result of disobedience – or that they are always curses from God.

you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou

by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:32; Heb 8:9). We have a **“better covenant”** that is **“established upon better promises”** (Heb 8:6). **Woe to that foolish preacher or teacher who attempts to mingle the promises of the Old Covenant with the “better covenant” which Jesus is presently mediating!**

The Old Covenant did not set forth a single promise that extended beyond the grave! The inheritance it offered was temporal, and all of its blessings were as well. **But it is not so under the New Covenant!** We have received **“eternal life”** (1 John 5:13), and focus our attention on unseen things that **“are eternal”** (2 Cor 4:18). Our sufferings are working for us **“a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”** (2 Cor 4:17). We have an **“eternal inheritance”** (Heb 9:15), and have **“an**

house not made with hands, **eternal** in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1). Unlike the Old Covenant, to a people delivered from Egypt, our covenant is accompanied with **“eternal glory”** (2 Tim 2:10). Unlike Israel, we have **“obtained eternal redemption”** (Heb 9:12), and have been called **“unto His eternal glory”** (1 Pet 5:10). There is not so much as a syllable or hint of such glorious things under the Old Covenant – **not so much as a single word or the faintest whisper!**

It is no wonder that insightful souls rejoice when told we have been

Miletum sick” (2 Tim 4:20), or Epaphroditus who was *“sick nigh unto death”* (Phil 2:27). What would they say to Paul who said, *“I take pleasure in infirmities”* (2 Cor 12:10), and gloried in his *“infirmities”* (2 Cor 11:30; 12:5)?

What would those who spout their doctrine of now being the head and not the tail, say to James, whom Herod had killed by the sword (Acts 12:2)? What comforting words would they give to Antipas, described as Christ’s *“faithful martyr”* (Rev 2:13)? What counsel would they deliver to Paul himself, who was

promise, and it will be fulfilled: *“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”* (1 Cor 3:17).

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

The whole situation is further complicated when we consider the nature of the *“trouble”* Paul now mentions. The trouble was in unusual measure, but it was **not** experienced while he was disobedient! This was not *“trouble”* that came upon Paul because of a lack of faith, or a failure to be wholly committed to the Lord. Rather, **Paul refers to suffering for righteousness sake – something Jesus associated with blessing.** *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt 5:10). Peter also takes up the refrain, *“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled”* (1 Pet 3:14).

Here, then, is *“trouble”* that Paul experienced in the process of serving the Lord! His *“flesh had no rest.”* Jesus did not shield him from this fatiguing oppression because he was an apostle. His faith, as great as it was, did not enable him to avoid this outward difficulty, making him the head and not the tail. He certainly did not *“appear”* to be the victor before the eyes of men, and his opponents were not certainly afraid of him – something the Old Covenant promised upon the perfect fulfillment of the Law (Deut 28:10).

Paul’s experience reflected the very nature of the New Covenant, confirming how radically different it is from the Old Covenant. In Christ we are made *“new creatures”* (2 Cor 5:17), delivered from the world (Gal 1:4), and constituted strangers and pilgrims in it (1 Pet 2:11). In that whole process, we are set at variance with the world – a world that has been cursed, while we have been *“blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 1:3). The world cannot possibly survive, for God has determined that *“heaven and earth shall pass away”* (Matt 24:35). **It will not pass away of**

What we are reading about in this text is Paul’s experience of Christ’s promise – “in the world you shall have tribulation.” It is a microcosm, or little world, in which the conflict between the powers of darkness and the children of light is seen.

“delivered from the Law” (Rom 7:6), and from its *“curse”* as well (Gal 3:13).

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

Why take the time to say such things? I will tell you why. **Because the nature of the passage before us contradicts the notion that physical well being is integral to the New Covenant, or that hardship, sickness, opposition, poverty, and the likes are always the result of disobedience – or that they are always curses from God.** Nothing Jesus said, and nothing the Apostles said, taught people to expect that once they came into Christ, there would be a cessation of all inconvenience, opposition, physical debility, and poverty. **An enemy has introduced these heretical and seriously damaging doctrines!**

Who is the soul bold enough to declare the guarantee of health to the beggar Lazarus (Lk 16:20), or Timothy, who had chronic infirmities (1 Tim 5:23), or Trophimus, whom Paul *“left at*

chased out of cities by his enemies (Acts 9:25; 17:10,14), stoned (Acts 14:19), beaten (Acts 16:37; 21:32; 2 Cor 11:25), and thrice suffered shipwreck (2 Cor 11:25)? What would they say to those early disciples who were *“scattered abroad”* by persecution (Acts 8:1-4), or to Aquila and Priscilla who were, with other Jews, forced to leave Rome by the ruler Claudius (Acts 18:2). Would they rebuke the poor saints in Jerusalem, rather than taking up a collection for them (Rom 16:26).

Oh, this is a *“damnable heresy”* ^{2 Peter 2:1} that is being vomited out upon the church of our day! It teaches people to lie, misrepresent their own condition, and assess their progress improperly. **It places the stress on the very thing from which faith removes the emphasis.** It makes *“this present evil world”* as something from which we have **not** been delivered (Gal 1:4). This teaching has defiled what is being built upon the Foundation, and **it will not go unnoticed by heaven.** God has made a

old age, but by the deliberate purpose and word of the Lord. It is written, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth **the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain**" (Heb 12:26-27). However, as eternity rolls its ceaseless cycles onward, the saints of God will remain "forever with the Lord," having charge of "the world to come," as glory is brought to God "through the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph 3:21).

What we see in Paul is a war of the worlds – the conflict of the seen with the unseen, of the perishing with one who has "eternal life." Then, while Paul was going about the business of the Christ who called him, his flesh "had no rest." But consider Paul now – now that he has "fought a good fight" and "finished" his course" (2 Tim 4:7). Tell me if he has any cause for regretting that he served the King of kings! Tell me if he is sorrowful about refusing to succumb to the devil! Yea, in him the word is fulfilled, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, **Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest**

from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Rev 14:13).

Now Jesus says to us, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). And again, "In the world ye shall have

between the powers of darkness and the children of light is seen.

In the conflict, Satan's objective is to drive Paul out of the Lord's vineyard. God's objective is to sift, try, and fortify His worker. Paul's objective is to glorify God and lay up treasures in heaven, where moth and rust does not corrupt, and thieves do not break through and steal.

What we see in Paul is a war of the worlds – the conflict of the seen with the unseen, of the perishing with one who has "eternal life." Then, while Paul was going about the business of the Christ who called him, his flesh "had no rest."

tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). That is our lot while we labor together with God in this world!

What we are reading about in this text is Paul's experience of Christ's promise – "in the world you shall have tribulation." It is a microcosm, or little world, in which the conflict

Let the apostle Paul be an example to you (as he is intended to be (1 Tim 1:16), and take heart when you read of how the Lord cared for him during such times! These things are written for your comfort. Remember, Paul is speaking of a time when his flesh "had no rest," or he experienced "no relief." The trouble was incessant – continual and with increasing pressure!

TROUBLED ON EVERY SIDE

"^{5b} . . . but we were troubled on every side . . ."

The more important the work, the more relentless is the trouble. Here, Paul is seen to be contending with battle horses. As Jeremiah said, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jer 12:5). The idea is, "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses?"^{NIV} And again,

"And if [you take to flight] in a land of peace where you feel secure, then what will you do [when you tread the tangled maze of jungle]?"^{AMPLIFIED}

If, in the ordinary pursuits of life, uninvolved in the "good fight of faith," and not seizing the kingdom with violence (Matt 11:12; Lk 16:16), a person blunders, stumbles, and falls, what will happen when he confronts the hosts of hell, and the rulers of the darkness of this world? If a person cannot contend with the day-to-day difficulties that all men confront, being born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7; Eccl 1:8; 2:22; 5:15-17),

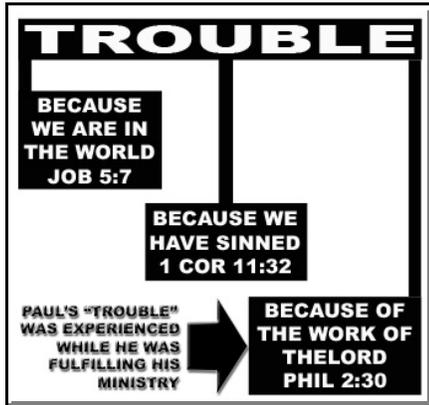
how will he be able to engage in the work of the Lord, where one becomes a special target of the old serpent (Rev 12:17)?

WE WERE TROUBLED

" . . . but we were troubled . . ."
Other versions read, "we were afflicted,"
NASB "but we were harassed,"^{NIV} "we were afflicted,"^{NRSV} "we suffered,"^{DOUAY} "we were distressed,"^{MRD} "we are in tribulation,"^{YLT} "We have all sorts of trouble,"^{IE} "We suffered in a number of ways,"^{ISV} "I was crushed with sorrow,"^{WILLIAMS} and "we were oppressed and afflicted."^{AMPLIFIED}

While laboring for the Master, Paul experiences great trouble, and great comfort as well– by Given O. Blakely

The word “troubled” is translated from the Greek word *θλιβόμενοι*, which can also be translated “afflicted.” ^{NASB/NRSV} The lexical meaning of the word is “to press hard upon . . . a compressed way; i.e. narrow, straitened, contracted,” ^{THAYER} “restricted,” ^{FRIBERG} “difficulty,” ^{UBS} “To press against or crowd against,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} and “to squeeze or pinch.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}



There are at least three kinds of trouble. The **first** is “trouble” that comes simply because we are in a fallen world, amidst the throes of death. As it is written, “*Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*” (Job 5:7). The **second** is “trouble” brought on because of sin, when we are chastened of the Lord. As it is written, “*For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*” (1 Cor 11:31-32). The **third** is “trouble” that is the direct result of doing the will of the Lord, when there is a reaction caused by sanctified work, whether through nature of persecution. As it is written, “*Because*

for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me” (Phil 2:30). And again, “*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Mat 5:10).

In this text, Paul is speaking of “trouble” that is induced by involvement in the work of the Lord. Here, the idea is that everything was difficult, and nothing went, so to speak, “smoothly.” Everything seemed to be against what Paul was doing. What is experienced within the believer, was being experienced without as well: “*I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me*” (Rom 7:21).

Being in Christ, commissioned and empowered by Him, and being in the very heart of His will, does not insulate us from “trouble.” In Christ Jesus we are “*kept by the power of God through faith*” (1 Pet 1:5). That *keeping*, however, is not from trouble, but **IN** trouble.

Paul told those who were, under the “*present distress*” in Corinth, considering marriage, would “*have trouble in the flesh*” (1 Cor 7:25). He spoke to them who were “*in any trouble*” (2 Cor 1:4), and mentioned some special “trouble” that came to him in Asia (2 Cor 1:8). Earlier he spoke of himself being “*troubled on every side*” (2 Cor 4:8). The churches in Galatia had some among them who were troubling them (Gal 1:7; 5:10,12). The Thessalonians were also experiencing trouble from oppressors (2

Thess 1:6-7). **Let no one suppose for a moment that the salvation of God insulates us from “trouble!”** Those who have been taught that in Christ, while we remain in this world, we realize a trouble-free life have simply been taught wrongly.

ON EVERY SIDE

“*. . . on every side . . .*” Other versions read, “*at every turn,*” ^{NIV} “*in every way,*” ^{NRSV} “*on every side,*” ^{ASV} “*in everything,*” ^{MRD} “*on all sides,*” ^{NJB} “*from every direction,*” ^{NLT} “*on every hand,*” ^{LIVING} “*all sorts,*” ^{IE} “*in a number of ways,*” ^{ISV} and “*in every way . . . at every turn.*” ^{AMPLIFIED}

When Paul was in Macedonia he did **not** experience occasional trouble, or only trouble from certain quarters. That would have been difficult enough to bear. He was “*troubled on every side,*” so that wherever he turned, and whatever he did, he faced agitation, opposition, difficulty, and hardship. The expression can be literally translated, “but in everything being afflicted.” One seasoned commentator said of this passage, “The style, in its picturesque irregularity, almost seems as though it were broken by sobs.” ^{ARCHDEACON FARRAR}

In other words, this surrounding and pressing trouble had a very real effect upon Paul. It depleted his strength and diminished his joy – not because he was weak, but because of the strength and longevity of the trouble. Keep in mind, this is trouble endured while engaged in the work of the Lord. He will speak more of the nature of this trouble, and of the calculated impact it had upon his sensitive and devoted spirit.

FIGHTINGS WITHOUT, FEARS WITHIN

“^{5c} . . . *without were fightings, within were fears.*”

Among novices and the spiritually uninformed there exists a sort of naivete that is most uncomely. Knowing in part that the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh 8:10), it is supposed that the saints can be strong and able to withstand the

vicissitudes of life **only** when they are “*happy.*” **This is a kind of idealism that does not comport with the stark realities of life in Christ Jesus.** The King Himself wept over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41), was “*grieved*” for the “*hardness*” of men’s hearts (Mk 3:5), “*sighed deeply*” in His spirit (Mk 8:12), and looked at a hard-hearted people “*with anger*” (Mk

3:5). When He approached the time during which He would lay down His life He said, “*My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death*” (Mk 14:34). It should not surprise us when we, in measure, participate in such sufferings. We are told that this kind of suffering has been left behind for those who serve the Lord’s Christ. “*Who now rejoice in my sufferings*

While laboring for the Master, Paul experiences great trouble, and great comfort as well— by Given O. Blakely

for you, and **fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church**" (Col 1:24). There is no atoning efficacy in such sufferings, but they are an appointed way through which we are "counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which [we] also suffer" (2 Thess 1:5). Now, behold the specificity with which Paul speaks of the trouble that surrounded him.

WITHOUT WERE FIGHTINGS

" . . . without were fightings, . . . "

Other versions read, "Outside were conflicts," ^{NKJV} "disputes without," ^{NRSV} "without combats," ^{DARBY} "external conflicts," ^{NAB} "there were quarrels all around us," ^{NJB} "fighting and contentions without," ^{AMPLIFIED} and "wrangling outside." ^{PHILLIPS}

Under the old covenant, God spoke of outward and inner trouble, sent by the Lord as punishment for Israel's waywardness: "The sword without, and terror within" (Deut 32:25). This passage, however, is speaking of the reaction of the world to the messenger and message of the Lord. He was superior to the trouble itself, but not to the experience of it.

The word "fightings" is a military term meaning, "battle . . . strife, contentions, a quarrel," ^{THAYER} "physical battle or a contest fought with weapons, battle, conflict, fight . . . also a battle fought with words," ^{FRIBERG} and "conflict, either physical or non-physical, but clearly intensive and bitter - 'to clash severely, struggle, fight.'" ^{LOUW-NIDA}

Here, "fightings" refers to outward assaults - "without." Some of them were physical, and others took the form of wrangling and fierce debate. The book of Acts does not provide the details of this brief stay in Macedonia, but he doubtless, as on other occasions, endured assaults and disputation from the heathen (Acts 16:19-34), the Jews (Acts 23:12-15), and false brethren (2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4-5). Paul had been involved in violent outbreaks of confusion - "fightings without" - as in Ephesus where an "uproar" occurred and "the whole city was filled with confusion," inhibiting the

preaching of the Gospel (Acts 19:23-40).

I understand these "fightings" to be public commotions and disruptions, as when the whole city of Thessalonica was set "on an uproar" (Acts 17:5). Another time, when Paul was in the Temple, "all Jerusalem was in an uproar" (Acts 21:31). Now, Paul says, when he came into Macedonia he was assaulted with all manner of "fightings without." These were outward circumstances that were hostile and pressing - things over which Paul had no control. Among other things, this meant that the apostle had to be versatile in warfare, fighting in many different manners, and against all kinds of opposition.

WITHIN WERE FEARS

The fears of which Paul speaks are very real. They have to do with our present frail state - while we remain in the body. These are fears that are not sinful, but rather drive us to the Lord in faith, who alone can deal with the matters causing the fear.

" . . . within were fears." Other versions read, "inside were fears," ^{NKJV} "terrors within," ^{GENEVA} "internal fears," ^{NAB} "misgivings within us," ^{NJB} "inside there was fear," ^{NLT} "our hearts were full of dread and fear," ^{LIVING} "inwardly there were fears," ^{ISV} and "anxiety within." ^{PHILLIPS}

The word "fears" is translated from the Greek word φόβοι (pho-boi), from which the word "phobia" comes. As used in this text, it means "fear, dread, terror . . . that which strikes terror," ^{THAYER} "fear, dread, alarm," ^{FRIBERG} "a state of severe distress, aroused by intense concern of impending pain, danger, evil, or possibly by the illusion of such circumstances," ^{LOUW-NIDA} and "an terror to hear," ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

This is the kind of "fear" that fell on Zecharias when he saw the "angel of the Lord" (Lk 1:12). On the day of Pentecost, this kind of fear "came upon every soul" (Acts 2:43). When Ananias

and Saphirra were smitten for their lie, this kind of "fear came upon all them that heard" (Acts 5:5,11).

This is a wholesome fear that is induced when one realizes things are being confronted over which no man has power. Suddenly the soul is aware of an environment or a circumstance that is of an order that is not controlled by men - an order that cannot be managed by the will or ability of mankind. If God does not work favorably in this area, it will be the undoing of the individual.

What These Fears Are Not

This is **not** the kind of fear that is excluded in our salvation - "the spirit of fear" (2 Tim 1:7), or "the spirit of bondage

again unto fear" (Rom 8:15). It is **not** the "fear" that is "cast out" by "perfect love" (1 John 4:18). That is a "fear" that has to do with drawing near to God - a "fear" brought in when Adam sinned and was "afraid" at the presence of the Lord, and hid himself (Gen 3:10). That is a "fear" for which there is no place in Christ Jesus.

Real Fears

The fears of which Paul speaks are very real. **They have to do with our present frail state - while we remain in the body.** These are fears that are not sinful, but rather drive us to the Lord in faith, who alone can deal with the matters causing the fear. David spoke of this kind of fear when he said, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee" (Psa 56:3). Unlike "the fear of the Lord," these are "fears" from which we can be delivered. As it is written, "I sought the LORD, and

he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Psa 34:4).

These fears are of such a potent nature that they can thoroughly disrupt the human constitution. Again David writes, "My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me" (Psa 55:5).

There is still a sense in which we serve the Lord "with fear and trembling" (Eph 6:5; Phil 2:12). Thus Paul once said he was with the Corinthians "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor 2:3).

For the apostle Paul, he knew there were eternal ramifications involved in his labors with the

Paul's fears were doubtless associated with his concerns about how Corinth received his first epistle, and how they received Titus. He later expressed some of these fears in words: "**For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: and lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed**" (2 Cor 12:20-21). And again, "**But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ**" (2 Cor 11:3).

dreadful institutional emphasis that dominates the religion of our day. The spirit that pervaded "the land of Shinar," moving people to "build a city and a tower" had come into the professed church. The cry is again heard in the land, "Let us make for ourselves a name"^{NASB} (Gen 11:2-4). And thus churches are seeking to be known in the community, the city, the state, and possibly the world. They have tailored their schools of higher learning to facilitate these plans, and structured their church staffs to meet this objective. **Their real aim is NOT to separate people from this world and get them ready to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.** Their purpose is lead people into a more trouble-free life, and to resolve all manner of domestic and social issues. **All of that is involved in making a name.**

Thus thoughts such as Paul had are rarely expressed – thoughts that reflected a certain dread that people might be seduced by the "old serpent," or lapse into a state of unbelief, or not repent of their wrongs and obtain grace to help in the time of need. **The contemplation of expending labor in vain, seeing a whole generation sink into the pit of hopelessness, or of a person or congregation provoking God to jealousy, is simply not experienced in an institutional setting.**

For the apostle Paul, he knew there were eternal ramifications involved in his labors with the Corinthians. His dealings with them were not that of a mere man. Both heavenly and hellish influences were being directed toward them, and their eternal destiny was in the balance.

Corinthians. His dealings with them were not that of a mere man. Both heavenly and hellish influences were being directed toward them, and **their eternal destiny was in the balance.** The real issue was not if they were a successful church, or a large congregation, or a prosperous one. It was **not** if they constituted a strong affirmation of the validity of Paul's ministry.

When dealing with spiritual life Divine approval and acceptance is at stake, and it is not to be taken for granted. Paul had a keen sense of the ultimate outcome of unbelief as well as of a strong faith. He knew the outcome of a spiritually sloven life as well as one lived with godly zeal and faithfulness.

The apostle had similar concerns for the churches of Galatia: "**I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain**" (Gal 4:11).

I do not doubt that this kind of "fear" is included in the disruptive "care" that came upon Paul "daily" – a care that was grouped with all manner of trials, oppositions, and hardship: "**Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches**" (2 Cor 11:28).

A FINAL WORD ON THIS MATTER

Much of what goes on in the name of the Lord totally lacks this kind of experience. **This is because eternal issues have been obscured by the**

For Paul, what followed death was more important than what preceded it. How people would fare when they stood before the Lord was of greater importance than how they appeared in this world. Whether or not they survived the end of the world and the coming of Jesus was of greater consequence than whether or not they survived a worldly crisis. How they would appear before Christ was the issue.

Those who have such a view of things know to some measure what Paul means when he said he experienced "fears within." A sort of holy dread comes when we consider our labor being in vain.

Those who have no understanding

of this expression will have to wait until the scope of their spiritual vision is larger,

and they grow up into Christ in all things. Then they will know more fully the true

nature of spiritual life, spiritual warfare, and effective ministry.

THE “NEVERTHELESS” FACTOR

“^{6a} *Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down.*”

For those who live by faith, circumstance – however grievous it may be – is not the end of the matter. **After the most disheartening possibilities have been considered, and the harshest of environments have been experienced, there is another factor to be considered.** We must not allow our thinking to find its terminus ad quem in our difficulties. Our thoughts must extend **beyond** the perimeter of our troubles. Here is where faith comes into prominence, for it can reach up into heaven, obtaining mercy, and finding grace to help, in the time of need. It can reach out beyond the trouble and move the heart and mind into a state of tranquility.

NEVERTHELESS

“^{6a} *Nevertheless . . .*” Other versions read, “*But,*”^{NASB} “*Then,*”^{LIVING} “*However,*”^{IE} “*Yet,*”^{ISV} and “*Not but what.*”^{PHILLIPS}

The word “*nevertheless*” is a conjunction that introduces an opposing clause – a word that offsets something that has already been said. In this case, it is a word that introduces a superior Person who is not diminished by the circumstance that has struck down the oppressed. That Person is God, who is not only superior to the debilitating circumstance, but can make the crushed victim superior to it as well.

When all has fallen apart, and we have been reduced to a point where we have no strength, no wisdom, no solutions, and no hope, faith reaches outside of the circumstance and takes hold of the “nevertheless!” There is more to

consider than our trouble!

THE COMFORTING GOD

“. . . *God, that comforteth those that are cast down . . .*” Other versions read, “*God who comforts the downcast,*”^{NKJV} “*God, who comforts the depressed,*”^{NASB} “*He that comforts the lowly,*”^{ASV} “*God who gives comfort to the poor in spirit,*”^{BBE} “*He who encourages those that are brought low,*”^{DARBY} “*God who comforteth the humble,*”^{DOUAY} “*God, who encourages all those who are distressed,*”^{NJB} “*God who cheers those who are*

equal to every trial, and were never brought to an end of our strength – if we could somehow keep from ever being struck down, made weak, or caused to despair.” Satan steps to the side of those so reasoning and shouts a loud “*Amen,*” for he well knows such a condition is nothing more than an imagination, however impressively it may be defended. Blessed is the person who sees this!

Were such a state possible, we would have no need of comfort, consolation, strengthening,

When all has fallen apart, and we have been reduced to a point where we have no strength, no wisdom, no solutions, and no hope, faith reaches outside of the circumstance and takes hold of the “nevertheless!” There is more to consider than our trouble!

discouraged,”^{LIVING} “*God, who comforts people who are down,*”^{IE} “*God, who comforts those who are miserable,*”^{ISV} “*God, who comforts the downhearted,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*God, Who comforts and encourages and refreshes and cheers the depressed and the sinking,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*God who cheers the depressed.*”^{PHILLIPS}

I suppose it would be better to think of a people who are **never** cast down, **never** depressed, and **never** brought low. Ah, **flesh reasons**, “What a blessing it would be to only leap from mountain to mountain, never having to descend into the valley. How marvelous it would be if we only knew rejoicing, and never knew sorrow. Or, how glorious if we only rejoiced, and never wept. What rich advantages there would be if we were

deliverance, mercy, grace, lifting, renewal, or encouragement. There would be no need for an Intercessor in heaven, or the presence of the Holy Spirit within. Daily nourishment would not be required, nor would prayer, faith, or hope. **All of those, and more, presuppose affliction, weakness, and the diminishment of strength.** They all presume a hostile environment, a fierce foe, and personal inability.

The context of salvation is need and weakness. Where either of these is missing, salvation at once becomes inconsequential. Thus, if you can see it, God has so arranged things that, in this world, we are frequently brought to an end of our strength in order that He might raise us, strengthen us, and make

us exhibits of His grace. That is a sort of summation of the verse, *“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).

A Commentary on God Himself

Here we have another of the Spirit’s frequent commentaries on God Himself. Other examples include the following.

- *“As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were”* (Rom 4:17).

selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor 5:5).

- *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us”* (Eph 2:4).
- *“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ”* (Eph 3:9).
- *“For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that*

and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

Faith and Hope in God

One of the primary objectives of our salvation is that our faith and hope might be in God Himself – **that we may be brought to a point where we rely implicitly upon Him, and anticipate what He has promised.** Thus it is written, *“Christ . . . Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God”* (1 Pet 1:19-21).

The context of salvation is need and weakness. Where either of these is missing, salvation at once becomes inconsequential. Thus, if you can see it, God has so arranged things that, in this world, we are frequently brought to an end of our strength in order that He might raise us, strengthen us, and make us exhibits of His grace.

Behold this marvelous proclamation! Jesus was chosen and destined to be God’s *“Lamb without blemish and without spot”* before the world was *“founded,”* conceived, or purposed. He has not been *“manifest,”* or made known for our benefit. It is *“by,”* or through, Him that we *“believe in God”* – the God who *“raised Him from the dead.”* The objective, or purpose, for God raising Jesus from the dead is poignantly stated: *“so that your faith and hope are [centered and rest] in God.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

- *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth”* (Rom 8:33).
- *“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy”* (Rom 9:16).
- *“So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase”* (1 Cor 3:7).
- *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Cor 4:6).
- *“Now he that hath wrought us for the*

believe” (1 Tim 4:10).

- *“I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession”* (1 Tim 6:13).
- *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy”* (1 Tim 6:17).
- *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”* (Titus 1:2).
- *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not;*

And what is the outcome of our faith and hope being in God? We have an sterling example of such an outcome in our text. When Paul was brought low, surrounded by trouble, experiencing *“fightings without and fears within,”* he kept his faith and hope in God. He knew that God was the only One who could deal with his situation. **But what is even more, he knew that God was inclined to do so! He knew this because it is God’s nature to comfort “those that are cast down!”**

This is why the Lord is called *“the God of all comfort”* (2 Cor 1:3). It is why those who mourn are promised, *“they shall be comforted”* (Matt 5:4). He thus is referred to as *“the God of patience and consolation”* (Rom 15:5). This is why He gives us *“everlasting consolation and good hope through grace”* (2 Thess 2:16). Even of old time God said to Israel, *“I,*

even I, am He that **comforteth** you” (Isa 51:12). He is the God who is determined and able “to **revive** the spirit of the humble, and to **revive** the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15).

To “**comfort**” is to console, encourage, strengthen, soothe, and refresh. It is the means of reviving, renewing, refurbishing, and recuperation. It is what enables those who have been knocked down to get up. As it is written, “For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again” (Prov 24:16).

Those God Comforts

And who are those to whom God ministers comfort – soothing and enabling comfort? It is “those who are cast down!” These are those struck down on the field of battle – those who lose strength, and appear to be at the mercy their enemies, whether circumstances, the devil, or people. That there is such a thing as saints who are “cast down” cannot be denied – at least, not without lying, **for experience teaches us this is so**. When a person is “cast down,” there is a need that is created. As it is written, “When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person” (Job 22:29).

The “**steps of a good man**” often lead into spiritually treacherous terrain, where all hope can appear to be lost. David once wrote, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, **he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand**” (Psa 37:24). To be “**utterly cast down**” means the person cannot get up. They are, as it

was, permanently struck down. **That does not happen to the righteous!** The God who comforts those who are cast down is a “*very present help in the time of trouble,*” and will enable those who are

down by circumstances. They know what it is like for a spiritual sore to run “*in the night and cease not*” (Psa 77:2). Many of them have seen their labors appear as though they were all for naught, when

These days, when religion is little more than frolicking in shallow water, there is not much talk about being “cast down.” But those who walk in the Spirit and live by faith know the experience of being “cast down” – thrown to the ground in some spiritual skirmish, or pummeled down by circumstances.

struck down to get up again! Thus Paul confessed he was “*cast down, but not destroyed*” (2 Cor 4:9).

Even the “**soul**” of a person can be “cast down,” so that hope emits only a very feeble flame, and faith seems to have lost its strength. Thus David cried out, “*O my God, my soul is cast down within me*” (Psa 42:6). He would even reason with his soul when it was struck down, exhorting it to have hope in God. “*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God*” (Psa 42:11; 43:5).

These days, when religion is little more than frolicking in shallow water, there is **not** much talk about being “cast down.” But those who walk in the Spirit and live by faith know the experience of being “cast down” – thrown to the ground in some spiritual skirmish, or pummeled

those in whom, they have invested themselves depart from them, and treat them as though they had not labored with them at all.

Paul was in such a case. Over a year and a half spent with the Corinthians, and voluminous writings to them seemed as though they were all in vain. He had even been deprived of their friendship, to say nothing of their embrace of his message. Yet, this bold warrior continued to wear “*the whole armor of God,*” and though he was weak and debilitated from the battles brought on by his ministry, he waited on the Lord. He knew it was still true, “*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*” (Isa 40:31). **Now, he will testify that God came through, getting comfort to him in the person of Titus, in a timely and effective manner.**

THE COMING OF TITUS

“^{6b} . . . **comforted us by the coming of Titus.**”

As is customary in the Lord’s dealings with the saints, He will use the members of the household of Jesus to

deliver needed grace and comfort. That is the manner of the kingdom, and it is one of the reasons why the “*love of the brethren*” is so important (1 Pet 1:22). **Those who despise regular association with the people of God**

should not be surprised when spiritual advantages are not being realized by themselves. If we do not company with those through whom God delivers comfort, we should not be surprised if we receive no comfort.

While laboring for the Master, Paul experiences great trouble, and great comfort as well– by Given O. Blakely

COMFORTED US

“ . . . comforted us . . . ” Other versions read, “consoled us,”^{NRSV} “gave us comfort,”^{BBE} “encouraged us,”^{DARBY} “He did comfort us,”^{YLT} “refreshed us,”^{LIVING} and “comforted and encouraged and refreshed and cheered us.”^{AMPLIFIED}

It is glorious to make the transition from conceptual to experiential! It is one thing to know intellectually that God comforts those who are cast down. It is quite another thing to actually enjoy such comfort.

Right here, I must say a word about a legalistic approach to religion, where rules, regulations, and procedures become the primary things. In such a case, there is always little or no participation in the precious promises of God. Under these conditions, the spirit of man is so wearied with concerns about doing things right that little attention is given to having faith and hope in God. **Such poor souls are ignorant of the fact that real obedience is the offspring of faith, which never fails to obey!** Thus we read of “*the obedience that comes from faith*”^{NIV} (Rom 1:5). Having come from this kind of background, I can testify to the death that is in the wake of such an approach. The word “*comfort*” is unconsciously stricken from the vocabulary of the person who lives under a system of Law – Law that is thought to have remedial and transforming power.

It is true that **ONLY** as we “*walk in the newness of life*” (Rom 6:4), living by faith (Heb 10:38), and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), are we **able** to be “*comforted*.”

Be sure of this, “comfort” is regularly needed – refreshment, encouragement, and consolation. That is precisely why the body of Christ is so structured as to allow for this ministration. Thus Paul stated his objective for the churches as, “*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of*

the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (Col 2:2).

Now, Paul will tell us how he experienced comfort. He will inform us of the means God employed to enable him to be superior to his circumstances, and to get up after he had been cast down.

THE MEANS – THE COMING OF TITUS

“ . . . by the coming of Titus.” Other versions read, “*by the arrival of Titus*,”^{NRSV} “*in the presence of Titus*,”^{YLT} and “*when Titus came*.”^{IE}

Paul’s “*comfort*” was tied to the physical arrival of Titus – to the time when he saw this young man face to face, and heard words come from his mouth.

Titus

There are at least two men named “Titus” in history. The first (who actually lived after out text) was a Roman emperor, Titus Vespasianus Augustus. He reigned as emperor from A.D. 79-81. Prior to that, he commanded a legion for his father Vespasian, in Judea (A.D. 67). Following the emperor Nero’s death in June 68, Titus was energetic in promoting his father’s candidacy for the Roman throne, who was, in fact, proclaimed emperor in the year 69. Vespasian then gave Titus charge of the Jewish war. **This was the man who was used of God to fulfill the prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70.** It was his armies of which Jesus said, “*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh*” (Luke 21:20). Titus’ campaign against Jerusalem was culminated in the capture and destruction of the holy city, Jerusalem, in September, A.D. 70. In the year 81, a large arch was installed at the entrance of the Roman Forum commemorating this victory, and is called “The Arch of Titus.” That arch remains until this very day (6/2005).

But this is not the “Titus” of Scriptural note.

Upon the pages of Divine history is inscribed the name of another “Titus”



Arch of Titus – 1997



On the Arch, Carrying the Spoils of Temple

“The treasures of the Temple of Jerusalem are shown being carried on litters (fercula) in the triumphal procession of AD 71. They include the seven-branched candelabrum (menorah), silver trumpets, and the table for the shewbread. Two plaques carried aloft would have had the names of conquered cities inscribed on them. After the triumph, the treasures were placed in the Temple of Peace in the Forum of Vespasian.”
Britannica Encyclopædia

who is of note in the regions of heaven. He is not a man God used to tear down, as He did Titus Vespasianus Augustus. **Rather, he is a man God used to build up, strength, comfort, and refurbish!** He is the “*Titus*” of our text.

About Titus

Titus was a Gentile convert, having come from among those who were formerly “*not a people*.” It is generally understood that he was a Greek, possibly from the city of Antioch. He was converted by Paul himself, who refers to him as “*mine own son after the common faith*” (Tit 1:4). Paul refers to him when writing to the Galatians, telling them how he went up to Jerusalem fourteen years after he was initially introduced to the churches in Judea. At that time, Paul took

Barnabas and Titus with him. He also states that he went up to Jerusalem “by revelation,” or by Divine direction. The historical account of that trip is given by Luke in Acts 15:2-35.

It was at that time that Paul had

Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (Gal 2:3-5).

When Paul went to Macedonia

letter of Paul to the Corinthians. This is referred to in this epistle (12:18). That is the occasion of which Titus will give a full report to Paul.

In his travels with Paul, Titus is said to have gone to Dalmatia, a European region, and a part of Illyricum, where Paul had formerly preached (2 Tim 4:10; Rom 15:19).

Paul wrote a special epistle to Titus, that bears his name. In it he charged Titus with the responsibility of setting in order things that were lacking in the churches that were in Crete, and appointing elders in every city (Tit 1:5). He also admonished him to “*sharply*” rebuke certain of the Cretians who were “*teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake*” (Tit 1:11-13). He told him to speak boldly, rebuke with all authority, and not give occasion for anyone to despise him (Tit 2:15). He also admonished Titus to meet him in Nicopolis, and do everything he could to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, seeing that they had everything they needed (Tit 3:12-13).

All of this confirms the faithfulness of Titus. He was trustworthy, and could be charged with kingdom matters with the full expectation that they would be faithfully carried out. He is a most noble example of what a young man can be in Jesus – filled with faith and wisdom. May the Lord raise up such men among us.

When Paul went to Macedonia from Ephesus, and by way of Troas, he expected to find Titus there, who had been sent on a special mission to Corinth. As he stated, he was much disappointed at this, having “no rest” in his “spirit” because he “found not Titus,” his “brother”

to take a stand against the Judaizers who were apparently pressuring him to circumcise Titus. On another occasion, he would circumcise Timothy “because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek,” even though his mother was “a Jewess and believed” (Acts 16:1-3). However, he would not do the same with Titus, for pressure was being put on him by “false brethren,” who sought to promote bondage to the Law.

Of this occasion Paul wrote, “*But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in*

from Ephesus, and by way of Troas, he expected to find Titus there, who had been sent on a special mission to Corinth. As he stated, he was much disappointed at this, having “no rest” in his “spirit” because he “found not Titus,” his “brother” (2 Cor 2:13). In our text, Titus finally arrives to give him a report, and it will be an uplifting one!

Paul refers to Titus as “*my partner and fellowhelper*” regarding the Corinthians (8:23). He was also charged with finalizing the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem that the Corinthians had pledged to give (8:6).

It is generally understood that Titus and a companion took the first

THE CONSOLATION WHEREWITH TITUS WAS COMFORTED

“^{7a} **And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you.**”

There is a certain interdependence within the body of Christ that is most refreshing. **Benefits between brethren are never intended to be one way. There is a mutual benefit that is realized in faith.** As Paul said

to the brethren in Rome: “*For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me*” (Rom 1:11-12). Now Paul affirms that Titus had been comforted by the Corinthians – that is, by the progress in the faith they had realized.

THE “NOT ONLY” FACTOR

“*And not by his coming only . . .*” Other versions read, “*and not only by his coming,*” ^{NKJV} “*and not merely by his arrival,*” ^{MRD} “*and not simply by his arrival only,*” ^{NJB} “*His presence was a joy,*” ^{NLT} “*Not only was his presence a joy,*” ^{LIVING} “*Not only that,*” ^{IE} “*and not alone by his coming,*” ^{MONTGOMERY} and “*But it wasn’t merely his coming that cheered us.*” ^{PHILLIPS}

In its workings, the kingdom of God has such breadth, and length, and depth, and height, that Divine benefits proliferate extensively. Therefore, the activity of reference will involve more than what is done for Paul himself. Rarely, if ever, does God work for a single individual alone. It is for this reason that it is wholly inappropriate for people to conduct their lives only for self-interests. Such a life is a sinful one, for it is being lived as though there was nothing to consider but self. If it is true that Jesus “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), then we ought to expect wonderful results to proceed from such a life.

Learning that a plentitude of benefits accompany salvation confirms a significant advance has been made in the Lord. It will also induct a life that is free from boredom and filled with rich insights and benefits.

CONSOLATION FOR TITUS

“ . . . but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you . . . ” Other versions read, “but also by the comfort you had given him,”^{NIV} “but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you,”^{NRSV} “but by the comfort which he had in you,”^{BBE} “but also through the encouragement with which he was encouraged as to you,”^{DARBY}

When a person does not live by faith, they cannot enjoy the benefits that come from faith. If one chooses to live with a lack of spiritual discernment, the blessings that come within the framework of discernment are thereby forfeited. If the people of God are not highly esteemed, the advantages that Jesus ministers through them cannot possibly be realized.

“but also by the refreshing with which he was refreshed by you,”^{MRD} “but also by the comfort you had given him,”^{NIB} “but so was the news he brought of the encouragement he received from you,”^{NLT} “but also with the comfort with which he was comforted over you,”^{NLT} “but also the news he brought of the wonderful time he had with you,”^{LIVING} “but also by the fact that he had felt comforted on your account,”^{WEYMOUTH} “but by the comfort he had gotten from you,”^{WILLIAMS} “but also by the comfort you had been to him,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “but also by [his account of] the comfort with which he was encouraged and refreshed and cheered as to you.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Here is something that must be grasped: being able to be encouraged or comforted in the Lord postulates a spiritual mind. A person who is not occupied with the things of God cannot possibly experience comfort from God – particular as it comes

from His people. This is one of the many curses of being carnally minded – being excluded from comfort.

When a person does not live by faith, they cannot enjoy the benefits that come from faith. If one chooses to live with a lack of spiritual discernment, the blessings that come within the framework of discernment are thereby forfeited. If the people of God are not highly esteemed, the advantages that Jesus ministers through them cannot possibly be realized.

If this world is the main world, then men have no right to expect advantages to be ministered to them from heaven. For those with eyes to see, this explains why some people live in continual spiritual poverty. They are simply not living in the place where spiritual blessings are being ministered and enjoyed.

THEIR EARNEST DESIRE

“ ^{7b} . . . when he told us your earnest desire . . . ”

The benefits of an accurate account cannot be minimized. **May the Lord bring a cessation to inaccurate and flawed reports among the people of God.** That is not to mention reports that are false, having no truth in them, and delivered only for personal gratification. Titus was blessed by the Corinthians, and gave the sort of report that accurately reflected what had

happened there.

HE TOLD US

“ . . . when he told us . . . ” Other versions read, “as he reported to us,”^{NASB} “while he gave us word of,”^{BBE} “relating to us,”^{DARBY} “When he told me,”^{NLT} “For he told us,”^{TNT} “and by the report which he brought,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “because he kept on telling me.”^{WILLIAMS}

The word “told” comes from a word meaning “to announce, make known, disclose,

to report, to bring back tidings, and to rehearse.”^{THAYER} and “to provide information, with the possible implication of considerable detail.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

The Greek word from which “told” is derived (ἀναγγέλλων) is translated in different ways, using a variety of words. Some of them include, “rehearsed” (Acts 14:27), “declared” (Acts 15:4; 20:27), “spoken of” (Rom 15:21) “showed” (Acts 19:18; 20:20), “behaved” (2 Thess 3:7), and “reported” (1 Pet 1:12). **The idea includes that of making something**

While laboring for the Master, Paul experiences great trouble, and great comfort as well– by Given O. Blakely

known in its details – like shining a light upon something so that its various facets can be seen. Titus delivered a detailed report to Paul – one in which the working of the Lord and the progress of the saints could be clearly seen.

Ambiguous and Meaningless Talk

It is not uncommon to find a lot of ambiguous and meaningless talk among professed believers. Such talk is often institutional-centered. Sometimes it is

communications should be a means through which God can bless our brethren. We are not left to conjecture here. *“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). Suffice it to say, one kind of speaking that will minister edification is the faithful reporting of progress in the Lord, whether in self or others. This appears to be a largely untapped resource

my visit,” ^{NLT} *“your longing desire,”* ^{YLT} *“how much you yearned,”* ^{IE} *“your eager longing,”* ^{MONTGOMERY} *“your yearning affection,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“your eagerness to help.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

Titus reports that he **not** merely found a good “*desire*” among the Corinthians, but an “*earnest desire*.” This expression comes from a single Greek word – ἐπιπόθησιον. The same word is translated “*vehement desire*” in verse eleven. The word means “*longing*,” ^{THAYER} “*great longing, earnest desire,*” ^{FRIBERG} and “*to long for something, with the implication of recognizing a lack – to long for, to deeply desire.*” ^{LOUW-NIDA}

This is the kind of longing to which David referred when he wrote, “My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.” It is an overwhelming desire for something that has been lost, or is not presently available. It includes the idea of yearning, craving, and panting after.

This is the kind of longing to which David referred when he wrote, “*My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times*” (Psa 119:20). It is an overwhelming desire for something that has been lost, or is not presently available. It includes the idea of yearning, craving, and panting after.

simply idle chatter that only takes up time. Often it is the sharing of various opinions and views that are of little or no consequence.

among believers. It is good for us to seek to take time to perceive the good things that God has been doing around us, and then faithfully report it to the saints.

YOUR EARNEST DESIRE

“ . . . your earnest desire . . . ”

Other versions read, “*earnest desire,*” ^{NKJV} “*your longing,*” ^{NASB} “*your longing for me,*” ^{NIV} “*your desire,*” ^{BBE} “*your ardent desire,*” ^{DARBY} “*your great desire,*” ^{GENEVA} “*your love towards us,*” ^{MRD} “*your yearning,*” ^{NAB} “*your desire to see us,*” ^{NJB} “*how much you were looking forward to*

Whatever a person may choose to think about such things, our text is exposing us to the kind of conversations in which holy men of God engaged. While it is not right to attempt to regulate speaking by laws, or force people to be artificial in their words, there is something to be learned here. **As much as possible, our words and**

And what was the object of this “*earnest desire?*” It seems to me that is was twofold. First, they had a desire to see Paul again, having received his epistle with discernment, beholding the care that he had for the churches. Secondly, their desire was to rectify the wrongs that had risen among them, and to walk pleasingly before the Lord. All of this had been awakened by Paul’s letter to them. It has also been duly noted by Titus, which confirms this was not a mere show. We ought to note that genuine spiritual attitudes cannot be hidden. They manage to push themselves to the surface.

THEIR MOURNING

“ 7c . . . your mourning . . . ”

Other versions read, “*your deep sorrow,*” ^{NIV} “*and of your grief,*” ^{MRD} “*your lament,*” ^{NAB} “*how sorry you were,*” ^{NLT} “*your weeping,*” ^{PNT} “*your lamentation,*” ^{YLT} “*how sorry you were about what happened,*” ^{LIVING} “*how deeply sorry you were,*” ^{IE} “*your penitence,*” ^{MONTGOMERY} “*how sorry you were [for me],*” ^{AMPLIFIED}

and “*your deep sympathy.*” ^{PHILLIPS}

“*Mourning*” is a strong word. It reflects both insight and repentance; concern for those who were harmed, and sorrow for sins committed. The word “*mourning*” included the idea of wailing and lamentation with great remorse.

When Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, he had to chasten them for **not mourning** at the presence of a grievous fornicator among them. “*It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up,*

While laboring for the Master, Paul experiences great trouble, and great comfort as well– by Given O. Blakely

and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Cor 5:1-2). **Now, however, they had been stricken with a sense of the seriousness of their sins, and were mourning.**

True repentance is the result of “godly sorrow.” As it is written, “*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death*” (2 Cor 7:10). This involves contrition, or the possession of a “*contrite spirit*.” A “*contrite spirit*” is one that has been crushed beneath the weight of godly conviction. All pride has been pushed out, and no justification can be found for what has been committed. David put it into words in the expression of his deep regret over his sin with Bathsheba, and the action he took against her husband Uriah. “*For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest . . . Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness*” (Psa 51:3-4,14).

This is the kind of attitude that was now possessed by the Corinthians, who formerly had divisions among themselves (1 Cor 1:10; 3:3; 11:18), carnality (1 Cor 3:1-3), fornication (1 Cor 5:1-5), inconsideration (1 Cor 6:1-8), abuse of the Lord’s table (1 Cor 11:30-34), confusion in their assemblies (1 Cor 14:1-33), . . . etc. But now, they have seen the error of their ways, and it has caused them to “*mourn*.”

How does the Lord respond to such contrition of heart?

• **THE LORD IS NEAR THEM.** “*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit*” (Psa 34:18).

• **THE LORD DOES NOT DESPISE THEM.** “*The sacrifices of God are a*

broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:17).

• **THE LORD DWELLS WITH THEM.** “*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,*

We are living in a time when human diagnosis and solutions have been granted prominence within the church. Under the banner of “counseling,” these determinations and resolutions have been given a place, just as though they were ordained of God.

whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15).

• **THE LORD LOOKS UPON THEM.** “*For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word”* (Isa 66:2).

What a marvelous work is seen in genuine repentance, and the mourning that follows it. To begin with, God Himself gives repentance (Acts 5:31; 2 Tim 2:25). **Therefore, the presence of repentance evidences that God is at work.** Only God can “*grant*” repentance that leads to life – eternal life. That is precisely why the early church rejoiced at the report of the Gentiles turning to the Lord. “*When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life*” (Acts 11:18). The “*mourning*” of the Corinthians confirmed God had done a great work in them through the rebuke, exhortation, and faithful tutelage of His faithful servant Paul.

A Word About Our Time

We are living in a time when human diagnosis and solutions have been granted prominence within the church. Under the banner of “counseling,” these determinations and resolutions have been given a place, just as though they were

ordained of God. **Rarely does anyone raise their voice in question about a church environment that requires such a massive effort.** Had the church staffs of our time existed in the days of the Corinthian defection, they would never had needed a letter from Paul. The counselors could have handled it all. At least that is the conclusion to which the current counseling emphasis leads.

In dealing with the various flaws of Corinth, Paul narrowed it down to a single cause – carnality; and carnality is sin, causing hostility toward God because of its affinity with the world.

One of the great tragedies of modern counseling is that it does not induce repentance and mourning. There are too many impersonal explanations for sin being provided. However, sin is always personal. **Lamentation over sin is virtually unknown in the average church – a condition that Paul severely upbraided in his first letter to the Corinthians** (1 Cor 5:2). More and more sin is being treated as the norm.

Now, however, Titus reports that the kingdom norm has at last been reached in Corinth, and a proper attitude has been obtained toward sin, toward Paul, and toward the Lord Himself.

THEIR FERVENT MIND TOWARD PAUL

^{7d} “. . . *your fervent mind toward me*”

The Corinthians had not possessed a proper attitude toward Paul. Some had said, “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but **his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible**” (2 Cor 10:10). Of all people, he had to defend his apostleship to them – people with whom he had spent many productive months (1 Cor 9:1-27). Now, Titus reports a refreshing change in the attitude of the Corinthians toward Paul.

YOUR FERVENT MIND

“. . . *your fervent mind . . .*” Other versions read, “*your zeal*,”^{NKJV} “*your ardent concern*,”^{NIV} “*your care for me*,”^{BBE} “*how loyal your love*,”^{NLT} “*your*

loyalty and warm love,”^{LIVING} “*your enthusiasm*,”^{IE} “*your jealousy*,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*your eagerness to take my side*,”^{ISV} “*how eagerly you took my part*,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*your keen interest*.”^{PHILLIPS}

To think in a comely manner about a person is one thing. To have “**fervent mind**” toward them is quite another matter. **That is an indication of the work of the Holy Spirit, who is noted for His fervency as well as His sensitivity.**

The words “*fervent mind*” come from a single Greek word – ζήλον. It means “excitement of mind, ardor, fervor of spirit, zeal, ardor in embracing, pursuing, defending anything, zeal in behalf of a person,”^{THAYER} and “a human emotion expressing active enthusiasm, ardent affection, keen interest, zeal, ardor, jealousy.”^{FRIEBERG}

The expression indicates **looking forward, anticipating, and doing everything possible to experience what is desired.**

TOWARD ME

“. . . *toward me*” Other versions read, “*for me*,”^{NKJV} “*to me ward*,”^{GENEVA} “*in our behalf*,”^{MRD} “*to take my side*,”^{ISV} and “*you took my part*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The idea is that, after reading Paul’s first letter, the Corinthians were now anxious to see Paul, to be with him, hear his words, and benefit from his presence. **His “bodily presence” would not be considered contemptible now.** His speech would no longer be viewed as halting and unpleasant to their ears. What a change had been wrought in them, and it was being confirmed by Titus!

PAUL REJOICED THE MORE

^{7e} “. . . *so that I rejoiced the more.*”

I seriously doubt that it is possible for any believer to reach a confining border of any blessing of God, or expression of spiritual life, in this world. Admittedly, there are times when it seems as though we have reached the limit of some benefit of God, or some spiritual insight. Yet, for the most part, some new horizon is generally seen, or some facet of the mystery that was not apparent before. That is simply the nature of spiritual life. It is also one of the key factors that makes living by faith so wonderful. **It is no wonder that so many professed believers are bored with their lives. There is no heavenly freshness in them, no increasing joy, and no growth upward.**

THE "SO THAT" FACTOR

“. . . *so that . . .*” Other versions read, “*and when I heard it*,”^{MRD} “*and this*

made me,”^{ISV} and “*all that*.”^{PHILLIPS}

In Christ Jesus there are certain causes that are put into place. By “causes” I refer to appointed means through which our lives are graciously enhanced. The expression “*so that*” touches on this facet of spiritual life.

Here, the idea is that the more Titus reported, the more Paul rejoiced – particularly when he heard of their fervent desire toward him. Titus, then, becomes a means through which the joy of the Lord was reinforced and enlarged in Paul. It seems to me that it is a noble ambition to seek grace to be a source of joy to our brethren.

REJOICED THE MORE

“. . . *I rejoiced the more.*” Other versions read, “*I rejoiced even more*,”^{NKJV} “*my joy was greater than ever*,”^{NIV} “*I rejoiced still more*,”^{NRSV} “*I rejoiced yet more*,”^{ASV} “*I was still more glad*,”^{BBE} “*I*

rejoiced yet more,”^{GENEVA} “*my joy was great*,”^{MRD} “*I was all the more joyful*,”^{NJB} “*I was filled with joy*,”^{NLT} “*I overflowed with joy*,”^{LIVING} “*I felt even happier*,”^{IE} “*I was gladder still*,”^{WILLIAMS} and “*all that made me doubly glad to see him*.”^{PHILLIPS}

As if it was not enough to hear of the Corinthians recovery from iniquity, that recovery had cleared their hearts toward Paul. They now saw him differently, as a kingdom resources instead of a thorn in their side. Now, rather than seeking to find fault in him, they rush to his aid, are anxious to see him, and swift to defend him.

Why would such an attitude cause Paul to “*rejoice the more?*” For some, this appears to be nothing more than an exercise of vanity – a sort of pride that is not comely. However, those who imagine such things have not seen Paul aright. Nor, indeed, do they have a clear view of real kingdom manners.

Here was a man who had not only been “put into the ministry” (1 Tim 1:12), but was eager to fulfill it. **Without fail, he preached and taught what the Lord unveiled to him.** If he was given

and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:2-11).

- All of this was in strict accord with God’s “eternal” and unwavering “purpose.”

Here, then, is why Paul rejoiced at the news of the Corinthians fervent mind toward him: **now the marvelous things he had to say, and that he earnestly desired to speak, would be received by them.** His heart burned to fulfil his commission, and the former attitude of the Corinthians was inhibiting that fulfillment.

Only eternity will discover the marvelous effects that lives of faith have had upon those who have worked together with God in His vineyard.

to perceive a mystery, he freely declared it “without charge” (1 Cor 9:18). Paul expressed this wonderfully to the Ephesians, and it depicts the entirety of his faithful and prodigious ministry.

*“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ); which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, **that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;** and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities*

Bear with me while I briefly draw attention to some of the key points in this arresting passage. It provided us with a grand overview of Paul’s faithfulness.

- What God had given to Paul became common knowledge.
- People knew of it because Paul declared what he had been given.
- Through his writing, people could come to understand Paul’s insight into the mystery of Christ.
- Paul was made a minister in accordance with God’s effective power, so he could proclaim what God had shown to him.
- He preached the “unsearchable riches of Christ.”
- He was appointed to make all men see the glorious realities he had been given to understand, and he could not be content until that was realized.
- He knew that through the message he was preaching, heavenly hosts were being instructed concerning God’s “manifold wisdom.”

One of the great deficiencies of the modern ministry is its lack of a message from God! I am astounded at the degree of spiritual poverty that exists in the mind of the average preacher. Almost to a man, preachers will acknowledge their miserable grasp of the Word of God, and inability to traffic in the truth of God. Modern preachers, for the most part, are more acquainted with the writings of men than with the Scriptures themselves. They know more about what men have said about the Word of God, than what the Word itself says. As James would say, “My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (James 3:10).

One More Thing

It is written that charity “rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor 13:6). That “truth” is found particularly in the “the word of the truth of the Gospel” (Eph 1:13), the proper handling of “the word of truth” in general (2 Tim 2:15), and in the lives of those who consistently “walk in truth” (3 John 1:4).

Only eternity will discover the marvelous effects that lives of faith have had upon those who have worked together with God in His vineyard.

CONCLUSION

The passage we have just reviewed confirms that **God has not called us to a cake-walk, lives of ease and**

convenience, and objectives that are easily fulfilled. As Paul labored with Christ, declaring the wondrous message

that had been unveiled to him, he walked through a door into the field of trouble. He found foes against him, and agitation

While laboring for the Master, Paul experiences great trouble, and great comfort as well— by Given O. Blakely

within. Trouble was on every side, and fierce warfare and fightings were leveled against him.

Some might reason that a God of all power could simply reach down and pluck Paul out of those troublesome environs. Or, He could command the oppressors to stop, and pronounce peace to envelop his heart, dispelling all of his fears. It might also be reasoned that He could have instantly turned the heart of the Corinthians so that they caused no concern to Paul in the first place. He could have moved Titus to be in Macedonia when Paul expected him, so that a period of restlessness would not have been endured at all.

Of course, all of that is nothing more than human theorizing. Even so, that is the way in which people tend to think – and there is no small number of religious zealots that encourage them to think in this way. Such leads us to believe we do not have to put up with the devil, endure the insolent attacks of men, or slosh about in the slough of despond. But, is all of that really right? **Is that really what God has revealed to us about the circumstances that attend His working through us?**

Are we to believe that Abel could have avoided being slain, Isaac the heckling of Esau, and Joseph being hated by his brethren? Is that what we are to suppose? Could it be right that Job could have headed off suffering, and Moses the opposition of his own people?

Come now, those who bark like dogs about the prosperous and successful life, and having such a command over its circumstances – those who boast of being the head and not the tail! Could James really have avoided death by the sword? And, could Stephen have taken a course of action that kept him from being stoned? Was Antipas martyred because he really conducted himself in a thoughtless manner before his critics? Why was Paul beaten with stripes, beaten with rods, stoned, three times shipwrecked, and abandoned in “*the deep*” for a day and a night? Why did he experience threatening

“*perils*” in his journeys, among robbers, by his own countrymen, among the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren? Why did he experience weariness and painfulness? Why did he experience sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness? Was it that he had no faith? Was he unable to rebuke the devil, command storms, and take charge of the situation? Or, has there been a serious

saints of God become more precious to us, and the love of the brethren becomes more prominent in our hearts. It is through them that the precious things of God are ministered to us, often coming during times of great affliction, as they came to Paul in our text.

I know very well that there are things we cannot cause to happen in those

Let me be quite clear about this. This passage has confirmed that the nature of spiritual life and our labors in the kingdom does not for a moment suggest fleshly well being. The focus of grace is not the body, and men greatly err in leading people to believe it is.

misrepresentation of life in Christ Jesus?

Let me be quite clear about this. **This passage has confirmed that the nature of spiritual life and our labors in the kingdom does not for a moment suggest fleshly well being.** The focus of grace is not the body, and men greatly err in leading people to believe it is. We have been exposed to the way in which God works, and the manner of His great salvation for those who remain in this world.

Like it or not, spiritual life results in difficulty for the flesh. This is so because flesh is destined to die, and thus God will **not** cater to it. Further, as we walk by faith and live in the Spirit, the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit is **accentuated**, not diminished. The hostility of the world becomes **more** apparent, not less noticeable. Sin and those who commit it become **more** distaste, and the things of heaven become **more precious** than anything and everything the world has to offer.

It is in this context that the

about whom we are concerned. In a sense, we may very well find ourselves in the same situation as Paul. He had faithfully taught the Corinthians, and they had not appreciated his labors. He had a deep and continual concern for them, yet it did not seem to be causing anything to happen in them. Even when he determined to come to them again, it seemed like obstacles reared their heads everywhere he went. He had no rest in his body, or in his spirit – fights without, and fears within.

Yet, Paul fought on, and so must you! He kept the faith, and so must you! He kept running the course that had been set before him, and so must you! He continued to hope, and so must you! He did not give up, and neither can you!

Then, one glorious day, when Paul was in the midst of a sea of trouble, with no land in sight, a young man got to him with a basket of fresh spiritual fruit. It changed his entire person, lifted his spirits, and the river of joy began to flow again. Oh, fatigued saint of God, a messenger may very well be on his way to you right now. Hold on! Hold on!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 7/8/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The thirty-first lesson will cover verses eight through twelve of the seventh chapter: **"A PROBLEM RESOLVED."** In First Corinthians, Paul had severely rebuked the Corinthians for the immorality found among them, admonishing them to rid themselves of the guilty party. Now, Titus brings word that they had done precisely as Paul said, and that the fornicator had repented. 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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A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

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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>



Do not forget the upcoming Refreshing Waters Renewal. This is a time of unusual blessing, when the "unity of the Spirit" is realized, together with "the unity of the faith," and the "love of the brethren." The theme of "Divine Glory" will be insightfully developed, and all will be edified.

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