

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 #32

COMMENTARY ON: 7:13-16

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

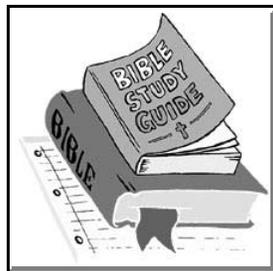
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

A CAUSE FOR REJOICING

When Titus told Paul about the obedience of the Corinthians, in purging the fornicator from their assembly, he rejoiced together with Titus. It was an occasion for great joy. He did not rejoice because of an expansion program at Corinth, or because of their record-breaking attendance, but because of their obedience. The success of a community program did not set Paul to rejoicing, nor the completion of an elaborate building plan. It was the obedience of the Corinthians in a hard matter that brought joy to his troubled heart. In this, he had the mind of Christ, revealing that his values had been properly formed.

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 32



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 Stand 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).

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

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

A CAUSE FOR REJOICING

“ 7:13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. ¹⁴ For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. ¹⁵ And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. ¹⁶ I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.” (2 Cor 7:13-16)

INTRODUCTION



How important are spiritual recovery and progress? Are they luxuries rather than necessities? Can we treat

them lightly, or casually, as though we are guaranteed repeated opportunities to enjoy such benefits? Judging from the state of the church, one might be tempted to think this is the case. **Spiritual recovery is often approached as though it was at the end of a lengthy and highly regimented procedure that can be carefully and successfully monitored by men.** Spiritual growth is not even an issue in the average church. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear the people of God derided for paying too much attention to believers, as though their primary concern is to be those outside of the body of Christ.

examine this notion – i.e. that those outside of Christ are to be the center of our attention, with everything else being made subservient to that priority. Is this taught anywhere in all of God's Word? Did Jesus live out this kind of priority – He that came to seek and save that which was lost? Did any Apostle ever preach this? Is there a single Epistle or letter addressed to believers, or anyone else, that leaves us thinking this way? **It is necessary to pursue these inquiries because our text deals with the church, and with matters pertaining to its recovery and satisfactory growth.**

Bear with me while I briefly

The text makes no sense at all if the most important thing is recruitment.

When believers are obedient in difficult matters, it is a cause for special rejoicing— by Given O. Blakely

CONTENTS

- COMFORTED IN THE COMFORT OF ANOTHER (7:13a)
- JOYING IN THE JOY OF ANOTHER (7:13b)
- WHEN A PERSON'S SPIRIT IS REFRESHED (7:13c)
- NOT ASHAMED OF BOASTING (7:14a)
- SPEAKING EVERYTHING IN TRUTH (7:14b)
- WHEN INWARD AFFECTION IS MORE ABUNDANT (7:15a)
- REMEMBERING THE OBEDIENCE OF OTHERS (7:15b)
- TITUS WAS RECEIVED WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING (7:15c)
- HAVING CONFIDENCE IN THE SAINTS (7:16)
- CONCLUSION

If our eyes are really to be turned away from the people of God, as though the purpose of God was fulfilled on our entrance into Christ, then we will need something more than a mere slogan or humanly-devised system to confirm this is the case.

There are two motions in spiritual life: one is forward, and the other is backward. There is no motion from side to side, allowing for a static moral or spiritual condition. Living by faith is a forward posture in which one presses *"toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil 3:14). From another perspective it is going *"on to perfection"* (Heb 6:1), or *"reaching forth to the things that are before"* (Phil 3:13). **Where this stance is not being maintained, there is an inevitable drawing back, or retrogression.** The backward motion is toward ultimate condemnation. Thus it is written, *"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not*

of them who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb 10:39).

The Corinthians had been in a backward stance, and thus had actually been losing ground, even though they felt they were advancing. If men are not getting closer and closer to the ultimate objective, or *"end,"* which is *"everlasting life,"* they are moving rapidly toward condemnation. There is no neutral ground. This circumstance is what moved Paul to write so extensively and passionately to the Corinthians. They stood in danger of being thrust out, just as surely as Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden (Gen 3:24). In such a case, Paul's labor there would have been in vain, and he would *"suffer loss,"* even though he himself would be saved *"so as by fire,"* or testing (1 Cor 3:15).

I labor this point because of the conditions that I see in the Christian world. After over fifty-three years (2005) in extensive labors for Christ, and after being exposed to hundreds of congregations and many thousands of believers, I must acknowledge the following. **Proportionately, I do not know that five percent of the Christians to whom I have been exposed show any evidence of spiritual growth.** Strong, discerning, and persevering believers are unusually rare, and that is a most serious circumstance.

It is precisely for this reason that Paul is rejoicing over the recovery of the Corinthians in the matter of the fornicator. This confirmed that God was at work among them, working *"both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13). This rekindled Paul's hope and joy. Now he could elucidate on matters they needed to know, yet which were hidden to them while they were moving backwards.

THE NECESSITY OF CONFIRMATION

There is a sort of principle that

becomes obvious to us as we advance in grace and truth. **The kingdom of God, particularly in regards to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, is totally free from speculation and empty philosophy.** It is unfortunate that the Christian community has been bombarded with a theoretical approach to the truth. This is one of the causes for the many divisions that exist within the professed church. The opinions of men have been vaunted above the word of God, of which David said, *"You have magnified Your word above all Your name"* ^{NKJV} (Psa 138:2). That is, so far as men are concerned, **God has assigned the greater value to what He has said.** He has done this because His word is the means through which faith comes and is sustained – the appointed agency by which spiritual life is maintained (Rom 10:17; Luke 4:4).

Owing to Satanic-inspired departure from the faith, God's Word no longer is perceived as central. That is one reason why men feel at liberty to flood the world with professed translations of the Scripture, which are nothing more than their own view of the Word. While these are often presented as *"paraphrases"* of Scripture, they are too often nothing more than human commentaries. In them, the understanding of men is frequently exalted above the Word itself.

An Example

All of this has opened the door for men to assign an unreasonable value to their own understanding. Rather than the Word determining the boundaries of thought, it is placed within a sort of elastic boundary that allows men to further define and codify Scripture. **When, for example, the Lord Jesus says He will come again and receive us unto Himself, that is not enough for some.** The Apostolic elaboration of that doctrine is also not sufficient. Thus men have contrived at least four views Christ's coming which, unlike the truth itself, are not compatible or harmonious with one

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another.

Fastening upon a opinion of what is involved in God establishing His kingdom, the coming of the Lord is filtered through that perception of the kingdom, and further defined by men.

- Premillennialism says that Christ will come **before** the millennium –the thousand year reign of Christ (which is nowhere affirmed in Scripture). Further defined, this coming will occur before “the great tribulation,” through which, they say, the church will not have to pass (which also is nowhere affirmed in Scripture).

The promises of the absence of Satan and the removal of disconcerting experiences are thus viewed as a sort of parabolic way of speaking of salvation.

While there may be elements of truth in all of these teachings, the truth itself is not the point of any of them. It is the position that is fundamental. The position is the basis for uniting or dividing, commending or condemning. Thus, while God has magnified **His Word** – what HE has said – men have magnified **their position** – what THEY have said.

THE POINT OF ALL OF THIS

The kingdom of God, particularly in regards to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, is totally free from speculation and empty philosophy. Because of the exaltation of God’s Word, that Word is frequently said to be confirmed, or verified.

- Postmillennialism seeks to combat the above view by saying Jesus will come **after** the proposed millennium, which is defined as the period in which the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14). That time will also be inducted by the conversion of Israel, according to the fulfillment of God’s promise to them (Rom 11:25-32).
- Amillennialism affirms that the time from Pentecost to Jesus’ coming is, in fact, the millennium. According to their view, Israel has been written off, totally rejected as of A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed – a judgment brought upon them because of their rejection of Christ (Luke 21:20-24).
- Preterism takes the position that Jesus actually did return as He promised in A.D. 70. According to them, we are now living in the new heavens and the new earth, and the resurrection has already taken place.

Here I want to deal with the principle to which I referred earlier: **The kingdom of God, particularly in regards to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, is totally free from speculation and empty philosophy.** Because of the exaltation of God’s Word, that Word is frequently said to be confirmed, or verified. This was done when certain things took place, fulfilling what God had affirmed, or said (1 Kgs 2:27; 2 Chron 36:21; Ezra 1:1; Lam 2:17; Matt 1:22; 2:15,23; 4:11-13; 8:17; 12:17-18; 13:35; 21:4-5; 26:56; ; 27:35; John 12:38; 15:25; 17:12; 18:9,32; 19:24,28). **What God has said WILL come to pass.**

It is for this reason that we also read of God confirming what He has said – verifying, corroborating, and substantiating it. Thus it is said of the Lord, *“That confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof”* (Isa 44:26).

When Daniel examined the Babylonian captivity in view of Jeremiah’s prophecy he concluded, *“And He hath confirmed His words, which He spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem”* (Dan 9:12).

When the Apostles went forth preaching the Gospel, the Lord worked with them, confirming and verifying that what they proclaimed was the truth. *“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen”* (Mark 16:20).

In expounding *“the day of salvation,”* Paul affirmed that in it God was confirming what He had promised to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers”* (Rom 15:8).

The salvation that we presently enjoy was confirmed *“at the first”* by the Lord Himself, establishing that what was **said** was, in fact, the truth. *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him: God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”* (Heb 2:4).

All of this is intended to substantiate that God, in His great salvation, is not simply throwing out ideas to the sons of men. Judging from the various activities of the professed church, men might be disposed to think this is what God is doing. However, God’s Word and work are in truth. They hold up under examination, and are confirmed by the work that they accomplish.

THE APPLICATION TO OUR TEXT

All of this may appear to be nothing more than a novel bypath having naught to do with our text. However, bear with me as I make an effort to connect these thoughts with our text.

What God says comes to pass. He

has depicted Himself in this way: *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it”* (Isa 46:9-11). Now, this is how God is. A lie cannot come from His mouth! He is not capable of misrepresentation! WHAT He says never becomes outdated or obsolete!

But let me get more to the point. **What the Lord says of His people will be confirmed in what those people do.** Men may attempt to emulate what the Lord says, but the real people of God actually do it!

- If God says of those in the New Covenant, *“They shall ALL know Me”* (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11), **that is precisely what they will do** – know Him! If there is found a person who claims to be one of His, yet does not know Him, that individual has not told the truth, for God does not lie!
- If God says of those who have *“one Shepherd,” “they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them”* (Ezek 37:14), **that is exactly what they will do!** If it is possible for someone to be under that One Shepherd, and yet **not** do this, then God has not told the truth – and He cannot lie!
- If God says of those from whom He has removed a stony heart, and in whom He has placed a heart of flesh, *“And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them”* (Ezek 36:27), **that is precisely what they will do.** If a person can have the Holy Spirit and these things not happen, then God has not told the truth – and He cannot lie.
- If the Lord says of the day of salvation, *“Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of*

salvation” (Isa 12:3), **then that is what will happen.** If we find a people professing to be saved, yet lacking a thirst for the water of life, and who rarely, if ever, draw waters from the abundant *“wells of salvation,”* then their profession is **not** true – God cannot lie.

I am sure you can see where I am going with this line of reasoning. The Corinthians had made a profession of faith. In the beginning it was said of them, *“and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized”* (Acts 18:8). There was a time, Paul said, when *“the testimony of Christ was confirmed”* in them (1 Cor 1:6) – that is, it became apparent that He was at work

As time progressed, however, characteristics were found among them that are not found in the kingdom of God . . . These conditions were in sharp conflict with the nature and effectiveness of salvation.

in them. Separating themselves from their former lives, it was said of them, *“but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor 6:11).

As time progressed, however, characteristics were found among them that are not found in the kingdom of God. Divisions (1 Cor 3:3), fornication (1 Cor 5:1-5), appealing to the world for help (1 Cor 6:1-5), inconsideration at the table of the Lord (1 Cor 11:23-32), and other things, were cropping up like thorns among them. **These conditions were in sharp conflict with the nature and effectiveness of salvation.**

How does a man of God approach something like this – a church or an individual who possesses qualities **from which** Jesus saves us! Is it serious for those who say they are “Christians” to possess primary traits that are at variance with that profession? Is such a condition “normal,” for if it is, there is certainly nothing to worry about. However, if it is serious, as God counts

things serious, then how should we deal with it.

- **FALSE APPROACH #1.** One approach to this would be that of the worldly-wise. Such might say, “Now this does not mean you are not saved, for God has loved you unconditionally. However this kind of conduct will rob you of joy, and cause you to miss the better things. Find some kind of professional help to get through this, and know that God is still with you and loves you.”
- **FALSE APPROACH #2.** The legalist might step up to the situation with an analysis something like this. “It is obvious that you never were saved in the first place! How can you be a Christian and live like this. You are nothing more than a denomination,

and are on your way to Hell!”

- **FALSE APPROACH #3.** A person who feels men are saved by arbitrary Divine choice, that is wholly unrelated to the individual himself, might reason thus: “I personally do not care for this kind of conduct, but who am I to judge. God will save whomever He wills. I refuse to sit in judgment of you on this matter.”

There may be a variety of ways in which such views are expressed, but you get the idea. **The point is that this is not how Paul dealt with the Corinthians.** He did not look past their sin, leaving them to wallow in it. He did not excuse it, or attempt to rationalize its presence and dominance. Nor, indeed, did he write to them as though everything was all right, and there was really no need to deal with such matters.

Paul knew the principle of which I have been speaking: namely, that what God says is always confirmed! Further, genuine spiritual life can and will respond appropriately to the Lord! Viewed from this perspective, the

instructions Paul gave to the Corinthians concerning the expulsion of the fornicator among them (1 Cor 5:4-12) were designed to establish at least two things.

- Identify the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- Establish the way by which the reality of the Corinthian's profession could be confirmed.

A profession of "newness of life" that cannot be confirmed is simply not the truth. There is no such thing as life

made them free (John 8:32,36).

Disobedience, stubbornness, a failure to grow up into Christ, and the likes, bring the profession of such a person into question. The works of such a person do not confirm his profession – and that kind of circumstance is not a godly way or the manner of the covenant.

Newness of life is perfectly consistent in all of its expressions. New life does not express itself like old life. The "new man" does not emulate "the old man" (Eph 4:24). We do, in fact, have

to "hirelings" (John 12-13), who have no genuine care for "the flock of God" (1 Pet 5:2).

Early in the history of the church, the heart of the Lord Jesus was revealed in those who fellowshipped in His labors. When Paul and Barnabas had completed a rather large circuit of preaching, "Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do" (Acts 15:36). This "visit" was of such critical importance that Paul refused to take the then unreliable John Mark with them. The contention was so sharp between Paul and Barnabas over this matter that they separated, going their separate ways. It was then that Paul chose Silas and "went throughout Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches" (Acts 15:36).

This kind of action was necessary because unstable and vacillating churches bring no glory to Jesus – statistics notwithstanding. The "great salvation" of God is not designed to kick-start people, then leave them to stumble and fall on the path of life. If it is true, as Isaiah affirmed of the Messiah, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand" (Isa 53:10), then what may be said of a church in which all manner of sin is found, and spiritual growth is not evident? Does anyone imagine that this condition sets the angels to rejoicing, or provides the tutelage God intends for them to receive "in the church" (Eph 3:10)? Is that condition evidence that the please of the Lord is prospering?

This is precisely why Paul was now exhilarated at the progress in Corinth. Their feet had been set on the "narrow" way that leads to life, and the prospect of them being a trophy of God's grace was again growing brighter. That is why spiritual recovery is so precious to those who are blessed to see it take place. It evidences further work is on the way.

Newness of life is perfectly consistent in all of its expressions. New life does not express itself like old life. The "new man" does not emulate "the old man" (Eph 4:24). We do, in fact, have "this treasure in an earthen vessel," but that "treasure" cannot be managed by the "earthen vessel.

from God that lacks evidence, or cannot be corroborated by the conduct of the ones possessing it. If men concoct theologies that actually allow for conduct to contradict profession, they have done nothing more than misrepresent God and demean the Lord Jesus. **God has no salvation that leaves men under the domination of sin.** If those who are being held fast by sin make a claim to being saved, that claim is to be ignored. **There must be evidence for the claim to be valid.**

It is imperative for us to perceive that **doing does not cause salvation, it confirms it.** Heartfelt obedience, in this case, proves that something has really happened to the individual. Real conviction has occurred (John 16:8-11). Real repentance has taken place (Acts 11:18). The heart of the obedient one has been opened (Acts 16:14). The truth has

"this treasure in an earthen vessel," but that "treasure" cannot be managed by the "earthen vessel." That is not possible, for that would make the "old" superior to the "new!"

CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Paul is not simply rejoicing because the Corinthians did what he said. **Rather, he is set to rejoicing because what they did corroborated that they had real spiritual life.** It also confirmed his labors among them were not in vain.

These two considerations – the growth of the saints and the validity of one's labors – are of critical importance to real laborers in the Lord's vineyard. **The stacking of impressive statistics never appears to have occupied a prominent place in the thinking of godly men.** They are, however, of paramount importance

COMFORTED IN THE COMFORT OF ANOTHER

" 7:13a **Therefore we were comforted in your comfort . . .**" Other

versions read, "We have been comforted in your comfort,"^{NKJV} "For this reason we

have been comforted,"^{NASB} "By all this we are encouraged,"^{NIV} "In this we find

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comfort,” ^{NRSV} “Therefore we are comforted,” ^{RSV} “So we have been comforted,” ^{BBE} “**Before God**: therefore we were comforted,” ^{DOUAY} “By all this we have been encouraged,” ^{NIB} “That is what I have found encouraging,” ^{NJB} “This is what comforted us,” ^{ISV} “Therefore we are relieved and comforted and encouraged [at the result],” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “That is why we now feel so deeply comforted.” ^{PHILLIPS}

There are certain causes and effects in the kingdom of God. **As a general rule, the causes come from God, and the effects are wrought among men.** In our text, the “comfort” experienced by the Corinthians also became the experience of Paul and Titus.

Here, in this text, one of the great

spirit, and cause him to be strong and encouraged once again.

This is the manner of the kingdom – the way things happen when we participate in the grace and nature of God. Personally experienced Divine benefits do not stay with us, nor are they intended to do so. Each member is referred to as a bodily “joint” that supplies needed resources to the other members of the body (Eph 4:16). That is the Divine arrangement. There are certainly advantages that come to us directly from heaven – such as “*God Himself*” doing this or that (1 Thess 3:11), ministering to us directly. Divine supplies can be delivered to us independent of human involvement – as they were to John on the Isle of Patmos.

17:9-16). When the Lord Jesus humbled Himself, and walked among men, certain women “and many others,” “ministered unto Him of their substance” (Luke 8:3). Phebe is described as one who had been a “succourer of many,” using her resources to assist the saints of God (Rom 16:2). Referring to a believer named “Mary,” Paul said she “bestowed much labor on us” (Rom 16:6).

Now Paul affirms that the “comfort” realized by the Corinthians – comfort that was ministered to them by “the God of all comfort” (2 Cor 2:3) – had extended to him. He had already told them that when God comforts one of His children, they are thereby enabled to “comfort them which are in any trouble” (2 Cor 2:4). Now he confirms that this does not have to be done in person – one believer directly comforting another. **In this case, the very report of their recovery and encouragement ministered comfort to Paul.** Only the Lord could institute a covenant with such singular benefits as this!

All of this is owing to the focus of the kingdom, which is not the individual. The focus of the heavenly kingdom is the Lord Jesus Himself. It is He who, in the capacity of “the Lamb”, is in “the midst of the throne” (Rev 5:6; 7:17). **He is the center of attention, and all eyes are upon Him.**

As soon as a person begins to think they are the center of things, that their difficulties are the most prominent ones, and that their will is the preeminent will, **they at once forfeit all heavenly advantages.** Such an attitude does not comport with the nature of Divine rule, and **God will not change His rule to make someone other than His Son the focus of attention.**

It is especially important that this lesson be learned. We are living in a society that promotes purely self interests. Men are taught to pursue careers and objectives that are primarily for themselves. A new approach to religion is gaining ground that allows for the body of Christ to be divided into self-interest groups where personal preferences become the basis for fellowship rather than faith in Christ. In such an environment, it should not

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principles of life in Christ Jesus is seen being lived out. “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth,” or “well-being” ^{NKJV} (1 Cor 10:24). In this case “the wealth” of another is the plentitude of salvational benefits enjoyed by a brother or sister in Christ. Because we are “members one of another” (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25), **very real spiritual experiences are brought to us through the members of the body of Christ.**

The benefit of such a life is seen in the fact that Paul derived comfort from the comfort of other members of the body of Christ. Further, this was a much needed “comfort,” for Paul was being “troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears” (7:5). **Now, in the midst of this grievous circumstance, encouragement is brought to Paul by means of a report of grace that had been experienced by the Corinthians.** God used that report to buoy up his

However, the normal arrangement is for our needs to be delivered to us by means of members of the household of faith – the “body of Christ.” Therefore, those who isolate themselves from Christ’s brethren do themselves a great disservice, and enter into a life of decided disadvantage, to say the least. It is, in fact, questionable that real spiritual advancement can be realized independently of the “household of faith” (Gal 6:10). So far as life in this world is concerned, that is one of the fundamental reasons for the church – **ministering to one another.**

Every believer, as well as every collection of believers, are designed to be a repository upon which others may also draw. The high priests and priests of Israel derived their living from the tithes of their brethren (Num 18:21). The prophet Elijah was sustained during a famine by the resources of widow (1 Kgs

surprise us that our text appears to have little relevance. However, for those who are actually engaged in the “*good and acceptable and perfect will of God*,” this text opens the door of hope and godly anticipation. **Suddenly, our resources are multiplied in staggering proportions.**

By way of further explanation, the way we participate in the blessing of another is to have a “*common faith*.” When we are believing in the **same** Lord, anticipating the **same** glory, and serving the **same** purpose, we become suitable recipients of the grace that has been

extended to others. We share in the common repository of “*all saints everywhere*.” When we are lifted out of the theoretical into the actual, spiritual advantages are realized that are hidden to those who choose to live in a world containing only themselves.

JOYING FOR THE JOY OF ANOTHER

“^{18b} . . . *yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus . . .*”

It becomes apparent that Paul’s whole life was wrapped up in the Lord. He was actually living “*unto Him*” who died for us and “*rose again*” (2 Cor 5:15). We know from Scripture, that Paul was a tentmaker by “*occupation*.” Originally, when Paul came to Corinth, he found Acquila and Priscilla, and chose to abide with them: “*he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers*” (Acts 18:3). However, you will **never** read anything from Paul about how he made tents, or where he sold them, or of his preference for materials, or where he acquired the skill to make them. His life did **not** consist of making tents, even though he was a “*tentmaker*” by “*occupation*.” **His comfort and joy was always related to kingdom matters, as confirmed by this very text.**

It is possible to center your life around something other than the Lord and your life in Him. However, those who live by faith **cannot** do this. They rather master the art of living in the world, but not being of it, for Jesus has chosen us “*out of the world*” (John 15:19). This is precisely why Paul can enjoy such elation at the report of God working in other people. **As you must know, such rejoicing is not possible when life revolves around something other than Christ Himself.** When Jesus is no longer perceived as central, the benefits are halted.

EXCEEDINGLY THE MORE JOYED

“ . . . *yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we . . .*” Other versions read, “*And we rejoiced exceedingly more*,”^{NKJV} “*And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even more*,”^{NASB} “*In addition to our own*

encouragement, we were especially delighted,”^{NIV} “*In addition to our own consolation, we rejoiced still more*,”^{NRSV} “*And in our comfort we joyed the more*,”^{ASV} “*and we have the greater joy in our comfort*,”^{BBE} “*And we the rather rejoiced in our encouragement more abundantly*,”^{DARBY} “*In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted*,”^{NIB} “*we were made happier still*,”^{LIVING} “*Besides that, we are especially glad*,”^{IE} “*in addition to this our*

more abundant.”

Jesus spoke of this aspect of spiritual life – when increase defies all human logic, and the tide of life swells rapidly and extensively.

• This is what He described to the Samaritan woman He confronted at Jacob’s well. “*But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the*

Here is the experience of exponentiation – of raising a quantity to a higher power. This speaks of a rapid increase and unusual growth rate – “exceedingly the more.” This is a dimension of spiritual life that few professing believers ever realize.

comfort, we were even more delighted,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*I was made so glad that my cup ran over*,”^{WILLIAMS} “*And in addition to our own [personal] consolation, we were especially delighted*,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*our joy was greatly enhanced*.”^{PHILLIPS}

Here is the experience of exponentiation – of raising a quantity to a higher power. This speaks of a rapid increase and unusual growth rate – “*exceedingly the more*.” This is a dimension of spiritual life that few professing believers ever realize. **They become so enamored with temporal life that they never truly tap into the abundance of spiritual life.** They are satisfied with the ebb and flow of normality, and are thus robbed of “*life*

water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

• He spoke of it during “*that great day of the feast*.” He cried out to the people, speaking of an abundance with which they were not hitherto familiar: “*If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*” (John 7:37-38).

• Peter spoke of this kind of increase as the sudden dawning of the day, and the flooding of the heart with light. “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,*

until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet 1:19).

- The Psalmist put it in yet another way: *"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures"* (Psa 36:8).
- Putting it in most personal words David said, *"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over"* (Psa 23:5).
- The prophet Isaiah said it this way: *"And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined"* (Isa 25:6).
- Again Isaiah prophesied, *"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"* (Isa 12:3).

and to experience an extraordinary measure of comfort, now Paul speaks of a great swelling of the wave of joy – something like a spiritual tsunami wave, rising to heights that dwarfed the vexation he had been experiencing.

There are such things as:

- *"Exceeding greatness of His power"* (Eph 1:19).
- *"Exceeding riches of His grace"* (Eph 2:7).
- *"Exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think"* (Eph 3:20).
- *"Faith growing exceedingly"* (2 Thess 1:3).
- Grace that is *"exceeding abundant with faith and love"* (1 Tim 1:14).
- Being *"glad also with exceeding joy"* (1 Pet 4:13).

From the experiential point of

From the experiential point of view, these occur suddenly and with rapid and refreshing increase. In the wake of such things, the heart can suddenly be lifted out of despair and propelled like a spiritual rocket into an acute awareness of well being and benefit.

All of this speaks of a sudden and expansive increase of Divine plentitude. A springing well, rivers of living water, the sudden breaking of the day, abundant satisfaction, fat things, wells of salvation! **They all defy human logic, and transcend the dreadful plain of the ordinary!** This is what Israel experienced on the banks of the Red Sea, when they witnessed the drowning of Pharaoh's army (Ex 15:1-19). It is what the army of Israel experienced when they saw the mighty Goliath fall to the earth with a thud, and witnessed David cutting off his head (1 Sam 17:51-52).

Thus, as if it was not enough to hear of the recovery of the Corinthians,

view, these occur suddenly and with rapid and refreshing increase. **In the wake of such things, the heart can suddenly be lifted out of despair and propelled like a spiritual rocket into an acute awareness of well being and benefit.**

This is kind of experience Paul is describing. It was not an irrational experience in which he was transported into a kind of trance. Rather, this was the result of spiritual understanding – of the truth of a matter being seen and grasped. **On this high level, when he was being comforted and encouraged by the comfort experienced by the Corinthians, he was suddenly lifted even higher in the**

joy of another. This is another benefit of walking in the Spirit.

This is a most vivid depiction of going *"from strength to strength"* (Psa 84:7). **In my judgment, it is not possible to experience this kind of benefit when one lives strictly for self, and is moved along by self-interests alone.** I again want to underscore that this whole passage shows the power of no longer living unto ourselves!

FOR THE JOY OF TITUS

"... for the joy of Titus..." Other versions read, *"to see how happy Titus was,"*^{NIV} *"because of the joy of Titus,"*^{BBE} *"By reason of the joy of Titus,"*^{DARBY} *"by Titus' joy,"*^{NJB} *"the gladness Titus felt,"*^{WILLIAMS} and *"the satisfaction your attitude had obviously given Titus."*^{PHILLIPS}

Ultimately, all spiritual joy is traced back to Jesus Himself. This is involved in Christ's words to His disciples on the eve of His betrayal. *"These things have I spoken unto you, that MY JOY might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"* (John 15:11). From the existential point of view, this joy is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, and is thus included in His "fruit." As it is written, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy..."* (Gal 5:22).

From a practical point of view, this means that the believer is brought to rejoice in things that bring joy to the Lord Himself. It is, in this sense, *"the joy of the Lord"* (Neh 8:10). Here, then, is a circumstance that delighted the Lord, bringing joy to Him. By virtue of Titus and Paul walking in the Spirit, that circumstance also brought joy to them.

Once again, behold how Paul is effected by other members of the body of Christ. Titus was favorably impacted by the response of the Corinthians, and that effect was also enjoyed by Paul. Thus the words of the Scripture are fulfilled, *"Rejoice with them that rejoice"* (Rom 12:15). Isaiah alluded to this kind of joy when he prophesied, *"Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her"* (Isa 66:10). This also fulfilled the parable of the lost sheep. When the good shepherd found the wandering sheep and brought it home

again, “*he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost*” (Luke 15:6).

Thus Titus returned from Corinth rejoicing, for he had witnessed the working of the Lord Jesus, who was “*exalted for to give repentance*” (Acts

5:31). Now, Paul rejoices with him, for in Christ valid spiritual experiences are shared. Troubles are halved, and blessings are doubled.

WHEN A PERSON'S SPIRIT IS REFRESHED

“^{13c} . . . because his spirit was refreshed by you all.”

Here we have another confirmation that “*the joy of the Lord*” is a rational joy – one that reaches deeper than the soul, into the human spirit. A

Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:8). The human spirit can understand, perceive, discern, and comprehend. This is the part of man in which Divine fellowship is realized, for the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God

unbelieving spies, “*But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it*” (Num 14:24).

Focusing on the rationality of the human spirit, and its powers of reason and perception, Paul wrote, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” (1 Cor 2:11). The human spirit, then, does not refer to his emotional make-up, even though that aspect of our persons is included.

When God moved Sihon to become obstinate and not allow Israel to pass through his country, it is said that He “*hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate*” (Deut 2:30). When Hannah wept and agonized before the Lord because she wanted a child, she said she was “*a woman of sorrowful spirit*” (1 Sam 1:15). When God chose Cyrus, king of Persia, to head up the rebuilding of the Temple, it is written that He “*stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia*” (Ezra 1:1). Solomon said the spirit “*the spirit of a man*” could sustain him in bodily infirmity, but a “*wounded spirit*” would cast him down even if he had sound health of body (Prov 18:14).

rational spirit cannot be refreshed by irrational means. Further, this is not “*refreshment*” of the body, although it does tend to refurbish even our earthy constitution.

HIS SPIRIT

“*. . . because his spirit . . .*” Other versions read, “*because his mind.*”^{NRSV}

Here is another word that cannot be satisfactorily explained etymologically, or by means of a lexicon. The word lexically means “*breath*,” as in “*breath of life*,” which is said to be in animals as well as in mankind (Gen 2:7; 6:17; 7:15,22). Much more is involved in this, however, that mere animation.

The Human Spirit

The “*spirit*” is the part of man to which understanding is ministered by the Lord. As it is written, “*But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the*

(Rom 8:16).

Paul said he served Gods with his “*spirit*” (Rom 1:9). When he was concerned about various aspects of the kingdom relationships with brethren, he said he had “*no rest*” in his spirit (2 Cor 2:13). When he was in Athens and saw the city “*wholly given to idolatry*,” it is written that “*his spirit was stirred in him*” (Acts 17:16).

Man’s spirit has motivational power, and can constrain a person to enter into a thoughtful work. When, for example, Moses gathered materials for the building of the tabernacle, it is said of those who contributed, “*Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the Lord’s offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.*”^{NKJV} (Ex 35:21). Again, God said of Caleb, who contradicted the report of the ten

Focusing on the rationality of the human spirit, and its powers of reason and perception, Paul wrote, “*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?*” (1 Cor 2:11). The human spirit, then, does not refer to his emotional make-up, even though that aspect of our persons is included. Often men will speak of a persons emotions by saying, “*That person has a lot of spirit*,” or “*He is a very spirited person*.” The thoughts that are generally conjured up by such statements do not reflect the intent of this verse.

The “*spirit of man*” is his most complex and versatile part. This is the part that is “*renewed*” in regeneration, and through which Divine fellowship is realized (1 Cor 1:9). Eternal life is found in man’s “*spirit*” – and eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20).

The versatility and aptitude of the human spirit can be seen in its three primary expressions: the will, intellect, and emotion. It appears to me that the "heart" of man is difficult to distinguish from his "spirit." They are inextricably tied together. This is seen in Ezekiel's prophecy of what is involved in regeneration. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek 36:26). This speaks of a change of who the person is ("new heart"), and how he expresses himself ("new spirit").

A truly "spiritual" religion effects the total man, issuing forth in a sanctified will, sound thinking, and holy emotion. By comparison, idolatry, which is falseness in its essence, tends to stir emotion, whether frenzy (as with the prophets of Baal, 1 Kgs 18:26-28), uproar and disorder (as with the worshipers of Diana, Acts 19:34), or total irrationality (as presenting children to Molech in an offering of fire, Lev 18:21; Jer 32:35). The tribal religions of the world are not noted for their contribution to stability and sound thought, but take men to the border of beastliness and irrationality. All of this contradicts the fundamental nature and purpose of humanity.

A religion that is shallow and thoughtless is more related to idolatry than to the Living God. When strong appeals are made to the emotional makeup of man, to the exclusion of thought and insight, the devil is at hand. In such a context spiritual refreshment cannot take place, and thus growth into Christ is not possible. When this is seen, some of the modern trends in professed Christendom become matters of great concern. There is a certain superficiality in much of what presents itself as having to do with Christ. This is nothing more than an inhibition to progress in the faith. It does not require enough of the people to profit them. It does not reach deep enough to stabilize them. It does not summon all of their powers into activity. Those snared by such meager offerings will know nothing of the experience chronicled in this text.

REFRESHED BY YOU ALL

"... was refreshed by you all." Other versions read, "has been set at rest,"^{NRSV} "has been made glad,"^{BBE} "set

his mind at ease,"^{NLT} "made him feel good,"^{IE} and "soothing and refreshing his spirit."^{AMPLIFIED}

As used in this text, refreshment has to do with the elevation of the powers and aptitudes that have been

for Titus what Stephanus and Fortunatus did for Paul. Here is what Paul said of those two: "For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such" (1 Cor 16:18).



impacted by faith. The will, intellect, and emotion are so enhanced as to diminish the value of this world, and cause the realities grasped by faith to become more dominant. Refreshment rejuvenates the inner man, and subdues the flesh. It is a form of putting on the new man, and putting off the old man (Eph 4:22-24).

Refreshment to the soul is like the early and latter rain to the fields of grain (Joel 2:23; James 5:7). It results in the renewing of ones strength – the strength of the inner man. As it is written, "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).

In this text, the Corinthians did

This kind of refreshment is realized in the human spirit, and comes from what the individual is able to perceive. The human spirit cannot be "refreshed" by bodily activity or sensations that course through the flesh. Some have represented great spiritual benefit to have been realized through irrational processes – things occurring in their flesh. True benefit can only be realized when one's faith perceives the truth of God – either its affirmation of its confirmation. In this case, it is the confirmation of the truth – the truth that within the New Covenant, God works in the people "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 3:13). It comes when the things of God become more clear, or the working of God Himself has been perceived.

The refreshment of the spirit of Titus produced this aspect of faith, setting him to rejoicing. Because the effects of faith cannot be confined to the individual originally experiencing them, Paul's rejoicing rose to an even higher level when he saw that Titus had been refreshed and renewed by the sight of the Corinthian progress.

A Kingdom Trait

The kingdom trait that is perceived in this text is worthy of a few more comments. **Sin pushes its victims into the restricted world of self-interests.** In such a state, the advantages of others are of little or no consequence, and personal experience becomes the dominant consideration. When, however,

we are "joined to the Lord," and begin walking in the light "as He is in the light," the borders of our world immediately expand. We are brought to the point where we can rejoice in the progress of other members of the body of Christ, and do so exceedingly.

NOT ASHAMED OF BOASTING

"^{14a} **For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed . . .**" Other versions read, "For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed," ^{NKJV} "I had boasted to him about you, and you have not embarrassed me," ^{NIV} "For if I have been somewhat boastful about you to him, I was not disgraced," ^{NRSV} "For if I have expressed to him some pride in you, I was not put to shame," ^{RSV} "For if in anything I have gloried to him on your behalf, I was not put to shame," ^{ASV} "For I was not put to shame in anything in which I may have made clear to him my pride in you," ^{BBE} "And if I boasted about you to him in any way, then I have not been made to look foolish," ^{NJB} "I had told him how proud I was of you – and you didn't disappoint me," ^{NLT} "I had told him how proud I was of you – told him before he left me of my pride in you – and you didn't disappoint me," ^{LIVING} and "and I had bragged about you to him, and you didn't let me down." ^{IE}

in this letter he wrote of "having confidence in you all" (2 Cor 2:3). He will state again in this very passage, "I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things" (2 Cor 7:16). He even states that he had "great confidence" in them (2 Cor 8:22).

Now he acknowledges that before Titus left to bring them the first letter, and set in order the things that had gotten out of hand, he had boasted of them to Titus.

HOW COULD PAUL BOAST OF THE CORINTHIANS?

One might very well ask how Paul could boast anything of a church who had so many flaws? How, in any sense, could any assembly requiring such strong rebukes and correction be a cause of boasting? **The answer is found in what they were in Christ Jesus.** Paul's confidence was in what the Lord had wrought in them, and not in their

sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).

- "... ye are **God's husbandry, ye are God's building**" (1 Cor 3:9).
- "Know ye not that ye are **the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?**" (1 Cor 3:16).
- "And ye are **Christ's; and Christ is God's**" (1 Cor 3:23).
- "... ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11).
- "Now ye are **the body of Christ, and members in particular**" (1 Cor 12:27).
- "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be **the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart**" (2 Cor 3:3).

Paul knew that, properly nourished, and given due heed, the new nature will grow and mature.

It is apparent from this text that Paul had boasted about the Corinthians to Titus before he left to go to them. This was a remarkable display of faith. Even though the Corinthians had done miserable in their conduct, Paul chose to consider their noble beginnings, and how they had responded to the Gospel. Earlier

natural abilities or achievements. Ponder what he had said of them.

- "That in every thing ye are **enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge**" (1 Cor 1:5).
- "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and

The work declared in these texts was the source of Paul's boasting. He felt their conversion was genuine. Their response to the Gospel, turning from idols, fleeing for refuge to Jesus – these were all causes for boasting in the Corinthians. Having seen the truth of the Gospel, they experienced the work of God, shining into their hearts "with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus" (2 Cor 4:6).

Paul knew that, properly nourished, and given due heed, the new nature will grow and mature. Although the Corinthians had allowed the

outbreak of all manner of iniquity among themselves, if they could see things as they really were, and separate themselves from defiling influences, **they would recover and make advancement in the faith.** That is what the “*new creation*” does. That is how the “*new man*” responds.

Thus, when Paul says that he was “*not ashamed*,” he means the response of their faith confirmed the superiority of the “*new man*,” and justified what he had said of them. They were not like Demas, who forsook Paul, “*having loved this present world*” (2 Tim 4:10).

This matter of boasting in the work of the Lord is something in which most of us could do much better. This does not allow the believer to overlook sin, just as Paul did not overlook the sin of the Corinthians. However, if we will exert ourselves to nurture the new man, even though he may have been thrust into the background and neglected, there is hope of recovery.

Consider the many rich insights that Paul shared with the Corinthians. He was speaking to the “*new man* .”

- The fact that God puts us into Christ, and makes Him to be to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor 1:30).
- That everything belongs to the believer, who belongs to Christ, who belongs to God (1 Cor 3:20-23).

He also knew that when men give themselves to sin, they at once begin to lose a sense of the truth of God. Being purchased by God and being raised from the dead are the last thing a transgressor will consider. When the “old man” is let off the cross, you can no longer count on the individual calling up the precious things of God.

- That the saints will judge the world and angels (1 Cor 6:1-3).
- That our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20).
- The Savior’s teaching concerning the Lord’s Table (1 Cor 11:23-32).
- The purpose and nature of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12-14).
- The superior quality and effectiveness of love (1 Cor 13:1-3).
- The nature and reality of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:1-57).

What was the purpose of that instruction? Much of it appeared to have little or nothing to do with the issues that existed in Corinth – at least, that is the way it may have appeared on the surface.

In these things, Paul was feeding “the flock of God” (1 Pet 5:2) – **feeding Christ’s “lambs,” and feeding His “sheep”** (John 21:15-17). He knew that the people of God cannot recover from the snare of the devil without receiving some measure

of strength, for man “*lives by every word of God*” (Lk 4:4). He also knew that when men give themselves to sin, they at once begin to lose a sense of the truth of God. **Being purchased by God and being raised from the dead are the last thing a transgressor will consider.** When the “*old man*” is let off the cross, you can no longer count on the individual calling up the precious things of God. They must be declared to such people **again** – declared with power by someone who sees them.

The point in this text is that Paul would never have spoken in this manner if he did not know there was a neglected part of those in a backward stance that **could** hear his words – faint though they may have sounded. **When he “boasted” of the Corinthians to Titus, he was banking on the response of their “new man.”** The Corinthians came through, bringing refreshment and joy to both Paul and Titus. Oh, that such men and women were in our time, who knew the potential of the “*new man*,” and labored to feed and strengthen him in good hope.

SPEAKING EVERYTHING IN TRUTH

“ 14b . . . **but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.**”

SPEAKING IN TRUTH

“ . . . *but as we spake all things to you in truth, . . .*” Other versions read, “*But just as everything we said to you was true,*”^{NIV} “*but as we said nothing to you that was not true,*”^{BBE} “*all things I*

preached unto you are true,”^{TNT} “*I have always told you the truth,*”^{LIVING} “*we have in all respects spoken the truth to you,*”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*in every matter I have spoken the truth to you.*”^{WILLIAMS}

Paul affirms to the Corinthians that he has spoken everything to them “*in truth.*” That is his manner, and that is what he has done.

The phrase used here is

significant: “*we spake all things to you **IN** truth.*” Several of the translations provide an interpretation of this phrase rather than a translation of it, saying that Paul meant **what** he said **was** the truth. It is certainly right that what Paul said was true – but that is **not** what he is saying in this verse. The word “*in*” is in all of the Greek texts. It comes from the Greek word ἐν (en), which means “of a place proper; in the interior of some whole; within limits of

When believers are obedient in difficult matters, it is a cause for special rejoicing– by Given O. Blakely

some space. ^{THAYER} He means that he spoke **within the context of truth**, and in perfect harmony with it. This is “*the truth*” that “*makes*” free (John 8:32).

Gospel. His view of recovery has been shaped by the Gospel. He is not speaking as a wise man of the world, but as a messenger of the Gospel of Christ. **What he demands of the people is what the Gospel demands.** What he is calling them to is the very thing to which the Gospel calls them.

for the truth, and then faithfully feeding and sustaining that appetite..

It is Paul’s profound love for Christ (1 Pet 1:8; 1 Cor 16:22), His earnest quest to “*know Him*” (Phil 3:10), and an acute awareness of His stewardship of the Gospel (1 Cor 9:16-17), that moved him to speak in this way. His speech was the result of his insight.



True preachers do not speak with the conclusions of psychiatry and sociology in mind. Their words are not delivered with statistics, surveys, and human studies in mind. Their thoughts have **not** been shaped by human opinion, religious tradition, or the creedal statements of a denomination. They speak, preach, and teach within the context of the truth of God.

They also speak with the “*new creation*” (2 Cor 5:17) in mind – acutely aware of the capabilities of “*the new man*,” and of the necessity of walking in the

Spirit and living by faith. Such holy men are keenly aware of the alienating effects of sin, and the stultifying impact of spiritual ignorance.

This also involves speaking “*the truth in love*” – love for God and Christ, love for the Word itself, and a love for the people to whom it is addressed (Eph 4:15). A person cannot feed the flock of God without first acquiring an appetite

BOASTING FOUND TRUE

“... *even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.*” Other versions read, “*our boasting to Titus was found true,*”^{NKJV} “*our boasting to Titus proved to be the truth,*”^{NASB} “*our boasting about you to Titus proved to be true as well,*”^{NIV} “*our glorying also which I made before Titus was found to be truth,*”^{ASV} “*the good things which I said to Titus about you were seen by him to be true,*”^{BBE} “*our boasting to Titus has been the truth,*”^{DARBY} and “*our boast to Titus has been proved as true as anything we said to you.*”^{NJB}

Because Paul spoke with the new creation in mind, and in harmony with the nature and intent of the Gospel, the recovery of the Corinthians confirmed that what he said was the truth. He had said they were Christ’s (1 Cor 3:23), and their response confirmed they were. He had boasted of their standing in Christ to Titus, and now it was clear that this was the truth. What joy it must have brought to his heart to have their state in Christ clearly confirmed!

“*In truth*” and “*the truth*” are not the same. When Paul delivered the Gospel to the Corinthians, he spoke “*the truth*” (1 Cor 13:6; 2 Cor 4:2; 11:10; 13:8). When he assessed their situation, he did so in harmony with, or strict accord with, that truth. In this passage Paul means that he is speaking within the context of redemptive truth. Nothing that he has said is in conflict with the Gospel. His view of sin has been dictated by the

WHEN INWARD AFFECTION IS MORE ABUNDANT

“^{15a} *And his inward affection is more abundant toward you . . .*”

Paul now elaborates on the impact the Corinthian recovery had upon Titus. He was not a “*hireling*,” like the one to which Jesus referred (John 10:12-13), who cared nothing for the sheep. Titus’ association with the people of God was not a professional one in which his worldly-taught aptitudes and techniques were employed in an impersonal way to assist the Corinthians. His was a spiritual relationship in which a

fellowship with Christ was cultured, in which a genuine love and concern for His people was developed. As simplistic as that may appear, it is exceedingly rare to behold such tender souls in our day.

INWARD AFFECTION

“... *his inward affection . . .*” Other versions read, “*His affections,*”^{NKJV} “*his affection,*”^{NASB} “*his heart,*”^{NRSV} “*his love,*”^{BBE} “*his bowels,*”^{DOUAY} “*His personal affection,*”^{NJB} “*tender affection,*”^{YLT} “*He loves you,*”^{IE} and “*His strong and tender affection.*”^{WEYMOUTH}

This is a most remarkable expression – “*inward affection.*” It might appear as though all affection is “*inward*,” thus making this nothing more than a rhetorical expression. However, it is not the manner of the Spirit to move men to use meaningless words. **The Spirit’s vocabulary** (words which “the Holy Spirit teaches” NKJV – 1 Cor 2:13) **are words that precisely accord with ultimate reality.** They are words that promise spiritual life and understanding.

The expression “*inward affection*”

comes from a single Greek word *σπλάγχνα* (splagx-na), which is used at least twelve times in the New Covenant Scriptures. There is a lot of meaning in this word, as is evidenced by the various ways in which it is translated. **As will become apparent, it speaks of a Divine quality that is obtained by men – when they partake of the Divine nature.** I have highlighted the word that is translated from the above Greek word.

- ☛ *“Through the **tender** mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us”*(Luke 1:78).
- ☛ *“Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his **bowels** gushed out”*(Acts 1:18).
- ☛ *“Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own **bowels**”* (2 Cor 6:12).
- ☛ *“For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the **bowels** of Jesus Christ”*(Phil 1:8).
- ☛ *“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any **bowels** and mercies”*(Phil 2:1).
- ☛ *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **bowels** of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering”*(Col 3:12).
- ☛ *“For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the **bowels** of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother”*(Phile 1:7).
- ☛ *“Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own **bowels**”*(Phile 1:12).

Lexically, or from a strict language point of view, this is the word used to denote the bowels or intestines of the body. Among the Greeks this word was used to regarding the seat of more violent and expressive passions such as anger and love. However, among the Hebrews its meaning was honed down to an even finer meaning. It signified the “seat of tenderer affections, especially kindness, benevolence, and compassion.” ^{LIGHTFOOT} It was

regarded as “equivalent to our heart (‘tender mercies, affections, etc).” ^{THAYER}

An Essential Aspect of Pure Religion

This introduces an aspect of “*pure religion*” that is of especial significance. **It is a rational tenderness in which the deepest part of the person becomes involved.** This can involve agitation and anger, or being moved to compassion. Jesus was stirred in His inward part when He saw men buying and selling in His Father’s house. The impact of that experience erupted in an unquestionable display of godly zeal (Matt 21:12-13). On another occasion, He was deeply moved by a woman caught in the act of adultery, and cast down at His feet. On that occasion, “*tender mercy*” came forth, and He told the woman He did not condemn her (John 8:11-12).

I will go so far as to say, mankind

Much of religion is nothing more than politeness, or non-abrasive routine, where people act in a certain manner that is more civil. Yet, the heart is not involved, so the sin of their peers does not make them weep, and repentance does not make them rejoice.

could not be reconciled to God by a heartless means. A Savior who was not deeply affected by the human condition could not have wrought a remedy for their condition. Nor, indeed, can an Intercessor that is **not** touched with the “*feeling of our infirmities,*” effectively minister to the saints (Heb 4:15).

Much of religion is nothing more than politeness, or non-abrasive routine, where people act in a certain manner that is more civil. Yet, the heart is not involved, so the sin of their peers does not make them weep, and repentance does not make them rejoice.

My Own Experience

I well remember a bout with spiritual insensitivity that I had many years ago. It suddenly occurred to me that, in my preaching, I had come to a point where I rarely wept, or was moved

to deep emotional feelings. I wondered how such a thing could happen, for I am, by nature, an emotional and high-strung person. Yet, I found myself speaking of such matters as the death of Christ with little apparent impact upon my “*inward affection.*” Somehow, I had become more academic than spiritual. By the grace of God, I was able to recover from this deficiency, being granted “*tender mercy*” from on high. I have never forgotten that experience.

I have found that there are certain environments in which it is most difficult to maintain inward sensitivity. A purely academic environment is such a realm. This is so because it places more stress upon the mind than upon the heart. Unless a person maintains a strong faith, this will culture insensitivity, which renders a person spiritually impotent. Without deep and

extended feelings for the people of God, men will gravitate to routines and procedures, for they can be maintained without heart. **Of course, God does not work through such heartless means.**

There are certain brethren among us who are noted for their sensitivity. They are tender and, and their deepest part is often stirred by the truth to weep, or to especially rejoice at the report of some great work of God. They are people in whom “*inward affection*” is more prominent. You will at once think of several people who fall into this category. Such souls are of inestimable value.

Titus and Inward Affection

This inward and sensitive part of Titus was stirred up by the awakening of the Corinthians. He saw the implications of spiritual recovery, and thus experienced unusual delight. He knew

the outcome of hardness, and was therefore moved within when the Corinthians exited the “broad road” on which they had been walking. People like Titus are essential to a strong church.

MORE ABUNDANT TOWARD YOU

“... is more abundant toward you ...” Other versions read, “*are greater for you,*”^{NKJV} “*abounds all the more toward you,*”^{NASB} “*is all the greater,*”^{NIV} “*goes out all the more to you,*”^{NRSV} “*is the more increased by his memory of you all,*”^{BBE} “*for you is all the stronger,*”^{NJB} “*He cares for you more than ever,*”^{NLT} “*is all the more drawn out towards you,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*is running over toward you,*”^{WILLIAMS} and “*goes out to you more abundantly than ever.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

Such a circumstance is not possible if the sons of God have “unconditional love” for one another. Whatever that phrase is intended to connote, it is certainly stated in a most

clumsy manner. How could the inward affections of Titus become stronger if they were unconditional? If circumstances and differing levels of spiritual growth have no impact on the way we view the people of God, and how we are drawn toward them, then how could the experience described in this text even exist? How is it possible for one child of God to have his heart more profoundly drawn to certain brethren – to obtain a more intimate and closer association with them, and a more profound affection for them? If love is not impacted by the individual that is being loved, how could such a condition exist? How could John be described as “*the disciple whom Jesus loved*” (John 20:2; 21:7; 21:20)? How would it be possible for Jesus to prefer to be with only twelve of His disciples on the eve of the Passover – desiring such private a gathering “with desire” (Luke 22:14-15)?

See, love is in degrees, it is not

static, or in a fixed measure. It is possible to be “*dear children*” (Eph 5:1), to be a person close to the “*heart*” of God (1 Sam 13:14), and to be “*well pleasing*” to Him (Col 3:20). There are people toward whom God gives special attention. “*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).

Titus was a “*partaker*” of this aspect of “*the Divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4). He had been “*changed*” into this portion of the Divine glory by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18). He could be “*touched*” deep within by the appropriate progress of the people of God. He could be moved closer to them. May the Lord grant that His church will be blessed more and more with leaders possessing this holy and willing aptitude. If only men will desire to feed His people, they will be enabled.

REMEMBERING THE OBEDIENCE OF OTHERS

“^{15b} ... whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all ...” Other versions read, “*As he remembers the obedience of you all,*”^{NKJV} “*when he remembers that you were all obedient,*”^{NIV} “*by his memory of you all, how you*

change that had been wrought among the Corinthians. **Even the recollection of what he is reporting must have moved Titus to expressions of deep and spiritual emotions.** How will the man of God report such holy movings? To what cause

recollect, and reminisce. It is to look back upon something, think about it again, relive the experience, and revive a memory. **Remembering involves extracting something from the past, bringing it into the present, and ruminating, or reflecting, upon it.**

Even the recollection of what he is reporting must have moved Titus to expressions of deep and spiritual emotions. How will the man of God report such holy movings? To what cause will he ascribe the increased affection of Titus for the Corinthians?

gave way to his authority,”^{BBE} “*he remembers the way you listened to him,*”^{NLT} and “*as he recalls the submission [to his guidance] that all of you had.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

It is as though Titus was sitting before Paul as he wrote, reporting the

will he ascribe the increased affection of Titus for the Corinthians?

HE REMEMBERETH

“... whilst he remembereth ...” One of the great abilities of God’s “*offspring*” (Acts 17:29) is the ability to “*remember.*” To “*remember*” is to recall,

Remembering can awaken the soul, enabling the individual to avoid falling into a snare. Thus we read, “*Remember Lot’s wife*” (Lk 17:32), and “*Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen*” (Rev 2:5). There is also a remembering that only intensifies the dreadful circumstance in which one finds himself. Thus Abraham said to the rich man in hell, “*Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*” (Luke 16:25).

Once, when speaking to a spiritually blind people, Jesus pointed out their inability to remember proper things. “*And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because*

ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? **and do ye not remember?**" (Mark 8:17-18).

Solemnly, the people of God are admonished, **"REMEMBER the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive"** (Acts 20:35). And again, **"REMEMBER that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel"** (2 Tim 2:8). And again, **"But, beloved, REMEMBER ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts"** (Jude 1:17-18).

Why is such an importance attached to remembrance? **It is because of the awakening power that accompanies it.** This is a kingdom activity that God's people do well to culture – to become experts in remembering the appropriate things – things that contribute to our spiritual well being.

This is one of the serious liabilities of living only for the "now." Some refer to this generation as the **"NOW generation."** It is a generation that is only affected by what is happening right now. The past is discarded as having no present profit, and the future is viewed as wholly irrelevant. However, this is a completely erroneous view of things. **Life cannot be lived properly without an active memory!** One of the secrets to avoiding the snare of the devil is remembering such things as the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, the flood of Noah's day, the abrupt cessation of the building of the tower of Babel, and the overthrow of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness. There is also the experience of hope and courage being awakened and strengthened by the recollection of Noah's salvation, David's defeat of Goliath, and the preservation of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews awakens the remembrance of many saints, and it has a calculated effect upon our spirits.

Now, Titus recalls something

about the Corinthians that made them even more precious to them. This recollection caused a deep affection for them to be enhanced.

THE OBEDIENCE

"... the obedience of you all..."

What is "obedience?" **It is submission, compliance, correctly responding to a valid directive, and conforming ones conduct to God's commands.**

Our salvation is often traced to our obedience. *"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you"* (Rom 6:17). Again, *"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"* (Rom

obedient children" (1 Pet 1:13-14).

It is no wonder, therefore, that Titus was drawn all the closer to the Corinthian brethren **when** they were obedient – responsive to the word of the Lord.

How Were They Obedient

The obedience of reference was most extraordinary – **a certain revelation that God was at work in them** *"both to will and to do"* (Phil 2:13). Let me remind you once again what they were instructed to do concerning the fornicator who was among them.

- **They were to gather together with an unquestionable focus upon this problem.** *"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the*

Why is such an importance attached to remembrance? It is because of the awakening power that accompanies it. This is a kingdom activity that God's people do well to culture – to become experts in remembering the appropriate things – things that contribute to our spiritual well being.

10:16). And again, *"And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him"* (Acts 5:32). And again, *"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thess 1:8). And again, *"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him"* (Heb 5:9).

Obedience is, then, something integral to our association with the living God. **It is part of a line of demarcation between God's rejection and His acceptance.** The people who were destroyed in the flood are described as those who *"were disobedient"* (1 Pet 3:20). Those who are properly preparing for the coming of the Lord are said to be *"as*

power of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 5:4).

- **They were to deliberately and determinedly deliver this man to Satan.** *"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"* (1 Cor 5:5).
- **They were to purge this contaminating influence from their presence in order to become "new" before the Lord.** *"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).
- **There were to cease observing "the feast,"** which I take to be the Lord's Supper, with wickedness among

themselves. *“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”* (1 Cor 5:8).

- As though it was not clear enough, they were to expel the fornicator from their presence. *“Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person”* (1 Cor 5:13).

There certainly is nothing simplistic and undemanding about those things. They required commitment, concern, faith, and even hope – *“that his spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor 5:5b). The three abiding realities of spiritual life – *“faith, hope, and charity”* – were all required in these demands. This made their *“obedience”* all the more precious.

We ought to especially note the significance of even a single act of obedience – in particular the Corinthians

handling of the fornicator. It is no small thing, and that is why so many wonderful effects followed the obedience of the Corinthians. Ponder what has been mentioned thus far.

- Paul *“rejoiced”* that they *“sorrowed unto repentance,”* being made sorry *“after the godly manner”* (2 Cor 7:9).
- Their response approved them *“to be clear in this matter”* of the fornicator (2 Cor 7:11).
- Paul and Timothy were comforted in the comfort realized by the Corinthians (2 Cor 7:13a).
- Paul and Timothy joyed for the joy that Titus experienced (2 Cor 7:13b).
- The spirit of Titus was *“refreshed”* by the Corinthian’s progress (2 Cor 7:13c).
- Their obedience confirmed that what Paul had boasted of them was the

truth (2 Cor 7:14).

- The *“inward affection”* of Titus for the Corinthians was made more abundant toward them because of their obedience (1 Cor 7:15).

That is the type of environment in which great things for God can be both experienced and accomplished! Further, where such holy responses are found (the Corinthians response to Titus, Titus’ response to them, and Paul’s response to Titus) the presence and working of the Lord is confirmed. Faith, hope, and love are thus increased. Confidence, assurance, and joy are enhanced. **Because the fallow ground of the heart is broken up, more of the truth can be declared and understood.** The speaking of the truth brings a certain refreshment and strength to the speaker, and to the hearers as well. Here, then, is a classic example of building one another up, ministering to one another, and increasing with the increase of God.

TITUS WAS RECEIVED WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

“ 16c . . . how with fear and trembling ye received him.”

Paul further recounts the circumstances involved in the Corinthian’s revenge of their disobedience. The novice might very well inquire how or why so much is being said about such a thing – such a thing as recovering from sin. Paul’s words could very well offend those whose hearts are calloused concerning sin – those who are prone to pass over sin as though it was normal, and was not attended with very weighty considerations. I do not doubt

that some would have swept this whole incident under the rug, continuing on as though nothing had happened. However, such responses bear no similitude of spiritual reality. They rather betray an abysmally feeble grasp of the truth, and a dangerous closeness to *“this present evil world.”*

What Sin Does To A Person

In order for a person or a congregation to recover from sin as serious as that of the Corinthians, a lot has to happen. This is because transgression weakens, dulls, blinds, and

causes one to be insensitive. It obscures heaven and makes the world appear as though it is the only thing with which we are to be concerned. Sin is to the soul what leprosy is to the body, blindness is to the eyes, deafness is to the ears, and dumbness is to the tongue. It brings a certain paralysis to the soul, even as palsy brings to the body. It causes malfunctioning within the soul like an issue of blood brings to the body. Iniquity throws men into jeopardy, like that demon threw a young boy into fire and water (Matt 17:15). Like the woman who was bowed over with a *“spirit of infirmity”* (Lk 13:11), sin causes the soul to stoop low, so that it can no longer stand erect, and move about in the heavenly places. It causes spiritual aptitudes to wither, like that man with a withered hand, so that the things of God can no longer be grasped (Mk 3:1).

Sin defiles and soils the soul. It brings a blight upon the mind, so that thinking aright becomes nearly

Sin defiles and soils the soul. It brings a blight upon the mind, so that thinking aright becomes nearly impossible, if not altogether impossible. It pushes the person into a state of death, and moves him closer to hell and further from heaven.

impossible, if not altogether impossible. It pushes the person into a state of death, and moves him closer to hell and further from heaven.

Do you imagine that this is not the case? Ponder your own miserable existence when you were living under the dominance of sin. You will see that, if anything, I have understated the case.

What Does It Take?

If it is true that sin causes such serious conditions, how can such a person or persons be rescued? First of all, just as with our initial salvation, **“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible”** (Matt 19:26). **If, somehow, God is not brought into the scenario, recovery is not possible.** Men must settle it in their minds that this is the case. Whatever opinion a person has about depravity, free will, the ability of man, and so forth, **if no Divine influences are exerted, no recovery is possible!** If a person falls into sin after he has been put into Christ (1 Cor 1:30), what person of sound mind imagines they can extricate themselves from that sin under their own power.

In order for recovery from sin to be accomplished, here are some of the things that must occur.

- ☛ Someone outside of themselves must become aware of their condition – someone through whom God will work.
- ☛ There must be a willingness on God’s part to do something about the situation.
- ☛ Someone must speak the truth about the situation to the sinner.
- ☛ There must be receptivity of that person and his word on the part of the sinner.
- ☛ The remedy to the situation must be articulated.
- ☛ That remedy must be accepted and the appropriate action taken.
- ☛ Jesus must intercede for the sinner.
- ☛ The Holy Spirit must work upon the

heart and conscience of the sinner.

- ☛ Holy angels must become involved in the circumstances, clearing the way for the minister to come, and bringing about the kind of synchronization that occurred in the conversion of Cornelius.
- ☛ The sinner must abruptly end the way he is living, and make straight paths for his feet.
- ☛ In the case of Corinth, everyone must work together for the glory of God.
- ☛ In this case, a messenger had to get from Asia to Greece – doing so in time to deliver the message, and direct the recovery.

These are just a few of the things that had to happen – and they did. Who would dare to think that such could occur under purely human administration? See, this is why Titus and Paul were set to rejoicing. They knew something of the Divine involvements in this matter.

WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

“... how with fear and trembling ...” Other versions read, “with fear and honor,”^{BBE} “with such respect and deep

Most people with whom we are familiar do not take sin that seriously. In fact, it is not at all unusual to find people becoming quite defensive when the matter of their sin is brought up. Some have a ready supply of convenient excuses and explanations to account for their failures. Others are highly offended that anyone brings them up at all, declaring their lives are their business, and no one has a right to intrude into them – especially with rebukes or a call to repentance.

concern,”^{NLT} “so anxiously and with deep concern,”^{LIVING} “timidity and nervous anxiety,”^{WEYMOUTH} “reverence and trembling,”^{WILLIAMS} “and [the reverence and anxiety [to meet all requirements],”^{AMPLIFIED} and “the respect and reverence.”^{PHILLIPS}

You know a great work has begun when people become nervous about their sin – especially when they are going to be faced with it, and brought into account

for their response to holy initiatives.

It may appear as though these words are overstated – “*with fear and trembling*.” Most people with whom we are familiar do not take sin that seriously. In fact, it is not at all unusual to find people becoming quite defensive when the matter of their sin is brought up. Some have a ready supply of convenient excuses and explanations to account for their failures. Others are highly offended that anyone brings them up at all, declaring their lives are their business, and no one has a right to intrude into them – especially with rebukes or a call to repentance. **At once you see how differently the Corinthians responded to Titus. That is precisely why so much is made of it. God was at work in these circumstances!**

The phrase “*fear and trembling*” is well known among those who have a heart for the Word of God. Paul mentions it at least three times in his Epistles.

- ☛ The Corinthians receiving Titus. “And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you

all, how with fear and trembling ye received him” (2 Cor 7:15).

- ☛ Servants obeying their masters. “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ” (Eph 6:5).
- ☛ Working out our own salvation.

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12).

Paul’s Preaching

Paul said that when he came preaching to the Corinthians, he did so *“in weakness, and in much fear, and in much trembling”* (1 Cor 2:3). Ther

Eliphaz the Temanite

Eliphaz the Temanite told Job of an occasion when *“fear” and “trembling”* came upon him, making all of his *“bones*

with dread and terror, and includes the idea of a deep respect in which one thinks very highly of someone. *“Trembling”* has to do with quaking, and distrusting one’s personal ability to do what is required.

“Fear and trembling” is the effect of God and the things of God upon the flesh, or the *“old man.”* A lively awareness of the presence of God, as confirmed at Mount Sinai, strikes fear into *“the natural man,”* however cultured he may appear to be. That is why, as he stood consciously in the presence of the Almighty, even Moses said, *“I exceedingly fear and quake”* (Heb 12:21).

accustomed to moral and spiritual deficiencies, spiritual ignorance, and a lack of respect for the real messengers of God – preachers who have been *“sent”* by God (Rom 10:15). However, those are the unacceptable and abnormal responses. **What we are beholding in this text are genuine spiritual responses.** This is the way in which the Lord works, and it is evidencing what happens when sinners in the church respond in faith to the word of the Lord. Any other response would have been unacceptable. The Corinthians knew this, and they is why they responded with *“fear and trembling.”* **The very notion of being found unacceptable to God causes discerning people to fear and quake.**

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The counseling trends that are being found within the modern church are not producing the results described in this text. That, of course, reveals that they are humanly-devised methods. When an approach to sin is foisted upon the church that does not produce godly results, the church must respond with spiritual violence, casting it from their presence. **Only a “corrupt tree” can fail to produce good fruit, and there is no place in Jesus for “corrupt trees.”** Ultimately, all corrupt trees will be *“hewn down”* (Matt 7:17-19). We do well not to grow accustomed to them.

to shake” (Job 4:14).

David the Psalmist

The Psalmist exhorts men to *“Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling”* (Psa 2:11). Those who advocate the praise of the Psalms do not often refer to this verse. David also said, *“My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments”* (Psa 119:120).

The Testimony of God

The Lord revealed through Isaiah that He is inclined to those who tremble at His Word. *“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).

The Meaning

What is the meaning of the expression *“fear and trembling?”* And, how is it that the Corinthians had such a response to Titus? *“Fear”* is associated

All of this means that the Corinthians associated the coming of Titus with a Divine confrontation. God had already worked upon them, as the Spirit had no doubt brooded upon their hearts as He did upon the face of the deep (Gen 1:2). They lost all fleshly culture and composure when they realized they were going to be called into account for their response to Paul’s letter. **They trembled at the very thought of being found deficient, or coming short of what was required of them.**

Their consciences were alive with an awareness of the Living God, and of the total and unqualified unacceptableness of sin in His presence. They did not want to displease the Lord. **They feared being assessed as coming short of the glory of God – a condition for which Jesus died, and from which He delivers us.**

Admittedly, this kind of language sounds strange to the average American “churchman.” Such have become

YE RECEIVED HIM

“ . . . ye received him.” Other versions read, *“receiving him,”* ^{NIV} *“you welcomed him,”* ^{NRSV} *“you took him to your hearts,”* ^{BBE} and *“you accepted and welcomed him.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Titus was received and welcomed with fear and trembling. The Corinthians did not ask him to leave, as the Gergesenes asked Jesus to leave (Matt 8:34). They did not cry out *“Let us alone,”* as the unclean spirit who dominated a certain man in the synagogue cried out when he confronted Jesus (Mk 1:24). Even though their conduct had been unacceptable, and they had been sternly rebuked for it, yet God had so worked within them that they *“received”* Titus, **even though they knew they were going to be examined by him.**

Is this not a marvelous thing – that those who have been disobedient, thoughtless, critical of the one who

converted them, and tolerate of a gross sinner amongst them, **could be so changed as to welcome a messenger from the one who had written so strictly to them?** Do you doubt what God can do within a transgressor? Ponder the church at Corinth. They are undeniable evidence of the convincing power of the Holy Spirit, the powerful effects of godly sorrow, and the unquestionable effectiveness of repentance. The

Corinthians are a trophy of God's grace!

The church of our day needs to be reminded of these things. The Kingdom of God is not simply a matter of words. **It is a Kingdom of power that enables recovery, brings refreshment, and stimulates joy.** That is why it is written, *"For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power"*^{NASB} (1 Cor 4:20). Therefore Paul wrote to the

Thessalonians, *"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake"*^{NKJV} (1 Thess 1:5). That is not a mere external power that impresses the flesh, but a moral and spiritual power that impresses the massive number of holy angels and strengthens saints on earth. It is a power that enables recovery!

HAVING CONFIDENCE IN THE SAINTS

¹⁶ ***I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.*** Other versions read, *"Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything."*^{NKJV} *"I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you,"*^{NASB} *"I am glad I can have complete confidence in you,"*^{NIV} *"I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you,"*^{RSV} *"It gives me great joy to see you answering to my good opinion of you in every way,"*^{BBE} and *"I am very happy because I now am of good courage and have perfect confidence in you in all things."*^{AMPLIFIED}

This is a most remarkable statement! Remember, this is addressed to the very people to whom Paul had said, *"For ye are yet carnal"* (1 Cor 3:3), *"ye are puffed up"* (1 Cor 5:2), *"ye are unleavened"* (1 Cor 5:7), *"I speak to your shame"* (1 Cor 6:5), *"There is utterly a fault among you"* (1 Cor 6:7), *"Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels"* (2 Cor 6:12), and *"I speak this to your shame"* (1 Cor 15:34). **How is it possible to have confidence in that kind of people?**

The truth of the matter is that you **cannot** have confidence in **that** kind of people. However, they had *"cleared"* themselves in the issue being addressed, and were no longer *"that kind of people"* (2 Cor 7:11). Now they had *"put on the new man,"* and Paul knew very well how **that** nature responded to Divine direction. It was not *"the Corinthians"* that were the objects of his confidence, but *"the saints"* – that is what they were *"called to be"* (1 Cor 1:2).

Some of the Pauline expressions of *"confidence"* will serve to buttress this view of the work of the Lord. **If ever the working of the Lord can actually be confirmed, we can have confidence that it can be brought to a God-glorifying**

differently – more after the manner of the following.

- *"As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus. And in this confidence I*

How is it possible to have confidence in that kind of people? The truth of the matter is that you cannot have confidence in that kind of people. However, they had "cleared" themselves in the issue being addressed, and were no longer "that kind of people" (2 Cor 7:11). Now they had "put on the new man," and Paul knew very well how that nature responded to Divine direction.

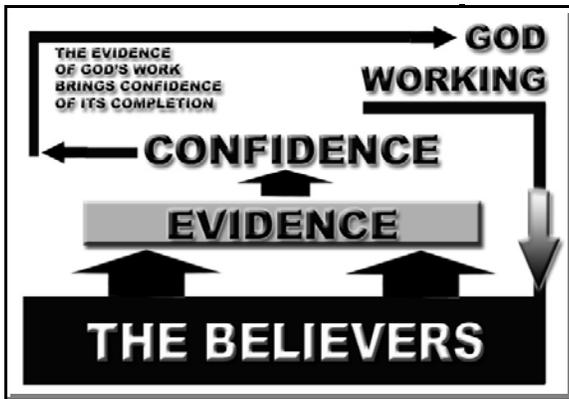
conclusion. When that work is **not** confirmed, and carnality seems to be breaking forth on every hand, doubt at once enters, moving even Paul to say, *"I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain"* (Gal 4:11). And again, *"I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you"* (Gal 4:20). And, indeed, Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians expressed similar doubts: i.e. *"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power . . . What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"* (1 Cor 4:19,21). Now, however, with evidence of their recovery sounding in his ears from a faithful servant, he speaks

was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit" (2 Cor 1:14-15).

- *"And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all"* (2 Cor 2:3).

- *"And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you"* (2 Cor 8:22).

- *"I have confidence in you through the*



Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be (Gal 5:10).

- *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:6).
- *“And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you”* (2 Thess 3:4).
- *“Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say”* (Philemon 1:21).

These arresting and precise expressions of confidence were based upon two things:

- 1 – The knowledge of God.
- 2 – The evidence of His working.

They in no way reflected a confidence in “the flesh,” or any degree of assurance in the abilities or power of the people themselves. Those who are of Christ are appropriately described as people who do not have such confidence – that is, confidence in human ability.

Thus it is written, *“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh”* (Phil 3:3). The Amplified Bible reads, *“and put no confidence or dependence [on what we are] in the flesh and on outward privileges and physical advantages and external appearances.”* Those who *“walk in the light”* (1 John 1:7) **know** *“that which is born*

of the flesh is flesh,” and it can never be anything else (John 6:63). They know that *“all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away”* (1 Pet 1:24). Even the Psalmist, living in spiritually primitive times knew this. In one of his great songs of praise he wrote, *“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man”* (Psa 118:8).

Paul has no confidence in the Corinthian’s natural ability, their training in the flesh, or the habits they may have cultured. You cannot trust in such things! It is said of the man who *“maketh flesh his arm” – “whose heart departeth from the Lord”* (Jer 17:5).

However, it is quite another story when the things that God alone can do are found within the person. When repentance is found, and it is **known** that God *“gives repentance”* (2 Tim 2:25), **then you can have confidence!** Wherever there is a *“broken heart”* and a *“contrite spirit,”* and you **know** that God honors such a condition (Psa 34:18), **then you can have confidence!** Wherever there is conviction, and you **know** that it the Holy Spirit that convinces men of sin (John 16:8-11), **then you can have confidence!** When you see spiritual working joined together with

willingness, and **know** this is the kind of work God alone does (Phil 2:13), **then you can have confidence.**

Thus Paul, having the working of God confirmed in the Corinthians, knows it is still true, *“that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:6). He knows, as David said, *“The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me not the works of thine own hands”* (Psa 138:8). Once the evidence of Divine activity within the believer is substantiated, the apostle can speak as he did to the Thessalonians: *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it”* (1 Thess 5:23-24).

Let us not be naive about this matter. **When little evidence of Divine power and working is perceived, there can be no genuine confidence that the work will be completed – even though that is the strong desire of our heart.** God’s people must not pretend in this matter, for pretending is always wrong. This, of course, is one of the cardinal differences between First and Second Corinthians. There was little basis for confidence when Paul wrote the First epistle. However, such evidence now surfaced as promoted the kind of confidence that brings glory to God. Thus, we have the refreshing tone of Second Corinthians – a tone that brings a certain refreshment to the soul, tenderness to the heart, and clarity to the mind.

What a marvelous contribution the recovery of the Corinthians has made to our understanding, and how grateful I am that it is recorded for us! Let us make the most of it for the glory of God.

CONCLUSION

The effect of the Corinthian recovery upon both Titus and Paul are noteworthy. Even when Titus was reporting these good things to Paul,

refreshment and an outpouring of his affection toward the Corinthians occurred: *“And his affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers*

the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling”^{NASB} (2 Cor 7:15). It seems to me that this is a most precious ministry believers have one to

another – to confirm the working of the Lord in their lives by their conduct and determinations. Where there is little or no evidence of Divine activity, we can only pretend we feel confident about the people – and the godly will not conduct themselves in a pretentious manner.

If you desire for the godly to think well of you, endeavor to give them a reason to do so. If it is true that loving the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, is the sum and substance of the Law and the prophets, then confirmation of what the Lord has done will, indeed, be a great cause for rejoicing.

All of this may appear quite elementary. And, in a sense, it is. However, while men have slept, an enemy has entered among the saints and sowed tares among them – people who provide no refreshing reminder that the Lord is doing something. These pretenders have taught men to rejoice in large institutions, seasonal attendance, and buildings and worldly credentials. Paul referred to such people with remarkable clarity when he wrote, *“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things”* (Phil 3:18-19).

We cannot rejoice in such people, or express a great confidence concerning their outcome. Neither, indeed, can we make our hearts be drawn to them, or prefer them, or lavish our affection upon them. It is not that we loathe them, for we do not. But they are not our kind of people. They do not prefer the things that sustain our soul. They have no appetite for the things that bring life, and peace, and joy to us. Their vision is too limited, and their hearts are too small. They live too far away from the Lord to be our close companions. When we think of them concern and care for their condition rises within us. The memory of them troubles us, and the recollection of their lack of spiritual progress disturbs us.

We are not sure if they will be gathered to the Lord or not. We doubt that they have enough oil in their lamps

to survive the long night vigil. We do not see in them a source of help, and they bear too much resemblance to the world for us to trust them. The smell of earth is upon them, and it is difficult to detect any heavenly fragrance upon them.

We refuse to despise them, or look down upon them, for we know that Christ died for them, and that the door of salvation is standing wide open – even for them. But we will not kid ourselves about their condition. We know all too well how God feels about those who “draw back.” He takes no delight in them, and will not walk with them (Heb 10:38-

them and will walk in and with and among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. So, come out from among [unbelievers], and separate (sever) yourselves from them, says the Lord, and touch not [any] unclean thing; then I will receive you kindly and treat you with favor, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”
AMPLIFIED BIBLE (2 Cor 6:16-18).

Is there even the slightest question about what God requires of His people? If Jesus died to “deliver us from

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39). He does not receive them in their condition, all contradicting theology notwithstanding. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ demands that His people come out from among the ungodly, and touch not the unclean thing. He has left no doubt about this. *“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers [do not make mismatched alliances with them or come under a different yoke with them, inconsistent with your faith]. For what partnership have right living and right standing with God with iniquity and lawlessness? Or how can light have fellowship with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and Belial [the devil]? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement [can there be between] a temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in and with and among*

this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), what kind of reasoning would lead anyone to believe they could remain a friend of it? Whether a person knows it or not, or regardless of whether he agrees with it or not, it is written to the utter consternation of all flesh, *“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 4:4). God’s grace confirms this is true.

If you have the heart to see it, all of these things have been confirmed in this text. The sorrow over the condition of the Corinthians that Paul once possessed has now been turned into joy! The comfort of the Corinthians has been experienced by Paul, together with the joy of Titus. Titus himself has been refreshed by the Corinthians.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 8/5/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The thirty-third lesson will cover verses one through five of the eighth chapter: **"THE CHURCHES IN MACEDONIA."** Although the churches in Macedonia were not in a state of affluence, God blessed them to give out of their deep poverty, abounding far beyond their ability in assisting the poor saints in Jerusalem. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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

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