

*The Bible Notebook*

# 2 CORINTHIANS

Volume 1

A Verse by Verse Study

By

Johnny L. Sanders, D. Min.

# DEDICATION

To

Johnny L. Sanders II

*I love you, my son*

# INTRODUCTION

## THE CITY OF CORINTH

Corinth owed its importance to its geographical location. It was located at the south-western part of the isthmus which links northern Greece with the Peloponnesian peninsula. There were two harbors, one on the Adriatic Sea to the west, and the other on the Aegean Sea to the east. Crossing the isthmus at Corinth enabled ships and sailors to avoid the treacherous waters around the peninsula and save the time required for the voyage. Larger vessels unloaded cargo and passengers at one port and they were hauled overland to the other. Small vessels were hauled the four miles overland on a sort of an ancient railroad utilizing wooden rollers over which men pulled the ships.

A line of distinction should be drawn at 146 B.C. in a study of the history of Corinth. After a decisive victory at Leucopetra, on the isthmus, Roman troops were able to occupy Corinth without opposition. The citizens were either killed or sold into slavery, and the city itself was leveled. Rebuilding was forbidden. After 100 years of desolation the city of Corinth was re-founded by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony [3: 2].

The new city possessed the same physical characteristic as the old. Beyond that it bore little resemblance to the older city [3: 2]. There is little doubt that many Greeks were among the new settlers of the new city, but it was in no way a distinctively Greek city and many comments about Corinth made by earlier Greek writers applied to old Corinth more than new Corinth. It would seem, however, that the moral climate was about the same. The new city did little to redeem the reputation of the old. All great sea ports of the day were filled with the same vices as Corinth, but this city had some distinctions that set it apart from other places.

Corinth had a transient and cosmopolitan population. For one thing, it was a center of commerce and industry. Slavery was another factor in bringing many nationalities to Corinth. The city had a population of 600,00 and it has been estimated that 400,00 of these were slaves. Many of these slaves were talented and cultured people.

Corinth was a great city of entertainment. The Isthmian games were held near by every other year. These games were second in importance only to the Olympic games which were held every four years. The gladiators were particularly popular with a population that loved bloody sports.

Corinth was also a noted religious center. The ancient Greek gods and goddesses were still worshiped. The eastern mystery religions were also popular. The Egyptian religion of Isis was a favorite of many. There was a Jewish synagogue there to accommodate the Jewish population.

The most outstanding physical feature of Corinth was the massive plateau known as Acrocorinth, which rose nearly 2,000 feet above the surrounding land. At its foot the city grew and flourished. At the top its flat summit is where the 1,000 sacred prostitutes served Aphrodite, the

goddess of love.

The most famous cult there was that of Aphrodite. In the old city of Corinth the worship of Aphrodite was especially popular. Aphrodite was worshiped elsewhere in Greece, but worship took on a unique form in Corinth. Sources say that a thousand prostitutes served in the temple of Aphrodite. The mixture of sexual immorality and religion was similar to the Baal worship of Old Testament times. In fact, worship of Aphrodite in Corinth was probably an imported version of Phoenician worship of Astarte (Astareth, or Ashtoreth in the O. T.). Astarte was the female consort of Baal. We cannot be sure that this blend of religion and immorality was still practiced in Paul's day, but it probably was. It was to this great city of commerce, religion and immorality that Paul came with a mission [ 5: 13f].

## PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP TO CORINTH

In Acts 18:1-8 we find Paul's initial contact with the Corinth. From our study from the Book of Acts we may glean certain facts that aid us in our current study.

1. It was in Corinth, on the Second Missionary Journey, that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, lived with them, and worked as a tent maker with them (18: 2-3).
2. They preached every Sabbath in the Synagogue (18: 4).
3. The arrival of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia added a dimension of urgency and intensity to Paul's preaching in Corinth (18: 5).
4. Paul was driven from his preaching in the synagogue and moved into the home of a proselyte named Titus Justus who lived near the synagogue (18: 6-7).
5. Crispus, a leader of the synagogue, and many Gentiles were converted (18:8).
6. Paul was encouraged in his ministry in Corinth and received a vision from the Lord. He remained in the city 18 months (18: 9-11).
7. The Jews brought Paul before Gallio, the Roman proconsul of Achaia, and demanded that he be punished for his contentious teaching. Gallio, regarding their requests as a Jewish dispute, refused to involve himself and allowed the Gentile crowd to rough up Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, who had replaced Crispus (18: 12-17).
8. Paul left Corinth, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him (18: 18).

After leaving Corinth, Paul sailed from Cenchrea to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla. He left

them in Ephesus and sailed to Caesarea, and from there made his way to Jerusalem. He later went to Antioch of Syria where he had been serving when the Lord called him to go on the first missionary trip. He then began the Third Missionary, which took him through Phrygia and Galatia again, and then he returned to Ephesus where he remained for nearly three years (Acts 18:19 - 19:1). In Paul's absence, the spiritual conditions within the church at Corinth had deteriorated greatly. He probably heard reports about conditions at Corinth from time to time (23: 27-28).

While Paul was at Ephesus, four distinct factions developed at Corinth (Paul, Apollos, Peter, Christ). Paul wrote a letter to Corinth which is lost to us, but one to which he refers in I Corinthians 5:9 (**Letter # 1**). Later he wrote the letter we know as the First Letter to the Corinthians (**Letter # 2**). He would write at least two more letters (**Letters 3 & 4**) to the Corinthians. One of those letters is 2 Corinthians, the other alluded to in the epistle. Some, however, believe that 2 Corinthians is made up of fragments of other letters, the balance of which are lost. In this study it will be assumed that this epistle is a unit and not a compilation of fragments. God inspired Scripture and God protected it. What God inspired, He protected. So, we have four letters from Paul to the church at Corinth - of which we have any knowledge.

Considering his long association with the church, and the nature of his relationship with them, it is certainly possible that he wrote a number of personal letters to the church. However, only those two which are a part of the New Testament canon were inspired by the Holy Spirit and destined to become a part of the Bible. Letters one and three were simply personal letters to the church from its founder. That does not preclude the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the writing of those two letters, or the subject matter, but it does rule out the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

## MOVING FROM I CORINTHIANS TO II CORINTHIANS

When Paul sent 1 Corinthians to the church at Corinth, he was planning a visit before too long. He planned to remain at Ephesus for a few more weeks (until after Pentecost), and then "pass through Macedonia in the course of the summer and autumn and so come to Corinth, where he might possibly spend the winter - probably the winter of A.D. 55-56 (1 C. 16.5-9)" [4: 164].

Some time later Paul modified his plans and decided to visit Corinth twice. He decided to visit Corinth first and then go on to Macedonia and then visit Corinth again on his return from Macedonia. After the second visit he would, according to this plan, sail to Palestine (2 Cor. 1:15f), assuming that the collection of the gift for the suffering saints in Jerusalem would have been completed in these Gentile churches around the Aegean (see 1 Cor. 16:1-4).

Paul was forced to change his plans because of a number of circumstances. First, there was the deadly peril which befell him "in Asia" (II Cor. 1:8-10). He does not reveal what the peril was but it obviously had an impact on his plans. Secondly, there was news of more trouble in Corinth, which

made it necessary for him to pay an immediate visit to the church there. It seems that 1 Corinthians had not been as effective in correcting problems in the church as Paul had hoped (and as God had intended). Some suggest that “Timothy was not strong enough to enforce the apostle's directions” [4: 164].

Timothy may have brought back news of the trouble and Paul decided that nothing short of a personal confrontation with the church would work and therefore set sail for Corinth. This “second visit” (2 Cor. 13:2) was a **painful visit**, both for Paul and the church members (2 Cor. 2:1). During this painful visit, one of the members took the lead in defying Paul's apostolic authority and Paul, deeply hurt (2 Cor. 12:21), withdrew, possibly fulfilling his plans to pass through Macedonia.

Next, we find that Paul sent a stinging, **tearful letter** (or, sorrowful letter) to the Corinthian church. This was a letter which he wrote “out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears” (2 Cor. 2:3f). The “tearful letter” was the third letter Paul wrote to them (Bruce calls it “Corinthians C”). This letter was sent by Titus.

As soon as Titus departed for Corinth, Paul began to feel sorry he had written it. In it he assured them of his love for them, but insisted that they demonstrate their love for him by acknowledging his apostolic authority, particularly in reference to the man who had so boldly defied his apostolic authority. Even though he had regrets about the letter, he had assured Titus that the church members' hearts were in the right place.

After Titus sailed for Corinth, Paul experienced severe depression and also faced extreme danger from some other source (2 Cor. 1:8f). Later, possibly after the danger subsided, or when circumstances dictated, he went to Troas where he hoped to meet Titus on his return from Corinth. Bruce observes:

He waited probably until navigation across the Aegean had ceased for the winter, and since he knew that Titus would not be sailing straight across to Troas from Corinth but would be taking the land-route through Macedonia, he himself set out for Macedonia, and there too was a prey to inward anxiety as well as unspecified external troubles (2 Cor. 7:5) [4: 165].

Then Titus met him in Macedonia bringing him the good news that the “tearful letter” had been more effective than he could have imagined. They responded so strongly that they were in danger of going too far in the other direction in dealing with the offender. There were still some problems but Titus was delighted with their attitude and reported this to Paul. Paul sent them another letter (his **fourth letter**), this one, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would reveal Paul's joy in their response and answer some important questions. Even though chapters 10-13 are bold and cutting enough to have been called a “tearful letter,” this was, in a very real sense, a letter of reconciliation.

In this study it will be assumed that our **1 and 2 Corinthians are the second and fourth**

**letters** written by Paul to the church at Corinth and that **the first and third letters** are lost to us. Many, however, feel that 2 Corinthians is made up of the remaining fragments of two letters. They claim that the severe nature of chapters 10-13 suggests that these chapters were originally a part of the “tearful letter.”

There is an abrupt change in chapter 10, but R. G. V. Tasker has interesting point here. He says, “The opening words of 2 Cor. x, ‘now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ’, seem to suggest that the writer is conscious that he is going to write in a somewhat different strain from the earlier chapters, and to speak with special emphasis (cf. Gal. v. 2)” [14 - 32]. Tasker makes a valid point:

2 Corinthians has come down to us a single Epistle. In no MS is there any trace of a division at any point in the letter, or any variation in the arrangement of the material; and in no early Christian writer is there any suggestion that the document is composed of parts of different letters, or that it was not all written at one time to meet one particular need. And yet, in spite of the complete absence of any external evidence in support of their views, many modern scholars have felt justified from internal evidence in concluding that it embodies fragments of one or more earlier letters written by the apostle to the Corinthians [14: 24].

Those who hold opposite views will point to evidence to support their view. But, when trying to decide this issue, one must consider, not just the mind and emotions of Paul, but the mind and heart of God. One can become so caught up in an effort to try to recapture the emotions and intentions of the human author that he forgets the fact that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Author and that Paul was the human instrument by which the letter is communicated. This is not to say that the writing was simply mechanical, for the personality and education (compare Paul with Peter) of the human writer are seen, and is of interest. His motives in writing are clearly seen, but those motives are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

To reject this position and claim that this Epistle is a collection of fragments of earlier epistles raises a number of questions. Did God inspire the writing of Scripture He could not preserve? If some person compiled this epistle from fragments, how can we be sure that all the parts were inspired? Did uninspired parts find their way into the Bible? Or, Was the compilation what was inspired? My answer to those questions is simple: Every word of Scripture is God breathed, inspired by the Holy Spirit. That is **Divine Inspiration**. Every word God intended for us to have as His Holy Word has been miraculously preserved (**Divinely Preservation**). Today, many students of Scripture have their minds illuminated so that they may both understand Scripture and make a practical application of what they learn in their daily life. That is **Divine Illumination**. But why did I say that many understand the Word, and not all who read it? Paul explains in his First Epistle to Corinth that spiritual truths are spiritually discerned.

There are two groups who will not be able to understand Scripture. Lost people can study the characters and events of the Bible, and glean a lot of information and benefit from them. Thomas

Jefferson, a Deist, believed very strongly in the ethical principles of the Scripture and agreed with the position of almost all the Founding Fathers that the Constitution of the United States should be founded on Biblical principles. Yet, Jefferson took his scissors to his Bible and cut out stories of the supernatural. A lost person may read and retain more “information” from Scripture than some Christians. There are students of “religion” who have a very high IQ, while there are Christians who have a low IQ. At the same time, the Christian has been indwelt by the Divine Author Who will help him to make an application of what he does read and understand. There is another group that falls in the middle. Christians who are walking in the flesh have a limited understanding of Scripture, and often stumble in making an application in daily life.

## THE LETTER

In 2 Corinthians Paul focuses on two main points. First, there is the defense of his ministry. Paul is defending himself in order to defend the ministry, the Gospel he had preached at Corinth, and the doctrines he had taught them. The Holy Spirit inspired him to defend this ministry in a way that made the apostle very uncomfortable at times. But it is because of this that we have some practical guidelines for the ministry. Secondly, there is the call for the Christians at Corinth to join other churches in giving to the collection for the saints in Jerusalem.

Brian Harbour points out that “The major motivation was Paul’s desire to defend his apostleship. Second Corinthians is consequently one of the most personal of Paul’s epistles” [7: 5]. It may be both the most personal and the most emotional of the Pauline epistles.

## AN OUTLINE OF THE 2 CORINTHIANS

INTRODUCTION, 1:1-11.

- A. Salutation, 1:1-2.
- B. Paul praises the Lord Who comforts the afflicted, 1:3-11.

I. PAUL’S DEFENSE IN LIGHT OF THE PROBLEMS AT CORINTH, 1:12-2:13.

- A. He explains why he had changed his plans to visit them, 1:12-2:4.
- B. He asks that discipline be tempered with reason and love, 2:5-11.
- C. He missed both Titus and an open door for ministry at Troas, 2:12-13.

II. PAUL DEFENDS HIS APOSTOLIC MINISTRY, 2:14-6:10.

- A. He is confident of ultimate triumph, 2:14-17.



- B. This is not a letter of self-commendation, 3:1-3.
- C. He is a minister of the New Covenant, 3:4-18.
- D. He saw his ministry as supernatural, 4:1-6.
- E. He never permitted circumstances to take his eyes off Jesus, 4:7-18.
- F. Assurance of the Resurrection is a source of courage and hope, 5:1-9.
- G. He shares two compelling motives for faithfulness in the ministry, 5:10-21.
  - 1. He will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account, 5:10-13.
  - 2. The love of Christ was his great incentive, 5:14-21.
- H. Paul's ministry highlighted by righteous living, endurance in affliction, and numerous paradoxes, 6:1-10.

### III. PAUL'S EXHORTATIONS ARE BOTH PERSONAL AND EMOTIONAL, 6:11-7:16.

- A. He exhorts them to be open toward him, 6:11-13.
- B. He exhorts them to be separated from evil, 6:14-7:1.
- C. Their repentance would bring joy to Paul and revival to the church, 7:2-16.

### IV. COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS IN JUDEA OCCASION FOR INSPIRED TEACHING ON GIVING, 8:1-9:15.

- A. A basic principle for giving is found in the example of the churches of Macedonia, 8:1-6.
- B. The example of Jesus should motivate believers in helping those in need, 8:7-15.
- C. Exceptional care in handling the offering would motivate faithful giving, 8:16-9:5.
- D. In giving one will reap what he sows, whether sparingly or bountifully, 9:6-15.

### V. PAUL RETURNS TO THE DEFENSE OF HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY, 10:1-12:21.

- A. He answers the critics by establishing the authority of his apostleship, 10:1-18.
- B. He resorts to the "foolishness" of boasting in defense of his ministry, 11:1-12:18.
  - 1. He boasts of his jealousy for them, lest they be led astray, 11:1-6.
  - 2. He boasts that he had preached the Gospel to them without charge, 1:7-12.
  - 3. He warns them about false apostles, 11:13-15.
  - 4. He boasts that he had suffered for Christ, 11:16-33.
  - 5. He boasts of his visions and revelations, 12:1-10.
  - 6. He boasts of his unselfishness service, 12:11-18.
- C. Paul appeals to the Christians at Corinthians to repent, 12:19-21.

### CONCLUSION - 13:1-14.

- A. Paul states his plans, 13:1-10.
- B. He adds greetings and a benediction, 13:11-14.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE

### A. SALUTATION, 1:1-2.

**1:1 - PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST.** *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia.”* Paul is, of course, Saul of Tarsus, whom we first meet in Acts 7:58 where we learn that he watched the clothes of those who stoned Stephen. In Acts 8:1, we find that “Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.” Following this, the youthful Saul launched an assault on these people who had not yet been given the name Christians, but were simply thought of as “the Way.” He became a leader of the persecution in Jerusalem and was on the way to Damascus with letters from the high priest take the persecution to Syria when he met the Lord face to face on the Damascus Road. The Roman government gave the Sanhedrin authority over religious matters concerning the Jews who lived in other provinces.

Saul, “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1), and armed with letters of authorization, set out for Damascus with his band of enforcers to spread the persecution of believers to another part of the Roman world. His plans were to take those who followed “the Way” back to Jerusalem for trial. But on the way to Damascus something happened that changed everything - both for Saul of Tarsus and for the world (see Acts 9:3ff). There on the blinding light and heard the voice of Jesus, saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Paul asked, “Who art Thou, Lord?” Jesus answered, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” Saul was taken on to Damascus where he continued three days without sight and without food or drink. The Lord sent Ananias, one of the believers in Damascus to restore Saul’s sight and to tell him that he was a “chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

Paul, now on his Third Missionary Journey among the Gentiles, is writing this Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Because of charges made by some of the Jews, he is forced to defend his apostolic authority. It is only natural that he would begin the introduction to the letter by stating his apostleship.

Judaizers from Jerusalem had hounded Paul’s steps attacking both him personally and the Gospel he preached. The opposition began from this group of Jewish believers as soon as Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria with their report that Gentiles had been saved in a number of cities and churches had been planted in those places. In the church at Antioch, there were Christian Gentiles, Christian Jews, and the Judaizers who professed faith in Christ but insisted that Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be saved. They added works to grace, which is clearly incompatible as Paul wrote in Romans 11:6. Paul requested the Jerusalem Conference of A. D. 51 (Acts 15 and Galatians 2), at which it was held that Gentiles are saved the same way as Jews - that it, by grace through faith. The Judaizers lost but followed Paul and Silas as they went back to the church which had been planted by Paul and Barnabas on the First Missionary Journey.

The opposition in Corinth may well have included some Judaizers, but from the nature of the problems there, and from the character of the epistle itself, it seems likely that those who had attacked Paul and his message at Corinth were people other than the Judaizers. However, there are similarities in their attack, even if the issues were not identical.

**BY THE WILL OF GOD.** Paul was not a self-appointed apostle, and therefore a false apostle. Rather, he was an apostle by the will of God, called personally by Jesus Himself. The Apostle to the Gentiles was an apostle of equal rank with Peter, John, or any of the other apostles - that had been challenged by the Judaizers in Galatia, just as it had been challenged by these opponents of Paul in Corinth..

**AND TIMOTHY.** This is not to say that Timothy was the co-author of the epistle. Timothy who was with Paul at they time of the writing, would be sent from Ephesus to Corinth with this epistle (Acts. 19:22). In the first letter to the Corinthians we find Paul introducing himself in the same way and adding “and Sosthenes our brother.” It is possible that Sosthenes was his amanuensis then as Timothy is now, and that Paul was dictating the epistle to his son in the ministry. Another possibility is that since Timothy had been unsuccessful in dealing with the problems at Corinth, they might have lost respect for him and Paul includes his name as a statement to them that Timothy is a fellow missionary who is worthy of their respect.

**TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH.** The letter was sent to the church at Corinth and to all the saints of Achaia. The new, or restored Corinth, was made the capital of Achaia and the pro-consul lived there (Acts 18:12). So, this was a circular letter that would be read first at Corinth and the copied and sent on to other churches of Achaia. We are not told what other churches there were in Achaia. Athens was in Achaia, but we are not told that there was a church there at this time. It would seem that here, as in other places, Paul concentrated his missionary work, on the major population centers along major Roman roads and people from the small towns and villages who were saved while visiting the larger city would return to plant churches in their own towns and villages.

**1:2 - GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE.** “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Grace (*charis*) is the usual Greek greeting and carries the basic idea of joy, pleasure, or beauty. In a Greek letter it simple meant “greetings.” In the New Testament it refers to the unmerited love or favor of God and stresses the fact that through faith in Jesus Christ we receive something would could never merit on our own. This is the Greek word from which we get the beautiful name, “Karen.”

Peace (*eirene* in Greek; Shalom in Hebrew) was the normal Hebrew greeting. The Greek word means peace, or rest and is used in contrast with strife, denoting the absence of strife [18: 1686]. The Hebrew word means more. It goes a step further and assumes a more positive attitude. Rather than simply wishing one the absence of strife, it refers to everything that brings the highest good to that person. It points to everything it takes to help him reach his highest potential and make his life worth while. This is the Greek word from which we get the name, “Irene,” which though not as common as it once was, is a beautiful name, a name with a particularly beautiful sentiment.

Paul sends this letter with a prayer that they would know both the grace and the peace of God. You cannot have one without the other, and they only come in this order. Peace is always dependent grace. Without grace there is no peace (certainly not the peace that passes all understanding). The grace of God is always unmerited. There is nothing one can do to earn eternal life, but “the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 3:23b).

## **B. Paul praises the Lord Who comforts the afflicted, 1:3-11.**

**1:3 - BLESSED.** *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.”* This is from the word which may be translated eulogy. It is used of man in Genesis 24:31, but in the New Testament it is used only in reference to God (as in Luke 1:68 and 2 Cor. 11:31).

**NOTE:** In this letter Paul has **no prayer of thanksgiving** for the saints and **no commendation**. But he does find reason to **praise the Lord**.

**THE GOD AND FATHER.** God is identified by many names and titles in the Bible. He is God, Lord, YHWH, Father, the Almighty. Here He is identified as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Frequently in the New Testament when both the Father and Son are mentioned in the same passage the Father is referred to as God or Father and Jesus is referred to as the Lord.

**THE FATHER OF MERCIES.** Paul adds a word to each name for the Lord. He is the Father of mercies. Satan is the father of liars. God is the Father of mercies. This is another glorious title for our Lord. There are many names for God in the Bible; none are without significance, all merit considerable study and meditation.

**THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT.** The word for comfort means to call along side, or to call to one's side. This is the word Jesus used in referring to the Holy Spirit as Comforter (*paraklete*, Gr.) in John 14 and 16. In Isaiah 40:1 he says, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people” (KJV) In God the tormented soul finds comfort. I once heard the late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, who had been president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there, preach on Isaiah 40:1ff. He made a statement I will never forget: “The Word of God is so designed as to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

**1:4 - WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR AFFLICTIONS.** *“Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”* It has been said that the Gospel is designed to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. All those afflicted with sorrow, grief and anxiety will find comfort in God if they go to Him in faith. The Greek word Paul used for afflicted denotes actual physical pressure. In the early church, a decision for Christ invited trouble. Today that trouble might come in the form of a burden to the spirit or soul, but it must still be expected.

**THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO COMFORT.** “That” expresses the reason we are comforted. God comforts us and He expects us to comfort others in their affliction. Robertson observes that “Paul here gives the purpose of affliction in the preacher’s life, in any Christian’s life, to qualify him for ministry to others” [12: 208]. Personal experience with God’s comfort is very important in our ministry to others.

**1:5 - THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.** “*For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.*” From Isaiah 53 we learned that the Messiah would be a Suffering Servant. We also see that His suffering was vicarious (he suffered for us). Reflecting on the sufferings of Jesus Christ through the scourging and the crucifixion, we might remind ourselves that the word “excruciating” means “out of the cross.” Paul mentions some of his suffering for the cause of Christ in various epistles, but no one ever suffered like Jesus. For one thing, Jesus had never sinned, He deserved none of the agony. It was all for us.

**IN ABUNDANCE.** The idea here is that the sufferings of Christ overflow upon His disciples. Paul identifies his own suffering with the suffering of Christ (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24). Does this mean that we simply identify with the suffering of Christ, or that if we are faithful to Him we must expect to suffer for His sake?

**OUR COMFORT.** Just as our suffering may be in abundance when we witness for Jesus Christ, the comfort we receive through Him will be in abundance. We should be comforted, not by the prospects of suffering for the cause of Christ, but by the knowledge that we are suffering for Him and that and that He is our comfort. He offers comfort in times of stress, but we should never forget that Jesus Christ is our comfort. Our comfort is not dependant upon an emotion but a Person.

**1:6 - IF WE ARE AFFLICTED.** “*But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.*” He had been afflicted and knew that if he continued in his ministry he could expect more affliction. The modern reader of 2 Corinthians may not expect to suffer as Paul did but in one way or another, if he is a faithful witness for Christ, Satan will oppose him. The world will oppose him. Sooner or later that opposition will lead to affliction. If you have not been afflicted by Satan and his allies lately, maybe it is because your witness and your ministry are too weak to attract their attention.

For many years a few people have been trying to bring the sufferings of Christians around the world to our attention in America. Most people seem unaware of the fact that in Muslim countries Christians are often subjected to severe persecutions and even death. Their children are sold into slavery and their property is confiscated. To receive Jesus Christ as Savior is to invite severe persecution. In America, if one plays it safe - just goes to church on Sunday morning and then blends in with the world the rest of the time - he can avoid persecution for his faith. Most Christians in America are at ease in Zion, and do not even reflect upon any need for this comfort - which may indicate that they really do not know what being a Christian means.

Paul wanted them to know that if he was afflicted it was for their comfort and salvation. He does not mean that he can save others by suffering, even if he is suffering for them. What he means is that if he is afflicted it will be because of his effort to bring the Gospel message of salvation to them.

**IF WE ARE COMFORTED.** Whether Paul was afflicted or comforted during his affliction, it was his desire to encourage them. One who has experienced such comfort could more effectively comfort others during their time of trouble. I had visited many families in their hour of grief, preached a lot of funeral messages, and stood by many grave-sides before I stood before that of my own father. He died on Mother's day that year and was buried on my birthday, May 12. The following year we held funeral services for my mother on the anniversary of my father's death. Before that time I had to say, "I know I really don't know how you feel, but I am here and I care and I am praying for you." Now, I can say, "I understand. I know how it feels."

When I was pastor of West Side Baptist Church in Bastrop, Louisiana, Perry Talley, one of our deacons, gave me his golf clubs. He told me that after his second back surgery he would not be able to use them again. I was pleased to have the golf clubs and expressed my regret that he had to give them to me because of a health problem. Several years later, I experienced a physical injury that might have left me disabled, and did leave me semi-disabled (my term for it) for an extended period of time. During that time I recalled the gift of the golf clubs and then I understood what my friend must have gone through before he reached the decision that he would never be able to play again. Because of my affliction, I believe that some of the people I have counseled with have felt that I really did understand their problems more because of what I had been through myself.

Paul, it is believed, suffered from an illness that may have been some reoccurring problem. Many have speculated that Luke often traveled with him for that reason. Some interpret his reference to his health in Galatians to malaria or some kind of swamp fever. It is also believed by many that he had poor vision, but that is not the primary source of the afflictions here. So much of his suffering came from persecutions and other perils, like shipwrecks, hunger, imprisonment, and beatings.

**PATIENT ENDURING.** Here we find the key to victory over affliction. Spiritually minded believers are the ones who will endure with patience without giving up or becoming discouraged. The key to patient endurance is their faith. The word for "patient" denotes a willingness to remain under (to bear up under).

**1:7 - OUR HOPE.** *"And our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort."* This carries with it the idea of waiting with expectation, but also with patience, with special emphasis on of endurance. The believer's hope in God is not just wishful thinking, not pie in the sky bye and bye. It is far more than that. But the "hope" is not the believer's hope in God, but Paul's hope for these Corinthian saints. What is his hope for them? It is that they be sharers with him, both in affliction and in comfort. This involves true fellowship in Christian service. The word translated fellowship in the New Testament denotes a partnership (participation) in worship and ministry.

**FIRMLY GROUNDED.** There has never been a time when Christians did not need to be firmly grounded for their own edification, and there has never been a time when the church did not need its members to be firmly grounded in Jesus Christ and in sound doctrine for it to be a healthy church. Unity, growth, and fellowship in the local church depend upon sound doctrine, not love as many think. Even though love is essential, that which binds us together in the Lord's work is (1), a relationship with Jesus Christ, (2) the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, and (3) sound doctrine. When those things are present we will love one another. You cannot love God without loving one another as we are clearly taught in 1 John and you cannot have a mature relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit that is based on false doctrine. If the word "doctrine" cause anyone a problem, he should substitute the word "truth".

**SHARERS.** Does Paul mean that these saints in Corinth are experiencing the same persecution and afflictions he is facing in Ephesus? Considering the political and spiritual climate in Rome at the time, there was always the danger of persecution, and if not outright persecution, certainly there would be "afflictions" of various kinds, financial, political, familial, and cultural. However, it is possible that Paul means that they, as his brothers and sisters in Christ, suffer when he suffers, they are afflicted when he is afflicted. In which case, his comfort would be their comfort. His comfort was in the Lord and they would share in that comfort.

**1:8 - OUR AFFLICTION.** *"For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life."* Paul has already given us some insight into the relationship between affliction and comfort. Now, as if to illustrate the point from his own personal experience, he alludes to some recent affliction. We do not know what the affliction was, but it happened in Asia, probably in Ephesus. He does not tell us here whether it was personal illness. If the reference is to physical illness he must have been seriously ill - he "despaired even of life."

There is every reason to assume that the affliction might have been intense persecution, or even the threat of death (see vs. 9). We do know that the disciples prevented his facing the mob led by Demetrius in Ephesus (Acts 20:30ff). We also know that Priscila and Aquila risked their lives for Paul in Ephesus (Rom. 16:4). Since he had so many enemies, it is possible

that there was a recent plot to kill him. If so, this might have caused him to leave Ephesus for Troas when he did.

However, since he expected to meet Titus at Troas, he may have left when he did in order to keep an appointment with Titus.

What we do know is that Paul had experienced the comfort of God in the midst of the greatest afflictions, and he had experienced deliverance from a life-threatening experience.

To express the anguish he had felt Paul uses a number of words with which many of us can identify: "tribulation" (v. 4), "sufferings" (v. 5), "afflicted" (v. 6), "burdened", "despaired" (v. 8), and "sentence of death" (v. 9). Paul's deliverance was made possible through a Sovereign God (v. 10) because of the prayers of fellow believers (v. 11). How the prayers of the saints can in some sense move a Sovereign God is both a beautiful and a mysterious truth taught in the Word of God [BSB].

**WE DESPAIRED EVEN OF LIFE.** What ever the affliction was, his life was in danger and it was beyond his power to endure it. It was up to the Lord to deliver him, and He did deliver him. Paul was not paranoid, and he was not letting his imagination run away with him. The Greek word from which we get the word "witness" is also the word for "martyr." Paul, like so many other First Century believers understood that he was taking his life in his own hands when he became a witness for Jesus Christ.

There are many places in the world today where Christians are ostracized, persecute, imprisoned, and killed for the cause of Christ. It is easy for an American Christian to admire Paul from a distance without giving a thought to the potential costs of a total commitment to the Lord. Paul was not exaggerating when he wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). However, following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the threat of persecution from radical Islamic groups seems a far greater threat than ever before in America. Christians are being persecuted around the world by radical Muslims today. Of the fifteen million people Hitler's Nazis slaughtered, six million were Jews and millions more were Christians. Of the estimated forty to sixty million people killed by Communists in the Soviet Union and possible forty million killed by the Chinese Communists, millions were Christians. The radical Muslims who brainwash ignorant peasants and persuade them to commit suicide bomb attacks on innocent civilians are more barbaric than the Marxists.



A precursor to persecution in America may well be seen in laws that permit Muslims to pray in public schools while denying that privilege to Christians and Jews. There are only about six million Muslims in America, yet with the support of the media, they are claiming rights and privileges that previously granted only to Humanistic evolution, but denied Christians and Jews.

**1:9 - THE SENTENCE OF DEATH.** *“Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.”* Death seemed imminent. It was completely beyond Paul’s control. This was possibly the affliction mentioned in the previous verse, but there may have been more than one threat. Whatever the danger was, only God could deliver him. The God Who raises the dead had delivered him from what he considered to be certain death. Robertson suggests that we have here a further purpose of God in affliction, in addition to verse 4 [12: 211]. The Lord took advantage of this opportunity to teach Paul a lesson about faith in time of crisis.

We need to come to terms with suffering, affliction, and even persecution in the world today. Many wonder how we can say that God is just and permit His people to suffer injustice. How can He be merciful and permit His people do be denied mercy? How can He claim to love us and permit us to be persecuted? Those who ask those questions do not know the Scripture. Jesus suffered and bled and died for us and He told us that He did not come to bring peace but a sword. Jesus taught that if we are faithful to Him we will be persecuted, and it seems reasonable that the more faithful we are to Him the more we risk affliction and persecution.

Suffering is not pleasant, or we surely would not call it suffering, but let us remember that Jesus put Himself in harm’s way for us. He Who voluntarily suffered and died for us told us that we can expect to suffer for the cause of the Gospel. No one who suffers for Christ should be surprised. Surely Paul was not surprised. We should make a commitment to be faithful to the God Who is faithful to us (1 John 1:9). Perhaps the health and wealth Gospel preached by some radio and television evangelists has conditioned many believers to believe that if they do certain things, God will make them healthy, wealthy, and wise. At His discretion, God blesses some with health and others with wealth - and some with both. But He does not bless all with wealth or health. If by His grace, He chooses to let you be one of those whose stewardship involves being unpopular, being ridiculed, being deprived, or even being persecuted, we should not only face it, we should thank Him for the opportunity to bear a witness for Him under the circumstances.

The church in America today is in a theological maze, with millions gathering every Sunday to sing praise songs and then go on their merry way - to the lake, the mall, to a movie, or to a ball game. Such a shallow commitment does not anticipate persecution. Why would Satan bother with them, they are no threat to him and they are spiritually fruitless and barren. Music is a great aid in worship, but a very poor substitute for it.

In a day when even the most active church members are more focused on a mansion on a hill than a dwelling place in Heaven, it may not be easy for some to expose themselves to danger for the Cross the way Paul did in his day. After all, what did Paul have to lose? What do you have to lose

that you are not going to lose anyway? I have often said that some professing Christians do not seemed to be concerned about “taking it with them;” they don’t act like they think they are going anywhere.

**1:10 - SO GREAT A PERIL OF DEATH.** *“Who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.”* He had considered himself as good as dead, but God delivered him. This was not the first time, nor would it be the last time God would deliver him. The word “delivered” is from the word which means to rescue as one might draw one from a pit (recall Jeremiah's experience).

**ON WHOM WE HAVE SET OUR HOPE.** Paul could face death without fear because of his conviction that “He will deliver us...” Most Christians really do not know how they would react to the threat of death. Paul knew from experience. His philosophy of life was, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

**1:11 - HELPING US THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS.** *“You also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.”* When Paul received the good report from Timothy about the Corinthian church he exhorted them to pray for him. His faith in intercessory prayer is seen also in Rom. 15:30-31; Phil. 1:9; Col. 4:12.

Paul had great faith in intercessory prayer. He knew that while there were those who opposed him in Corinth, there were many who were praying for him. Paul considered people to be his prayer partners. Their prayers would help - and had helped - deliver him from suffering and persecution. Here we see that prayer partners participate not only in intercession but also in thanksgiving.

There are a number of people today who have taken God at His word and committed themselves to pray for others. A number of Christian leaders have led conferences on the subject of intercessory prayer. But some of the best testimonies come from individuals who have benefitted from intercessory prayer.

When my brother, James Sanders, learned that he had a malignant tumor wrapped around his spinal column, he listened to his doctors and had surgery and began receiving radiation therapy and followed that with chemotherapy. But more than anything else, he looked to the Lord to save his life and restore his health. He stressed his confidence in intercessory prayer. Learning that concerned Christians all over the mid-south were praying for him was a source of comfort and hope. Every Christian can do this much for another. But intercessory prayer calls for a commitment many are not willing to make.

There is more to my brother’s story. Not only did he look to the Lord for deliverance from cancer and all the side effects of the surgery, radiation, and chemo-therapy, he did all he could to help himself. Following surgery he was partially paralyzed from his waist down. Therapy was tried, but in time he could tell that the therapists were beginning to give up on him. “I could see it in their eyes,”

he said. He wanted parallel bars build on his patio, so I took tools to his house in Bossier City, Louisiana where he lived at the time and cut and routed top bars so they would be smooth and and he enlisted a friend to build the parallel bars. He began just trying to get onto his feet and walk between them from one end to the other. He could not really tell when his feet touched the floor, but he just kept trying, refusing to give up until he could stand, and then take steps without falling. He had to have help getting on his three-wheeler, but when he did he rode it around the yard.

Everyone in his neighborhood watched his progress and appreciated his determination. Then the day came when he began driving. He could not feel his feet on the accelerator or brake, so he could only drive in the daytime. He was forced into retirement, but in time his walking improved to the point that he could do the chores he need to do around his home as long as he could take his time. There are times when his feet burned and his calves feel restricted as though they were in a vise. When that happened he had to take a day or two off and keep his feet elevated. He is convinced that he is free of cancer today because the Lord answered his prayers and those of his family and friends. He is also convinced that if he had not put forth a maximum effort to rehabilitate himself he would not be walking today. He leads a busy life today by the grace of God.

## **II. PAUL'S PERSONAL DEFENSE IS NECESSARY IN LIGHT OF THE PROBLEMS AT CORINTH, 1:12-2:13.**

### **A. He Explains Why He Had Changed His Plans to Visit them, 1:12-2:4.**

**1:12 - OUR PROUD CONFIDENCE.** *“For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”* The NIV has “our boast.” Robertson notes that this points to the “act of glorifying,” while in verse 14, the emphasis is the thing boasted of [12: 211].

In these verses (12-20), Paul had changed his travel plans with respect to Corinth (vv. 15-17; 2:1-4). He had obviously written (the tearful letter?), or sent word that he intended to visit the church, but had been prevented, possibly by the great affliction to which he had referred. Whatever the reason, his change of plans gave his opponents an opportunity to accuse him of inconsistency, if not a misrepresentation of the truth. “Paul’s response is graciously but firmly to affirm his integrity and sincerity in his conscience, character, and conduct. Unlike his opponents, Paul claimed a transparency and clarity for his message, ministry, and methods. This will become especially evident in chs. 10, 11, 12, 13. Paul provided some valuable guidelines for how we ought to respond to those who have misunderstood us” [BSB].

**THE TESTIMONY OF OUR CONSCIENCE.** The conscience is not an infallible guide, but at

the same time the conscience is not to be regarded lightly. The conscience may be shaped by one's environment, by certain disciplines, or by other people - parents or teachers - who do not know Jesus Christ of the Scriptures. In which case, one may be in opposition to the will of God even though he is following his conscience. For the Christian, the conscience can never be a substitute for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his or her heart. At the same time, the conscience that is formed and nurtured by the Holy Spirit will serve to honor and glorify the Lord in all things.

**IN HOLINESS AND GODLY SINCERITY.** Paul and his companions had walked before these believers in the in the spirit and not in the flesh - "not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God." Paul stresses that this is how we had "conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you." We must walk in the spirit even while dealing with those of this world, but above all else, this should be our commitment in all dealings with other believers.

**NOT IN FLESHLY WISDOM.** All wisdom is not fleshly wisdom but there is a wisdom of this world which seems never to understand the difference in the wisdom of the spirit and the wisdom of the flesh. A Baptist deacon lamented the fact that in his church there were a number of financial experts who were active members and could make a significant contribution if asked to serve on the finance committee. However, these people were regularly left off the committee. In some cases when one did serve, any change he might suggest was quickly over-ruled by someone who had very little expertise. That is not to claim that the church finances should only be controlled by bankers and accountants. But there is no reason that a Christian accountant cannot practice spiritual wisdom.

There are times when problems arise in the church and the pastor or some other member, or members, must deal with the issue. It would be interesting to know how many times church leaders resort to worldly wisdom in trying to solve a problem. How many times is that solution influenced by how many people one is related to in the church, what their position is in the community, how long they have been in the church, or how much money they give?

A pastor once felt led to talk with a wealthy deacon with a lot of influence in the church and community. It seems that the deacon had served an alcoholic beverage at his daughter's wedding. The pastor visited with him and shared his convictions about alcoholic beverages and reminded him of the position the church took on the subject. He tried to point out the harm it could do to his testimony and to the witness of the church, especially since everyone in the area knew about it. The deacon asked to be placed on the inactive list. The pastor's days were numbered in that church! If the pastor had been using worldly how do you think he would have dealt with the problem?

**WE HAVE CONDUCTED OURSELVES.** Paul and his fellow missionaries had conducted themselves in such a way before the church that they had more than enough opportunity to observe how scrupulous Paul was in all things. He had spend eighteen months with them (Acts 18:11), during which time his life had been an open book. Today, a pastor will encourage people to look to Jesus as an infallible guide. How do they look to Jesus? The Bible is an infallible guide to the mind of God, the heart of Jesus, the nature of the Holy Spirit. Before the completion of the New Testament Canon there was no complete Bible for them to use. What these people in Corinth knew about Jesus they

learned from Paul; what they learned of the life and character of Christ they learned from observing the way Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke lived in their midst. The Holy Spirit guided the missionaries and He instructed the people as they observed the missionaries and listened to the sermons and lectures.

**1:13 - FOR WE WRITE.** *“For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end.”* Paul had to defend himself. “He wrote what God revealed to him in these letters in readable, understandable language. He suggested that a partial insight would give way to a clearer understanding of him and his ministry” [DSB]. Paul’s sincerity is the emphasis here as he defends his ministry and his call against charges made against him. His is a holy and godly sincerity, he is writing from the heart. His conscience has been yielded to the Holy Spirit. There is a lot at stake and therefore it is important that they accept his explanation. If they could not accept the messenger they might well doubt the message, which was the idea behind his critics.

Attacks on the Lord’s servants can be incredible intense, even when there is no basis for the criticism. Some of the most intense and animated criticism I have ever received was when I done the least to deserve it. I well remember the lady who I visited in the funeral home as soon as I learned of her husband’s death. As I spoke, I could tell my words were not getting through to her, and under the circumstances that is often to be expected. But in this case, I could tell she was not buying anything I had to say. Finally, she said, “Brother Sanders, I just thank God my husband did not live long enough to know how little you cared about him, and that you did not visit him.” I had only recently driven quite some distance to visit him in a hospital in another location. No family member ever contacted me about him to let me know he had been transferred to a nursing home in our area. When I learned of it from others I went to the nursing home and asked about him, only to be told that he was not there. He had been taken to a nursing home in another town. I was shocked when I heard of the man’s death. The grieving widow, who was obviously trying to numb her feelings with alcohol, had made up her mind and nothing I could say made any difference. I assure her that I had visited her husband only recently - but no family member was there. She said, “Yeah, I heard you dropped by.” I assured her that I had not “dropped by,” but made the trip only to see her husband. She brought up the fact that I could not have tried to visit him in the nursing home where she worked because “they would have told me.” When I assured her that if I had known where he was I would have visited him, she said, “Well, Bill Smith (not his real name) knew!” Of course Bill Smith had not mentioned it to me. I finally excused myself and left.

I have also found it interesting that those who have criticized me the most vehemently and intensively have often been people in whom I had invested the most time and energy. This was especially true when someone else was agitating the situation for his own reasons. A fellow pastor told me once that an older pastor had warned him when he moved to a new church that “the person who helps you hang your curtains will be first one to try to run off.”

Paul’s letter is practical and applicable to local church situations today. There are still people in many churches with a “run it or ruin it” attitude. They will support their church as long as they are

elected to the offices they desire and chair key committees. I was once told that a certain person would never support me because he had not been elected to serve on the Pastor Search Committee. They were right. A name who was not active in the church once told me, "I know times when that man has tried to get you under his thumbs that you don't even know about."

It is only fair to state that most pastors are deeply indebted to those who offer their unwavering support for their pastor. One man once told me that a certain small faction would use anything they could find against me - he based that on the way he had seen them treat other pastors. He counseled me to be very careful what I said to any critic because I could expect to be misquoted. He went on to say, "If they make charges against you, don't respond to it. Let us deal with it for you." Paul could have no deeper love for anyone at Corinth than I have for that man - and many others like him. I know Paul's sense of gratitude. I also know there are times when the pastor must make sure his motives are not misunderstood.

**I HOPE YOU WILL UNDERSTAND.** It is important for them to understand fully "until the end." The report Titus had brought to Paul showed that the majority of the people did now understand his change of plans. He is concerned that they continue to understand; that they would not be swayed by his opponents in the church.

**1:14 - YOU...PARTIALLY...UNDERSTAND.** *"Just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus."* Is he thinking of the original Pauline faction (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4) as some think, or does he mean that the church as a whole had only partially understood him? The Pauline faction did glory in Paul, but it would seem more natural to assume that he includes the whole church. In light of the victory of the truth in their church (according to Titus' report), he is saying, if he is their ground for rejoicing, they are his also.

**THE DAY OF OUR LORD JESUS.** The "Day of the Lord" receives sufficient emphasis in the New Testament to claim our attention. "The Day of the Lord" points to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The title "Lord" in the Old Testament refers irrefutably to God the Father, but in the Pauline Epistles it denotes Jesus Christ.

While the term "Trinity" is not used in the Bible, there are sufficient references to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the trinitary nature of the Great Three-in-One God, God in Three Persons. The First Person of the Trinity is usually referred to in the Pauline Epistles as God or the Father; the Third Person, as the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit; and the Second Person of the Godhead, is identified by the name, Jesus," or the title, "Christ," as the Son, or simply as the "Lord." The Bible reveals God to us as One in essence, three in personality.

Francis Shaeffer testified that he was able to move from agnosticism to theism when he came to understand the doctrine of the Trinity. Since there is a horizontal relationship within the Trinity, there was no inadequacy within the Godhead that demanded that God create man for fellowship. God is complete within Himself. He created man for His pleasure, just as He created the universe for His pleasure. Of all the things God created, the only creation that has brought grief to Him is the one

creature created in His Own image. Yet, that is the one creation for whom God sent His Son to die on the Cross so that there would be a means by which that creation might have eternal life.

**1:15 - I INTENDED AT FIRST TO COME TO YOU.** *“In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing.”* The imperfect tense is used and it might be paraphrased, “I was intending to come at first to you.” This was his plan at first, while in Ephesus. He planned to go to Achaia directly from Ephesus and from Achaia to Macedonia; then return to Achaia on his way to Judea. Circumstance had prevented that first visit with them. It is possible that he was waiting for the return of Titus with a message from them, but when Titus did not return as soon as he was expecting him, he was forced to change his plans. Titus did not arrive by the time the sailing season on the open sea ended, so Paul went to Philippi where he met him. Titus, traveling by land, came to Philippi with an encouraging report.

**THAT YOU MIGHT TWICE RECEIVE A BLESSING.** If he visited them twice they might have a second blessing. The blessing, or the joy, would, of course be mutual. Paul, contrary to false charges, is not in love with himself, he is not an ego-maniac. He is confident, however, that if he meets with them God will bless their worship and their fellowship.

**1:16 - TO PASS YOUR WAY.** *“That is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.”* The original plans called for Paul to sail from Ephesus to Corinth to visit them, then he would travel to Macedonia (Philippi) and return to Corinth before going to Judea. It seems obvious that they were aware of his plans, and that he had come under considerable criticism for changing those plans. He was accused of vacillating.

**TO BE HELPED ON MY JOURNEY TO JUDEA.** Paul uses this same verb (to be helped, to be sent forward) in Romans 15:24, where he expects the same help from the church at Rome on his proposed missionary trip to Spain. His opponents in Corinth took advantage of this change of plans to accuse Paul of vacillating, or even lying to them. They were looking for any occasion to criticize him and thought they had found one in this. These opponents were possibly members of one of the opposing factions in the Corinthian church which are introduced to us in the First Epistle to Corinth (Paul, Peter, Appolos, and the Christ faction).

It is a well known fact that there are people in many churches who are always seeking fault in preachers, just as enemies were determined to find fault with Jesus. Paul is forced into the unpleasant position of having to explain his actions to the church, knowing that nothing he could say would convince those who had set themselves against him.

Sadly, many pastors have been through forced termination in the last three or four decades, many with very little cause, few with the two legitimate reasons for dismissing a pastor - heresy and immorality (unethical, illegal). Just as sad is the fact that when charges are brought the pastor may well have to stand by and watch the opposition cultivate support. Often when light opposition does not encourage to the pastor to resign, some people will turn vicious. Through it all, the pastor knows

that once he begins to defend himself all he does is give the opposition ammunition to use against him.

It does not take a lot of courage to attack a pastor, it is like shooting fish in a barrel. No one in our society is more vulnerable than the average pastor. Unfortunately, very few ministers are blessed with supporters who will encourage him to remain silent and let them defend him. This is extremely rare, because most of his support will gradually erode as various people assure him that the love him and they believe in him, “But we are going to have to live with these people after you are gone.” One would be tempted to say, “Are you not also going to have to live with God? And He is not going anywhere!” We can thank the Lord that there are some people who are committed to doing what is right in the sight of God, regardless of what their neighbors think or say.

**1:17 - I WAS NOT VACILLATING.** *“Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”* This verse may be paraphrased like this: “Did my change of plans indicate that I couldn’t make up my mind? Am I like a worldly man who says yes and no at the same time?” In 1 Cor. 16:5. “Paul had promised to go to Corinth. In the second ‘lost’ letter (between 1 and 2 Corinthians) he may have said something different, which seemed to make him say yes and no at the same time. His present itinerary was Ephesus to Troas to Macedonia to Corinth [RSB].

As distasteful as this was, he is forced to deny these rather absurd charges. What person among his critics had not made similar changes in plans of numerous occasions? He asks, “Do you think I was showing fickleness.” The NIV has, “When I planned this, did I do it lightly?”

“Vacillating” is a sign of weakness. After all, how can you ever trust a person who is constantly vacillating like a some modern politicians? For example, senatorial candidate Al Gore, and presidential candidate Al Gore were like two different people. One was strongly opposed to abortion and for tobacco, the other was militantly pro-abortion and opposed to tobacco. Jacob had to face the fact that his first-born son Reuben was “unstable as water” (Gen. 49:4).

**THAT WHICH I PURPOSE.** Paul is denying that he is guilty of fickleness in any of his plans. In all his plans he tried to follow the Holy Spirit and there had been no vacillation in any of his plans, now or any other time.

**YES, YES AND NO, NO.** We find a similar repetition of this in James 5:12, “Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay” (KJV). With Paul the yea means yea and the nay means nay. He is not fickle. When growing up in the Mississippi delta, I heard neighbors use the term “wishy-washy” to describe a fickle person. Our closest neighbor was Garfield Ellis, a black man who farmed land across the road from our farm. He once commented to me about a person who was inconsistent. He said, “I call them ‘sometime people.’ Sometime they are this way, and sometime they are that way.”

This was a serious charge against Paul and it was a label he refused to wear. Such a reputation would hinder his ministry. The minister today should pay attention to his plans to avoid a reputation for vacillating. He should keep his appointments and keep them on time - if he does not



keep them on time he does not keep them at all. If changes in plans have to be made, he should be sure to clear them with others concerned. God will bless and use stability in the Christian's life, whether the person in the pulpit or the one in the pew. There should be a godly consistency in the believer's life.

**1:18 - OUR WORD TO YOU IS NOT YES AND NO.** *“But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.”* He would never say one thing and mean another. He would not say “yes” when he meant “no”. He would not say “yes” today and change it to “no” tomorrow. He calls God as witness to the truth of what he is saying.

One point in little danger of being overstated is that when we are born again we receive a new nature. Since we are born from above, not from below, our nature is that of the Christ Who indwells us, not of the world that once enslaved us. God tells us that He never changes, He is faithful (1 John 1:9). If we are children of God we have received a new nature and that nature does not vacillate.

**1:19 - THE SON OF GOD, CHRIST JESUS.** *“For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us--by me and Silvanus and Timothy--was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.”* Jesus was Paul's example as He is ours; and Jesus was not a yes and no person. With Him, yes meant yes and no meant no. One of the primary attributes of God is His immutability. He never changes; He has no need to change. We are not immutable, but Christ in you is! When we vacillate it is because we do not listen to the One who indwells us.

**SYLVANUS AND TIMOTHY.** Sylvanus is the Roman name for Silas, Paul's associate on the Second Missionary Journey, chosen by Paul after he and Barnabas had a disagreement over John Mark. Timothy, who has been saved on the First Missionary Journey when a church was established in his home town of Lystra, was invited by Paul to join them when they visited his church to share the good news about the success of the Jerusalem Conference in agreeing that Gentiles, like Jews, are saved by grace through faith. Luke is not mentioned here, but his association with Paul and his fellow missionaries can be followed by reading the “we” sections of Acts. It is possible that Luke was not with Paul at this time, but since he may have traveled primarily as Paul's physician, his name may have been omitted here. It is more likely that he was not with them at the time in question.

**1:20 - IN HIM THEY ARE YES.** *“For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”* As many as are the promises of God, they are always yes, always true and will forever remain the same. For God to be God He must be consistent with Himself. “Jesus, God's Son, is the center of Christian preaching. The message is clear. In Jesus all Old Testament promises find their fulfillment. In Him God saves His people and gives us security” [DSB].

**OUR AMEN.** Amen was and is used in worship (1 Cor. 14:16). It means let it be so, or let it be so. Jesus is our “Amen to the glory of God through us.” In other words, we give our concurrence to Him by saying Amen.

**1:21 - HE WHO ESTABLISHES US WITH YOU IN CHRIST.** *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God.”* This is a very important point: you do not establish yourself in Christ. Only God can do that. Many wonderful and glorious things happen to us when we are saved. In verses 21-22, Paul points out four of those things:

- (1) God “establishes us”.
- (2) He “has anointed us”.
- (3) He “has sealed us”.
- (4) He has “given us the Spirit ... as a guarantee”.

This last blessing has reference to an initial installment which guarantees full payment to follow. The Christian has received eternal life. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion is the initial payment and guarantee that all the benefits of eternal life will certainly follow. This is a marvelous promise of our eternal security in salvation [BSB].

**ANOINTED.** The word is from the word which means to anoint or to consecrate. The meaning here is that He anoints us with the Holy Spirit. We find another reference to this anointing in 1 John 2:20. There is a rich and glorious history behind the term to anoint in the Bible. In the Old Testament, priests and kings were ceremonially anointed as a sign of official appointment to office, and as a symbol of God’s power upon them. The Holman Bible Dictionary provides a brief overview:

The act was imbued with an element of awe. David would not harm King Saul because of the anointing the king had received (1 Sam. 24:6). Likewise, Israel (Ps. 89:38), and even Cyrus (Isa. 45:1) are called God's anointed because of God's working through them. Israel came to see each succeeding king as God's anointed one, the messiah who would deliver them from their enemies and establish the nation as God's presence on the earth.

In the New Testament anoint is used to speak of daily grooming for hair (Matt. 6:17), for treating injury or illness (Luke 10:34), and for preparing a body for burial (Mark 16:1).

Christians see Jesus as God's Anointed One, the Savior (Acts 10:38). The same symbolism as in the Old Testament is employed in this usage: God's presence and power are resident in the anointing. Likewise, the Christian is anointed by God (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:27) for the tasks of ministry [HBD].

**1:22 - SEALED US.** *“Who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”* God is the One Who seals us. In ancient writings this meant to set a seal upon something to keep it from being opened as in Daniel 6:17. The seal might used instead of a signature. Legal documents were sealed to guarantee validity. Various other things were sealed to prevent anyone from tampering with

the contents. When God sealed us (at the moment of conversion) we are secure. He is our Protector and Defender.

**GAVE US THE SPIRIT...AS A PLEDGE.** The KJV reads, “Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” Robertson says the word was of Semitic origin and that it is “common in the papyri as earnest money in a purchase of a cow or for a wife (a dowry)” [12: 214]. The term “earnest money” is still used today. Earnest money is a partial payment made to guarantee that the one making the purchase will pay the full amount in a time agreed upon by both parties. “The earnest of the Spirit in our hearts is the witness of the Spirit that we are God’s” [12: 214].

The NIV is clear: “He has anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (1:21b-22). The seal denotes security, and “the pledge” is a guarantee that God will fulfill His promises. Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus:

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit** of promise, who is **given as a pledge** of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13-14, emphasis added).

The believer’s security in Jesus Christ is stressed throughout the New Testament, beginning in the Gospels and continuing through all the epistles. Jesus declared”

And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (John 10:28-30).

Peter wrote”

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1Peter 1:3-5).

**1:23 - I CALL GOD AS WITNESS TO MY SOUL.** *“But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.”* While one is commanded never to swear by God or anything in heaven, Paul is here inspired by the Holy Spirit to call upon God to be his witness that he was honest in all his dealings with them. The Holy Spirit bears witness within one’s spirit (soul) that his relationship with God is genuine. “By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit” (1 John 4:13). But Paul is not calling on God to bear witness

within his heart that he belongs to God, he is calling on God to bear witness within the hearts and minds of these readers that Paul is sincere.

**TO SPARE YOU.** Why had Paul not followed his original plans and visited the Corinthian church both going to and returning from Macedonia? The reason was to spare them. Before they repented and the majority of them changed their attitude toward Paul, another visit would have been painful to both the missionary and the people. Let us make no mistake about this; Paul had apostolic authority to deal with this issue, and if Lord has instructed him to do so, he could have dealt supernaturally with the opposition.

**1:24 - WORKERS WITH YOU FOR YOUR JOY.** *“Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.”* They were fellow workers, working *with* Paul and not *for* him. They were co-workers (1 Cor. 3:8) for the Lord. He is being careful to avoid an additional charge that he was lording it over them. Those who accuse Paul of being proud and self-centered should observe the extent to which he goes here to deny any desire to have “Lordship” over their faith. They work with him, not under him.

This is one lesson every pastor should learn early in his ministry if he does not learn it while he is growing up in church. There is a difference between pastoral authority, which is scriptural, and authoritarianism, which is not. A fellow pastor told me of visiting in the office of a pastor in a fundamentalist church. He was surprised to see a plaque that read, There are just two rules here.

Rule No. 1 - I am the boss.

Rule No. 2 - If ever in doubt, see rule number 1.

God had given Paul apostolic authority to deal with the situation in Corinth. But He had also give him the humility that kept him from lording it over them. This is a good example for pastors and for denominational workers.

**STANDING FIRM.** In their faith they were standing firm, at least the majority of them were. Standing firm points to courage, consistency, perseverance, and stability. Great value is placed on this in the Scripture as well as in Christian music. We sing, “On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.” Paul wrote to the Ephesian church:

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**. **Stand firm** therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one (Eph. 6:13-16, emphasis added).

**2:1 - I DETERMINED.** *“But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in*

*sorrow again.*” Paul says that he had reached a well reasoned conclusion. His decision not to visit again was not made casually or without consideration. Nor did the change in plans have anything to do with fickleness. If he had returned earlier before they were ready to put things right with the Lord, it would have been another sorrowful visit. His decision was made both for his sake and theirs. The confrontations, though necessary, apparently caused him a lot of grief.

There are times when a loving parent will have to deal quickly and decisively with a child’s behavior or attitude. The discipline might be so severe that, though the child will have forgotten it within a few days, the parent will remember it with sorrow months, or even years later. The mother or father wonders if the punishment had been fair, was it too severe? Should he have overlooked the problem. From my own personal experience, I can say that there were such problems that I had to deal with when my children when they were young that many parents would have overlooked. There were times when I reasoned that if I had loved them any less I could have let the behavior go unpunished and waited to see if the behavior would be repeated. Yet, because I loved them, I decided that the matter had to be resolved immediately. Discipline is not always comfortable, either in the home or in the church.

**I WOULD NOT COME TO YOU IN SORROW AGAIN.** It might be rendered “with sorrow”. It was not just a matter of his sorrow. He did not want to cause sorrow for them. But what does he mean by “again”?

We are not given a lot of information about Apostolic Authority here, but we do know that Paul was given authority over demons, disease, poison of serpents, the elements, and even death. He was fearless in face of the Roman officials in Philippi, but not foolish enough to risk an unnecessary death in Ephesus. You cannot intimidate a person whose philosophy of life is “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” We have no idea what Paul might have said or done that would have brought sorrow both to him and to the members of the church. By “again” I infer that they well understood that he was capable of bringing sorrow to them, if God so directed.

There is no way to tell from the text if Paul made another visit after the one mentioned in Acts 18, but it is possible that upon learning that the people refused to listen to Timothy, he changed his plans and made an urgent and painful visit. If that was the case, he wanted to spare them another sorrowful visit. There are those who, though without proof, insist that this demands an unrecorded trip.

Paul had made a painful visit to the Corinthians, probably during his three-year ministry at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:1-20:1). This second visit to Corinth probably took place between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians. As a result of this painful visit, Paul also wrote a sorrowful letter to the Corinthians, which the early church believed to be 1 Corinthians. More recently, however, scholars have argued for an intermediate letter written between 1 and 2 Corinthians. If this is correct, this letter, like the first letter Paul wrote to Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9), has been lost [BSB].

Though there is no conclusive proof, I subscribe to the conclusion that Paul both made an earlier unrecorded visit, and that he had indeed written a personal letter between the writing of First and Second Corinthians.

**2:2 - WHO THEN MAKES ME GLAD?** *“For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?”* He reasoned that if he caused them sorrow, there would be no one left to make him glad (bring him joy) but the very ones he had made sad. He was no glutton for punishment. He did not wear long face. He did not enjoy misery. Rather, he valued joy and wrote often of his rejoicing in all things. The Christian life is a life involving relationships. Paul was guarding his relationship with the saints at Corinth.

There may be another reason for this statement. Some of the members have accused Paul of vacillating and others have apparently questioned his motives. If he had been selfish in his work with the church he would be looking either to win their approval and cooperation or to benefit in some other way. Why would he deliberately offend those he wanted to honor him? Why would a salesman want to begin a sales pitch by offending the customer?

**2:3 - THE VERY THING I WROTE YOU.** *“This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all.”* Does he refer to what he had written to them in 1 Corinthians, or to the separate “tearful letter” he had previously written? Some think he is referring to what he is writing now in 2 Corinthians up to this point. The context suggests the “tearful letter” (or sorrowful letter). He has no desire to cause sorrow to the very people who ought to make him rejoice. Instead of the false apostles being right, the very opposite was true. He should be a source of joy to them and they to him.

Paul was inspired to write this letter to the church in response to some of the problems he had with the congregation. “This shows his writing was prompted by particular concerns and his need to call the church to responsible discipleship (v 9). The writing God inspired for a local situation was recognized as inspired for the general church as God led in the collection and formation of the New Testament” [DSB].

**2:4 - AFFLICTION AND ANGUISH OF HEART.** *“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”* Though it is possible that “much affliction” refers to whatever it was that threatened his life, whether persecution or serious illness (1:8), it is more reasonable to assume that the anguish of heart is his burden for the Corinthians.

**WITH MANY TEARS.** This has been referred to as the “sorrowful letter” (or “tearful letter”). The tearful letter was probably a letter Paul wrote to the church at Corinth between First and Second Corinthians. If so, it is lost to us. Some believe we have the letter preserved in part in chapters 10-13. They offer a lot of reasons for this position. There are also good reasons for rejecting this theory. For one thing, there is no proof. Beyond that, there are a lot of problems associated with the

claim that God inspired Scripture which He was not able to preserve. If only fragments of an inspired letter were preserved in this epistle, how do we know that the same thing did not happen with other letters? The Holy Spirit miraculously inspired the original writers of Scripture, He miraculously preserved the Scripture, and He miraculously illuminates the hearts and minds of believers' so that they can understand it.

Paul was a man of tears (Phil. 3:18; Acts 29:19,31), though there is absolutely no grounds for assuming that he was governed by emotions. His writings are characterized by clear analytical thought and logical argument. The Lord was inspiring an intellectual to write the thirteen epistles with which he is credited. Paul should have put to rest the old idea that a teacher cannot preach, that a person who is deep in theology cannot feel the power of God, that there is a conflict between intelligence and emotion. You can glean a lot more from one who teaches you the Word of God without crying and without emotional outbursts that you can from one who is emotionally overwrought, but unprepared or shallow. Why do we have to settle for either when we can have one who simply feeds the flock and lets the Holy Spirit manage his emotions? I have concluded that God did not call me to traumatize His sheep; He did not call me to entertain His sheep; and He did not call me to psychoanalyze them. He called me to feed His sheep.

Paul loved these people and to write a painful or tearful letter was not easy for him. A lady who was active in her church was heard on numerous occasions to say, "I'll tell you right now, I'll tell you what I think and I don't care what anybody thinks." How different from the admonition we have from the Lord to tell the truth in love.

**THE LOVE.** The letter he is now writing, unlike the painful letter, should cause them to rejoice. The reason they should rejoice is that he is making known to them the love he has for them. He loved them even when he had to deal with difficult problems, but both he and they would appreciate his love more now that some of the basic problems had been settled.

## **B. Discipline Must Be Tempered with Reason and Love, 2:5-11.**

**2:5 - IF ANY HAS CAUSED SORROW.** *"But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree--in order not to say too much--to all of you."* By "if any," does Paul have in mind the immoral person he mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:1, or to the leader of this current opposition to him? He is possibly referring to two different leaders at two different times, but we cannot be sure. In both cases he omits the name, perhaps revealing that he can be both very direct and considerate of the feelings of others. This person and those influenced by him had caused sorrow to the entire church at Corinth. The attacks by the enemy in the church at Corinth grieved Paul. When they suffered he suffered..

**2:6 - SUFFICIENT... IS THIS PUNISHMENT.** *"Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority."* The word translated punishment means to award or adjudge a penalty. The church had taken Paul's counsel to heart and heard the evidence and determined that the

individual was guilty and had passed a severe sentence. “The rebel had been punished sufficiently and had repented. Apparently some wanted a severer penalty (vv. 6-8)” [BSB].

**BY THE MAJORITY.** Those who believe in the autonomy of the local church will find encouragement in this verse. As in other churches we find the congregation reaching a decision or taking action on the basis of a majority vote. No other individual or group of individuals controlled the local church. Today Southern Baptist churches cooperate with other Southern Baptist churches in missions, education and various ministries. But each church determines its contribution or participation. As in the first century church, there is no hierarchy.

This is not to say that the majority is always right. One with God is still a majority. The ideal form of government for the church is a theocracy; the rule of the majority under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

**2:7 - SO THAT ON THE CONTRARY.** *“So that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”* The guilty party had been punished sufficiently and had repented, but apparently there were those there who wanted to impose an even more severe penalty on him. Rather than continuing the harsh punishment, they should decide on a different course of action. From time to time one hears the charge that the church has forsaken the New Testament principle of church discipline, and there are certainly grounds for that charge. But when did the church abandon the practice of dealing with members who brought shame on God and His church? While we are at it, it might be worth the time to ask, when did the modern church lose its sense of shame, period?

Early in the Twentieth Century many churches practiced church discipline - they “churched” people; voted them out for some offense or another. A denominational worker I had asked to speak in our church in September, 2001, shared an interesting story with our people. He had read in the minutes of his home church about an uncle who had been disciplined - “churched” - for some offense. He must have apologized and asked to be reinstated because one month later this same uncle served on a committee that investigated another member and “churched” him. My wife has a copy of the minutes of a Baptist association in Mississippi that lists, as most associational minutes do, members gained by baptism, members gained by letter, members lost by death, members lost by letter. This one had an additional column: MEMBERS LOST BY EXPULSION. Several churches had numbers in that column.

Why was the practice dropped by the middle of the century? I would suggest as factors, the Great Depression, World War II, among other things. In the first place, America entered its post-Christian period in the middle of the century. Shaeffer said that England entered its post-Christian period in 1895, America in 1935. I believe in the mid-forties would be more accurate in the Bible Belt, soon after the Second World War. Whatever the date, the Scopes Trial in 1925 had a bearing. People seem to have forgotten that the creationist won and the evolutionist lost, in part because the media portrayed Clarence Darrow as a brilliant attorney and William Jennings Bryant as a religious fanatic. Within ten years of the famous “Monkey Trial,” evolution was being taught in Christian colleges, and not just in the science department. The Bible departments were in a frenzy trying to



accommodate evolution with the day/age theory, progressive evolution, the gap theory, or some other attempt at theistic evolution.

Dr. Gary Parker, one of the world's most influential creation scientist today, was once an ardent evolutionist. He believed it and taught it in high school and in college. While doing graduate work he began to question some of the evidence he had been using to support evolution. Then he found a copy of a commentary on Genesis, co-authored by Dr. Henry Morris, founder of the Institute for Creation Research. The more he examined the evidence the more convinced he became that the available evidence supports special creation. When he began teaching creation his strongest critics were not in the science department, they were in the Bible department. For those church members who have grown up in post-Christian America, the Bible department is something Christian colleges had before it yielded to the "religion department." Somewhere along the way it seems that some of those professors became more comfortable with religion than they were with the Bible. Their attitude helped spawn the conservative resurgence movement in the Southern Baptist Convention.

There were two one other factors that may have been, and I believe were involved in the church's move away from the practice of New Testament discipline. We tend to look for causes in considering any issue, but a cause is that which produces a given result. Two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen produce water - every time it is tried. There are usually a number of factors that go into a cause. The first factor involved in giving up the practice was abuse. Anyone could bring a charge against another and get a hearing in the church, or at least before a committee. If one person had something against another member he could humiliate him and his family before the community by bringing a charge against him. Members were occasionally "churched" for some amusing and ridiculous reasons.

M. C. Waldrup, one the best preachers I have ever known, grew up in east central Mississippi, not far from Meridian. He related a story from his childhood in a local church. It seems that one of the members had gone to Meridian during the month of July and upon his return he announced to friend that he had seen a block ice in Meridian on his trip. He was accused of lying, but the church decided to investigate before kicking him out of the church. They sent another member to look into the claim that the man had seen ice in Meridian in July. The other member returned and testified that he had not only seen a block of ice in Meridian but that they were actually making and delivering it in special insulated wagons. They kicked both men out of the church for lying.

I believe there is another factor that needs to be addressed. Somewhere along the way, as churches became more "numbers" conscious and pastors more "success" orientated, the "Members Gained" columns became more import them and the "Members Lost" columns received less attention. The churches that put the highest numbers on the board (and in the book) received recognition for additions, for baptisms, for Sunday School enrollment, for growth in any area, and for their contributions to mission causes. All of these areas are important, and become a problem only when abused, but a pastor who was interested in climbing the ladder in his denomination, or in getting a larger church, might seek a high pressure evangelist who boasts large numbers of decisions in his crusades.

I once attended an area crusade conducted by a highly respected evangelist. At the end of the message on Sunday evening the evangelist asked all preachers to come to the front. I was visiting with a friend from seminary so I stepped out and went to the front with him where we became a part of a long line. Then the evangelist told the congregation that he would like for all the people who wanted to see a great revival that week to come by and shake our hands and tell us they would be praying for the revival. Other than the fact that of the three thousand people came by, some really gave us a firm hank shake, others really pumped our hands. I soon discovered that they were going to crush my hand if I did not take off my college ring. About the time I managed to slip it off and drop it into my pocket, I looked up and saw a man standing on a chair, making pictures of all the people who were “coming down the aisles.” He was getting a lot of shots of the people as they came by, shaking our hand. I remember the distinct impression that if I could get a copy of his next newsletter I would see some of those pictures in it. A scene like that would be good for many more revivals.

There is still another factor. Ours became a mobile society. No longer were the people who lived in a rural community limited by distance in the choice of the church they would attend. They could easily drive to another community, or another town to another church. Members often transferred their membership for shallow, or even frivolous reasons: they were on the wrong side in the vote of the carpet, the youth minister, or the building program. The church called a new pastor and he was not like the old one; they didn't like the nursery, the parking lot, or the sound system, so they decided to try a new church. Sometimes people dropped out of church for an extended period of time and when they got under conviction about their unfaithfulness, they could not bring themselves to go back to the same old church and face those people who had been trying to get them to come back. So, they would go to another church. Some who left a church, possible to justify in their minds the decision they had made, would then try to persuade others to join them in the new church.

In some cases, programs, games, and gimmicks became more important in outreach than witnessing. The church that came up with the right program to attract young people often grew at the expense of a neighboring church - and neighboring pastor. The pastor of the growing church was the one that was most often visited by a Pastor Search Committee - from a larger church. But what does that have to do with church discipline? Everything! Our purpose is to grow a church by adding members, not shrink it by voting people out of the church. Besides, if we vote them out of our church, there is another church a few miles down the road that will receive them with open arms, no matter what they have done. And new members always receive a lot of attention for a little while. It seems meaningless to discipline people when no other church in the area pays any attention to it, and when the neighboring pastor assures them that they will be treated better if they will just move their letter.

**FORGIVE AND COMFORT.** This is the course of action they should now take. He does not say they were wrong in passing judgment. They had been right. But now that the person had given evidence of repentance, they should forgive and comfort him.

**LEST...SUCH A ONE BE OVERWHELMED BY EXCESSIVE SORROW.** We must remember the purpose in discipline. For the Christian, it is not just to inflict injury or punish for the sake of punishment. The real purpose should be to correct and reclaim a life. This is the Epistle of Reconciliation and that should be the purpose of the church in discipline.

**2:8 - REAFFIRM YOUR LOVE.** “Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.” It is not enough to cease the punishment. The church must seek to reclaim the disciplined individual for the Lord’s service. To refuse to love, forgive and restore the person to fellowship would be a grave sin. The Christian life is positive and not negative. There is a place for punishment, but punishment should not be an end unto itself. The Bible is clear about one thing. If we do not forgive others their trespasses, our Heavenly Father will not forgive us our trespasses (the Model Prayer).

There are Christians who yield to temptation and commit acts of sin. The Scripture teaches us that Christians may sin but cannot habitually sin to the point that it becomes their lifestyle (1 John). However, if there is a sin the believer may continue in for a long period of time it may well be in failure to love others. People know when they commit adultery or murder, but since failure to love others is not an act that is witnessed clearly by others, the individual may insist that he does love others. And he may well love certain people (*phileo*), but fail to experience and practice the New Testament love (*agapao*) required by the Lord. A judgmental attitude and an unforgiving spirit do not manifest Christian love. While a lot of people have been voted out of churches for adultery and criminal activity, I have never heard of anyone who has ever been disciplined for a lack of love.

God commands us to love one another, and failure to do so is a sin. Since God gives us His Spirit to indwell us at the point of salvation, when we are guilty of the sin of not loving others, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict us of that fact. When we are convicted we will either deny guilt or confess sin.

There is one other thing that we need to understand before leaving this subject. The love God commands is not a feeling. You cannot command romantic love (*eros*) and you cannot command brotherly love (*Philos*) because of the emotional aspects of those kinds of love. You cannot command boy A to fall in love with girl B. When new neighbors move into your neighborhood, you cannot do a neighborhood watch kind of think and assign certain neighbors to love them. This kind of love is cultivated according to their interests and those of their families.

The love God commands is agape’, a mental attitude kind of love that is directed and controlled by the mind. Emotions are subject to sudden change, but agape’ love is first and foremost a mental attitude love that is based on a vertical commitment and a horizontal commitment. Vertically, God commands it. Horizontally, we focus on others with the attitude that we will always seek their highest good. Their needs are our opportunities, of course, but agape’ is not limited to needs. We worship with others, we have fellowship with them, we rejoice when they rejoice, we grieve when they grieve, weep when they weep. We do this for all brothers and sisters in Christ, but it is not driven by emotions. As we become involved with other people in the practice of *agapao* love, we may well develop a *phileo* type relationship with a few of them.

**2:9 - TO THIS END.** *“For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.”* This does not refer to the purpose of the discipline but the reason for Paul’s request. What was the reason for this request? Paul’s apostolic authority had been challenged by some, but most of the members now acknowledge it. Here is the test for them. Will they yield to his apostolic authority and forgive and restore the guilty party?

**2:10 - WHOM YOU FORGIVE...I FORGIVE ALSO.** *“But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ.”* Paul is the wronged party and he is willing to forgive the individual. If he can forgive him, they should also forgive him. This does not mean that his forgiveness depends upon theirs. Even if they would not forgive him, Paul still had the responsibility before the Lord to forgive him.

**IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.** Was there not once a Vacation Bible School motto that declared, “I will do the best I can where I am, with what I have for Jesus' sake today?” Paul was always aware of the fact that everything he did he did in the presence of Christ.

**2:11 - THAT NO ADVANTAGE BE TAKEN OF US BY SATAN.** *“So that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”* Their forgiven brother needed to be restored to fellowship, “lest Satan put him under the pressure of continued self-accusation and introspection. Also, as long as the matter was not settled, Satan kept Paul and the church estranged.” [RSB].

It is obvious that Paul believed that Satan was real. That is more than one can say for many professing Christians today. Satan, as the title of a book by Hal Lindsey states, is alive and well on planet earth. He is still stalking the earth seeking whom he may devour. He cannot destroy the soul of the Christian, but he can destroy his life and his witness.

Many in the church today permit Satan to take advantage of them and their families. When I was in seminary in the early sixties, I had professors who did not believe in the existence of Satan. Satan was simply the personification of evil. While eggheads in high places were denying his existence, Satan was taking over on the streets of America. There has been a phenomenal growth in the area of the occult in the last fifty years, and every few years the occult gets a major boost from one source or another (ultimately, Satan is the source). During the Humanistic (Modernistic) period in American history, the period sandwiched in between the theistic world view that had prevailed since Adam; and the New Age (Post-modern) period which supplanted it, Satan’s gospel was, “God is dead,” or “There is no God.” New Agers began to assimilate, and finally over shadow Humanism by injecting spirituality into the dry, ugly world view of the Humanists. The Humanist said, “There is not God.” The New Ager responded, “Of course there is a god. In fact, there are many gods. If you are satisfied with your god and I am satisfied with my god, we should both be happy for each others.” Polls around 1990 showed an increase in the number of people who believed in God, and the church rejoiced. We were experiencing a revival in America. Evangelists assured us revival was coming, because of certain movements, and because of the polls.

Humanism, however, was not defeated by Christianity, it was supplanted and superceded by New Age religious philosophy. New Age was an umbrella term broad enough to cover almost any spiritual entity or movement, as long as it had nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Diversity was in, Christ the only way was out.

During the following years America was deluged with Disney's version of New Age philosophy - and our church members took their children in record numbers to see *The Lion King* and *Pocahontas*. And then came *Harry Potter*, and Christians headed for the book stores to buy each volume for their children. In doing so, they introduced their children to the occult, just as surely as they were introduced to witchcraft by their own who sat and watched television programs about good witches overcoming bad things through their magic.

Satan has been successful in getting occult material in Sunday School quarterlies, having New Age conferences held in churches and church camps, and leading Christians into occult healing techniques. He does not mind those who deny his existence, as long as they do not commit themselves to Jesus Christ.

Sadly, many Christian leaders do not understand the satanic influence of New Age religious thought. Within the span of about one month, I sat in meetings and heard someone ask the question, "Have we gone beyond New Age to animism?" One meeting was a national denominational meeting with about fifty people present. The other was a state denominational meeting with about the same number of people present. I e-mailed one of the men who asked the question with my response: the answer is no. How can you go beyond anything and everything?" There is room under the New Age umbrella for almost anything except Christ. Satan is deceiving and deluding millions today, and many of them are in the church.

### **C. He Misses Both Titus and an Open Door for Ministry At Troas, 2:12-13.**

**2:12 - TROAS.** "*Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord.*" It is believed by many that Troas was the home of Luke, the physician who wrote the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. The Holman Bible Dictionary tells us that Troas was

A city in northwest Asia Minor visited by Paul during his second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16:8,11; 20:5-6; 2 Cor. 2:12; 2 Tim. 4:13). Troas was founded before 300 B.C. by Antigonus, a successor of Alexander the Great and was located about ten miles south of the city of Troy. The emperor Augustus (31 B.C.--14 A.D.) made it a Roman colony. It served as an important seaport in the Roman Empire for those

traveling between Asia Minor and Macedonia [HBD].

Paul visited Troas on the Second Missionary Journey having had left Antioch of Syria with Silas who had taken the place of Barnabas. They had been joined by Timothy while visiting churches that had been established on the First Missionary Journey. On the First Missionary Journey Luke uses the third person plural pronoun (they). From Troas on we often find him using the first person plural pronoun (we). Study the “we” sections in Acts to determine when Luke was with Paul and the other missionaries.

**A DOOR WAS OPENED FOR ME.** Paul had apparently just made his exit from Ephesus after having faced some great peril in which he considered himself as good as dead. He made his way to Troas where he hoped to meet Titus on his return from Corinth. The missionary was still in anguish of soul, possibly because of the peril at Ephesus, but more probably because of the painful letter he had sent to Corinth (and then seemingly regretted it). This was causing him a great deal of anxiety.

Paul, without a doubt the greatest missionary in Christian history, blew it in Troas. There was an open door for missions, but Paul was so distracted by his anxiety that he missed the opportunity. If that could happen to so committed a missionary as Paul, it can happen to any believer today. In fact, it happens all the time. What a tragedy it is when we miss the open door of opportunity to serve our Lord!

Anxiety is not the only thing that will cause the Christian to miss an open door of opportunity. When I was a student at Mississippi College, I was pastor of a church near the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. I also led a group from the BSU at Mississippi College to the Hinds County jail in Jackson every Thursday afternoon. Each Sunday morning I preached the Parchman at 8:00 before going to the church for the morning service. One of the personal blessings was the privilege of developing a friendship with the chaplain, Roscoe B. Hicks.

I recall a conversation with Chaplain Hicks one Sunday morning. He had just returned from a revival where he was the evangelist. He loved to visit lost people and present the Gospel to them. He had a burden for the soul of the lost person. But the pastor was a gun collector and the chaplain lamented the fact that the only thing the pastor wanted to talk about all week was his gun collection. He didn't have time to visit the lost in his community.

**2:13 - NO REST FOR MY SPIRIT.** *“I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.”* He is restless and anxious. Finding that Titus had not arrived by boat from Corinth he began to worry about his co-worker. He was anxious to hear from the church. He had no way of knowing whether his tearful letter had made things better or worse.

**TITUS.** Titus was converted when Paul and Barnabas visited his home town on the First Missionary Journey. Paul called him “my true child in a common faith” (Titus 1:4). We learn from Galatians 2

that Paul took Titus with them to the Jerusalem Conference in A. D. 51, where he used him as a test case when there was a consensus that Gentiles were saved the same way as Jews - by grace, through faith. Circumcision was not required. The Holman Bible Dictionary provides more on Titus:

Though Acts does not mention Titus, he was quite involved in Paul's missionary activities as shown in the Pauline letters. He was evidently known to the Galatians (Gal. 2:1,3), possibly from the first missionary journey to that region. Titus also seems to have been a very capable person, called by Paul "my partner and fellow worker" (2 Cor. 8:23 NIV). He was entrusted with the delicate task of delivering Paul's severe letter (2 Cor. 2:1-4) to Corinth and correcting problems within the church there (2 Cor. 7:13-15). Titus' genuine concern for and evenhanded dealing with the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:16-17; 12:18) no doubt contributed to his success which he reported in person to Paul, anxiously awaiting word in Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5-6,13-15). Paul responded by writing 2 Corinthians which Titus probably delivered (2 Cor. 8:6,16-18,23).

Paul apparently was released after his first Roman imprisonment and made additional journeys, unrecorded in Acts. One of these took him and Titus to Crete, where Titus remained behind to oversee and administer the church (Titus 1:5). It was to Crete that Paul wrote his letter, asking Titus to join him in Nicopolis on the west coast of Greece (Titus 3:12). Following Paul's subsequent reimprisonment, Titus was sent to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10). According to church tradition, Titus was the first bishop of Crete [HBD].

**TO MACEDONIA.** Shipping across the Aegean had probably closed for the winter season and he knew Titus would go by land to Macedonia and he could meet him there. So Paul left for Macedonia, turning his back on an open door for service to the Lord. Paul is not on the Third Missionary Journey. He had visited Philippi on the Second Missionary after receiving the vision of a man from Macedonia asking him to come over and help. There was no Jewish synagogue at Philippi, so Paul and his companions went down by the river side to worship. There he met Lydia, a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira. The church at Philippi was probably begun in her home.

## **II. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTOLIC, 2:14-6:10.**

### **A. He Is Confident of Ultimate Triumph, 2:14-17.**

**2:14 - THANKS BE TO GOD.** *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."* In this section (2:14-6:10), Paul breaks away from the discussion of his itinerary for what is sometimes called

“the great digression.” “This is quite characteristic of Paul, and it allows him to develop his rich understanding of the message and ministry of reconciliation (note especially 5:11-21)” [BSB].

This sudden outburst of praise and thanksgiving stands in sharp contrast to the anxiety and dejection he had experienced at Troas where he had sought refuge from enemies in Ephesus, and where he waited anxiously for the return of Titus with news from the Corinthian church. His reunion with Titus in Macedonia and the report of progress in resolving some of the more critical issues at Corinth was occasion enough for celebration. Robertson says:

We can be grateful for this emotional outburst, Paul’s rebound of joy on meeting Titus in Macedonia, for it has given the world the finest exposition of all sides of the Christian ministry in existence, one that reveals the wealth of Paul’s nature and his mature grasp of the great things in the service of Christ [12: 218].

With this expression of gratitude Paul launches a long discussion of the glory and responsibility of the Christian ministry

**LEADS US IN HIS TRIUMPH IN CHRIST.** The word in the Greek was means to lead in triumph, or to make a show of, and pictures an emperor entering the capitol city at the head of his army. He makes a show of captives and other spoils of war. Paul saw himself as a captive in God’s triumphant procession. Paul rejoiced in being one of Christ’s captives being led in triumph, to the glory of God.

**SWEET AROMA.** “In Roman triumph garlands of flowers scattered sweet odor and incense barriers dispensed perfumes” [11: 218]. The idea here is that the knowledge of God is the sweet aroma which Paul had scattered before Him every place he went.

Many explanations for this passage have been proffered. At least this much is clear: Believers witnessing for Christ are a sweet aroma to God and to those who are saved through that witness; Christians are the sweet smell of life giving rise to life. On the other hand, the gospel witness contains announcement of judgment to the lost and is, therefore, an aroma of death giving rise to death [BSB].

**2:15 - WE ARE A FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST.** “*For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.*” Remember the metaphor of the triumphant entry of the Roman emperor who parades his captives before the city. “Similar to the incense burned in a Roman parade, the believer’s service in spreading the gospel is a sweet fragrance to the Lord. The same gospel brings life to the believer and death to the rejector” [RSB].

As the preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ spreads the fragrance of Christ he takes on some of that fragrance himself. This is the equivalent of letting the light of Christ shine through you so that people will see your good work and glorify God. If he is a true and faithful preacher of the Word, both saved people and those who perish will recognize those qualities that are Christ-like.



**2:16 - THE AROMA OF DEATH.** *“To the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?”* The same gospel bring life to the believer and death to the one who rejects the Lord. Some people are actually hardened by the Gospel, just as Pharaoh at first hardened his heart and in the end found God cooperating with him in the hardening of his heart.

Matthew Henry summarizes the message contained in these verses:

A believer's triumphs are all in Christ. To him be the praise and glory of all, while the success of the gospel is a good reason for a Christian's joy and rejoicing. In ancient triumphs, abundance of perfumes and sweet odours were used; so the name and salvation of Jesus, as ointment poured out, was a sweet savour diffused in every place. Unto some, the gospel is a savour of death unto death. They reject it to their ruin. Unto others, the gospel is a savour of life unto life: as it quickened them at first when they were dead in trespasses and sins, so it makes them more lively, and will end in eternal life. Observe the awful impressions this matter made upon the apostle, and should also make upon us. The work is great, and of ourselves we have no strength at all; all our sufficiency is of God. But what we do in religion, unless it is done in sincerity, as in the sight of God, is not of God, does not come from him, and will not reach to him. May we carefully watch ourselves in this matter; and seek the testimony of our consciences, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that as of sincerity, so speak we in Christ and of Christ [MH].

**WHO IS ADEQUATE FOR THESE THINGS?** This is a rhetorical question. The answer is obvious: in himself no one is adequate or sufficient. Only Jesus Christ is adequate, but in Christ Jesus His servants are made sufficient for “these things.” You do not produce the aroma which is pleasing to God, it is imputed unto those who walk in the spirit.

Now for a word on being “negative.” I well remember comments I have heard over the years about negative preaching. Let me begin by saying, that I do not want to hear only the negative side of the Gospel, nor do I want to hear only the positive side. There must be a balanced treatment of the Gospel for the simple reason that the Gospel is balanced. Early in my ministry I read that there are two hundred, thirty-seven warnings about eternal punishment for the lost in the New Testament (though have not confirmed that number). I have no idea whether the number is correct or not, but I do know that a lot of print is devoted to warning the lost of eternal destruction. I believe it was my old friend from Mississippi College, Harold Bryson, who the book, *Yes, Virginia, There Is a Hell*. Hell is a place of conscious, eternal torment. Someone once told R. G. Lee that he did not believe in hell and Dr. Lee in his own nonpareil way snapped back, “You won’t be there five minutes until you change your mind!”

I have no fear of being considered negative as long as I preach the complete Gospel. Suppose commuters driving to work every morning decide they do not want to look at negative signs along the highway - what a negative way to start the day. So the petition the highway department to replace all

those negative signs with positive ones. No more “danger” signs, no more “curve” signs with a safe speed posted, and no more of those “do not pass” signs! On the sign at the beginning of a long straight stretch of highway we see a bright yellow sign with a simple straight line. Instead of the “do not pass” sign where there is a yellow line to the right of the center line, there is now a sign beyond the yellow line that reads, “pass.” The whole idea is ludicrous, and if carried out it would make the highways very dangerous. But this is no more ludicrous not less dangerous than preaching only the positive side of the Gospel.

When I was growing up in the Mississippi Delta most of us had a cast iron heater or fireplace - a fireplace or a wood heater was not a luxury at the time. I well remember that we “laid by” the cotton to wait for harvest time when it was too big to plow, and big enough to shade out grass that would come up late in the summer. During the “lay-by” time we cut firewood for the coming winter. Many also cut “stove wood” for use in cooking. I well remember my father installing lines for the new propane tank so that we could have gas heat and a gas stove and oven.

In those days a major part of the training of a baby and toddler was to point at the stove and say, “Hot!” He or she heard it so often that every time he got close to the heater he would point to it and say, “Hot!” With many, the lesson was not learned until the child touched the “hot” heater. Throughout the New Testament we are warned that hell is hot. There is no plumbing there and there is no air conditioning. People must hear the promises of glory and blessings that await the believer, but the lost must know the danger they face.

I have heard people say they do not want to hear anything negative, and there have been times when a few people have tried to pressure me into abstaining from anything that is unpleasant when I preach the Gospel. There are others who think those who preach the whole Gospel are being narrow-minded. I plead guilty, but I have a confession: when I had bypass surgery I wanted my surgeon to be extremely narrow-minded. When I had a root canal I trusted my dentist to be especially narrow-minded. When I have flown I trusted my pilot to be just narrow-minded. That was no time for diversity.

**2:17 - WE ARE NOT LIKE MANY.** *“For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”* Unfortunately, it was necessary for Paul to draw a distinction between himself and some of the self-professed ministers of his day. Equally unfortunate is the fact that many today are “peddling the Word of God.” The word rendered peddling refers to the work of a huckster who, like a dishonest peddler, hides spoiled fruit by covering them with good fruit. Paul could not have found much joy in pointing out to the church at Corinth that there were charlatans parading as ministers of the Gospel. But he was inspired of the Holy Spirit to put as much distance between himself and the false apostles as possible. It is still not a pleasant task, but we must warn people of the wolf who comes us disguised as either a sheep or shepherd.

Many people have been deceived by peddlers of the Word of God. I was in Jacksonville, Florida and a high school friend met me for a brief visit. As we talked about home, I sought an

opportunity to witness to him. The mention of the Gospel reminded him of a man who set up a tent every Fall during cotton-picking time - the only time there was any money extra in the Mississippi Delta. This man preached only during this time and he usually held services nightly for two or three months. My friend laughed at the memory of this man, affirming rumors I had heard as a youth. He said, "I remember a lot of times when he wanted something to drink, but didn't want anyone to see him buy alcohol. He would give me money and I would go and buy whiskey for him." This peddler was sending a minor to buy whiskey for him!

Regular conversations for many of the hands each day revolved around what had happened at the revival the night before. "Jim got saved last night." Someone would, add, "They prayed for Mary until she 'got it' (received the Holy Spirit). To say "Holy Spirit" rather than "Holy Ghost" was tantamount to heresy. One morning some of our hands seemed sluggish as they showed up with their cotton sacks and started to the field. Someone told us that the preacher kept them at church a long time the night before. He had announced how much money God told him they would "take up," and he said he would keep passing the plate until the got it. Finally, the evangelist took his Bible to the only door and opening it, laid it down in the doorway. He announced that if anyone left the church before they got the sum God told him to collect, he would be walking over the Word of God.

On another morning a rather simple man came to the field beaming with joy. He announced that God had called him to preach. His Damascus Road experience was shameful. The evangelist told them that God was calling someone to preach and he wanted that man to come forward. No one made a move for some time. Finally, the peddler declared that God had given him a vision of a casket. The casket was only "so long" - he measured an infant size with his hands. "Junior" left his wife and infant son and headed down the aisle, deeply shaken. For the next few days he was both excited and relieved.

Those tent peddlers had nothing on the radio and television hucksters. Two of the most popular tel-evangelists of all time were Jim Bakker of PTL fame and Jimmy Swaggart, both of whom brought shame and embarrassment to the cause of Christ through highly publicized sins. With Bakker it was money, with Swaggart it was immorality (possibly money and women in each case). These were not the only peddlers on television or radio, they were just the most popular. Along about the same time, Oral Roberts was making the news with claims of having raised the dead in some of his services.

Evangelist Bob Harrington, the former "Chaplain of Bourbon Street," has recently returned to the Lord after having his ministry destroyed by sin. He became focused on material things and took his eyes off the Lord. I had classes with Bob and attended one of his French Quarter crusades when I was in seminary in New Orleans. There is no reason to doubt that Harrington is sincere at this time.

Every time some people see one of these peddlers of the Gospel fall into sin, make some bazaar claim, or fall into sin, they are quick to identify all preachers of the Gospel with that kind of behavior. I once heard R. G. Lee tell about going to visit a very busy owner in Memphis. The man was arrogantly wealthy and powerful - and too busy to be bothered by any preacher. Someone asked

Dr. Lee to visit the man and he went to his office where he asked the “information girl” to see the man. Just as she was asking if he had an appointment, the business man stepped out of his office, and seeing Dr. Lee, he asked, “What do you want?” When Dr. Lee introduced himself, the man said, “You preachers are all alike. You cut off your pay and you will stop preaching tomorrow!” R. G. Lee responded, “That’s a lie!”

“What did you say?”

“That’s a lie!”

The man told him if ever wanted to talk with him he would call him. Many weeks later Dr. Lee received a call from the man, and he wanted to talk. His family was gone and he was by himself when Lee arrived. In their conversation that night the man told Dr. Lee that he had done everything you can think of except commit murder. Dr. Lee said, “You have done that, too.” The man was shocked.

“What did you say?”

“You’ve done that, too. Your sin put Jesus on the Cross.”

This got the man’s attention and he called on the Lord to save him before Dr. Lee left that night. Like Dr. Lee, every true preacher of the Gospel would like to put as much distance between himself and the peddlers of the Gospel as possible.

If the Lord had not called me to preach there is no way I would be doing it. If there was anything else I could do I would be doing it. With a degree from Mississippi College, a ninety-eight hour Masters from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and a doctorate on top of that, I would hate to think that I could not have found something to do that would have been less stressful, less demanding of my time and energy, and at the same time, more profitable than being the pastor of a Baptist church. I have heard ministers accused of “being in it for the money,” and no doubt there are many who are, but I am aware of the ministry of hundreds of God-called preachers of the Word who have remained faithful servants of Jesus Christ, often at a great cost to themselves and their families. The true minister of the Word is “in it” by divine mandate.

There is another group of people today who seem to be “peddling the Word of God” to their own advantage. I cringe every time I see an ad on television announcing that yet another person who is identified with the world has just released a new tape of gospel music. Even Billy Graham was had Chris Christopherson to sing, “*Why Me, Lord*” at one of his crusades. Many tried to identify the singer as a Christian because of that song - until he openly rejected them. To him, it was just a song. It sickens me to hear people whose music glorifies - often with profanity and vulgarity - drunkenness, immorality, infidelity, and violence stand and sing a gospel song. When I was growing up near Sledge, Mississippi we listened to a Memphis radio station every morning while we were doing chores and getting ready for school. Farmers always listen to weather forecasts, and teenagers enjoyed the music. People throughout the area were convinced that certain Memphis entertainers were deeply spiritual because they closed their daily show with a gospel song. These brothers performed in our high school gym one Saturday night and a friend watched one of the men leave between songs and go

to his car for a drink. He was also with a woman my friend was convinced was not his wife.

A number of years later, I served as pastor of a church that had a history of gospel “singing”. They persuaded me to set a time when they could invite various quartets to sing. I was sickened later when I learned that members of one quartet visited with a man next door to the church and drank beer with him until their time to sing. The neighbor, a lost person, found this amusing.

I have preached at homecoming services on a few occasions when just as we closed the service, the doors sprang open and members leaving to go the fellowship hall for “dinner on the grounds” were almost run over by the quartet and their supporters who were rushing in with their instruments and sound system to set everything up for their afternoon program. They were euphoric, joking that while we were in service they were over in the fellowship hall eating dinner. There were also some who sat in their cars or in a bus in the parking lot and would not come in until the worship service was over. You can be sure this is one thing I want to know about any group that might be invited to our services

There are many Christian musicians who love the Lord and their lives are a daily testimony to His love and grace. Who would question George Beverly Shea? There are many others, whose tapes and CDs filled cabinets in our sons rooms when they were growing up. My complaint is with those who are simply “peddling the Word of God” for their own glory - or profit.

## **B. This Is not a Letter of Self-Commendation, 3:1-3.**

**3:1 - ARE WE BEGINNING TO COMMEND OURSELVES?** *“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you?”* Paul had been forced by his enemies into doing something he found distasteful. He is forced to praise himself. Letters of commendation were apparently very common in that day. If one was going into a new country he might ask his friend to write a letter of commendation, a letter of introduction. It is possible that some of Paul’s critics had shown up in Corinth carrying such letters of commendation. Paul does not feel that he needs a letter of commendation, either to them or from them.

The question needs to be asked. Just who are these critics? Are there actually critics, or is Paul assuming that these charges were being made about him? In looking for answers the first place one might look is to the Judaizers, those Jews who had been converted to Christianity, but insisted that before any Gentile could be saved they must first be circumcised. That is, they must first become Jews because salvation is of the Jews. These were the critics who opposed Paul and Barnabas when they returned to Antioch of Syria to report the results of the First Missionary Journey. These critics were so adamant in their opposition that Paul and Barnabas scheduled a conference in Jerusalem in A. D. 51 to resolve the issue with the help of James, the half-brother of our Lord, and with other leaders in the church at Jerusalem. Simon Peter had helped win the debate for salvation by grace through faith - both for Jews and Gentiles. This is recorded in Acts 15 and Galatians 2.

The Judaizers had failed to supplant the Gospel of grace with the gospel of works plus grace in Jerusalem, but they did not stop there. They dogged Paul's steps as he continued his work among the Gentiles, following him on the Second Missionary Journey to the region of Galatia, attacking both the man and the message. The Book of Galatians, was written in the heat of this battle.

Were these critics in Corinth the Judaizers? It is possible, but if so the focus of the attack has shifted. That may have been the case, but it is also possible that these critics were simply "peddling the Word of God" for their own reasons. They may have simply wanted to take over the church and use it for their own glory and profit. These may have been Jewish evangelists, or they may have been individuals who were following a few Jews who had moved to Corinth in Paul's absence.

Another possibility is that they were members of the church who had been there all along. An astute man once talked with me about a group in his church. I will never forget a statement he made: "They will either run it or ruin it. If they cannot run the church they will destroy it." Their behavior over a period of years affirmed his insight into the character and motives of this group. Sadly, I doubt that his church was unique in that respect. A well known denominational worker once preached a revival in a church I served as pastor. He had an occasion to talk with a man he had observed during the week, and later he assured me that this man "has an obsession with control that is a sickness." He had the "run it or ruin it attitude." He wanted his to be a respected church that would receive credit for their activities and for missions support in his denomination's state paper. But he also wanted credit locally. I assured one individual that I had continually tried to be this man's friend - one day he would give me the highest praise, and another time he would give me a sharp, quick look that reminded me of the saying, "if looks could kill." This person who had observed the man's behavior in church and in business replied, "You don't understand. He will never be pleased until you stand in the pulpit and single him out for praise." He did not want an expression of appreciation in private, he wanted to hear it from the pulpit. Like Diotrephes, he loved "to have the preeminence among them" (3 John).

It is possible that this was the case in Corinth, but it seems more likely that the ringleaders were outsiders who had either come to the church at Corinth with the purpose of gaining control of the church, or after arriving there they had made a commitment to take control of the church. Their chosen method was to undermine the preaching and teaching of their founder. In order to undermine the message they did what evil people have so often done - they attacked the messenger.

**3:2 - YOU ARE OUR LETTER.** *"You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men."* Their testimony is treasured in the hearts of Paul and his companions. Paul, Timothy and Titus had no letter commending them to the church at Corinth from the church at Ephesus or Philippi. They had no letter from any of the original apostles, nor did they intend to solicit any. Paul is writing to their hearts trusting that he has a place in their hearts as he has a place in his heart for them. He has no letter written on parchment, or even on stone. They are the only letter he has and it is written in his heart and reflected in his heart for them to read. This writer wrote the following poem, entitled "My Life."

My life is an open book,  
Open wide for all may see.  
Each day it must be a little better,  
For someone may follow me.

My life is an open book,  
Open wide that you may know  
With but one quick look  
What kind of seed I sow.

The print is large, the type is bold,  
And easy for you to see.  
So, when my life you behold  
I ask your prayer before you judge me.

---- Johnny L. Sanders

**KNOWN AND READ** (*ginoskomene kai anaginoskomene*). Here we have a play on words (known and known again). The meaning is that it is literally true. To read is to know again. To read God's Word is to gain a deeper understanding of God and His ways. Paul is now writing to the church for the fourth time, unless there were other letters he does not mention, and there may well have been others. The letter he is concerned with here is the reflection of the message in their lives. God's people are "His new creation, working, witnessing, and living to help change the world for Christ. Christian workers need no better recommendation than the lives of those whom we have influenced to live for Christ. The result of our ministry should be persons following the Spirit's leadership" [DSB].

Even though Paul is speaking of their living out the Gospel he had taught them, this has an application in the reading of the Bible - reading the Word of God is like knowing it again. Both the beauty and the duty of reading the Bible are implicit in this expression. No matter how well one thinks he knows the Scripture, every time he reads it he knows it again; that is, he gleans new truths from the Word of God and the truths he already knows are affirmed. By reading and re-reading the Word of God our knowledge of divine truth increases in both breadth and depth.

As important as the believer's personal spiritual growth is, there is something else to consider. The Christian must never forget that he may be the only Bible some one may every read. V. E. Gideon illustrates this:

As a young man of sixteen years of age, and already aware of God's call to ministry but refusing to obey his leadership in the matter, I had such a shattering experience in witnessing. It was revival time, and a soul-winning experience found me saying, "You know that the Bible teaches..." This neighbor, a father of two children, replied: "I don't read the Bible. The only Bible I read is the Bible I read in your life and in the

lives of other Christians.” What a shock! To know that a man twice my age was reading the Bible in my own disobedient life was convincing! [20: 13].

**3:3 - YOU ARE A LETTER OF CHRIST.** *“Being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”* He continues the metaphor of verse 2, but with a switch. They were a letter written on the hearts of Paul and his companions so that all men could read that letter through their lives. Now, he says they are a letter of Christ. They were (1) cared for by Paul and his fellow missionaries; (2) written not in ink; (3) written with the Spirit; (4) Written not on tablets of stone, but (5) written on tablets of human heart.

The disciple himself is an open letter to the world. The letter is not composed with ink on paper but with the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men. The Corinthians were eloquent witnesses, by their very existence, to the ministry of Paul. Since there were those at Corinth determined to undermine Paul's authority, the Corinthians themselves needed to be reminded that Paul was the one who introduced Christianity in Corinth. Christ was the Author of their salvation, and they were an epistle of Christ. Paul had been the medium by whom the Savior had penned His letter [BSB].

### **C. He Is a Minister of the New Covenant, 3:4-18.**

**3:4 - CONFIDENCE...THROUGH CHRIST.** *“Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.”* Paul is confident, but his confidence is not a matter of self-conceit. He is not on an ego trip. His confidence is in and through Jesus Christ. The basis of his confidence is faith, and this is not a faith that can be shattered by circumstances. It is confidence that we always have access to God when we go to Him through Jesus Christ. It is confidence that we can look to God for both protecting and provisions when we go to Him through Christ.

New Age religious movements - plural, there is no one single New Age movement - have no problem with “religion,” “faith,” or “god,” so long as we leave Jesus Christ out of it - and that means the Jesus of the Bible. We must stress the Jesus or the Christ of Scripture, because New Agers have their own teachings about Jesus, a view that clashes with the Scriptural Jesus (so do the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses. They love an inclusive Jesus but hate the exclusive Christ of Bible, whereas the Scripture clearly reveals that there is only one way to God. Peter and John preached, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

It took some time for the most astute Christians to understand what was happening when polls were released in the nineties that revealed that the number of Americans who believed in God was on the rise, but their belief in God was not having as much influence on the way they lived as it once did. How could you explain that? In the first place, we did not need polls to see that we were in a state



of moral decline. All moral indexes revealed that there had been a marked increase in sin of almost every kind imaginable between 1962 and 1992. Christian “leaders” immediately began to proclaim that “it all began when they took prayer and Bible reading out of schools. If they will just put prayer and Bible reading back into our schools....”

Few answers in the moral arena are that simple. But **please get this**: taking prayer and Bible reading out of public schools did not **cause** this moral dilemma! It may well have been a factor, but to draw the conclusion that it caused it is to fail to understand what was going on - and to fail to understand the problem is to fail to find a solution. **Please follow me here**. It is essential that we get this right. And please do not be discouraged if you missed it, because a lot of preachers missed - some still do.

I was attending a meeting of the Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1992 or 1993 when the president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention spoke briefly to us. At one point he suggested that we are in the post-Christian period of our history. Pausing, he asked, “Do you think we may be in the post-Christian era in America?” At the conclusion of the meeting I walked outside and observed two friends who were in a serious conversation. As I joined them, one asked the other if he believed we were in the post-Christian period of our history. The other said, “Yeah, I believe it, and I’ll tell you when it started. It started when they took prayer and Bible reading out of the schools.” At the risk of offending, I said, No, it did not start then. According to Francis Shaeffer, it started in 1935 in America, 1895 in England. What we saw in 1962 and 1963 was proof that we were already in the post-Christian era in our history. If we had not already been in the post-Christian period we never would have seen the Supreme Court take prayer and Bible reading out of our schools.”

Sadly, many Christians in America never read Shaeffer. If they had they would have understood when and why America entered the post-Christian era, and we would have had a better understanding of the inevitable consequences of it. The launching pad in America was the famous Scopes trial at which time the ACLU joined liberal scientists and educators in **demanding that evolution be taught in public schools along with creation** - not instead of creation, but as an alternate view. The camel finally had its nose under the wall of the tent. Within ten years the camel was up to its shoulders in the tent and pushing aggressively to take it over. Even in Christian colleges professors in the science departments were teaching evolution - either instead of creation, or they were teaching one of the accommodation theories - the gap theory, theistic evolution, day/age, or some progressive theory that brought creation and evolution together in unholy wedlock.

In another decade the camel was in the tent and creation was being forced out. In 1948, the U. S. Supreme Court introduced us to an unconstitutional term: Separation of Church and State. Before too long most Americans assumed that the term was constitutional - **but it is not found anywhere in the constitution**. By 1962, the Supreme Court was in the business of writing law, and not just interpreting it, usurping power that had been placed in the hands of the legislative branch as well as the executive branch by our constitution.

A century earlier, the Supreme Court was quoting Scripture to justify its decisions, as it had been from the days of the Founding Fathers, whose writings reveal that they never intended that there be a wall of separation between church and state. What the signers of the Constitution sought to do was to take the state out of the business of establishing a religion, or making one denomination a state approved denomination and forcing other denominations to support that one denomination with their taxes. With the help of the media, liberals shouted “separation of church and state” so loudly and so long that most citizens assumed that it was in the constitution. So, they took prayer and Bible reading out of our schools. But, some would ask, “Was that not significant?” You bet it was! It was very significant - not because it launched us into the a post-Christian era, but because it demonstrated that we were already in the post-Christian era. But, do not all the charts and graphs depicting the moral decline show a demonstrable increase in most every area covered Absolutely? Then was the removal of prayer and Bible study not a factor? Absolutely!

It was a definite factor - there are usually many factors involved in producing a cause, however. For example, I am convinced that there would have been a moral decline in America even if they had not taken prayer and Bible reading out of our public schools, but I do believe these rulings accelerated that decline in morality - or maybe we should say, the increase in immorality. I well remember that when the decision was made to take prayer and Bible reading out of public school, the decision was applauded by my liberal seminary professors, who adopted an attitude of intellectual superiority. They were right in stating that saying a state approved prayer that would not offend any one in the community would be meaningless anyway. They were wrong in assuming that prayer and Bible reading had not meant anything to students a century earlier.

Liberals did not want to offend those in the community who were not Christians. They would ask, “If in your community the majority of people were Muslims, would you want them to write the prayer that your children would be praying at school?” Of course not. But they are missing a significant point. This nation was founded on Christian principles, not Islamic principles. Every immigrant who came to this country came here with full knowledge that this was a nation founded on Christian principles - this was, in essence at least, a Christian nation. America has never been a theocracy and there has never been a time when all Americans were Christians. But there was a Christian consensus. That is the point to remember. Fewer than one per cent of the citizens of America are Muslims, yet the media, since September 11, 2001, treats it with such deference that one would think of it as a major religion - and in so doing they are enabling Islam to become a major influence.

It is my position that when all those immigrants came to America, bringing with them their pagan religions, they were either fleeing famine, a restrictive life, or persecution in their former country. They saw America as a land that offered hope. We were in the majority, they were in the minority. They knew that they would be free to practice their religion, but they understood that this was a Christian nation that was guarantying them the right to a pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. Most would have understood it if America had insisted on their learning to speak and read English, and they would have understood if they had gone to a school in which Christians began the day with a brief reading from Scripture and a sincere prayer. What they might not have understood was why a

teacher or principal would chose the campus slut the read the Scripture and the campus drunk to lead in the prayer. And that did happen.

What is the solution? I think it is very simple - simple but as of yet untried. Get prayer and Bible study back into the church. Get prayer and Bible study back into the home. Within one generation you will not be able to keep prayer and the influence of the Scripture our of the school, whether it is officially allowed or not. No one was complaining about the students who were praying following the shootings at Columbine High School.

**3:5 - NOT THAT WE ARE ADEQUATE IN OURSELVES.** *“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”* This answers the question of 2:16. Paul never hesitates to deny that he is self-sufficient, or all sufficient. He is Christ-sufficient. He wrote to the Philippians, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). Paul cannot generate the power for this kind of confidence within himself. That he understands the sufficiency of Christ is seen in that famous passage in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9:

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you**, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me (emphasis added).

**NOTE:** In verses 5-18, Paul takes up the theme of the “new covenant” which is prophesied in Jer. 31:31-34 and explained in greater detail in Heb. 8-10. A number of contrasts are drawn here to demonstrate the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant (“Testament,” v. 14). This discussion would be an especially powerful attack against the false teachers, especially the Judaizers seeking to enslave the Corinthians in legalistic bondage (see 11:20), but also those who were peddling of the Word of God (2:17).

**3:6 - WHO MADE US ADEQUATE.** *“Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”* God makes us adequate (sufficient, NKJVt). In fact, He is our sufficiency.

A number of years ago I listened to a sermon by Stephen Olford. If a preacher wants to get under conviction all he has to do is listen to Stephen Olford. I remember listening to Stephen Olford at Luther Rice Seminary in 1978, I remember crowding Olford and Spiros Zodhiates on a front pew of the First Baptist Church, Jackson as we waited to have degrees conferred upon us, and I remember talking with him later than evening. While most preacher never feel more inadequate than when listening to, or talking with Stephen Olford, I remember an illustration he used in that taped sermon that has an application here.

Many years ago a wealthy businessman in South Africa ordered a Rolls Royce from the factory in England. After taking delivery of his Rolls, the man showed it to friends and one asked him about the horse power of the engine. He did not know so he searched for the answer in the manual that came with the automobile. Finding no mention of the horse power of the engine there, he telegraphed Rolls Royce headquarters in London. Identifying himself and his automobile, he asked: "What is horse power?" He waited impatiently for the answer and when the telegram was delivered to him there were three words on it, "Adequate, Sir, adequate."

What ever your needs are, God is adequate, Sir, adequate. The Lord assured Paul on another occasion, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Whatever your need is, His grace is sufficient, whether you need salvation, restoration, healing, comfort, assurance, strength, or guidance in making difficult decisions.

**OF SERVANTS OF A NEW COVENANT.** We are adequate servants or ministers of a new covenant because He has made us adequate. No servant, including evangelists, pastors, deacons, professors, or denominational workers have grounds for boasting, for none are adequate within themselves. We can only function fruitfully in His adequacy.

When I first wrote this study I made a statement that I would have to question today. I wrote, "One of the most significant steps the church has taken in the last half of the twentieth century is found in the emphasis placed on the fact that all believers are ministers of this new covenant. While God calls out certain individuals as vocational (full time) ministers, he calls all believers to Christian ministry." There is nothing wrong with that statement, but there might well have been something wrong with the way some taught it. A well informed Southern Baptist denominational worker who was traveling all over America made a statement that prompted me to take a second look at this emphasis. This man had been visiting churches of all sizes, and leading conferences in churches, retreats, and denominational facilities. He was concerned about the increasing in the number of forced terminations of pastors. As we discussed the issue, he asked, "Do you know where I think some of it started?" When I asked the question he anticipated, he said, "I think a lot of it has come from the denominational emphasis on the ministry of the laity."

He went on to explain that some people were using the term in such a way as to cause a lot of lay-persons to lose respect for God-called preachers of the Gospel, and pastors in particular. Many church members, when they had a disagreement with. Or about a pastor, began to wonder, "What makes him so special? He is no more a minister than I am." There is one sense in which they are right, but there is another sense in which they are as wrong as wrong can be. The Bible stresses that God called pastors, those anointed of God, are to be treated with respect by their parishioners. They should be followed as long as what they are doing is Scripturally sound. People had better be very careful when they raise their hand against the Lord's anointed. Perhaps it would help all concerned if we all remember that we are all "servants" of the "New covenant."

**THE LETTER KILLS BUT THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE.** Paul's critics are concerned about

letters of commendation which cannot bring life. Paul is concerned about the Spirit, Who does give life. “Our ministry is in the name of Jesus, who gave Himself to establish a new covenant based on forgiveness of sin. Our ministry is not a legalistic call to follow regulations but a joyful invitation to let God’s Spirit fill and direct our lives” [DSB].

**3:7 - THE MINISTRY OF DEATH.** *“But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was.”* The ministry of death refers to the law, particularly to the Ten Commandments. It is not that death is the goal, for it is not. But it is “marked by death in its outcome” [12: 221]. He had already written in 1 Corinthians 15:56, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul is giving us his commentary on Exodus 34:29-35.

**LETTERS ENGRAVED ON STONE.** The reference is to Deut. 9:10: “The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.” Paul is not saying that the Law was bad, and that it was faulty - what he is saying is that, as great as it was, it pales in significance when compared to Jesus Christ. The Law was given with great glory and it was Gods gift to His Chosen People - for that time, as they awaited the fulfillment of His blessed promise.

**MOSES...THE GLORY OF HIS FACE.** When Moses came down from Sinai with the tablets of the Law, his face shone brightly because he had been talking with God “face to face.” The fading of the glory on his face is interpreted here as meaning that “his face was ‘re-charged’ with glory every time he went into the presence of Yahweh in the ‘tent of meeting’ [4: 191]. The Israelites could not “Look intently” upon his face, as one cannot look intently at the sun. They could glance at it to see that it shone brightly, and to see that the glory faded after each meeting, as the glory of that dispensation the Law was fading or passing away.

Faith in Christ is more glorious than faith in Moses. Both came with glory, but certainly the ever-present Spirit in us brings more glory, a stronger experience of God's overwhelming presence, than did the writing on stone tablets housed in the ark. The law shows us we are condemned sinners. Christ makes us right with God. Through Moses only veiled glory was seen. In Christ the full glorious presence of God becomes visible. Belonging to Christ, we reflect His glory to the world. As we grow in Christ, we more fully reflect His glory, because we become more like Him. In all this the trinitarian God--Father, Son, and Spirit--are at work [DSB].

**3:8 - THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT.** *“How will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?”* This is the ministry marked by the Holy Spirit, the Christian ministry. It does not refer to the independent ministry of the Holy Spirit, but to His ministry in and through Christians. The glory of the Christian ministry is a greater glory because it does not fade away.

**3:9 - MINISTRY OF CONDEMNATION.** *“For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.”* And it did! We should never lose sight of one important point. The Law was the law of Yahweh. It brought condemnation because man was unable to obey the Law and was thus condemned by it, yet it was holy and glorious. There was nothing in all the world to be compared with it, but it was by design passing away. It would yield to the new covenant of grace.

**MINISTRY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Man cannot produce righteousness any more than he could obey the Law. Why then is the ministry of righteousness abound in glory more than that of the Law? The answer is that under the new covenant the believer is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, by grace through faith. In Romans 1:17 Paul says, “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written,

BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” He also says, “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... (Rom. 3:21-23).

**3:10 - WHAT HAD GLORY.** *“For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it.”* This refers to the Mosaic Law, which had great glory as it looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah, but now that He has come the Law has no glory. The Jewish believers in the church at Corinth would be able to follow this argument and they would have been able to help Gentile believers understand it. The Book of Hebrews was written first of all to Jewish believers. There a similar argument is presented:

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. For **He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses**, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now **Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant**, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but **Christ was faithful as a Son over His house**--whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end (Hebrews 3:1-6, emphasis added).

**ON ACCOUNT OF THE GLORY THAT HAS SURPASSED IT.** Jesus did not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it. The Law of Moses “has no glory” today, not because it was false, but because it has been surpassed by a greater glory, the glory of the ministry of righteousness. On some mornings the full moon may seem very bright, but as the sun rises one can watch as the brilliance of the moon fades away, yielding to the greater light.

When one is surprised as the suppressive laws in Israel that try to prevent Christians from

witnessing to Jews there, we should not be surprised - disappointed, but not surprised. When we read, as I recently did, of persecution and harassment of Christians by Israeli citizens, we must pray for the persecuted saints, but understand the militant attitude of those Jews who obviously understand that if Christianity succeeds in Israel, Judaism is in serious trouble. Those people understand the implications. If Christianity is right about the Messiah they are wrong. They had rather fight it than face it.

I recently listened to a Jewish believer, at least I think he was Jewish, in a radio interview. He was trying to help the audience understand Islam and Islamic terrorism. He stressed that Islamic terrorism is religious, and secular governments do not understand that, and as a result their approach is often flawed. He explained that Islam teaches that Judaism was once good, but the Jews corrupted it. God replaced Judaism with Christianity, and for a long time after Christ Christianity was good, but then it became corrupt and Allah appeared to Mohammed and told him the he was going to replace Christianity with Islam. Islam must, according to their belief, succeed in supplanting all other religions in the world - at any cost, including murder, war, or terrorism.

What is standing in their way? Judaism and Christianity. They will deal with other religions in time - they are all false anyway - but their main focus is Christianity and Judaism, which were legitimate religions at one time, but not any more. They have given way to a superior religion. The Muslim has no problem at this time in history in accepting the fact that there are Christians and Jews in the world; what they cannot accept is a Christian or a Jewish nation in the middle of the Islamic world. The very existence of Israel or a Christian Lebanon is a threat to Islam that the West cannot comprehend. The success of Israel ( the little Satan), as a nation, spells the doom of Islam, and for that reason Islamic nations have supported the Palestinians in every way possible without inviting an attack on their own country. They hate the little Satan, Israel because its success would make a liar of Allah, and they hate the United States, the big Satan, because the U.S. supports Israel

Christian Jews understood what Paul meant when he said that the glory of Judaism was fading before the bright light of Christianity. Non-believing Jews, however, understood that if Christianity was right, that would invalidate their religion. That is one reason they went to the Roman officials with tales about the Christians, assuring the Romans that while Judaism was a legitimate religion (officially declared to be so by Rome), Christianity was not a true religion, but a heresy.

**3:11 - FADES AWAY...WITH GLORY.** *“For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.”* And it was! Make no mistake about it: the Mosaic Law was superior to all that predated it and to all that followed - until Jesus, that is. As glorious as it was, however, it was fading away. The glory of Judaism was disappearing before the glory of the Messiah. Take a kitchen match. When they were a nickel a box they were just plain matches, but now they are “kitchen” matches and you will only have enough left out of a dollar to pay the sales taxes on the box. Back then you could strike a match anywhere, even though they had no such claim on the box. Today, they carry the claim, “Strike Anywhere” - but don’t count on it. If a room is totally dark you can strike a match, and as long as it is burning it will give light to anyone in the room. However, after striking the match you find the light switch and go over and flip the switch up and the room is flooded

with light. The match is still burning but it has been so surpassed by the electric lights that you immediately extinguish the match because it is meaningless.

We occasionally lose our power during a thunder storm or an ice storm. We light candles and set them in various rooms so that we can find our way around in the house. When the electricity comes back on we go around and blow out the candles. We do not throw out the candles, we save them for another time when they might be needed. The only reason we burn candles while the power is on is for the fragrance. The Law had its purpose, but when Jesus came it was time to move on to the greater glory.

Sadly, the glory of Christianity, which once shone so brilliantly in America has faded in the last fifty years, but not because the glory of Christ has faded, and not because the glory of the Gospel has faded. It has faded as America has moved deeper and deeper into the post-Christian era in our history. It would be interesting to know just how closely the de-Christianization has paralleled the rise in mass communication, beginning with the invention of the radio, then the television, and now the Internet. There were radio preachers in the early days who proclaimed the Word of God across America, but much of what was heard was not sound doctrinally. Then came television, providing both the true preachers of the Word and the charlatans with a platform and an audience. At one period, you could hardly find a time when you could not find a Jimmy Swaggart, a Jim Bakker, an Oral Roberts, or someone far worse on television. Today, crowd manipulators prance back and forth before huge audiences, slaying people in the spirit, entertaining them with tales of their visit with Jesus, demonstrations of their power, their “word of knowledge,” and an appeal to support their efforts to support orphanages in some foreign country.

There are some outstanding preachers of the Gospel on the radio and on television today: Adrian Rodgers, Chuck Swindoll, and John MacArthur on radio; James Kennedy, Charles Stanley, and Billy Graham on television. One would think that with these preachers of the Gospel, and local pastors whose services are broadcast or telecast across America, this country would have become more of a Christian nation than ever. What we saw for many years was the secularization of our nation, and then that yielded to New Age religious influences on society in general, and more subtly, on the church. The glory of Jesus Christ has not faded, however, and a spiritual awakening is still possible, even assured if we meet the Lord’s requirements (2 Chron. 7:14).

**THAT WHICH REMAINS IS IN GLORY.** That which remains is the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. The new ministry is permanent. It is not fading away. This claim should receive special emphasis in this day in which “Christian” cults abound. It is amazing to see how many people have developed a new cult around themselves by convincing followers that they are Christians and that their views are Scriptural; when, in fact, they are corrupting and distorting the Scripture.

People who are well grounded in the Scripture are not easily deceived by Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Unification Church, The World Wide Church of God, Christian Science, or the New Age cults. The late Walter Martin pointed out the importance of a knowledge of the Bible in dealing with the cults. The believer should be concerned with more than just how to get rid of the cult



members who come to the door. He should seek to win them for Jesus Christ, but if he is not willing to pay the price to prepare himself through Bible study and prayer, he might be advised to direct them to someone else who is better qualified. He points out that most cult members are closed-minded and antagonistic toward Christians, and almost without exception, manifest a pronounced intolerance for any position but their own. Martin stresses:

Above all else, Christians must learn that most cults consider that they have freed their adherents from religious exploitation which they almost always accuse historic Christianity of practicing. In this connection it becomes a vital necessity to demonstrate genuine interest in the cultist as a person for the sake of himself and his personal redemption, rather than as a possible statistic for any given denomination [9: 27].

**3:12 - HAVING...SUCH HOPE.** *“Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech.”* Here we have two words which are rightly associated with the Christian life - hope and boldness. These words are inter-related. It is the hope that produces the boldness. Boldness, which finds its source in the faith the believer places in Jesus Christ, affirms the hope.

Paul and his companions used “great boldness” in their speech. Any person with this hope and this awareness of the glory of the ministry of righteousness should speak with boldness. That should never be confused with arrogance, spite, indifference or callousness. Sadly, some children and young people can testify that the most cruel criticism they have ever experienced came from the tongue of some church member who seems to feel that it is his or her calling to set everyone else straight - and they justify it by saying that the Holy Spirit led them to say it. The Holy Spirit, Who indwells the believer, gives him spiritual power, guidance, and boldness but He does not give him the spirit of arrogance, pride, dissension.

Boldness is rooted in faith. Paul pulls back the veil for us and reveals something of the character of this boldness in Philippians 1:19-21:

For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and **hope**, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that **with all boldness**, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.**

This boldness is not a matter of arrogance, but faith; boldness rooted in hope. Hope in the New Testament is not wishful thinking. Today, one may say, “I hope someone will die and leave me a million dollars!” That is not likely to happen, but it may not keep some people from wishing they had a million dollars. Hope in the Christian experience is much deeper and far richer than that. It is the assurance of that which God promises to His children. Paul expressed hope in his second letter to Timothy: “For I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Tim. 1:12b).

**3:13 - MOSES... VEIL OVER HIS FACE.** *“And are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.”* This was his practice when he came from the tent of meeting where he had stood in the presence of God. He put a veil over his face when he came out.

**THAT THE SONS OF ISRAEL SHOULD NOT LOOK INTENTLY.** We must not think that Moses put the veil over his face to protect the eyes of the Israelites from the brilliance of the glory on his face; or to hide the glory of his face. The reason he hid his face was that they would not see “look intently at” that which was fading away. The fading of the glory on the face of Moses is symbolic of the glory of the Law which was fading away and would be surpassed by a greater glory. Both “hope” and “boldness” (vs. 12) are rooted in, and dependant upon a glory that never fades away. Every believer needs to set aside some time to study and meditate upon the significance of the glory of God, and what it means to him or her personally.

**3:14 - THEIR MINDS WERE HARDENED.** *“But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.”* Literally, their thoughts were hardened. The Greek word translated hardened means hard skin, or to cover with thick skin (as a callus), or to petrify (see Mark 6:52; 8:17).

**THE SAME VEIL REMAINS UNLIFTED.** Amazingly, even “at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted.” Paul, the former Pharisee and zealous student of Judaism understood the people of Israel and he must have written this with a tear in his eye. The glory of the old covenant had already faded, yielding to the surpassing glory of the new covenant, but for the unconverted Jew, the veil remained in place so that he could not see that the glory had faded. This does not refer to the identical veil which Moses wore, but to one that has the same effect on any person who blinds his eyes to the glory (light) of Jesus Christ [12: 222]. And so it is today. Whenever the old covenant is read by the Jew today the veil is still unlifted and he is blind to the fact that the glory had faded. He is blind to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Savior.

**3:15 - WHENEVER MOSES IS READ.** *“But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart.”* This means that whenever the Jew who holds to the old covenant and rejects Christ (and the New Covenant) the veil remains in place. It would be absurd to infer that this discourages the reading of the Old Testament by Christians. Jesus used the Old Testament Scriptures both frequently and effectively.

**THE VEIL LIES OVER THEIR HEART.** This vivid picture brought agony the Paul's heart. In Romans 9:3, he says, “For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (KJV). How sad! This thought should strike a chord of compassion and sorrow in the heart of every believer. Every time I read a column by a moral conservative Jew like Don Feder, Mona Charen, or Suzanne Fields I experience this sorrow in my heart. It was Don Feder, who at Christmas a few years ago wrote in a column that America needs to get Christ back into Christmas. In 2001, he wrote a column in which he lamented the fact that Christians are doing

nothing about the way the media treats Christianity and the way America is converting Christmas into a secular celebration. He stresses that he is a Jew and Christmas is not his holiday, but he stresses his appreciation for Christian principles. He just feels that Christians should have as much love for their religion as he does for his. For another thing, these conservative Jews understand that a Christian America is a far safer place for Jews than an secular America, a New Age America, or an Islamic America.

Don Feder, Mona Charen, and Suzanne Fields are among a very small number of conservative Jewish columnists are committed to the religion of the Old Testament, they have great respect for Christian morality, and write with more integrity than many Christians. In fact, they sound more like Christians than most Christians who write in the secular media. Exceptions are people like Linda Bowles and Charlie Reese. But sadly, these people still have the veil over their eyes and if they die without Jesus Christ they will go to hell. Rather than feeling that this is unfair, we must pray for their salvation. To claim that God is unfair is to reveal ignorance of Scripture - God gave His Own Son up to suffer humiliation and torture and finally to die on a cruel cross for my sins and theirs. What more could He do and maintain His holiness?

**3:16 - WHENEVER A MAN TURNS TO THE LORD.** *“But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”* The reference is to the Jew who turns to Christ. Both the Jew and the Gentile must repent (turn from sin), but the emphasis here is on the Jew who turns to Jesus Christ.

**THE VEIL IS TAKEN AWAY.** The verb here means to take away, as anchors that are cut loose (Acts 27:40; 28:13). Paul has in mind Exodus 34:34 where we find that when Moses went before the Lord, the veil was taken away. “After the ceremony the veil is taken from around... the face of the bride” [11: 223].

**3:17 - THE LORD IS THE SPIRIT.** *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”* Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses the title “Lord” for Jesus throughout his epistles. He normally uses “God,” or “the Father” for God, and the “Spirit” or the Holy Spirit for the Third Person of the Trinity. To those who hold to a unitary theory of God, Paul is identifying Christ as the Holy Spirit, and in so doing they eliminate the Third Person of the Trinity. Unitarians reject the Trinity, insisting that One Person is playing three different roles. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is interchangeably called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (See Rom. 8:9ff, where He is called the Spirit of God). Paul is not teaching a unitary theory of God here. The word Trinity does not appear in the Bible, but the teaching of the Trinity is found throughout the New Testament.

Francis Shaeffer said that his discovery of the Doctrine of the Trinity enabled him to move from being an agnostic to become a theist. He reasoned that if the unitary is right, then God needed to create other life in order to have relationships (fellowship), which idea assumes an inadequacy on the part of God. According to the Trinitarian view, there has never been a time in which God has had any need of anything, including someone with whom He might have a relationship, or fellowship. Those who hold the unitary theory might object that God created angels and so He would have had a

relationship with them. That would have given Him a vertical relationship with subordinate beings, but that would have been relationship based upon dependency. In reality, there has never been a time when there was no horizontal relationship, fellowship within the Godhead in which all three Persons were co-eternal, shared identical character, nature, and attributes. Thus, God created man for His pleasure, not because He had a need.

God is one is essence, manifested as three in personality. He is not engaged in role playing. When Jesus was baptized, the Son was baptized, the Spirit manifested Himself, and the Father spoke. When Jesus withdrew to spend a night in prayer to the Father, there really was a Father with Whom He spoke - either that or He was lying to His disciples and the Gospel is a tragic hoax.

**WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS THERE IS LIBERTY.** Note here that Paul uses “the Spirit of the Lord.” What liberty does he intend here? For one thing we have freedom of access to God. In Romans 5:2, Paul writes, “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” In Ephesians 2:18, he writes, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

**3:18 - WE ALL.** *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”* All Christians, not just apostles and others who were called out for special ministry. No distinction is made between the man in the pulpit and the person in the pew. All may approach the heavenly Father with an unveiled face. This great the New Testament distinctive clearly assumes the doctrine of the Priesthood of Believers.

**WITH UNVEILED FACE.** As Moses unveiled his face when he stood before the Lord, the Christian may approach Him with unveiled face. The believer may stand before God and witness personally His unsurpassed glory.

Our access to God is stressed in the Scripture and it should never be taken for granted. In Romans 5:1, Paul is inspired to write, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." It is by God's grace that under the New Covenant we have permanent and continuous access to the throne of grace. The veil has been removed! We did not move it, God moved it - just as surely as he tore the veil in the temple into from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

**BEHOLDING AS IN A MIRROR.** For the same figure, see I Cor. 13:12. It seems that the picture here is not of one looking at himself in a mirror, but of the mirroring, or reflecting of the glory of God. We may behold God’s manifestation of His glory, and we reflect that glory before the world.

**THE GLORY OF THE LORD.** “Glory” is a term one often encounters in the study of the Word of God. It is our loss if we do not make an effort to understand the full significance of the word so that we can make an application of it in our relationship with the God of our Salvation. According to

the Holman Bible Dictionary informs, glory denotes

The weighty importance and shining majesty which accompany God's presence. The basic meaning of the Hebrew word *kabod* is heavy in weight. (Compare 1 Sam. 4:18; Prov. 27:3.) Thus it can refer to a heavy burden (Ex. 18:18; Ps. 38:4; compare more idiomatic uses in Gen. 12:10; 47:4; Ex. 4:10; 7:14). On the other side, it can describe extreme good fortune or mass numbers, a use with many different English translations (compare Gen. 13:2; Ex. 12:38; Num. 20:20; 1 Kings 10:2) [HBD].

The verb basically mean to “give weight to, honor” (Ex. 20:12; 1 Sam. 15:30; Ps. 15:4; Prov. 4:8; Isa. 3:5). Glory is not so much something someone bestows on another as it is a quality of importance which a person, group, or nation has and which another recognizes. They do not give him the weight or honor, they recognize the fact that he is deserving of it.

People may so honor other people by a recognition of their place of the honor in the human community. A nation can have such honor or glory (Isa. 16:14; 17:3). Following the September 9, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, millions of Americans have been waving “Old Glory,” singing, “God Bless America,” and in many other ways assuming a new patriotism that has been lacking since Viet Nam, though revived briefly during Desert Storm before the media began its assault on our victory in that war. Following their relentless assault on President George H. W. Bush, his approval rate showed an incredible drop. It seemed that they tried to do the same thing with the war of terrorism, but God has been protecting and blessing President George W. Bush, the son.

“To give glory” is to praise, to recognize the importance of another, the weight the other carries in the community. In the Psalms people give such glory to God, that is they recognize the essential nature of His Godness that gives Him importance and weight in relationship to the human worshiping community. (Compare Pss. 22:23; 86:12; Isa. 24:15.) Human praise to God can be false, not truly recognizing His importance (Isa. 29:13; compare 1 Sam. 2:30). At times God creates glory for Himself (Ex. 14:4, 17; Ezek. 28:22). As one confesses guilt and accepts rightful punishment, one is called upon to recognize the righteousness and justice of God and give Him glory (Josh. 7:19; 1 Sam. 6:5). God thus reveals His glory in His just dealings with humans. He also reveals it in the storms and events of nature (Ps. 29; compare Isa. 6). Glory is thus that side of God which humans recognize and to which humans respond in confession, worship, and praise. (Compare Isa. 58:8; 60:1.) Still, for the Old Testament, the greatest revelation of divine glory came on Sinai (Deut. 5:24). Yet such experiences are awesome and fearful (Deut. 5:25). Such revelation does not, however, reveal all of God, for no person can see the entirety of the divine glory, not even Moses (Ex. 33:17-23) [HBD].

In the New Testament the Greek word, *doxa*, is used to express glory and limits the meaning to God's glory. In classical Greek *doxa* means opinion, conjecture, expectation, and then praise. New Testament continues the Old Testament meaning of divine power and majesty (Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17; 2

Pet. 1:17). The New Testament extends this to Christ as having divine glory (Luke 9:32; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:14). “Divine glory means that humans do not seek glory for themselves (Matt. 6:2; John 5:44; 1 Thess. 2:6). They only look to receive praise and honor from Christ (Rom. 2:7; 5:2; 1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 2:16)” [HBD].

**BEING TRANSFORMED.** Paul is moving to a powerful conclusion of this point. Ryrie notes that: “Paul builds on the experience of Moses in Ex. 34:29-35. We Christians, he says, behold constantly Christ's divine glory; and this beholding changes or transforms us from glory to glory; i.e., from one degree of glory to another” [RSB ]. There is always room for growth in the Christian life. This verse holds out a promise to all who would grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## **D. Paul Saw His Ministry as Supernatural, 4:1-6.**

**4:1 - THIS MINISTRY.** *“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart.”* Paul does not hesitate to state the claim that he was called by the Lord to the ministry in which he was engaged. In Romans 1:1, he introduces himself as “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called (to be) an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” Every God-called preacher of the Word should labor under this same conviction, and if he does he will remain faithful, confident that the God Who called him will accomplish His purpose through him.

The modern God-called preacher of the Word understands that “This ministry” to which he has been called is God’s ministry, and he is God’s minister. He must be willing to be used as an instrument of righteousness and redemption according to the grace and sovereignty of God. It may be tempting to try to help the Lord out at times, but he must be careful not to run ahead of the Lord. When a church with a reputation, a strong budget, and all the right numbers loses a pastor it is amazing how quickly their pastor search committee will be flooded with resume’s, often with a cover-letter assuring them that the Lord has revealed to him that he is to be their new pastor.

Pastors of the mega-churches get the attention, the salaries and benefits, the large staff, the trips to the Holy Land, and the invitations to speak at the conventions, retreats, and conferences. But the God-called person, whether pastor, evangelist, or missionary, must never lose sight of the fact that there are no small tasks and no unworthy positions when the individual is in God’s will.

Years ago, according to the stories, there was a planning meeting for an area crusade, and after most of the details had been worked out, someone asked, “Who are we going to ask to come as the evangelist?” Various names were mentioned, including Dwight L. Moody who had considerable support among the ministers. A young preacher who was holding out for a younger man, objected, “I don’t believe Mr. Moody has a monopoly on the Holy Spirit.” There was a brief pause before an older pastor replied, “Dwight L. Moody certainly has no monopoly on the Holy Spirit, but that is not the point. The point is, the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on Dwight L. Moody.” God should have the monopoly on every person He calls into His service.

**WE DO NOT LOSE HEART.** Or, we faint not. Paul uses the plural in speaking of himself, but the same should apply to all Christians. He is not faint-hearted and we should not be faint hearted in ministering and witnessing for Jesus Christ. No doubt, every called minister of the Word will agree with that, and no one likes to think of himself as one who might “lose heart.” But in a day when pastors are terminated for no better reason than, “Well, you have been here two years and we feel like that is long enough,” it is understandable that some become discouraged.

Many preachers are frustrated because they have prayerfully sought the leadership of the Holy Spirit and they have exhausted themselves, sacrificed family time, and spent their own money when the church did not cover their expenses, only to be callously terminated. They were defenseless as people they had loved and served took turns taking pot shots at them and their families. Those who attack the pastor often boast of their courage in confronting him with one charge after another, when in reality it was like shooting fish in a barrel. The pastor could not say anything in his defense that would not be used against him. He was defenseless, except for one thing - he had his call from God which he could not compromise.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of a situation like that is when the man of God finds himself in a situation like that and he looks to his fellow pastors, only to find that they are treating him like he has leprosy. I have talked with a number of pastors who were called to a new church, and after a time they learned that all those former pastors who had been forced to resign were not heretics and infidels after all. The church has had fifteen pastors in thirty years and they do not intend to change the system. The pastor of a medium sized church met with me several times after individuals began to pressure him to resign. He has enough support to have voted them out, but he would not put the church through that kind of fight. After he announced his resignation we met at the Cracker Barrel and he asked me, “Do you know how many preachers have contacted me? One. You.”

We must not lose heart then the people we are called to serve turn against us, and we must not lose heart when other God-called ministers avoid us. The One Who called us will never forsake us. We must also determine that we will not expect too much of other people. Some of have had the support of people whose support never wavered, even after many years. They simply stand for that is right before the Lord and do not compromise in order to be popular with others.

One other point should be made before leaving this subject. Those who do not lose heart will forgive those who have offended them, and they will forgive those who should have supported and encouraged them, but did not. Those who lose heart become frustrated, and some become bitter. That compounds the tragedy because it gives ground to the devil, and it denies God both the victory and the glory.

**4:2 - RENOUNCED THE THINGS HIDDEN.** *“But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”* There are certain things the minister must renounce; things that should not be a part of his character or

behavior. These hidden things may surface to bring shame to the minister and to the Kingdom of God. Christianity has been embarrassed by the Jim Bakker scandal and by the Jimmy Swaggert scandal in recent years, with both being disciplined by their denomination. Jim Bakker has been sentenced to a lengthy prison sentence and other members of the PTL Ministries have been found guilty and sentenced to long terms. Others have been indicted. Comedians are having a field day with all the reports of immorality and financial irresponsibility.

Any pastor who has followed a pastor who was forced to resign for moral reasons knows the price the innocent victims must pay and the damage it does to the image and influence of the church. He also knows the harm that may be done by the preacher who cannot keep a confidence, or the one who is given to fits of anger. Satan will use every opportunity to destroy the minister and his ministry. The only logical and practical thing to do is to face temptation and renounce the sin immediately. He must resist the devil and draw near to God for a victory over those things that might bring shame.

**NOT WALKING IN CRAFTINESS.** The word for craftiness refers to one who is clever, cunning, or deceitful. The minister must be open and above board. When he speaks people must know that he means exactly what he says. A lady once told this writer that her church called a new pastor who thought he was a good psychologist. There were a number of fishermen in the church and some were mechanically inclined. From time to time he would ask one of the men to come by his house and see if they could repair his outboard motor. Her husband was asked to come by one day and when he returned home he told his wife that the pastor knew more about an outboard motor than he did, and it was obvious to him that he was doing something to the motor to cause some slight problem and then he would ask one of the men over to help him solve this illusive problem. Some liked being asked to help and he used this situation to develop a closer relationship with them. But when this one man became convinced that it was a gimmick, he was turned off by it.

The minister must be open and above board. I once asked a friend about an illustration he used and suggested that he had exaggerated a point. He said, "I wasn't lying; I was just blowing it up where they could see it!" Even at the risk of seeming less colorful, or less dynamic, the minister should be a man of integrity in all things.

**ADULTERATING THE WORD OF GOD.** This occurs any time the minister, or any other believer, adds any impurity to the Word of God. Paul renounces any temptation to adulterate the Word of God by mixing error with truth, or by conducting himself in a manner inconsistent with the Gospel he preached.

**BUT BY MANIFESTATION OF TRUTH.** In contrast to craftiness and polluting the truth, he has made a commitment to manifest the truth. In manifesting the truth, we must bear two things in mind. First, the minister or lay witness must present the truth without trying to make it say something it obviously does not say - don't water it down. Secondly, He must follow the advice of Paul to Timothy: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV).



**TO EVERY MAN'S CONSCIENCE.** He has no letter of commendation from other people, or groups asking the Corinthians to accept him. He will let his message and ministry commend him to their conscience. One's conscience is important, but the believer must understand the significance of his or her conscience. With the believer it is never enough "let your conscience be your guide", because there is a far superior Guide, and that is the Holy Spirit.

Man was created a moral being and there is something inside every person that says, "This is right" or "This is wrong," Even younger children on the playground are often heard to exclaim, "That's not fair." On what does he base his opinion? He has been taught by parents, teachers, and ministers that certain things are right or fair, and certain things are wrong. He was so created as to desire to be treated in a fair or equitable manner - even if the person is basically interested only in his own welfare. He is also taught that certain things are right and certain things are wrong and in time he can adjust his conscience to suit his own purpose or desires - even though it may resurface to trouble him from time to time.

You can pick up a hand full of rocks from a stream bed or a gravel road and move them around in your hands and feel the rough edges, edges that would cause injury to your hands if you applied enough pressure. However, if you take those same rocks and place them in a rock tumbler with a course polishing compound for a week or two, and then flush out the tumbler and add a fine polishing compound and tumble them for another week, all the rough edges will have been smoothed out or worn down to the point that they are very pleasant to rub with your fingers. The conscience is much like that. Many people have discovered that the behavior which once caused them a certain amount of discomfort - even pain - will after years of neglect or abuse cause little pain, and may be engaged in with a certain amount of pleasure.

**IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.** It must be remembered that the unsaved person has a conscience. The human conscience is programmed from childhood to approve certain things and renounce others. For example, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, there are entertainers who help pollute the morals of America and at the same time lend their support to any effort to prevent pollution of the air and streams. The Christian's conscience must be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. The Christian who surrenders his heart to the Holy Spirit will never have to worry about his conscience being in conflict with the Lord. His life is directed by the Word of God and its divine Author. The saint may have difficulty with subjects like capital punishment or abortion if he does not understand what the Bible teaches, or if he does not accept it as the authority for his life.

**4:3 - IF OUR GOSPEL IS VEILED.** *"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing."* It is not the purpose of Paul to veil the Gospel which he preaches. However, if it seems veiled (that is, if the meaning is hidden), it is hidden only to those who are perishing. The message of salvation is clear to anyone who will read the Scripture. Children read John 3:16 and confess their sins to God, trusting Jesus Christ to save them.

That does not mean that all the teachings of the Bible will be understood by every person who reads it. Paul wrote, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us

which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). He further states, “But God hath revealed [them] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:10-11). Deeper truths are revealed only to the redeemed.

**4:4 - THE GOD OF THIS WORLD.** *“In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”* Or, this age as in I Cor. 1:20. Satan is the "god of this age." This phrase appears only here in the N. T., but Jesus uses the same thought in John 12:31 and 14:30 (prince of this world). Satan claimed to rule over the world in the temptations of Christ in the wilderness.

**BLINDED THE MINDS.** They refused to believe, or closed their eyes to the truth, and in doing so gave Satan the power to blind their thoughts. This happens all the time. Every time the unbeliever says, "no" to Jesus Christ, he both closes his eyes to the truth and gives Satan an opportunity to blind his mind more and more.

**THE LIGHT.** The word means illumination or enlightenment. It is against the "light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" that they close their eyes. Jesus is the Light of the World and it is against that light that they are closing their eyes and at the same time being blinded in their minds.

**THE IMAGE OF GOD.** Do you want to see God? Then, look to Jesus. It is He, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (Col. 1:15). Any god you find in any other way other than through Jesus Christ is a false God.

**4:5 - FOR WE DO NOT PREACH OURSELVES.** *“For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.”* “Surely as poor and disgusting a topic as a preacher can find” [12: 225]. Unfortunately, there are some who seem to do this very thing. They may do it in at least two ways. First, they may focus the attention of their audience on themselves or their pet project to the point that people lose sight of Christ. The appeal for money by a few television preachers has made the work difficult for those who are true ministers of the Gospel. They receive money and invest it in brick and mortar in their headquarters, rather than investing it in souls for Christ. In the second place, they may use the first person singular pronoun when preaching about God to such a degree that they detract from the Gospel and focus attention on themselves.

**CHRIST JESUS AS LORD.** Southern Baptists adopted the slogan "Here's Hope, Jesus Cares for You" for the 1990 simultaneous revivals. An earlier slogan was, "Good News America, God cares for you." They changed the slogan to use Jesus rather than God because of all the cults which minimize the person on Christ, and those cults and religions who proclaim some god who has nothing to do with Jesus. Jesus is Lord and, as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. 2:9-10).

**YOUR BONDSERVANTS FOR JESUS' SAKE.** He sees himself as their bond-slave for Jesus' sake. It is one thing to call himself the bond-slave of Jesus, but Paul goes a step further and calls himself their bondservant. There can be but one motivation for this kind of submission: "for Jesus' sake."

**4:6 - GOD WHO SAID.** *"For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."* Paul paraphrases Genesis 1:3, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." We have here another example of the use of the Old Testament Scripture by the New Testament writers. But we have more than that. We have another reminder of the parallel between Genesis 1 and John 1. Jesus was the Agent by which God gave the universe light and He is the One by Whom we receive spiritual light.

**LIGHT SHALL SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS.** The God who said, "Let there be light" is the Light Who illuminates our hearts and enables us to comprehend the Gospel message. It took a mighty act of God to bring light out of darkness in creation, and it takes a miracle of God to illuminate the darkened human heart. He gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the heart.

**IN THE FACE OF CHRIST.** As the Christian looks on the face of Jesus Christ he receives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, and he who is enlightened will be motivated to look the more often on the face of Christ. He will also share this light with others.

#### **E. He Never Permits Circumstances to Take His Eyes off Jesus, 4:7-18.**

**4:7 - THIS TREASURE.** *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves."* The treasure is the knowledge of the glory of God. It is our salvation and all the benefits. The primary focus is on the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ and the power to share the light with others.

**EARTHEN VESSELS.** This refers to our frail human bodies. This seems like an unlikely vessel for such great power. We are vessels of clay the divine Potter molds into vessels for His service (Rom. 9:20ff).

**THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF THE POWER.** "Power" is from the Greek word *dunamis*, from which we get our word dynamite. Perhaps the ultimate expression of the power of God in the life of the believer is found in this expression, "The surpassing greatness of the power." The child of God has great power, supernatural power, but that power is not a power he generates within himself, it is the power of God. Numerous religious movements today are concerned with power. They seek to discover the power of the mind, or the power of the spirit; or they try to discover some other source of power. Satanists are especially interested in power.

There are two sources of supernatural power in the world. The first source is God and His

power is unlimited. The second source is Satan and while his power is supernatural, it is limited. One had better be sure of the source of his power.

There are an incredible number of Muslims in the world today who are totally committed to the spread of Islam at any cost, including in many cases murder of innocent civilians, and terrorism in general. They are being taught to hate Jews as the little Satan, and Americans as the big Satan. They hate Christians and in countries where they can get away with it, kill those who become Christians and enslave their children.

Today, many nations are seeking ways to appease Muslims within their borders. Other nations knowingly harbor terrorists, either because they are in agreement with them or because they fear what they might do. There are a number of rich, powerful Arab who export enough oil to keep the machinery of the industrial nations going. They could, by shutting off the oil, cripple the economy of any country in the world. Islamic fundamentalists are ready to fight to the death with a fanatical zeal for their religion, converting people to Islam, or killing those who oppose them. There are some sixty Islamic governments in the world, and they can field an awesome army of zealots who are ready to die for Islam. They have money, they have the soldiers, they have the oil, and they have the commitment.

There is one area in which Islam is totally lacking: “the surpassing greatness of the power” of God within the lives of its subjects. There are many people who tremble before the numbers, and others who quake before the fanaticism. The Christian has a power they do not know. When we look back at the history of modern Israel we can see a manifestation of the power of God in both the establishment and the preservation of the nation. Israel occupies a thin sliver of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. There is absolutely no way Israel should still exist as a nation. The entire Arab, or Muslim world is dedicated to the destruction of that tiny nation. They have waged war against Israel on more than one occasion when there is no way they should not have been successful. How could that tiny nation with so few resources stand against the confederation of Islamic nations? There is but one way - the power and will of the one true God.

The Islamic leaders concluded that they lost one war because of the wealthy Jews supporting Israel. They lost again and blamed the United States. Israel still stands - and few in Israel are Christians. Yet, the Christian well knows that the reason Israel still exists today, and the reason it will be in existence when Jesus returns is that God is using Israel to demonstrate His power and His sovereignty before the nations. He has made promises concerning Israel, and He will honor His promises.

Every Christian is engaged in a spiritual warfare against an enemy who does not think he can lose. He has incredible resources and he is fully prepared, even anxious, to use them. The believer is invited to put on the whole armor of God so that he might engage the enemy with confidence of victory. While Christians do not all agree on Israel, there is one thing all true believers should agree on, and that is the “surpassing greatness of the power” that becomes ours the moment we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Israel has not always been straight with America, but God is faithful

to His nature, His character, and He is able to honor His promises.

Sadly, the average Christian is no more aware of the surpassing greatness of the Power of God that is available to every single believer than he is aware of his spiritual gifts. During the twelve years he served with the Interfaith Witness Department of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, Jimmy Furr led conferences on the cults, New Age Movements, and the occult. One question he often dealt with was, why do people become involved in the occult? He explained that many people get involved with the occult, satanism, witchcraft, and other occult groups because they could give them a demonstration of a power they had not witnessed in their church. Why should we expect lost people to be attracted to a powerless church.

The church that depends on its numbers, its staff, its money, its programs, and its denomination for its success is a powerless church. Unfortunately, most Christians spend their lives wandering in the wilderness of the flesh without any real sense of spiritual power. They are sustained by manna - kept by the power of God, but never filled with the surpassing power of God because they refuse to trust Him and walk with Him in the spirit. This power is in available to those who walk after the spirit, not to those who walk after the flesh.

**4:8 - AFFLICTED IN EVERY WAY.** *“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing.”* The word translated “afflicted” means to contract, squeeze, or to press as one pressed grapes. Paul was under both physical and emotional pressure during his entire ministry. He was pressed, but not crushed. God has blessed the church with many strong examples. For the modern church one name says it all - Joni Erickson Tada.

Although frequently mistreated, Paul was encouraged by his faith in God, who raised Jesus from the dead. We cannot expect a world without problems, sorrows, and pains. Our Lord endured the same kind of world. Our troubles last but a moment compared to the eternal glory God has for us. Meanwhile, in our sufferings we represent Christ to the world [DSB]

**PERPLEXED BUT NOT DESPAIRING.** Paul loves a play on words and he uses one here. He is “lost, but not lost out” [12: - 226]. Synonyms for “perplexed” run all the way from “amazed” to “befuddled,” and Paul knew all those emotions, but he was never defeated. The English word “despairing” can denote anything from being despondent to abandoning hope. There is an old macho saying, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” We may think of a boxing metaphor - , down but not out. There is another old saying: “It’s not how much dog there is in the fight, it’s how much fight there is in the dog.”

One of the greatest football coaches in history was Tom Landry. To say Tom Landry was to say character, dignity, and courage. Tom Landry was a Christian gentleman, a godly man, a man of principles. Once when his team lost a game they should have won, Landry explained that on that day his team had not played to win, they had played to keep from losing.” Their attitude set them up for a defeat. This is a problem Paul never had.

**4:9 - PERSECUTED BUT NOT FORSAKEN.** *“Persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”* In various places in his epistles Paul chronicles his persecution. But he never had to face persecution alone. God was always there to protect him, and even when God did not prevent persecution, He sustained His servant during the persecution.

**STRUCK DOWN BUT NOT DESTROYED.** Today we would say he was knocked down but not knocked out. He is probably referring to Lystra where he was stoned and left for dead. However, there were other times when he was subjected to brutal beatings.

**4:10 - CARRYING ABOUT IN THE BODY.** *“Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”* Ignatius was called “God-bearer.” Paul said, “We die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31). See also Col. 1:24, where Paul says, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.”

**THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS.** Paul identifies his suffering with that of the Lord Jesus. He does not say that his suffering was on par with that of Jesus, or that it accomplishes the same thing, but that he had endured constant suffering and persecution on His behalf. He had been greatly effected by the death and burial of Christ and his own suffering was the result of his commitment to Him. Christians are motivated to remain faithful through suffering and persecution by the knowledge that “the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” The believer shares in the resurrection life of Christ.

**4:11 - DELIVERED OVER TO DEATH.** *“For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”* Does Paul mean that each believer is constantly being delivered over to death all through his life, or that from generation to generation believers are being delivered over to death? The latter seems more reasonable. It is natural for the “natural” man to ask why the righteous have to suffer if God really loves us. If He cares, and if He has the power to do anything He chooses to do, why do His children suffer? He answers that question here - “so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

From the Christian martyrs of the early centuries to those of the Reformation, to the victims of Nazism and Communism, to those killed and enslaved by Islamic militants of today, Christians have been called on to demonstrate their love for the risen Lord before an evil world. The twentieth Century was the bloodiest century in the history of mankind - so much for evolution, if by evolution we include anything beyond biology. The Nazis killed 15,000,000 people, 6,000,000 of whom were Jews. Communists in the Soviet Union killed from 40 to 60 million people, and the Chinese Communists may have killed another 40 million people. Then there were murderous regimes of Cambodia, Viet Nam, Cuba, and numerous other countries. Christians and Jews have been the primary targets for persecution and extermination, in Islamic countries. While it took the world long enough to grieve for the six million Jews killed by Hitler, the murder of millions of Christians has received little attention. It is especially challenging to get the West to acknowledge the persecution

of Christians by Muslims today. It is also interesting that the same Americans who grieve over the horrors of slavery in America - slavery that has not existed for a century and a half - cannot get worked up over slavery in Africa or Asia today. It is a fact that we are a picture driven society, and if the media ignores it, we ignore it, and if the government ignores slavery in various parts of the world, the media may well continue to ignore it. The media created a feeding frenzy atmosphere in America over Apartheid in South Africa where black people were discriminated against by white people - yet consistently ignored it when black people tortured and killed other black people, or when Muslims sold Christians into slavery to Africans or Asians. One wonders, considering the media's total lack of interest in these situations what their agenda really is.

There are still many places in the world where Christians are abused and killed for the cause of Christ, and as America moves deeper and deeper into the post-Christian period of her history, the potential for persecution should become a growing concern for the church. Conservative Jewish columnists has expressed surprise and frustration because of discrimination against Christians in America - and because Christians watch their rights being stripped from them without resisting the efforts of the ACLU, Americans for Separation of Church and State, and other foes. As America continues to march into deeper and deeper into a post-Christian culture, persecution may await those who witness for Jesus Christ. The sad thing is the it may take persecution to awaken the church to its mission in the world today. Sadly, Christians have always seemed to respond better to persecution than to prosperity.

**4:12 - DEATH...LIFE.** *“So death works in us, but life in you.”* Paul's physical suffering pressed him down (4:8), but it was the means by which the Corinthians came to know eternal life. The same principle applied to his suffering in Ephesus, Philippi, and other places. It was worth the pain and suffering for Paul to see the results. And what results they were - churches planted at Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and believers without number who would move throughout the regions establishing churches in smaller towns and villages..

**4:13 - ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH IS WRITTEN.** *“But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak.”* Paul is adapting the words of Psalms 116:10, “I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.” Paul believed in Jesus, therefore he was qualified to speak. Though oppressed, he maintained an outlook of hope (v. 14); therefore, he does not lose heart (v. 16), though his outer man is decaying. He does not lose hope because this affliction is light and temporary when viewed from the perspective of eternity.

**4:14 - HE WHO RAISED THE LORD JESUS.** *“Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.”* This verse seems to imply that Paul was not certain that he would be alive when Jesus returned as some have wrongly inferred from 1 Cor. 7:29; 10:11; 15:51. At the same time, it emphasizes one of the most essential themes of the New Testament: and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who as the Resurrection and Life is the guarantee of our resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ distinguishes Christianity from the religions of

the world. Yes, that is grammatically correct. I did not say the “other” religions of the world, because according to my definition, Christianity is not a religion of the world. The religions of the world all have one thing in common: they are all involved in doing something to get the attention of some god, or many gods. They may be trying to gain the favor of a god, or they may be trying to do something to appease some god so as to avoid his wrath. If anyone protests, I will concede the point that there are some people who are simply - in some cases, frantically - trying to “find” god, trying to “know” god, or trying to “be” a god. So, whether, it is the pantheism of some pagan religion, polytheism of Hinduism or Mormonism, the monism of the New Age cults, or the monotheism of Islam, they are all involved in a works based religion which cancels the grace of God. The religions of the world are involved in a quest for God. Christians worship a Savior who came to “seek and save the lost.” The Gospel of Salvation by Grace in one of the key distinctions between Christianity and the religions of the world. The Resurrection is another, our resurrection in Him is yet another.

The assurance of the resurrection would encourage these ancient saints during the trials that were certain to come, considering the hostile climate in which they lived. The hope of the resurrection encourages believers today who face ostracism, persecution, slavery, and death for the cause of Christ. It is getting more and more dangerous to be a Christian. Opposition is mounting in America, even as the threat of persecution escalates around the world.

The transcript of the now famous - or infamous - video tape of Osama bin Laden was released on December 14, 2001, shortly after the video tape was shown on various networks. The world was treated to what was tantamount to a confession of guilt in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. What the world saw was a man so causally speaking of the murder of innocent (as far as he was concerned) men, women, and children from some eighty countries that some have claimed the tape was a fake. His laughing, his chuckling, his facial expressions, and his body language expressed thrill and excitement, even though the we did not witness in him the wild-eyed expression or the loud angry shouting rage we have come to expect of demonstrating Muslims in Palestine. He laughed about deceiving most of the attackers, he boasted of his experience in such violent attacks as well as his calculations of the number of people who were killed. At one point bin Laden quotes several short and incomplete Hadith verses. One such quote is as follows: “I was ordered to fight the people until they see there is no god but Allah, and his prophet Muhammed.” The more radical Muslims have been preparing to take the war to the West, especially to Jews and to Christians. Christians must be prepared for war.

Matthew Henry writes

The grace of faith is an effectual remedy against fainting in times of trouble. They knew that Christ was raised, and that his resurrection was an earnest and assurance of theirs. The hope of this resurrection will encourage in a suffering day, and set us above the fear of death. Also, their sufferings were for the advantage of the church, and to God's glory. The sufferings of Christ's ministers, as well as their preaching and conversation, are for the good of the church and the glory of God. The prospect of



eternal life and happiness was their support and comfort.

**4:15 - THE GRACE WHICH IS SPREADING.** *“For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.”* The grace was abounding from one to another as each responded to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and then went on to lead others to receive Him as Savior.

**4:16 - WE DO NOT LOSE HEART.** *“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”* As in verse 1. A lot of people do lose heart, but those who are growing in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit should not lose heart (“we faint not,” KJV).

**OUR OUTER MAN IS DECATYING.** The NKJV renders it, “our outward man is perishing;” the NRSV, “our outer nature is wasting away.” Whatever translation we prefer, in Old Testament terminology, the outer man is “going the way of all the earth.”

**OUR INNER MAN.** The soul, or the spirit “is being renewed every day.” When the individual is born again, he receives everlasting life, but he needs daily nurturing and renewing. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who are obedient to Him.

**4:17 - MOMENTARY, LIGHT AFFLICTION.** *“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.”* Paul, who had suffered more than most believers can imagine, puts things into perspective. Regardless of what happens to the saint, it is for a brief period of time compared to eternity. Not only is the suffering of the saints “momentary,” or brief, it is also “light” when compared to the sufferings of our Savior.

The weight of all temporal afflictions was lightness itself, while the glory to come was a substance, weighty, and lasting beyond description. If the apostle could call his heavy and long-continued trials light, and but for a moment, what must our trifling difficulties be! Faith enables to make this right judgment of things. There are unseen things, as well as things that are seen. And there is this vast difference between them; unseen things are eternal, seen things but temporal, or temporary only. Let us then look off from the things which are seen; let us cease to seek for worldly advantages, or to fear present distresses. Let us give diligence to make our future happiness sure[MH].

**IS PRODUCING...AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY.** In this verse we see a careful balancing of words of contrast [affliction vs. glory, lightness vs. weight, for the moment vs. eternal]. The entire subject requires careful balancing. No one receives eternal life because he suffers in this life, yet we are clearly told that those who suffer for Jesus in this life will receive a measure of glory “beyond all comparison.”

**4:18 - THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN.** *“While we look not at the things which are seen,*

*but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*” The focus of the believer’s life is not on material things. Unfortunately, professing Christians seem as bound to the material things of life as the unsaved person. During the hippy movement during the 1960s the charge was made that the “Jesus freaks” were so heavenly minded they were of no earthly good. Others answered that they were simply reacting to their parents who were so earthly minded they were of no heavenly good.

The Scripture does not teach that we should hold material things in contempt. But it does teach that we should never become possessed by our possessions. The Christian may stand and sing, “Wherever He leads, I’ll go”, but the more he possesses, the less likely he is to go. R. G. Lee once told of a young man who had just been saved who had just heard a sermon on witnessing to lost people. At the conclusion the pastor announced that they would sing “Rescue the Perishing” for the invitational hymn. After a verse or two the new convert walked down the aisle and asked the pastor, “When do we begin?” The pastor asked, “Begin what?” He said, “Rescuing the perishing!” The pastor replied, “Oh, that’s just a song. It’s just a song.” When you sing I Surrender All, is it just a song?

**THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN.** That is, the spiritual things. The Christian, and the minister in particular, must place high priority on spiritual things. He does not have to neglect the practical things of this world; some of them are essential. But he must never let them get between himself and the Lord.

**THE THINGS THAT ARE SEEN ARE TEMPORAL.** We read it and we say we believe it, but we do not always act like it. If it can be seen it is temporal and if it is temporal, you are going to have to give it up some day. Why, then, should we place more value on that which is perishing than that which will never perish. The ad says diamonds are forever. The Bible says it is not so. Every thing you can see is temporal; some are just more temporal than others.

Scientists tell us the very universe is wearing down. The sun is being consumed, or we would receive no light from it. I recall have lamented some years ago the fact that my Oldsmobile was wearing out. I recall thinking, “when I replace it I will have to pay more money for less car than I have now.” The family enjoyed the automobile so much when we bought it. We liked the size and the V-8 engine, the interior, all the options that made it a pleasure. But every time the odometer shows another ten thousand miles, something tugged at my heart, reminding me that it was wearing out and there was nothing I could do about it. A diamond will outlast an automobile, but on the scale of eternity, there is really that much difference.

It is foolish to place too much trust in that which is passing away. It is also foolish to trust in that which is set for destruction. To paraphrase murdered missionary Jim Elliot, “It is not foolish to give up what you cannot keep for what you cannot lose.” We are taught in 2 Peter 3:10 that, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

**THINGS ...NOT SEEN ARE ETERNAL.** Spiritual things are eternal and should receive top priority in our thinking. Today people are aware of the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise, abstinence from certain things that are harmful to the body. Any member of a modern health club has observed the lengths to which some people will go to keep the body in good condition, to build and define muscles. They work out in front of mirrors, flex, and expand and then go back to work. Some of them are fanatics. The same may be said of some of the runners and fast-walkers. Exercise is certainly beneficial and highly recommended. It is disturbing, however, to note how few people are as concerned about their soul as they are their body. Paul says, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things" (1 Tim. 4:8, KJV). Both bodily exercise and spiritual exercise (godliness) are important, but compared with spiritual growth and development, bodily exercise fades into insignificance.

## **F. Assurance of the Resurrection Is a Source of Hope, 5:1-9.**

**5:1 - FOR WE KNOW.** *"For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* Thank God, we know! This is not wishful thinking. Every believer knows that this earthly body is not all there is. Assurance of eternal life is one of the sweetest fruits of the Christian's faith. We share in the resurrection life of Jesus today and we shall share in that life forever. Matthew Henry summarizes verses 1-8:

The believer not only is well assured by faith that there is another and a happy life after this is ended, but he has good hope, through grace, of heaven as a dwelling-place, a resting-place, a hiding-place. In our Father's house there are many mansions, whose Builder and Maker is God. The happiness of the future state is what God has prepared for those that love him: everlasting habitations, not like the earthly tabernacles, the poor cottages of clay, in which our souls now dwell; that are mouldering and decaying, whose foundations are in the dust. The body of flesh is a heavy burden, the calamities of life are a heavy load. But believers groan, being burdened with a body of sin, and because of the many corruptions remaining and raging within them. Death will strip us of the clothing of flesh, and all the comforts of life, as well as end all our troubles here below. But believing souls shall be clothed with garments of praise, with robes of righteousness and glory. The present graces and comforts of the Spirit are earnestness of everlasting grace and comfort. And though God is with us here, by his Spirit, and in his ordinances, yet we are not with him as we hope to be. Faith is for this world, and sight is for the other world. It is our duty, and it will be our interest, to walk by faith, till we live by sight. This shows clearly the happiness to be enjoyed by the souls of believers when absent from the body, and where Jesus makes known his glorious presence. We are related to the body and to the Lord; each claims a part in us. But how much more powerfully the Lord pleads for having the soul of the believer closely united with himself! Thou art one of the souls I have loved and chosen; one of those given to me. What is death, as an object of fear,

compared with being absent from the Lord! [MH].

**IF THE EARTHLY TENT WHICH IS OUR HOUSE.** Various metaphors for the human body are used in the body. Here we have the metaphor of a tent or a house. The point is that the human body is our temporary dwelling place. The tent was a temporary dwelling place for the Children of Israel in the wilderness. When they moved into Canaan, especially after the Conquest, there must have been sense of permanence as they settled in houses they built on land they believed would be in their family for many generations. Today, many people seem so obsessed with building bigger and more expensive houses that you want to remind them that “you can’t take it with you.” However, considering their attachment to their house you cannot help but wonder if some of them really think they are going anywhere.

In the space age the body may be thought of as our space suit which we inhabit here on planet earth. Regardless of the number of years one inhabits his “earthly tent,” it is temporary. If a thousand years is as a day, and a day is a thousand years to the Lord, what is a life span of seventy, or even one hundred years?

**IS TORN DOWN.** The verb was actually the word used for striking down a tent [12: 228]. Some times the human body is torn down instantly and violently, at times it is torn down over a period of time by a dreaded disease. In other cases, it may simply wear out over a period of years, but regardless of the circumstances it is still temporary.

**WE HAVE.** He does not say that we may have: we have an eternal house. By faith we know what the future holds. Faith is the “title” (deed) to the things we hope for (Heb. 11:7).

**A BUILDING FROM GOD.** This is the resurrection body. What a contrast! The first house is built of things seen, and therefore temporal; the building God provides is a “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Heaven will be the eternal dwelling place of every born-again child of God. But the emphasis here is the resurrection body, not Heaven in general. We are given enough information in the Scripture to justify all the joy we derive from our reflections on that eternal “building from God”:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and **there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain;** the first things have passed away.” And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev. 21:1-5, emphasis added).

**5:2 - IN THIS HOUSE WE GROAN.** *“For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be*

*clothed with our dwelling from heaven.*” The metaphor of the house continues, as does the obvious contrast between the temporal nature of the earthly house and the eternal nature of the heavenly house. Is it any wonder that the spiritually discerning saint groans in this house for the one promised in Heaven? We find this illustrated in a moving way in Revelation 22:20, where John eagerly anticipates the return of the Lord: “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.” John responded, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

This is the idea behind Stuart Hamblin’s well known song, “This Old House.” He initially planned to set these lyrics to a reverent tune, but was persuaded to add rhythm to sell records. Later as a part of his Christian testimony he sang it as he had intended it to be sung and it stresses this theme.

**TO BE CLOTHED WITH OUR DWELLING FROM HEAVEN.** The metaphor is mixed (putting on a dwelling as clothing), but clear and meaningful. We groan for the time we put off this dwelling with all its burdens and put on the one God provides for us. Joni Erickson Tada has repeatedly written and spoken of her great desire to escape the paralyzed body that has been like a prison to her in so many ways and receive her perfected body and dance on the streets of gold. However, I thank God for every day He has left Joni with us because she has been one of His brightest lights on earth during the last fifty years, and one of the greatest witnesses to the love of God this world has known. I thank God for her testimony, but I also thank God that she will not always be confined to a wheel chair or a bed.

**5:3 - HAVING PUT ON.** *“Inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.”* The picture is of one putting on a garment. This is a familiar metaphor with Paul.

The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and **put on the armor of light**. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts (Rom. 13:12-14).

For this perishable must **put on the imperishable**, and this mortal must **put on immortality**. **But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable**, and this mortal will have **put on immortality**, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” (1 Cor. 15:53-55).

In receiving Jesus Christ as Savior, one takes off the old soiled garment and puts on the new - he is clothed in righteousness. He does not produce that righteousness, it is imputed unto him when he is born-again by the grace of God. The metaphor is of one putting on a new garment, but never an endorsement of a works based salvation.

**NAKED.** The believer, having put on the new garment, will not be found naked. We will not be

disembodied spirits. By “naked,” Paul means a disembodied state. At the moment of physical death, the immortal spirit of a Christian goes to be with the Lord (v. 8).

The dead in Christ are actually alive in heaven, experiencing all the glories of that place; but the saint himself is without a body temporarily, a state which Paul calls being “found naked.” Paul would prefer to be alive at the return of Jesus, “desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,” i.e., having a glorified body (vv. 2, 3). On the other hand, the apostle does not fear death because he knows that “to be absent from the body” is “to be present with the Lord” (v. 8) [BSB].

This passage allows no doctrine of “soul-sleep,” which states that at death the believer sleeps, unconscious until Jesus comes. This doctrine is also refuted by Jesus’ words to the repentant thief on the cross - which are in perfect harmony with this text (see Luke 23:42, 43). I once asked a friend who owns a several funeral homes what disturbed him most about funeral services. Without any hesitation, he said that what bothered him most is when someone tells the family their loved one is not dead, he’s just sleeping. Sleep may be used in the Scripture for death, but never for “soul sleep.” Sleep is a beautiful metaphor, if not pressed to cover more than is intended. The body sleep, the soul does not. The soul does find rest, but that rest is not a mindless nothingness.

There is another thing we must guard against, and that is the concept that believers will be unrecognizable and indistinguishable (disembodied) spirits until the time Jesus returns with the saints to rapture His church. We do know that when Jesus comes, the dead in Christ will rise first:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first**. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thes. 4:16-17).

This at first seems rather clear, but there are those who translate this, “The dead in Christ shall have risen first,” which disallows a bodily resurrection at the Lord’s return for His church. Those who hold this view believe that the resurrection occurs at the time of death, that there is not premillennial return of Christ for His church. They believe the believer receives his glorified body immediately at the time of his death.

However, Paul is clear in this letter to the Thessalonians (quoted above) as to the order. Yet, there is one other point that must be made: when the believer dies he does not become an indistinguishable nothingness. In the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Abraham is recognizable, and so is Lazarus. Herein is a mystery which will be cleared up for each believer the moment he is ushered through the portals of death into the presence of God.

**5:4 - IN THIS TENT, WE GROAN.** *“For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.”* The spiritually minded Christian, weighted down by the burdens of this body,

yearns for the garment with which God will clothe him. I once visited with a lay person who had strong convictions about witnessing to lost people. I was a young pastor and when we were invited in to visit with a young couple this deacon did not wait for me, he simply launched into his presentation. Before long it became rather morbid. The lady protested,

“Wait a minute, I don’t want to die!”

“You’ll be better off!”, the deacon snapped back.

Needless to say, our visit was over at that point. This is not the attitude or Christian world-view about which Paul was inspired to write. Christians should place great emphasis on the sanctity of life. Life is a gift from God, and every believer should be a good steward of that which has been committed to him. At the same time, the limitations of flesh, along with its infirmities groans for the glorified body which we will receive from the Lord.

**SWALLOWED UP BY LIFE.** Only that which is mortal will perish. Only that which is mortal can perish. The soul survives, clothed in the resurrection body. However, we must qualify that by stating that this is true literally. Figuratively, lost souls “perish” (John 3:16), even though they do not fade away, decay, cease to exist. The point here is that even those Christians who hold a very high position on the sanctity of life will anticipate with great intensity (“groan”) the glorified body and everything else Heaven offers.

**5:5 - HE WHO PREPARED US IS GOD.** “*Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.*” We need to be constantly reminded of this basic fact, especially in this post-modern age. Beyond this we must be reminded of the importance of stressing the identity of God, so as to distinguish the true God from the New Age gods and the old pagan gods. The world needs the God Who sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins. The Christian must never be ashamed to mention God or to talk with others about Jesus. We do not, however, worship god in a generic sense.

Francis Shaeffer said that the word “god” (little “g”) is the most meaningless word in the English language. It may also be the most disturbing and destructive word in the English language. Just think what it would mean to be a slave the Mormon god, or the Islamic god, or a New Age god. It would mean a fruitless life and an eternity of torment!

**WHO GAVE US HIS SPIRIT AS A PLEDGE.** The presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer is his assurance that he has eternal life and that God will fulfill all His promises to him, both now and throughout eternity. At the point of Justification, God gives us His Spirit to indwell us, and this is his assurance of Sanctification and Glorification. Sanctification depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit in one’s life. Whether we stand before the Lord with a fruitful life to present to Him, or empty handed with our work consumed by fire will depend upon whether or not we let the Holy Spirit have His way with our life.

**5:6 - AT HOME IN THE BODY.** “*Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that*

*while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.*” The verb for “at home” refers to one who is among his own people as opposed to being away from home, or away from his people. This denotes one who is still in the “earthly tent” (vs. 1), or “this house” (vs. 2), rather than in the “building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (vs. 1). While we are at home in this earthly tent (tabernacle, house), we are “absent from the Lord” in that we have not yet entered that “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

**5:7 - WE WALK BY FAITH.** “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” Since we cannot see God with our eyes, we can only walk by faith. As Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, “The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17b). “Though Christ is not visibly present today, we live by faith in the reality of His presence with us and the certainty of all the promises concerning our future” [BSB].

The lost person cannot live by faith because the kind of faith Paul writes about is a gift from God. It cannot be discovered, attained, or apprehended through human effort (Eph. 2:8ff). The Christian is one who was saved by grace through faith, and he must live in the realm of God’s grace by the faith the Lord has given him. God gives him the faith and He gives him the Holy Spirit to guide him in this walk. Anyone person who refuses to walk by faith in God is doing so, not because of ignorance but because he is in rebellion against the Lord. Failure to live by faith is not just a lack of insight, but open defiance of a loving God. It is not innocence, it is guilt. It is sin which must be confessed before there is a meaningful relationship with the Lord..

It was this revelation which Martin Luther finally comprehended and when he did he threw off the bonds of law, works and ritual and entered a personal walk by faith in the Lord. Francis Shaeffer comments on the significance of this discovery:

The birth pangs of the Middle Ages were characterized by an awakened cultural and intellectual life and an awakened piety. Yet at the same time the church continued to move away from the teaching of early Christianity as distortions of biblical doctrine increased. Soon European thought would be divided into two lines, both of which have come down and influenced our own day: first, the humanistic elements of the Renaissance, and second, the Bible-based teaching of the Reformation [13: 101].

The Renaissance was important to the development of western civilization, but the Renaissance without the Reformation would have been disastrous. Even those who professed to be Christians would still be walking in darkness, without faith or sight. The significance of this is seldom, if ever overstated. Unfortunately, millions today have no concept of this fact. They continue to try to mix faith and works, when Paul clearly teaches that the two views are mutually exclusive (Rom. 11:6).

**5:8 - WE ARE OF GOOD COURAGE.** “*We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*” Any person who really lives by faith as Paul did has every reason to be encouraged. “Of good courage” is a good literal translation, expressing boldness, but possibly denoting encouragement or even cheerfulness and not just boldness



- however, in Paul's mind the two are closely related. Under certain circumstances a person may face death or torture with a sense of resignation. Or, he may show great courage, but without cheer or "good courage." A soldier may show great courage on the battlefield for a number of reasons. He may hate the enemy to the point that he fights with reckless abandon. He may draw courage from his fellow soldiers or from a courageous leader. The Sargent portrayed my John Wayne in the Sands of Iwo Jima was absolutely convinced he was going to be killed in action, and he was determined to fight courageously and try to lead his men to victory on Iwo. He helped raise the flag on Iwo Jima, but was killed when he was hit by friendly fire from a ship that was trying to protect him and his men.

Paul understood life, and he understood what awaited him when life on this earth was over. How can anything defeat a person with the attitude Paul manifested? His philosophy is revealed in this letter to the church at Philippi: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21).

**PREFER RATHER.** This is a logical conclusion one must draw from the argument Paul has presented in verses 1-7. We are not to waste this life or abuse this body, but it is far better to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. The former state is temporal and filled with problems; the latter is eternal and filled with joy. The Christian should place a high value on his life, but never lose sight of the fact that there is something far better awaiting him when the time comes for to keep his appointment before the throne of God.

**5:9 - OUR AMBITION ...TO BE PLEASING TO HIM.** *"Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."* This is a good philosophy for every Christian. It should be the guiding principle of his life, in a life-or-death situation, or in the every day decisions of life. The Christian should not be so heavenly minded he is of no earthly good; nor should he be so earthly minded that he is of no heavenly good. God saved us for a purpose, and the fulfillment of that purpose in the "here and now" is as much a part of God's plan for us as the reward which awaits those who are faithful. Because Heaven is such a wonderful place, it is understandable that some, especially in times of trials, would want to look beyond this earth with its diseases, grief, and other hardships, to the glory and peace promised to the children of God. But we are not yet in Heaven, and our work is not in Heaven. It is right here where we live, and if we place great value on our salvation, if we really love God, our greatest desire will be to make whatever contribution we can to His Kingdom while we have the opportunity.

## **G. Two Motives for Faithfulness in the Ministry, 5:10-21.**

**5:10 - WE MUST ALL APPEAR.** *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."* There are no exceptions. We find in Hebrews 9:27 that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Christians must face the fact that they will be judged according to their works.

**THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.** Christ is Savior and Lord, but He is also Judge. Every lost person, whether religious or not, will stand before the judgement seat of Christ.” Every Muslim who has declared a holy war (Jihad) against Christianity, will stand before Jesus Christ in judgment. Every Jew who has rejected the Messiah will stand before the Christ he rejected to receive his sentence.

Every Christian will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but this will not be for sentencing. The purpose of this judgment is not to determine whether the believer is going to Heaven or Hell. The believer, having been justified once for all time, has received a judicial pardon from God, the supreme Judge. He is in no danger of going to hell, he has, to quote one, “I settled out of court.” Paul is clear in Romans 1:1-2:

Therefore, having **been justified by faith** (action completed in the past, from which we receive continuing benefits) **we have** (permanent) **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which **we** (permanently) **stand**; and we exult in hope of the glory of God (emphasis added).

This is accomplished by the grace of God. Having been justified once for all time, we have permanent access to God; we have permanent standing with Him; and we have His peace forever. This is not cheap grace, it is divine grace. Does this mean that you can just profess faith in Christ and go out and sin all you want to? In the first place, if your “want to” has not been converted you have never been saved. In the second place, in spite of your “want to” you are still a sinner saved by the grace of God, continually falling short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23 b). In the third place, when the lost person sins he is behaving according to his nature, for he is a sinner. When the Christian sins - and sin he will - he is sinning against his new nature in Christ, but he is also yielding to his old sinful nature which will be a source of temptation as long as he is in this world. Only when the believer is glorified will he be delivered from temptation permanently. But there is a major difference in the way God deals with the sins of the lost and the redeemed. He has an eternity to deal with the unsaved, and He will deal with him as his Judge. The believer has received a judicial pardon for his sins and will never have them brought up against him so as to condemn him to eternal death. God deals with the believer, not as his Judge, but as his heavenly father. The believer who sins can expect God to deal with unforgiven sin in the here-and-now. This is one way the saved person can know that he is a child of God:

FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; **for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?** But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons (Heb. 12:6-8).

**RECOMPENSED FOR HIS DEEDS.** All will stand before Him to receive his reward for the works done while in the body, whether those deeds are good or bad. Every Christian will stand before the Lord to give account of his works. Many do not seem to be motivated by this fact. Do they not

know it, or is it that they just do not take it seriously? Whatever the reason, many Christians will stand before the Lord empty handed. True believers will never be sent to hell, but why would any believer want to stand before God smelling like he has been there? As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:13, 15:

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

**5:11 - THE FEAR OF THE LORD.** *“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.”* This may not seem like a worthy motive for many today, but Paul certainly considered it a compelling motivation. This age of psychology. People are spending large sums in an effort to eliminate both guilt and fear. Guilt is seen as a feeling and not a fact. The best way to deal with the guilt feeling is to take the guilt to Christ and seek His forgiveness. That is also the best way to deal with fear of death and eternal punishment. But there is a healthy, reverential, fear that motivates one to be faithful to the Lord in worship, ministry and evangelism.

**WE PERSUADE.** The word translated “terror” (see above) is sometimes translated “fear.”

Whether the “terror of the Lord” about which Paul speaks is the awesomeness of God's judgment for unbelievers or the certainty of the accounting which each believer must give, the message is the same. The "terror of the Lord" is one of the strong motivations for each disciple to be involved in evangelism. An even stronger imperative for involvement in leading men to Christ is the love of Christ (v. 14). This verse speaks of His love for us and not our love for Him [BSB].

We must persuade or exhort, but only God can save or reward the individual. We may not always be successful, but we must try. This ministry of persuasion is hard work and it requires a genuine commitment to the Lord.

**WE ARE MADE MANIFEST TO GOD.** We are answerable to God and not man, which is fortunate because only He really understands our motives. Robertson points out that “are made manifest’ means to stand manifested and refers to a state of completion” [12: 230].

**5:12 -COMMENDING OURSELVES TO YOU.** *“We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.”* Is Paul using the plural in reference to himself, or is he including fellow missionaries (Timothy, Titus)? It is obvious that he finds personal commendation distasteful. Paul alone is the human author, but he seems to be including his companions here, as he does in his greetings in various epistles.

**GIVING YOU AN OCCASION TO BE PROUD OF US.** “Giving you an occasion of glorifying may be a better translation (the NRSV has “boast about us”). He does not want personal praise, but he does want them to know the truth and to glory in the ministry and the Gospel he preached. If the saints at Corinth understand the truth, if they follow the Holy Spirit, they will defend Paul and his associates in face of the criticism that has divided the church.

**THAT YE MAY HAVE AN ANSWER.** He wants them to know the truth so that they might refute the false apostles who are creating problems for him and for the church in Corinth.

**PRIDE IN APPEARANCE.** He has in mind the false teachers, either Judaizers, or other Jews who brag about their orthodoxy. They, like the Pharisees, are more concerned with appearance than reality. When Paul wrote, “giving you an occasion to be proud of us,” he is not seeking personal glory. As the false teachers were. He has already written to them: “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6).

**5:13 - IF WE ARE BESIDE OURSELVES.** “*For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.*” The Greek word is from the same root as the word ecstasy, and carries with it the idea of standing out from oneself. Literally, he is saying, “if we went mad,” probably referring to some specific occasion when his critics charged him with madness. (For a similar charge against Jesus, see Mark 3:21; see also Acts 26:24.) Here it is obvious that Paul is using the literary plural because he is referring only to himself. This is a condition of the first class, which means it is assumed to be true. For the sake of argument, Paul will assume for the moment that the charge that he is beside himself (crazy, off his rocker) is true.

Festus makes the same charge against Paul a little later in Caesarea (Acts 26:24). It has been suggested that because Paul spoke with tongues and had visions, he was open to the charge that he was beside himself. The Jewish critics were ready to make any charge they thought the church would accept. Many still tend to think that those who disagree with them are crazy, or beside themselves.

**IF WE ARE OF SOUND MIND, IT IS FOR YOU.** He will assume, for the sake of argument that he is beside himself. But if, in fact, he is of sound mind, they will benefit from it.

**5:14 - THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONTROLS US.** “*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.*” Does this mean that Christ’s love for us controls us; or that our love for Him controls us? The former seems more natural. His love for us keeps us within the bounds of His will for us. The highest motivation for worshipping God, for faithfulness to Him, and for serving Jesus Christ is not our love for Him, but His love for us. His is the higher love, holy and unchanging. Our love for Him is a response to His love for us.

**ONE DIED FOR ALL.** We are taught that Christ died for us. His death was vicarious as Isaiah had prophesied (Isa. 53). This is the central message in Paul's doctrine of salvation and Christology.

Christians are regarded as having died in Christ. Our Substitute died for us once for all time and all believers are regarded as having died in Christ, so that we can live for Him (Rom. 6:8-14). Jesus Christ died as our Substitute; that is, He died in our place (so that we do not have to die if we trust Him).

**ALL DIED.** To Paul this is the logical conclusion. One died for all, therefore all died in the One, “all the spiritual death possible for those for whom Christ died. This is Paul's gospel, clear-cut, our hope today” [12: 231].

In an Old Testament class at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Dr. T. J. DeLaughter reported that as he was walking from the parking lot to the classroom that morning he saw a janitor and asked, “How are you?” He answered, “I’m just fine, Sir. I been born twice, I’ve died once, and I ain’t never gonna die again.” Dr. DeLaughter noted that while we did not express it in those terms in the classroom, that is good theology!

**5:15 - HE DIED FOR ALL.** *“And He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”* Christ died for us so that we would not have to die for our sins. He died for us because there was nothing we could do to remove our sins. But there is more: “Christ’s death was, in part, for the purpose of bringing His followers into the experience of living for others” [21: Footnotes]. People are saved as individuals, but when they are saved, they are brought into a fellowship of believers. In Christ no man is an island unto himself.

**FOR HIM.** While it is true that individuals are saved, and that they become a part of the fellowship of believers, the church, the primary point in this verse is that we are saved by Him, and we are saved for Him. Just as all things were created By Him and for Him, He died to redeem us unto Himself. We are not our own, we are bought with a price, and that price was His vicarious, substitutionary death on the Cross for our sins.

**ROSE AGAIN ON THEIR BEHALF.** Thousands died on cruel Roman crosses, most of whom spent a lot longer on their cross than Jesus did. However, Jesus actually died by yielding up His spirit. No one could have taken His life against His will. As Jesus Himself said:

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father (John 10:17-18).

Jesus died for our sins so that we would not have to die for them. But He arose so that we might have life. The resurrection of Jesus is a major emphasis of the Pauline Epistles, the crowing miracle of the New Testament. Pagan religions have many stories about their gods that parallel in one way or another many stories found in the Bible about God. For example, almost all ancient cultures had some type of Flood legend which involved their deity. There is one historical fact that is lacking in

the legends and myths of pagan religions, and that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, without which, Christianity would be as baseless and invalid as any pagan religion.

**5:16 - FROM NOW ON.** *“Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.”* Before conversion one can only know, or recognize others in the flesh, but from the time of conversion when one receives the Holy Spirit, he may know others in a different relationship. Here Paul says that before his conversion he only knew Christ as a man, but from that point on He no longer knew Him that way.

Paul’s emphasis is placed upon his intention to know and to judge no man according to the flesh; i.e., he will not form opinions about a man based upon any outward distinctions (i.e., race, sex, or nationality), but rather his judgments will be based upon spiritual life and qualities. Once Paul had made his judgments about Jesus on strictly human bases. Now, however, his thinking focuses on spiritual realities [BSB].

**5:17 - THEREFORE.** *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”* The therefore of Paul are noteworthy. It usually means that on the basis of what he has just said, he will now draw an important conclusion. He has laid the foundation and now he will build on it.

**IF ANY MAN IS IN CHRIST.** All the blessings God promises are for those who are “in Christ.” Universalism is not taught in the Bible. It was fortunate that someone had the wisdom to change the wording of the pledge to the Christian flag from “one brotherhood uniting all mankind in service and love” to “one brotherhood uniting all Christians in service and love.” There is no brotherhood outside of Christ. All people are not a part of the family of God, only born-again believers. It is only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ that one becomes a child of God.

It is very disturbing that many today reject the teaching that Jesus is the only way of salvation. The Bible is very clear: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12. KJV).

**A NEW CREATURE.** It is not enough to turn over a new leaf, to reform, or to make new resolutions. Lost people must be born again. The lost person does not need a change of heart; he needs a new heart.

I met Carl Hart at a deer camp. He was an old deer hunter, a skilled woodsman, who became a friend. I often enjoyed talking with him - more often, I was just listening to him. I tried over a period of four years to lead him to trust Jesus Christ for salvation. At one point he told me about going to a church where the pastor talked about turning over a new leaf. He said that he never went back because he knew he needed to do more than turn over a new leaf. After four or five years he was born again. He was in his seventies, but he was child-like in faith and in joy. A few years later I visited Mr. Carl in the hospital. He knew he might never be able to go back to church again, but he

talked with me about how much the Lord and His church meant to him. He concluded by saying, “You tell those people at church that the Bible says you have to be born again, and By Golly, I’ve been born again!” I told them exactly what he said.

**THE OLD THINGS PASSED AWAY.** “Passed away” is in the aorist tense, indicating the decisive change salvation brings. When one is born again, he is immediately dead to “the old things.” Paul had once viewed Christ and His followers as the enemies of God, but with his conversion, that view has passed away (forever).

**BEHOLD, NEW THINGS HAVE COME.** Many love the more familiar King James Version: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” The perfect tense is used, denoting the permanent or abiding qualities and nature of the new life. Paul’s message to the church at Rome is relevant here:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-4).

A new creation, a new heaven and a new earth, are promised in the Word of God (cf. Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1). By the New Birth the Christian has already undergone the fundamental change; he is a new creature of the sort that belongs in the new creation [BSB].

**5:18 - ALL THESE THINGS ARE FROM GOD.** “*Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*” All blessings are from God. Some blessings are from God in a general sense (the rain falls on the just and the unjust) Other blessings are spiritual and those blessings are for Christians. They are all grace gifts from a loving Heavenly Father.

**WHO RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF THROUGH CHRIST.** This is one of the great doctrinal words of the Christian faith. Paul uses a number of metaphors of salvation in writing to the Church at Rome: “Being **justified** freely by his grace through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:24-25, KJV).

Reconciliation is provided because of God’s love. Love is the basis of man’s reconciliation to God. Reconciliation is necessary because of man’s sin against God, demanded by the holiness of God, made necessary because the justice of God must be satisfied. Reconciliation for man is provided by God. God does not need to be reconciled to man, and man does not deserve to be reconciled to God. The love of God is the basis for it.

**GAVE US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.** The ministry to which each born again believer is called is a ministry of reconciliation. The Christian is commissioned to proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation to others. Ryrie writes, “Reconciliation involves a changed relationship because our trespasses are not counted against us (v. 19). We are now to announce to others this message of God's grace” [RSB].

**5:19 - NAMELY.** *“Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”* Paul restates the truth of verse 18. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” He has committed to Christians the ministry of reconciliation. Incredibly, some professing Christians make no attempt to share this message with lost people. They seem to think that is the work of the pastor and evangelist.

Two essential messages are addressed in this verse. First, there is God’s ministry of reconciliation. The Cross is essential, and Jesus is the only means of reconciliation. Jewish columnists Don Feder and Mona Charen are conservative Jews, whose columns I have read for years. Both have come to the defense of Christians, and Christianity in America. Neither can understand why Christians sit back and watch their rights systematically taken away from them without a fight. I have never seen either Don Feder or Mona Charen (there are others I could mention), but I love them and respect them. Yet, as long as they refuse to accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah, they are without reconciliation. There is absolutely no hope for them but the One Whom they reject.

The second essential message is our ministry of reconciliation. Witnessing is not an option with God. The Christian who thinks he or she is exercising an option not to do personal soul winning is deceiving himself. He is living in rebellion against God’s Great Commission. God has reconciled him and “committed to us the word of reconciliation.” He has equipped us and energized us by giving us the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us for that very work (Acts 1:8), and to refuse to do it is to live continually in sin.

**5:20 - AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST.** *“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”* Paul uses a term of dignity and responsibility for the believer - ambassador for Christ. The obedient believer will take this responsibility seriously. For a moment, just think where most Christians would be if God suddenly announced that no person would be permitted to enter into Heaven if he could not point to one person whom he had personally led to Jesus Christ. Fortunately, our salvation does not depend upon our faithfulness, but upon His.

**WE BEG YOU...BE RECONCILED TO GOD.** The verb is an aorist passive imperative, “Get reconciled to God,’ and do it now” [12: 233]. This is the urgent message each ambassador must carry to lost people. A church member said, “I don’t believe in begging people to come to church. Every person in town knows where the church is, and they know they are welcome to come.” Paul expressed a different view as he wrote to Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of



season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (II Tim. 4:2).

As a "new creation" (v. 17) of God, believers have a new calling as "ambassadors" of Christ. Their assignment is to preach the message of reconciliation (vv. 19, 20) and to perform the ministry of reconciliation (vv. 18, 20). Their task is to be carried out with a sense of urgency as they "implore" (beseech, beg) men to be reconciled to God [BSB].

**5:21 - HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN.** *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* Jesus Christ lived a perfect life. He was the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb without spot or blemish. There was no sin in Him and when he died on the cross, it was not for His own sins. He became sin for us and died to pay the price for our rebellion.

**TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF.** Here again is the Gospel in a nutshell. Our Savior, Who knew no sin, has taken our sin upon Himself and died on the cross for those sins that we might have the righteousness of God. Through simple faith we may accept this great truth. But no one can fathom the depth of this doctrine.

When Jesus hanged on the cross, God placed our sin on His Son. Jesus cried from the cross, “saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). On the cross, Jesus, our High Priest, offered Himself, the perfect sacrifice, for our sin. When Jesus cried out from the cross, He felt the full weight of our guilt and felt the rejection of a loving God Who cannot look on sin. The world has never known greater agony - or greater glory.

The wonderful Gospel song captures both the truth and the beauty of it: “When He was on the Cross, we were on His mind.”

## MY LIFE

My life is an open book,  
Open wide for all may see.  
Each day it must be a little better,  
For someone may follow me.

My life is an open book,  
Open wide that you may know  
With but one quick look  
What kind of seed I sow.

The print is large, the type is bold,

And easy for you to see.  
So, when my life you behold  
I ask your prayer before you judge me.

---- Johnny L. Sanders

“The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

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