

SECOND CORINTHIANS

BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

STUDIES IN
SECOND CORINTHIANS

by
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This volume is dedicated to
Gale Kinnard Butler
“fairest among women . . . whom my soul loves”
wife for four decades, and
co-laborer in the ministry of the Gospel
for three decades. . . .

. . . there would have been no ministry without her!

and
to Sara Ann Butler
our “princess”-granddaughter

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever read someone else's diary? My sister and I became privy to our mother's daily diary recently, after the Lord called her home to heaven. It was a very emotional, intimate and strengthening experience. After reading Second Corinthians a man said he felt like a person would after rummaging in an old desk and discovering the daily diary of a preacher named "Paul." He said he felt almost as if he should not have been reading the pages because they were so intimate and special. But he was captivated with the desire to learn as much as he could from this great servant of the Lord, so he was unable to put the book aside until he had read and reread it.

You will feel something when you study Second Corinthians! You may say to yourself, "Yes, Paul, I know how you felt about that because I have had the same experience!" The letter may make you feel sympathy, disgust, shame, determination, and even anger. And it will not be only your emotions that are stirred. It will also attack your mind. You will have to think. A number of doctrines and spiritual principles for life will demand understanding and decision. It will build your faith and strengthen your capacity to live the sanctified life.

This epistle should be "required monthly reading" for every preacher, missionary, and Sunday School teacher. It should be required study for all Bible college students. Elders and deacons would be more sympathetic toward preachers if this epistle was read once each month at "board meetings." Don't just read it — partake of it! It is God's Word, lived and learned by God's greatest servant, to encourage all his other servants.

BACKGROUND

Authorship:

This epistle is so certainly from the pen of the apostle Paul Thiessen (in *Introduction To The New Testament*, Eerdmans, pg. 206-207) says, "Both the external and the internal evidence for the genuineness of this Epistle are so strong that we really need not dwell on these points. . . ." *Polycarp* (69-156 A.D., pupil of the apostle John) quotes II Cor. 4:14 and 8:21 in his *Epistle to the Philippians*; *Irenaeus* (130-200 A.D.) frequently quotes from II Corinthians (e.g. 2:15-16); *Tertullian* (160-220 A.D.) cites II Cor. 11:14 in his *Treatise on the Soul*; The Epistle is mentioned in the Muratorian Canon (170 A.D.) and is found in both the Old Syriac (ca. 150 A.D.) and the Old Latin (ca. 150 A.D.). The writer of the epistle twice calls himself, "Paul" 1:1; 10:1); the subject matter parallels all we know of Paul the apostle historically and theologically. That the apostle Paul was its author is certainly established beyond any reasonable doubt.

Historical and Cultural Background:

The student is referred to introductory notes in *First Corinthians*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, for background material on the city of Corinth and the establishment of the church there.

Occasion and Date:

Paul established the church in Corinth on his second missionary journey (Acts 18) about 50-51 A.D. After a year or more there he returned to Palestine (Acts 18:18-22); thence, eventually, to Ephesus (A.D. 54) on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:24-19:41) where he stayed three years. During this time he wrote a "first" letter to Corinth (I Cor. 5:9) not preserved. Receiving word from the household of Chloe of the many problems in the Corinthian congregation, he then wrote First Corinthians. In spite of Paul's strong condemnation and warning about division the party-spirit continued, agitated by Judaizing factions insisting on observance of the law of Moses and Jewish traditions (see II Cor. 3:1-18; 10:7; 11:13). When this news reached

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Paul at Ephesus, he made a short visit to Corinth to deal with it, but failed in the attempt (II Cor. 2:1; 12:14,21; 13:1,2), and he returned to Ephesus.

Plummer, Barclay, Thiessen, et al. think Paul, soon after returning to Ephesus from his "short, second visit," wrote a "severe" third letter sending it to Corinth by Titus (II Cor. 2:3,4,0; 7:8-12). Plummer thinks that the major portion of this "severe, third letter" is preserved in chapters 10 through 13 of what is now our extant Second Corinthians. That theory has been successfully disproved by Bernard.

While waiting for Titus to return with a report of the effect of his "severe, third letter," trouble arose in Ephesus, and he left that city before he had planned to do so (Acts 20:1). Paul started to Macedonia, via Troas, to meet Titus returning from Corinth. The two met in Macedonia in the fall of A.D. 57 as Paul was visiting churches in the region of Philippi and Thessalonica. Titus' word was that the long letter we now call First Corinthians had accomplished much good (II Cor. 7:6), but at the same time, his "short second visit" and his "severe, third letter" had not solved the problem of party-spirit and division; he was told, in fact, that some "false authorities" at Corinth were attacking his motives, his integrity and his authority as an apostle of Christ. Against the background of this news and Paul's deep concern, he determined to visit Corinth "a third time" and he wrote (from Macedonia) Second Corinthians, which appears to have been his "fourth" letter to the congregation there. He sent Second Corinthians on ahead to the church by the hand of Titus (II Cor. 8:6, 17). A little later Paul reached Corinth, and spent the winter of A.D. 57 there (Acts 20:2, 3), as he had planned (I Cor. 16:5, 6). While in Corinth, he wrote his great Epistle to the Romans.

Purpose:

Second Corinthians is probably the least known of all Paul's letters. It has even been called by some "Paul's unknown letter." That is a tragedy. Christians are much poorer because so few have had the motivation or self-discipline required to study a type of writing which demands personal involvement of mind and emotions. In Second Corinthians we are called upon to evaluate a person, not just a doctrine.

BACKGROUND

Second Corinthians is the "Jeremiah" of the New Testament. It is a very personal letter from the heart of this mighty apostle. Here we see him dealing with the trials and joys of his ministry from a subjective and intimate perspective. Here we are exposed to the ministry of the gospel as it stabs the human heart, defeats and depresses. Here we are involved in the experience of the ministry as it is actually lived out in life, "up close, and personal." Accepting the mission of Christ as a life-time calling will bring one a life fraught with personal adversaries and psychological turmoil. But its victories and rewards are beyond all comparison to its trials (II Cor. 4:16-18). In this letter the Holy Spirit bears witness with the spirit of Paul that a life devoted to the proclamation of the gospel is the most challenging, useful and fulfilled life ever! That is what Second Corinthians is all about!

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF ADVERSITY (1:1-24)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Was this epistle addressed to any other than the Corinthians?
2. What is affliction? What purpose does it serve?
3. What is comfort? How does one know when he is receiving comfort?
4. What behavior toward the Corinthians is Paul defending?
5. Why is it wrong for preachers to vacillate?

SECTION 1

Affliction (1:1-11)

1 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 in the whole of Achaia:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; ¹⁰he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him

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we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many prayers.

1:1-7 Aim: The aim of adversity or affliction is to strengthen. That is God's aim. Men have difficulty accepting that. Men cannot see the eternal purpose in all earthly circumstances and most of them will not believe God's revelation. God subjected all creation to futility (which inevitably includes affliction) so that it would hope and groan for divine assistance and redemption (Rom. 8:18-39). With the subjection to affliction, God also supplies the divine assistance.

The word for *comfort* in Greek is *paraklesseos*. It is a combined word from *para* meaning "alongside" and *kaleo*, meaning "to call or summon into one's presence." It is the same word used by the apostle John in his Gospel as the name of the Holy Spirit, or *Paraclete*, and is translated, "Comforter, Counselor" (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26). The word means "to call for an assistant." To be *comforted* means to be assisted, helped, strengthened.

Should those who preach and teach the gospel understand their experiences of affliction as *assistance*? Yes! So says God through the apostle Paul. Such an understanding and acceptance can only come, however, when the human mind and emotions are surrendered to the divine revelation. Acceptance will not come by human reason or feeling or experience. Everything in the human perspective says affliction is disadvantageous and in opposition to man's highest good. Only God knows affliction assists man to his highest good. Man has to believe God in *opposition* to his feelings and his experiences.

The Greek word *thlipsei* is translated *affliction* and means, "trouble, suffering due to pressure of circumstances." It is translated "straitened" in the KJV. Jesus was under constant *pressure* in his earthly ministry (see Col. 1:24). He was "troubled" or "straitened" often (Luke 12:50; John 11:33, 38; 12:27; 13:21). He said those who wished to be his disciples would enter through a difficult gate and continually travel on a road of *affliction* (Matt. 7:13-14) (*tethlimmene*, Greek perfect tense verb depicting a continuity of circumstances and results). *Thlipsei* refers not only to physical suffering but also to mental, emotional and psychological pressures. Every servant of God *will* suffer both afflictions. Sometimes physical suffering is induced by the

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psychological afflictions, or vice versa. Jesus experienced both (see Heb. 2:10-18; 5:7-9; 12:1-2). Paul suffered both (II Cor. 11:21-33; 12:7-10; Phil. 4:10-13; Gal. 6:17). The early christians suffered both (Heb. 10:33; I Thess. 2:14; I Pet. 4:12ff; Rev. 2:13; II Thess. 1:4, etc.).

Christians are not to be surprised that affliction comes their way as if it were something strange (I Pet. 4:12). All who would live godly in this world will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). In fact, anyone not being disciplined or strengthened by affliction should question their relationship with Christ (see Heb. 12:5-11).

Jesus was assisted (strengthened) by the afflictions and pressures He suffered. The book of Hebrews says Jesus was "perfected" through the things he suffered (Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:28; 12:2). That means, Jesus reached the goal God set for him and he did it through suffering affliction. It was for the very purpose of suffering that Jesus came into the world (Isa. 53:1-12; John 12:27; Luke 12:50; Matt. 26:38-39). It was revealed to Paul that part of the purpose of God for christians is to fulfill in their lives the afflictions of Christ (Col. 1:24-26). Paul also learned that messengers of the gospel are "perfected" (reach the goal God has for them) through affliction (II Cor. 12:7ff).

One of the primary gains of affliction is the capacity to minister to others. And it is not so much that we could never be of *any* help until we have suffered, as it is that the *sufferer* is made aware there is someone who understands, who sympathizes, and knows what it feels like to suffer. God had no need to become incarnate in Jesus and experience affliction in order to make *him capable* of helping us. But we needed to *know* he had experienced the same afflictions we experience in order that we would trust and turn to him as one who understands and as one who conquered.

The Creator (incarnate) experienced affliction for our sake. We creatures experience it, secondly, because we could not really understand and sympathize without it. We are not omnipotent and omniscient — we are not divine — we *must* learn by doing. Furthermore, it is our affliction that motivates us to comfort the afflicted. What made David the "shepherd-king" of Israel? His afflictions at the hand of Saul and others. What made Moses the great deliverer of Israel? The "abuse" he suffered as an Israelite (Heb. 11:24-28).

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To aspire to the spiritual perfection or maturity of Jesus Christ without aspiring to the suffering and affliction of Christ is to misunderstand the Scriptures. Paul plainly says in verse 5, "For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort (strength) too." It is the christian's *calling* to suffer for doing right (see I Peter chapters, 2 and 4). Affliction is christian education. The first thing the christian learns in affliction is that he is to be a comfort (strength) to others. The suffering christian is trained by his affliction so that he may lead others to the strength that comes from their afflictions. Christian comfort extended to those being afflicted is not merely sympathy — it is leading the afflicted to find the *strength* that should be coming from what they are experiencing. Strengthening is the *aim* of affliction. Looked at from God's perspective, affliction is not an adversity but an advantage! Affliction is not a weakness, but a strength. Paul found that when he was driven to God's grace by his weaknesses, he actually became strong (cf. II Cor. 12:7-10). And that especially applies to ministers of the Gospel.

1:8-11 After-effect: Paul illustrates his point by referring to one of his own experiences. He uses the expression, ". . . we do not want you to be ignorant . . ." to emphasize the importance of what he is about to say (see I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; Rom. 1:13; 11:25; I Thess. 4:13). He is discussing a very important christian doctrine — the purpose of affliction. This question about the reason for suffering is a question which all mankind longs to have answered. So Paul wants the Corinthian church to pay particular attention to what he has to say.

When Paul suffered this affliction is not certain. It is most likely a reference to the trouble that resulted from the riot in Ephesus (see Acts 19:23 — 30:1). The lives of Paul and his co-workers were in danger there. Paul did not tell the Corinthians what the affliction was, but he did describe its seriousness.

He said they were "utterly" (Gr. *huperbolon*, literally, "thrown over" or "excessively"), "unbearably" (Gr. *huper dunamin*, literally, "beyond power") "crushed" (Gr. *ebarethenai*, literally, "burdened down"). Paul and his co-workers, on this occasion, suffered deep depression. The Greek word *exaporethenai* is translated *despair* and literally means, "to be utterly without a way through." Death stared them in the face and they saw no way out of it. Within themselves (Gr. *alla autoi en heautois*, lit. "and ourselves, in ourselves . . .") they

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were possessed (Gr. *eschekamen*, "had, possessed, seized") with the sentence of death (Gr. *apokrima tou thanatou*).

Do christians get depressed? Do ministers of the gospel suffer depression? Yes! Apostles suffered depression. Even the Lord Jesus himself experienced it! Jesus once said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). The Greek word *sunechomai* is translated *constrained* in the RSV, and *distressed* in the NIV. The word literally means "to be pressed together, to be pressured." The depressing shadow of the cross was constantly across the path of Jesus. His soul was "troubled" often by the unjust death he was to die (see John 12:27ff; 13:21). In Gethsemane he "grieved and was distressed" and his soul "was deeply grieved even unto death" (Matt. 26:37-38). David, king of Israel, suffered depression (see Psa. 3; 5; 6; 10; 12; 13; etc.).

Does such despair serve any purpose? Yes! Paul said his despair in Asia came *in order that* (Gr. *hina*) they should not rely on themselves but on God who raises the dead. God "knocks the props out from under us" occasionally in order to show us that *he* is the only way through. God desires that we trust *completely* in him. Our Father has a divine inheritance to give us which we cannot receive unless we trust him completely. Abraham was despairing of ever having a child; Moses despaired of his ability to lead Israel; David despaired of ever being king of Israel — but God "pulled them through." Not only did God fulfill in them what he promised in this life, but out of their surrender to his grace, he saved them for eternal life with him.

If Paul's extremity was the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19), God delivered him, and his co-workers, through secondary means. God did not work any miracles to stop the riot. He simply made it possible for the town clerk to persuade the rioters against violence. This being the case, how did Paul know it was God who had delivered him? He knew there was no way out of the "deadly peril" surrounding him, and when the impossible became possible, he believed it was from God. Besides, Paul had hoped in God in times past and had been delivered. The Greek word *elpikamen* is perfect tense and means Paul had *set his hope* on God in the past and was continuing to do so. The temptations to pride, independence, self-reliance and human capability are so strong and so constant, God must continually allow some people to "endure a hard struggle with sufferings . . ." (see Heb. 10:32). All men "have

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need of endurance so that they may do the will of God and receive what is promised" (Heb. 10:36). Suffering produces endurance, character, and hope (Rom. 5:3-5). God subjected all of this present creation (humanness included) to futility for the purpose that it might turn to him in hope (see Rom. 8:18-25). Now when suffering, despair, loss and human frailty sweeps over the soul of man, there are only two alternatives. One is to allow a "root of bitterness" to spring up, increase the "trouble," and thereby become defiled (see Heb. 12:12-17). The other is to throw oneself completely upon the mercy and grace of God, learning that when we admit and live in a spirit of human weakness we may become strong through trust in God (II Cor. 12:1-10). It sounds paradoxical that strength will come from an attitude of weakness. And without God in the equation, it would be a contradiction. Friedrich Nietzsche scoffed at such a doctrine. His trust was in the "autonomy of man" and the "death of God." He believed the only good in the world came from man's "will to power." And his contribution to the world was a disciple named Adolph Hitler!

Dependence on God is easy to say but difficult to really do. Many trust him and depend on him as long as circumstances are prosperous and health is good. But true faith should be able to overcome our feelings when things are not going well.

Christians must help one another in such times. Paul called upon the Corinthians in this letter to *cooperate* (Gr. *sunupourgounon*, "helping together with") by intercessory prayer in securing his deliverance through the hand of God for the work he still had to do. Paul believed the prayers of the Corinthians would contribute in some way to receiving an answer from God. While God *could* act whether we pray or not, he is a divine Father and knows that our relationship to him is deepened and made secure only when we are constant in our dependence upon him. Praying and receiving answers produces thanksgiving throughout the church.

SECTION 2

Acrimony (1:12-24)

12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that

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we have behaved in the world, and still more toward you, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God. ¹³For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand; I hope you will understand fully, ¹⁴as you have understood in part, that you can be proud of us as we can be of you, on the day of the Lord Jesus.

15 Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double pleasure; ¹⁶ I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans like a worldly man, ready to say Yes and No at once? ¹⁸As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. ¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God. ²¹But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; ²²he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

23 But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. ²⁴Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

1:12-14 Suspicion: Every preacher of the gospel will have to endure, sometime or another, the acrimony of some of the members of his "flock". Jesus did (see John 15:18-27). Paul did — he is defending himself against the rancor and ill will of some of the Corinthians here. This is almost an inevitable hazard of the ministry of the gospel. It certainly should *not* be so. Jesus poured out his heart in prayer that it *not* be so (John 17:1ff). But it is, and ministers of the gospel should not be "surprised" at it (see I Pet. 2:18-25; 4:12-19, etc.). Paul suffered suspicion and indifference from a number of the churches he established (Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians).

The Corinthians had communicated to Paul that they mistrusted his motives. They were suspicious of his relationship toward them

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because he had promised to visit them and did not. They were questioning his integrity and his sincerity. They did not know, or disregarded, all the facts as to why he had not fulfilled his intention to visit and concluded that he was not dealing with them above board.

Paul appeals to the record of his past life. He tells them it is a matter of pride to him, *endorsed* (Gr. *marturion*, witnessed to) by his own conscience, that his *behavior* (Gr. *anestraphemen*, conduct, mode of life, literally — “to turn back in time”) had been *holy* (Gr. *hagioteti*, upright, honest) and in *godly sincerity* (Gr. *eilikrineia tou theou*). He calls upon the Corinthians to investigate his past dealings both “in the world” and “toward them”, and to judge his character on that basis. They would find that he behaved toward the world and toward them, *not* with a worldly attitude (Gr. *sophia sarkike*, wisdom of carnality), but in the grace of God (Gr. *en chariti theou*), that is, under the constraint of God’s grace toward him. In other words, Paul acted toward all people as God had acted toward him — with grace. Paul was constrained by the love of Christ to always view all men as God viewed them (see II Cor. 5:14-17).

Paul said, “I also take pride in the fact that ‘we’ (editorial ‘we’) are continuing to write to you nothing but what you can read and understand.” He gave them no cause in his use of language to be suspicious of his intentions toward them. Paul uses the Greek word *epiginoskete* which means more than just knowing — it means *to perceive, to understand*. Paul had not come to them earlier (when he preached there, Acts 18; and when he wrote them before, I Cor.) with sophistries, double entendres, and euphemisms. His words were simple, plain, direct, logical and understandable, (cf. I Cor. 2:1-5). He did not speak in “myths, endless genealogies. . . speculations. . . godless chatter, and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. . .” (see I Tim. 4:7; 6:20-21; II Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:13-14; II Pet. 1:16-21). Paul did not tell many allegories or use many illustrations. He was clear and straight to the point. His objective was to communicate, to produce understanding. There was no way the Corinthians could honestly accuse him of trying to disguise his motives or his intentions in what he had preached or written to them. So why are some of them now jumping to the conclusion that Paul has misrepresented himself to them? There were probably some in the Corinthian church still promoting the divisions, giving allegiance to

different apostles and leaders, who wanted to take advantage of Paul's failure to visit them and cast suspicion on his integrity. That is one of the chief tools of those who promote partyism in the church.

The apostle concludes this thought by saying, "My hope is that you will understand 'us' completely (as you have partially understood 'us') and realize that you can be as proud of 'us' as 'we' shall be of you on the day of the Lord Jesus."

Christian people need to concentrate on being sincere, loving, and understandable. Unity in the body of Christ is dependent, to a large degree, on *understanding*. Feelings, motives, intentions, opinions, aims and aspirations should be clearly and lovingly communicated. Covert, disguised, surreptitious language and actions should not be a part of christian relationships.

1:15-22 Slander: Someone had evidently slandered Paul and accused him of instability and untrustworthiness. Paul had first told the Corinthians he would visit them "after passing through Macedonia" (I Cor. 16:5). Later, perhaps in the unpreserved letter (the "severe" third letter — see Introduction), he mentioned that he wanted to visit them twice; once on the way to Macedonia, and once on the return from Macedonia. Paul implies here that the Corinthians knew of this last plan and that he had not fulfilled his promised visits.

Paul writes that because he was "sure" of the mutual understanding and confidence existing between him and the Corinthians, he had been *intending* (Gr. *eboulomen*, perfect tense, continuous action in past time) to make a "double" visit so they might have a double "grace" of God through the fellowship of an apostle of the Lord. That was what he had been planning. But he decided against it. He implies that God revealed to him he should not make this "double" visit (II Cor. 1:23). God knew some of the Corinthians would think Paul was "lording it over their faith" should he visit them as he planned. To spare them that problem, Paul changed his plans. And when he changed his plans, someone at Corinth assailed his integrity and accused him of *vacillating* (Gr. *elaphria*, lightness, fickleness).

He begins the defense of his character by asking the rhetorical question, expecting a negative answer, "I was not vacillating when I determined to do this, was I?" Apparently some had accused Paul of making promises like *worldly-minded* (Gr. *kata sarka*, according to flesh) heathen, irresolute, erratic, indecisive. He challenges them to

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produce evidence from his manner of life that he is unreliable or double-minded. He always kept his word — he was never guilty of doing just what was convenient or expedient for himself. He never said “yes” from one side of his mouth and “no” from the other side. He always said what he meant and meant what he said! He fully intended to keep his word to visit them twice. It was not *his indecision* that kept him from fulfilling his plan, but God’s divine direction!

As Stedman points out, it is significant that Paul did not say, “Yes or No.” It is not wrong to say “No” to some requests and circumstances. What is wrong is to say “Yes and No,” or to equivocate. It is wrong to say “No” and mean “Yes” or to say “Yes” and mean “No”! Christians are to be honest, firm and unequivocal toward their commitments, whether they are “Yes” or “No.” Jesus taught that his followers were to be so definite and unambiguous when they gave their word that the rest of the world would accept their “Yes” as nothing but “Yes,” and their “Nay” as nothing but “No” (Matt. 5:37 and see James 5:12).

Christians are to be people who keep their word because that is the essence of God’s character. This is Paul’s argument in verse 18. God keeps his word (Deut. 7:9; Psa. 119:89-90; Isa. 55:10-11; I Cor. 1:9; 10:13; II Thess. 3:3; Heb. 6:13-20, etc.). Paul is arguing that it is contrary to the regenerated nature of a Christian to deliberately equivocate because it is contrary to the nature of God. The record of Jesus’ life and words in the four Gospels verify that God keeps his word because God Incarnate (Jesus) always fulfilled his words. Not one word of Jesus (except the prophecies of his second advent) have failed to be fulfilled. The absoluteness of Jesus’ words and actions is what Paul is referring to in verse 19. Whatever Jesus promised (or promises) was always answered with an absolute “Yes”!

The *ultimate* “Yes” of God was the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Christ was the supreme, unequalled, veracity of God manifested in the historical frame of reference. All of God’s promises (from Genesis to Revelation) find their verification or ratification in Christ’s historical, bodily, resurrection from the dead. This is what the apostle means in verse 20. We believe this is also what Paul meant when he wrote in Hebrews 6:17, “So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed

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(himself) with an oath. . . .” In other words, God’s oath to verify the immutability of his promises, was himself (incarnate in Jesus Christ) upon the cross and raised from the dead!

Because of the veracity of God demonstrated historically in the ultimate historical act of raising Jesus from the dead, men may have assurance and respond with “Amen” (so-be-it, yes, verily, I agree, that is correct) to every promise of God. There is no word in the Greek text for the English word *utter*, however, it is proper to supply that word in a translation because Paul is here talking about man’s response to God’s faithfulness. God’s absolute faithfulness is properly responded to when man is faithful to keep his *own* word. Saying “Amen” to God’s veracity involves more than mere words — it demands action. Paul is arguing that his own manner of life has demonstrated this.

In summation of the defense of his veracity and integrity Paul appeals to the guarantee or the “seal” of God’s Spirit. Every christian should be able to appeal to the “seal” of God’s Spirit as a guarantee of his godly character. That is because every christian is being transformed into the image of God’s Son by the power of God’s word transforming his mind (see Rom. 8:5, 29; 12:1-2; II Cor. 3:18; Eph. 1:13-14). To be “sealed” by God’s Spirit is simply to have God’s image imprinted upon our character or nature (see Special Study, *Blessing of Being Sealed by The Holy Spirit*).

There is nothing mystical or extra-Biblical about the “seal” of the Spirit of God. In ancient times, a sovereign’s “seal” marked documents and objects with the authority of the sovereign. In other words, such documents were authenticated as belonging to the king by the seal stamped upon them. The seal was usually an engraving made in the likeness or image of the king. In the same way, God acting upon the believer’s nature through the divine word of the Spirit, has engraved his image (see Special Study, *Blessing of Being Sealed by The Holy Spirit*). When a believer loves God and obeys God, then the Spirit of God (in the word of God) bears witness with the spirit of the believer that he is a child of God (see Rom. 8:12-17). William Barclay says it this way, “When Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as an *arrabon* (guarantee) given us by God, he means that the kind of life we live by the help of the Holy Spirit is the first installment of the life of heaven and the guarantee that the fullness of that life will some day open

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upon us.”

In this context, then, Paul is inviting the Corinthians to compare his past manner of life toward them with the witness of the Holy Spirit in the word of God and test his veracity. He expects to be declared faithful because his life is “sealed” (marked, measured, characterized) by the Spirit of God.

1:23-24 Statement: Paul does not return slander for slander. He makes an honest, open statement of reasons he believes will justify his rearrangement of plans to visit Corinth. First, he implies God will approve of his change of plan — he calls God to witness against him should he be guilty of lying. It may be he is even implying that God gave him divine direction in refraining from visiting Corinth as he had planned. Second, whether it was God’s or Paul’s decision, or both, it was to “spare” the Corinthians something unpleasant. Rebuke and discipline is always unpleasant (cf. Heb. 12:11) for the moment. Sometimes, it may even be unprofitable! Paul always tried to find things in christians to praise. He used criticism and rebuke as little as possible. The less a teacher or preacher uses rebuke, the more effective it is when absolutely necessary. He had already rebuked them severely in the letter we do have (I Corinthians) and probably in a letter or visit for which we have no extant record. So Paul decided against carrying out his earlier plan to visit Corinth on the way to Macedonia, because, as things stood between them another visit (which would undoubtedly call for more correction) could only have hurt him and them (see II Cor. 2:1-4).

Second, Paul explained his change of plans by stating he did not want to give any appearance of lording it over the Corinthians. He could have visited them as planned, asserted his authority, criticized publicly their christian immaturity, and handed down apostolic reprimands and edicts. But he wanted to spare them that. That was the way “false apostles” acted (II Cor. 11:12-13; Gal. 2:4; II Pet. 2:10 — 22; Rev. 2:2). True apostles admonished tenderly, always willing to sacrifice self for the sake of the “flock” (I Cor. 4:14-15).

Thus Paul explained his decision not to carry out his original plan to visit the Corinthians and defended his veracity. His reasons for not fulfilling the original intention are righteous and good because they were to the advantage of the Corinthians and not for Paul.

One of the major problems in the ministry of the gospel is this one

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of fulfilling promises. Preachers, elders, Sunday School teachers, and other servants of the Lord sometimes make promises to do something for someone or be somewhere at sometime when they do not intend to keep those promises at all. Promises to lend assistance, visit, attend a meeting, write a letter, or pray for someone should not be made flip-pantly or insincerely! No christian, especially a minister of the gospel, should promise unless he intends to keep his word. Any promise broken should be able to be justified only by the same principles Paul justified his — that not fulfilling the promise would benefit the recipient more than fulfilling it. The christian minister's "yea" must be "yea" and his "nay" must be "nay" — he must be a man faithful to his word.

APPREHENSION:

1. Who wrote II Corinthians?
2. When did he write it?
3. What transpired in his relationship to the Corinthians *between* the two epistles from his pen?
4. What does the word "comfort" mean in the Biblical sense?
5. Did the Lord Jesus have to suffer "affliction"? Why?
6. How much affliction did Paul suffer? Can you recite his afflictions?
7. Does the Bible say "affliction" or suffering is part of the christian calling? Where?
8. How severe was Paul's affliction mentioned in II Corinthians ch. 1?
9. If Paul's extremity in this chapter refers to the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19), how did God deliver him?
10. Why was Paul having to defend his veracity in this letter?
11. How did Paul defend his veracity?

APPLICATION:

1. How would the leadership of the church (preachers, elders, deacons and Sunday School teachers) benefit from taking this

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book to heart?

2. How do you feel about the Biblical teaching that the aim of adversity and affliction is to strengthen?
3. Are you able to surrender your feelings about affliction to the teaching of the Bible? Is it easy?
4. Does it help you to know that Jesus and Paul and other christians *struggle* in their faith and feelings over affliction?
5. Have the afflictions you experienced made you better able to serve Christ and others? In what way?
6. Should christians get depressed? Does depression mean absence of faith?
7. When are you aware of your greatest feelings of strength?
8. Have you ever had people suspect your veracity and integrity? How did you deal with it?
9. Should christians always try to make sure their words are clearly understood? Do they?
10. When a christian promises something, is he obligated to keep his word? How good is your word?
11. What should a christian do if he has promised something he cannot possibly fulfill because of an emergency or circumstances beyond his control?
12. Upon what do you base your belief that God will keep all his promises?

Special Study

BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (Eph. 1:13-14)

INTRODUCTION

I. CONTEXTUALLY

- A. These two verses combine to form one of great “spiritual blessings” God has blessed us with in Christ
 - 1. Paul lays two huge sentences on the Ephesian church in chapter one
 - 2. The first sentence 1:3-14 is a catalog of all the ways in which God has blessed Christians in Christ
 - 3. The second sentence 1:15-23 is Paul’s prayer that these Christians may know (understand and experience) those blessings.
- B. Paul did not place all this “breathtaking” stress upon spiritual blessings without reason
 - 1. Spiritual blessings are not contingent upon favorable physical circumstances and are available to all believers alike
 - 2. Spiritual blessings thus have to do with the abiding realities, not the temporary trappings of the flesh.
 - 3. Spiritual blessings supply man’s most desperate need — to be remade into the person God intended him to be — this will be the thrust of these two verses this morning.

II. EXEGETICALLY

- A. Reading these two verses in the Greek text is an interesting experience.
 - 1. Literally it would read something like this:
“In Him also, you, the ones having heard the word, that one of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also, you, the ones having believed, were sealed (passive) with Spirit, the promised one, the holy one, who is the down-payment of our inheritance until the redemption which will give complete possession unto the praise of His glory.”

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2. The Berkeley Version is also interesting here:
“In Him you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the Gospel of our salvation, have as believers in Him been stamp marked with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge-deposit of our legacy for the releasing of our deed of purchase, and all to the praise of His glory.”

III. ETYMOLOGICALLY

- A. Seal - literal sense: “A device bearing a design, a name or some other words so made that it can impart an impression in relief upon a soft substance like clay or wax. When the clay or wax hardens, it permanently bears the impression of the seal.”
 1. Archaeologists find them being used 4000 B.C.
 2. Originally they took the form of a cylinder, gradually superseded by the scarab (beetle-shaped)
 3. Some carried on cords around neck like necklace; some cone-shaped in boxes; most in form of finger-rings
- B. Seal - uses
 1. As an authentication
 2. As a mark of ratification of a covenant
 3. As a means of protecting documents to seal against tampering
 4. As a deputation of authority
 5. As an official mark of ownership

IV. APPLICABILITY - Three areas of blessing for the christian in having been sealed with the promised holy Spirit.

- A. He Etches the Image of God and His Son Upon our Being
- B. He Gives Us the Earnest-Payment of Our Inheritance
- C. He Empowers Us As Emissaries of our Great God

Discussion

I. ETCHES THE IMAGE OF GOD UPON OUR BEING

- A. Authenticates our genuineness as belonging to Him
 1. “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God . . .” Rom. 8:16.

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2. Does not say that the Holy Spirit bears witness *to* our spirit but *with* our spirit — *summarturei*; the H.S. bears witness — and our own spirit bears witness.
3. If my spirit says I am a child of God, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit shows that I am not a child of God, then I am not a child no matter what my spirit says. The two witnesses must agree. My spirit must agree with the testimony of the Holy Spirit.
4. This co-witness of the Spirit of God with our spirit, whereby we are assured that we are children of God, is a very important and blessed reality. **BUT IT HAS BEEN SO OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISINTERPRETED.**
5. How does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit? A still small voice? A feeling? emotion? impulse? The Bible nowhere affirms such leadings! All people and religious denominations who claim such subjective witness of the Holy Spirit not only contradict one another — they contradict the Bible. The Bible claims to be the witness of the Spirit. The Spirit of God does not contradict Himself.
6. Since there are no inspired men living today — and those who claim to be such contradict the word of God in what is His witness about who are the children of God — the only witness which we have of the Spirit to us is found in His written Word. *No one knows the Spirit's will on any subject unless he has learned it from the written Word.* Anything that claims to be the Holy Spirit's teaching must not contradict this!
7. The Spirit of God lays down the terms by which we become a child of God, and when we believe and obey these terms then both the Holy Spirit and our own spirits testify that we are the sons of God.
8. **WHAT A BLESSING TO HAVE SUCH A SEAL PUT UPON OUR MINDS AND HEARTS . . . WE DO NOT HAVE TO DEPEND UPON FICKLE AND VACILLATING EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS . . . NOR UPON THE WHIMS AND OPINIONS OF MEN BECAUSE OUR SALVATION IS**

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AUTHENTICATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF IN HIS UNCHANGING, ONCE-FOR-ALL WORD . . . NO GUESSING, NO ANXIETY.

9. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" I John 5:13 THIS IS THE EMPHATIC WORD OF JOHN'S WRITINGS . . . "THAT YE MAY KNOW. . . ."
- B. Glorifies (The H.S. transfers some of the glory of God to our nature)
 1. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" II Cor. 3:18.
 2. Alexander Campbell said it this way in his *Christian System* "The work of redemption is a system of works, or deeds, on the part of God, which constitute the most splendid series of moral facts men or angel ever saw. . . . When these facts are understood or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. All the means of grace are, therefore, only the means of impressing this seal upon the heart, of bringing these moral facts to make their full impression on the soul of man. The testimony of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and the faith of those who believe and obey this testimony are the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the heart and character of man." He went on to say . . . "all the moral facts which can form moral character after the divine model, or which can effect a moral or religious change in man, are found in the testimony of God."
 3. What is this image of God . . . this glory of God which is impressed or sealed upon our being? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.
 4. I submit these as characteristics of God which we can enjoy as blessings if we will allow the Holy Spirit to impress

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them upon our natures: honesty; goodness; creativeness; humor; appreciativeness; enjoyment; giving-ness

5. Carol King has a phrase in her song, *Way Over Yonder*, "And the sweet-tasting good life is so easily found . . . way over yonder, that's where I'm bound." Let's appropriate that here.

THE SWEET-TASTING GOOD LIFE OF GOD IS EASILY FOUND . . . IF WE JUST LET THE SPIRIT ETCH IT UPON OUR BEING BY KNOWING AND DOING WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS IN THE SPIRITS WORD.

6. You see, this is the work of the Spirit. God the Father is the creative source of blessing; the Son is the revealer of the possibility of such blessedness and obtainer of it in the flesh; the Holy Spirit is the agent by which this blessing may be impressed or sealed upon the nature of man! HOW MIND STAGGERING! GOD CREATES THE BLESSING, THE SON WINS IT FOR US, THE HOLY SPIRIT TRANSFERS AND SEALS IT UPON THOSE WHO WILL ACCEPT IT BY FAITH!
- C. Secures and protects us against being defrauded by the thief of souls
1. When we are sealed by the H.S. we can live confidently that there is no power in this world or the other capable of robbing us of our souls, our life, our being.
 2. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." John 10:27-28
 3. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." John 5:24
 4. "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3:2-3
 5. "Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the

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world." I John 4:4

6. "We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him." I John 5:18
7. The book of Revelation pictorializes a great host which no man can number sealed by God — protected from the dragon and the beasts not able to be overcome by the great spiritual battle that rages between God and His enemies.
8. **WHAT A TREMENDOUS BLESSING TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE HAD THE SEAL OF GOD PUT UPON US. NO MATTER THE WORLD WANTS TO ERADICATE US . . . NO MATTER THAT IT MAY APPEAR AS IF THE FORCES OF UNGODLINESS WILL WIN THE STRUGGLE . . . GOD KNOWS WHO HIS ARE, HE HAS THEM MARKED AND SEALED, AND THEY ARE SECURE!**

II. HE GIVES US AN EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE

A. Holiness

1. What is the legacy left us by that Son of man who came to earth, born in a stable, who had not where to lay his head?
2. He brought us word from our Father that holiness is our legacy. The most needful, most enjoyable treasure God could will to us is holiness
3. What is the deepest longing of the human soul? To be clean, to be good, to be pure, to be true, to be a beautiful-person.
4. This is what I want when I get to God. Bags full or banks full of gold and diamonds are not what my soul cries out for. Ivory palaces and mansions are not what I want for my eternal inheritance. **I WANT, I NEED, I MUST HAVE HOLINESS!**
5. "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? . . . There is

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therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 7:18-8:1

6. Now God has taken care of my problem. He has provided me a cleansing, a goodness, a purity, a freedom from guilt, a holiness by the death of His Son. And when He comes for us this is what our great inheritance shall be — we shall be like Him.
7. But when we are sealed by the Holy Spirit — when His spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are a child of God, we have a down payment on this holiness already. **WE CAN NOW ENJOY GOODNESS, FREEDOM FROM GUILT, PURITY, HOLINESS — A TASTE OF WHAT THE FULL INHERITANCE WILL BE!**
8. Neither the real nor the pseudo (alleged) *baptism* of the Holy Spirit has anything to do with the sealing of the H.S. The baptism of the H.S. fell upon *Cornelius before* the two spirits could witness with one another that he was a child of God. He had not yet been baptized in water for the remission of sins. In like manner the baptism of the H.S. had nothing to do with providing him with a down-payment on his inheritance for neither baptism in the H.S. nor spiritual gifts imparted holiness (Judas). **SO WHY ALL THIS MAJORING IN THE MINORS? THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT ARE NOT WHERE IT'S AT! NEITHER REAL NOR ALLEGED!**

B. Rest

1. Another aspect of the legacy left to us is rest. Jesus came and said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" Matt. 11:28.
2. What makes work into labor? The frustration of seeing the fruits of one's work dissipated — the agony of knowing that one has spent himself laboring in something whose fruits are only temporary and ultimately useless. **THIS IS WHAT MAKES WORK INTO TIRING, FRUSTRATING, DEADENING LABOR.**
3. If the results of our work could find completion or perfection — if we could have confirmed to us that our work was eternally useful and abiding, that it wouldn't

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just disappear with time — we could find perfect rest.
REST IS NOT JUST THE ABSENCE OF WORK!

4. God has laid up for us an inheritance of rest. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" Rev. 14:13.
5. But those sealed by the Holy Spirit may now have a down-payment, a taste of that rest. Paul wrote the Hebrew Christians and said, "For we who are believing, are entering that rest . . ." Heb. 4:3.
6. Jesus said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal" John 6:27.
7. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" I Cor. 15:58.
8. Friend, if you're sealed by the Holy Spirit, you'll never get weary. Bone-tired and muscle-weak yes — but soul-tired and spirit-weary, never!

C. Dominion

1. Man was made to have dominion. "Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" Gen. 1:26.
2. God has promised that one day His saints shall reign with His Christ forever and ever. Rev. 22:5, etc.
3. But the blessing of being sealed by the Holy Spirit is that we may now enjoy a taste of that dominion.
4. The exciting second chapter of Hebrews asks, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" and answers by showing that while man was created to have dominion, because of sin he does not now have it, but Christ came in flesh and blood and won back man's dominion for him.
HE DEFEATED THE INVADER, SATAN!

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5. Christ, if we believe and trust Him, has set us free from being dominated by circumstances, by earthly things, by ego, by fears, by falsehoods, by others, by even Satan. **IN FACT, IN CHRIST, WE HAVE DOMINION OVER CIRCUMSTANCES, OVER THINGS, OVER EVERYTHING AND MAY ENJOY AND USE EVERYTHING TO GLORIFY GOD!** Mind you, I did not say we can selfishly take anything we want and use it in a way to bring shame upon God.
6. Whatever circumstances God sees fit to give us here, whatever talents, whatever worldly things, whatever associations, **WE ARE RULERS-OVER TO GLORIFY GOD AND REJOICE IN. . . .**
7. "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." I Cor. 3:21-22
8. ". . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Rom. 8:37
ALL THINGS ARE YOURS — MORE THAN CONQUERORS! What blessedness — what happiness — what glory. Friend, if you've been sealed with the imprint of God's Holy Spirit, you have been certified and authorized to be a joint heir with His Son, and to have dominion with Him.

III. EMPOWERS US AS EMISSARIES OF OUR GREAT GOD

- A. Certifies us as authentic representatives of Almighty God
 1. When the Spirit of the Holy God is etched upon our hearts . . . when we are sealed with the Spirit of Christ . . . it is an announcement to the world that we are on business for the King.
 2. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35
 3. J.B. Phillips on II Corinthians 3:3 "You are an open letter (epistle) about Christ which we ourselves have written,

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not with pen and ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Our message has been engraved not in stone, but in living men and women."

4. Many false prophets have gone out into the world (I John 4:1-6). The world desperately needs some authenticating mark upon the true prophets. That mark is the seal of the Holy Spirit. One who preaches the true apostolic message and one who lives the true apostolic message.
 5. "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" John 8:31 **IF YOU ARE SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT THROUGH HIS WORD, THEN YOU ARE A CERTIFIED DISCIPLE OF HIS, AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW . . . YOU WILL BE HAPPY AND BLESSED AND SO WILL OTHERS!**
- B. Certifies the authority of our message
1. When the image of God is stamped upon us by the Holy Spirit, we will proclaim and live the truth and the power of His truth preached and lived will be vindicated in the world.
 2. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin, righteousness and the judgment. The only agency by which the Spirit works in doing this is the written, preached and lived Word of God.
 3. But in the midst of all the failures and inadequacies of men's philosophical, political and ethical systems, **THOSE SEALED BY THE SPIRIT ARE CONDUCTORS OF THE GREATEST POWER IN THE UNIVERSE.**
 4. The power to convert men and change their eternal destiny is more awesome than the power to create this universe!
 5. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he had granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become part-takers of the divine nature" II Pet. 1:3-4.

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6. "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ . . ." II Cor. 10:3-5.

WHAT A BLESSING TO KNOW THAT WE ARE SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT TO BECOME CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH THE AWESOME POWER OF HIS WORD WORKS . . . AND IT SHALL NEVER RETURN UNTO HIM VOID!

- C. Certifies the power of His divine providence on our behalf
 1. When the nature of God is etched upon our minds through the Holy Spirit's agent, the Word of God, we know God as our beneficent, loving, acting, Father who is ready to use all His creation on our behalf.
 2. "We know that God works everything for good for those who love him, and are called according to his purpose" Rom 8:28.
 3. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us . . ." Eph. 3:20.
 4. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory . . ." II Cor. 4:17.
 5. Even angels "are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" Heb. 1:14.
 6. The O.T. gives us a vivid account of god's providential power being used for those with His mark upon them. Ezekiel ch. 9 pictures God's faithful ones being marked with His seal upon them. Then the book of Daniel shows God using kings, kingdoms, circumstances and creation to provide exactly and abundantly what those marked by Him must have to fulfill His purpose in their lives.
 7. He is the same God today to those with His seal upon them. THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS HIS MESSAGE THAT HE IS EVEN NOW USING KINGS

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AND KINGDOMS, CIRCUMSTANCES AND CREATION TO SERVE HIS SEALED ONES! WHAT POWER AND WHAT POWERS ARE OURS!

Conclusion

- I. SO THE BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
 - A. Etches the Image of God Upon Our Being
 - B. Gives Us the Earnest-Payment of Our Inheritance
 - C. Empowers Us as Emissaries of our Great God
- II. A WARNING
 - A. You are either sealed by the Holy Spirit or marked with the mark of the beast.
 1. The great division of mankind in the book of Revelation is between only two kinds of humanity . . . those with the mark of God upon their foreheads, and those with the mark of the beast.
 2. Satan puts his mark upon all those not sealed by the Holy Spirit.
 3. Jesus told the Jews in John 8 who wanted to kill Him because He told them the truth, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires."
 4. The seal or mark of Satan is the "mark of the beast" in Revelation and is given to those who worship the beast, political and military power; those who worship the false prophet, false religion and doctrine; those who worship the harlot, worldliness, carnal-mindedness.
 - B. Satan can even counterfeit the seal of the Holy Spirit;
 1. The beast and the false prophet are able to work signs (false signs) that will deceive men and women if they do not know what the true sealing of the Holy Spirit is
 2. Satan is able to change himself into an angel of light to deceive the ignorant
 3. He will try to deceive us into thinking that the immature, temporary miracles of the Holy Spirit are the seal of God
 4. He will try to deceive us into thinking that Pharisaic at-

BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

itudes toward works and self-righteousness are the seal
of God

III. BUT WHAT IS THE SEAL?

- A. How do we know we are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
- B. How do we know others are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
- C. As we said at the beginning, When the Holy Spirit bears witness *with* our spirits
- D. But *what* does the Holy Spirit witness?
- E. Very simply, He bears witness in His Word that those Believing, Repenting and Obeying God are sealed by God as His

IV. NOW WILL YOU JOIN ME IN THIS SONG AS A PRAYER
TO GOD FOR HIS SEALING

Just the first stanza and chorus 175

“O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer:
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.
O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee!
blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy full-ness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

Chapter Two

THE PROBLEM OF LONELINESS (2:1-17)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What "pain" was Paul reluctant to cause the Corinthians?
2. Who is the "one" who had caused pain both to Paul and the church?
3. What are the "designs" of Satan about which we should not be ignorant?
4. What "aroma" do christians become to God?
5. Who are "peddlers of God's word"? What's wrong with "peddling" it?

SECTION 1

Discord (2:1-11)

2 For I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. ²For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? ³And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. ⁴For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

⁵ But if any one has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to you all. ⁶For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough; ⁷so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. ¹⁰Any one whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ¹¹to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for

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we are not ignorant of his designs.

2:1-4 Pain: The pain of discord among christian brethren is severe, This is especially true when a preacher (like Paul) suffers the alienation of any part of his congregation. A person (or persons) in the church at Corinth had been attacking Paul's integrity. They had also been causing divisions in the church (see *Background* notes in this commentary). Paul had made a visit to Corinth (see chart, *Corinthian Correspondence and Visits*, pp. 57-61) to resolve this estrangement and it was "painful." The Greek word translated *painful* is *lupo* and means "grieve." It was a grief-filled experience. Paul knew the pain and loneliness of having brethren alienate themselves against their "father in the faith." Apparently the "visit" did not produce the harmony Paul desired — especially with one person. So he sat down and wrote a "severe" letter (II Cor. 2:3-9; 7:8-12) directing the church to discipline the troublemaker.

The apostle did all he felt the Lord would want him to do to resolve the situation. He determined he would not make another painful visit. If he goes on inflicting pain and causing the christians there to grieve, who will be there to make him glad? He does intend to make another visit to Corinth but he wants it to be a happy occasion. Paul was tender-hearted and would acknowledge that when he "pained" the Corinthians, he would hurt too. All he would get back from pain-ing them was pain. And his desire to keep from causing them sorrow was because he loved them so dearly.

What a lovely picture he humbly paints of himself in 2:4. The "severe" letter he wrote after returning from his "painful visit" was written with "much affliction and anguish of heart" and through tear-dimmed eyes. What an example for preachers today who may suffer without warrant the alienation and "trouble-making" of certain members of the flock! With Paul there is no defensiveness, no resentment, no desire to retaliate. There is much distress, much anxiety and much crying. Everything done (visits and letters) was done out of abundant love.

From the very beginning of the "trouble" in Corinth, Paul felt the loneliness and pain of their alienation. He wanted it resolved. He got no thrill or satisfaction out of stirring up the situation or prolonging it or intensifying it. Anxiety for *all* the churches was a constant thing

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with Paul (see II Cor. 11:28-29). The "pain" any of the brethren suffered hurt Paul. The Corinthian brethren are not the only ones over whom Paul shed tears (see Acts 20:18-19). Some preachers are not able to endure the affliction, anguish, anxiety and tears of loneliness in the ministry. They quit the ministry. There is failure on the part of both congregation and preacher when "preacher burn-out" occurs. But if both congregation and preacher were willing to pattern their faith and obedience more on the examples of the New Testament, there would be less failure.

2:5-11 Powerlessness: Before Paul wrote II Corinthians, he had found Titus in Macedonia (II Cor. 7:6-16) and Titus had reported encouraging news from the church in Corinth. The worst between the church and Paul was over. Titus reported that the Corinthian brethren were "longing, mourning and zealous" for Paul. Nevertheless, he wrote the words of this text to caution the brethren about prolonging the discord and alienation lest it sap them of their spiritual power.

Who is the "one" who has caused pain? Many commentators think this "one" is the incestuous man mentioned in I Corinthians 5:1-8. Look at this characterization of the "one" who has caused pain:

- a. The Corinthians felt the person had caused pain only to Paul, but the apostle corrected them and said he had caused pain to the Corinthians as well, v. 5.
- b. The majority of the congregation had exercised some form of severe discipline upon the person, v. 6.
- c. Some of the congregation did not think the discipline was adequate, and were planning to extend it, thus prolonging the alienation, v. 6.
- d. The person was in danger of being overwhelmed by excessive sorrow, v. 7.
- e. So Paul strongly urged the congregation to not prolong the punishment, but forgive, comfort and reaffirm their love for him, v. 7-8.
- f. He had written his former "severe" letter to them about this offender in order to test their obedience to apostolic authority, v. 9.
- g. Paul states he is willing to forgive the offender and that he forgives the man for the sake of the whole congregation in order

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to keep Satan from gaining an advantage over either Paul or the congregation at Corinth.

In light of the fact that the Corinthians believed the pain caused by this offender was all Paul's fault (which they surely would not have believed in the case of the incestuous man of I Cor. 5:1-8), and in view of fact that the Corinthian congregation had *not* joined in the inflicting of punishment on the incestuous man but were indeed boasting of their liberality toward him, we believe the offending brother of this text (II Cor. 2:5-11) is *not* the incestuous man of I Corinthians 5:1-8.

The context within which Paul discusses this "one who has caused pain" clearly indicates (II Cor. 1:15 — 2:17) the offender to be a ringleader of the bitter opposition against Paul's integrity and apostolic authority.

The following is probably the sequence of events which led to Paul's admonition here:

- a. The schismatism and challenge to Paul's apostolic authority mentioned in I Corinthians evidently intensified under the leadership of a ringleader who had singled out Paul for his verbal attacks.
- b. Paul made a quick, "painful" visit to the church but failed to resolve the alienation.
- c. Returning to Ephesus, Paul wrote a "painful" letter (not extant) directing the church to inflict some severe punishment (probably excommunication) upon the rebellious member, and thus reaffirm their obedience to apostolic authority.
- d. He then sent Titus to Corinth to discover and report back the condition of the church and the state of this problem.
- e. Titus did not return when Paul expected, so Paul went to Troas and Macedonia in search of Titus.
- f. Finding Titus in Macedonia, Paul received the report that the Corinthian congregation had severely disciplined the offender and reaffirmed their obedience to apostolic direction.
- g. Titus also reported that the offender was so contrite and penitent that he was in danger of being overwhelmed with excessive sorrow. He wanted to be reinstated to fellowship.
- h. The church, Titus reported, had refused to forgive the offender, probably thinking that to do so would be a sign of disloyalty to

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Paul.

- i. Paul now sits down in Macedonia and writes to the Corinthians (II Cor. 2:5-11) begging them to forgive the man because to intensify and prolong the punishment will be to prolong the alienation, drive the offender to despair, and push both the offender and the congregation into the camp of Satan.

There are a number of lessons to be learned and practiced from this apostolic pronouncement:

- a. When christians rebel against godly spiritual leaders and verbally attack them, their attacks bring grief upon the whole church of God as well as their leaders.
- b. It is the responsibility of the whole church to bring such rebellion to a resolution, even if severe discipline is necessary.
- c. If the offender repents and expresses desire to be reinstated in fellowship with the congregation, the congregation must forgive, comfort (strengthen) and love him.
- d. For there is a clear danger that severe spiritual discipline could cause a christian to be overwhelmed (Gr. *katapothē*, “swallowed up”) with grief.
- e. The apostles expect the church to obey *in everything* taught by them.
- f. Not forgiving a penitent brother makes any christian vulnerable to Satan’s designs.

The words “gaining the advantage” are a translation of one Greek word, *pleonektethomen*. The Greek word is also translated, *defrauded*, or *wronged*, or *taken advantage of* (see I Thess. 4:6; II Cor. 7:2). It is the Greek word from which the word *covetousness* is derived. Literally, it means, “to get more of.” Paul’s warning is that the attitude of unforgiveness makes christians vulnerable to being defrauded by Satan. The devil can steal their soul just as surely for an unmerciful attitude as he can for impenitent adultery. This verse tells us that a church or an individual christian may be overcome by the evil one simply by failing to do right! We are easily deceived into believing that evil only has power over us when we do something wrong. But according to Paul (and Jesus in Luke 12:47-48; and James 4:17)

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righteousness is a positive way of life, not a negative one. Failure to do right is in itself the most common sin of christians.

Paul states that christians are not ignorant of Satan's "designs." The Greek word *noemata* is from *noema* which means, "mind, thought, purpose." Paul believed in the existence of a real, personal devil whose purpose is to defraud and take advantage of God's people as well as prevent the salvation of the lost. But, the apostle declares, christians do not need to be defrauded — they may protect themselves against it — because they are not ignorant of the devil's thoughts and schemes. How may the christian know what the devil thinks and how he operates? By reading and believing the Bible, of course. Jesus exposed the devil's thinking and working in his confrontation with the him in the Judean wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11); in casting out demons (Matt. 12:22-37); in exposing the hatred of the Jewish rulers (John 8:34-47). In the Acts, in the Epistles, in Revelation we are informed about how the devil thinks and acts. In the history of man's creation we are clearly instructed about Satan's purposes and practices (Gen. 3:1-24). The apostle John tells us that only by listening to (heeding) the words of the apostles will we be able to know the difference between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (I John 4:1-6). There is only one way we may be certain that we are not ignorant of the devil's devices and that is to *trust only what the Bible says about the devil*. All other information purporting to be about the devil is suspect — whether from movies, religious crusaders against the occult, or teachers of Satanism.

One of the primary schemes of the devil is to enlist church members in causing division and perpetuating alienation between brethren. In doing so he creates disorder, discouragement, excessive sorrow, *loneliness*, and eventually, destruction. Many a preacher has been destroyed through this Satanic assault from within the church itself! The devil uses "false brethren" who are brought in "secretly" to "spy out our freedom." They are legalists who want to enslave us again to the elemental things of the world (see Gal. 2:4; 4:8-10; Col. 2:8-23, etc.). Satan will even misquote the Scripture to gain advantage over us (see Matt. 4:6). He will use everything God created for good (man's appetites, the law of God, human governments) in subtle, perverted ways to take advantage of us. The only way a human being can have the *advantage* over Satan is to dispel all ignorance of the

devil's designs by accepting only divinely revealed knowledge about him.

SECTION 2

Distance (2:12-13)

12 When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; ¹³but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

2:12 No Communication: The record in Acts shows that Paul was in Troas on two different occasions, neither of which corresponds to the one he mentions here:

- a. His first visit to Troas as a christian was on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6-10) where he had the vision of the man of Macedonia who said, "Come over into Macedonia and help us."
- b. On his third missionary journey he arrived in Ephesus (Acts 19:1ff) wrote the epistle we know as I Corinthians; left Ephesus at the time of the riot (Acts 20:1) and evidently went first to *Troas* (II Cor. 2:12) *in search of Titus*, and *thence to Macedonia* where he sat down and wrote the epistle we know as II Corinthians.
- c. Then, still on his third missionary journey, he came to Troas from Philippi (Acts 20:1-12) where the disciples were gathered on the first day of the week to break bread and Paul preached to them until midnight, (see Chronology of the Apostolic Age, page 57-61.

Troas was earlier named Alexandria Troas. It was located ten miles from the ruins of ancient Troy and founded by Lysimachus (one of Alexander the Great's generals) in 300 B.C. Troas was a Roman colony in the days of Caesar Augustus, and one of the most important cities of NW Asia. It was a port of call on the trade-route between Macedonia and Asia (Acts 16:8; 20:5; II Cor. 2:12). Titus would probably disembark there on his way back to report to Paul from his mission to Corinth. Paul was so eager to hear about the situation at Cor-

inth he could not stay in Ephesus so he went to Troas hoping to meet Titus there.

Paul had received no communication from Corinth. He really *cared* about the spiritual condition of the brethren there (II Cor. 11:28). He was feeling the anxiety of not knowing. There is a feeling of great loneliness and deep depression which accompanies such isolation. Even though "a door was opened" for Paul to preach the gospel in Troas he could not take advantage of it because he could not set his mind to rest due to his anxiety. It is interesting, if not rather consoling, to note that even the greatest of the apostles had his moments of depression and was unable to function properly at times. He had to leave the "open door" in Troas behind and go to Macedonia until he could find Titus and set his mind at rest about the situation in Corinth. Many a preacher has felt the same loneliness because the congregation to which he ministers has made it a point to keep from him information necessary to building the kingdom of God and making it grow in spirituality. Too often the preacher is flooded with negative communications and destructive criticisms and deprived of encouragement and enlightenments which would assist him in his work.

2:13 No Comrade: Titus was Paul's "true child in the faith" (Titus 1:4), a convert, friend, and cherished co-laborer in the gospel. If our own christian experience is any gauge, Paul was more nearly kindred to Titus than to some of his own flesh-and-blood. After he had converted Titus (a Greek), Paul took him to Jerusalem and defended him against the Judaizers (Gal. 2:3). During Paul's third missionary journey Titus was assigned missions to Corinth (I Cor. 1-6; II Cor. 2:13; 7:5-16; II Cor. 8). Much later Titus was in Crete and left behind there by Paul to organize its churches (Titus 1:4, 5). And then Paul requested Titus to meet him at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Titus was consecrated, courageous, and resourceful. He knew how to handle the quarrelsome Corinthians, the mendacious Cretans, and the pugnacious Dalmatians (II Tim. 4:10).

Titus was undoubtedly one of Paul's favorite companions. He is one of three individuals to whom Paul wrote Holy-Spirit-inspired letters (Timothy and Philemon being the others). Paul loved him as if he were his own son! When Paul was in prison the second time and facing certain death, Titus was one of those upon Paul's heart and lips (II Tim. 4:10) and one of those he longed to see.

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Every preacher knows the heartache of being separated from those he loves most. Usually it is his own family. Often, however, he also feels the loneliness of being separated from "comrades-in-arms" — his fellow ministers of the gospel. There is a definite camaraderie in the ministry experienced only by those who have met the same struggles, overcome the same difficulties, suffered the same setbacks. And when these "soldiers of the faith" have to serve in places where they are isolated from one another for long periods of time, there surrounds them a deep sense of loneliness. This is one of the problems that plague preachers. It plagued the apostle Paul. But heaven will solve that problem!

SECTION 3

Destiny (2:14-17)

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

2:14-16 Earnest: The vocation of a minister of God's word is conducive to loneliness. Because they preached the truth, the ancient Hebrew prophets were men who had to suffer loneliness. Jeremiah is the classic, of course, but even Elijah thought that he was the only one who stood for truth in all Israel in his day (I Kgs. 19:14-18). Jesus had to suffer the loneliness of being misunderstood and disbelieved by his own family!

Paul's words here are well paraphrased by J. B. Phillips:

"Thanks be to God who leads us, wherever we are, on Christ's triumphant way and makes our knowledge of him spread throughout the

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world like a lovely perfume! We Christians have the unmistakable 'scent' of Christ, discernible alike to those who are being saved and to those who are heading for death. To the latter it seems like the deathly smell of doom, to the former it has the refreshing fragrance of life itself."

Paul is portraying the earnestness of the ministry of the gospel here. It is a "life and death" ministry. Some (a minority) will welcome the man preaching the truth of God as a "refreshing fragrance of life itself." Others (the majority) will be offended at the minister of the gospel because he discerns in his message the unmistakable smell of doom!

The imagery used by the apostle to portray the awesomeness of a gospel preacher's task is taken from the Roman triumphal ceremony. We here quote from William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, Daily Study Bible Series, pgs. 183-184.

In his mind is the picture of a Roman *Triumph* and of Christ as a universal conqueror. The highest honour which could be given to a victorious Roman general was a Triumph. To attain it he must satisfy certain conditions. He must have been the actual commander-in-chief in the field. The campaign must have been completely finished, the region pacified and the victorious troops brought home. Five thousand of the enemy at least must have fallen in one engagement. A positive extension of territory must have been gained, and not merely a disaster retrieved or an attack repelled. And the victory must have been won over a foreign foe and not in a civil war.

In a Triumph the procession of the victorious general marched through the streets of Rome to the Capital in the following order. First came the state officials and the senate. Then came the trumpeters. Then were carried the spoils taken from the conquered land. For instance, when Titus conquered Jerusalem, the seven-branched candlestick, the golden table of the shew-bread and the golden trumpets were carried through the streets of Rome. Then came pictures of the conquered land and models of conquered citadels and ships. There followed the white bull for the sacrifice which would be made. Then there walked the captive princes, leaders and generals in chains, shortly to be flung into prison and in all probability almost immediately to be executed. Then came the lictors bearing their rods, followed by the musicians with their lyres; then the priests swinging their censers with the sweet-smelling incense burning in them. After that came the general himself. He stood in a chariot drawn by four horses. He was clad in a purple tunic embroidered with golden palm leaves, and over it a purple toga marked out

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with golden stars. In his hand he held an ivory sceptre with the Roman eagle at its top, and over his head a slave held the crown of Jupiter. After him rode his family; and finally came the army wearing all their decorations and shouting *Io triumphe!* their cry of triumph. As the procession moved through the streets, all decorated and garlanded, amid the cheering crowds, it made a tremendous day which might happen only once in a lifetime.

The risen King Jesus leads his preachers of the gospel in an awesome triumph through the streets of this world. To the victors comes the perfume of joy and triumph. But they are few and far separated from one another. To the wretched "prisoners," the condemned, the gospel is the scent of death, impending their doom. This makes the pilgrimage of the preacher of the word of God on earth a lonely journey. Preacher's have little time for frivolity, for foolishness. They have no time to waste on inanities. They walk in a procession of life and death. To most of those walking with them, their message smells of doom, and they are not appreciated or welcomed.

Those dead in sin are *surprised* that there are men of God who take their work with such seriousness. Those who spend their leisure hours in reveling wonder why preachers choose to miss out on the "good life" of living in licentiousness, passions, carousing and the like (see I Pet. 4:1-6).

Noah condemned the world by his preaching (Heb. 11:7) and wound up practically alone (he saved only his own family). Jeremiah was *alone* in his preaching (see Jer. 5:1; 11:18-20; 15:10; 18:18-20; 20:7-18). The truth preached exposes sin for what it *really* is, and the world hates (John 3:19-21; 15:18-25) anyone who does that! All who propose to follow Jesus in the ministry of God's word must *count the cost*. Part of that cost is loneliness.

Some in the Corinthian church had evidently wandered from the faith far enough that to them the preaching of Paul had become "a fragrance from death to death." And Paul was feeling the depressing loneliness of their antagonism toward him.

2:17 Exacting: The "fish bowl" kind of life preachers must lead only intensifies the loneliness they must suffer. Congregations expect of their spiritual leaders, rigid standards of personal integrity and conduct. And that is rightly so — so long as those expectations square

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with scripture. Paul wrote to both Timothy and Titus about the godly behavior they were required to exhibit in their ministries. But sometimes, as in the case with the apostle Paul here, congregations demand and accuse on false bases.

Paul firmly contradicts the false claims some in Corinth were making that he preached the gospel as a “peddler.” The Greek word is *kapeleuontes* which signifies someone who is a small-time retailer, actually, a huckster, in contrast to the Greek word *emporos* which means to be a merchant. The idea of the word *kapeleuontes* is marketing something dishonestly in order to line one’s own pockets. Some in Corinth were accusing Paul of using the gospel, exploiting the gospel, as an excuse to line his own pockets.

Evidently, in Paul’s day some were exploiting the gospel for personal gain. But Paul certainly was not doing so — especially with Corinth, for from them he received no financial remuneration or assistance (see I Cor. 9:12, 18; II Cor. 11:7-9; 12:13, 16).

Needless to say, there are many self-appointed religious “giants” today “peddling” the gospel for their own financial gain. And so many of them are plainly dishonest in their huckstering. This in turn, makes a cynical world think all preachers “have a racket.” And many a struggling, suffering messenger of God has served out his life on earth hurting and lonely because the world categorizes all preachers as “hucksters.” It wasn’t true of the apostle Paul and it isn’t true of a host of faithful spokesmen for God today! But the world’s cynicism makes for an exacting and isolated life for the true preacher of God’s word.

But Paul was sure of his own integrity. He knew he preached the gospel as a man of sincerity. The Greek word translated *sincerity* is *eilikrineias* and is sometimes translated *purity*. Some scholars think the word *eilikrineias* is etymologically related to the Greek word *helios* (“sun”) and therefore means, “pure as tested by the sunlight.” If this is so, Paul means his ministry will be able to stand the penetrating rays of the sun — his ministry is open to the light and may be seen by all to be pure. He knew his ministry would stand the very scrutiny of God himself. The preacher who is true to God will be true to men. If he knows his ministry will stand the scrutiny of God himself, he need not be anxious about the false exactions and hurtful isolations of cynical men.

APPREHENSION:

1. Why is the writing of this "second" epistle causing Paul "pain"?
2. Why was Paul so intent on resolving the alienation he was getting from the Corinthian church?
3. Who was causing "pain" in Corinth?
4. Can you recount in your own words the scenario of Paul's dealings with the Corinthian church which led to all this "pain"?
5. How will Satan "gain advantage" over these Corinthian christians according to Paul?
6. Why should christians want to know the devil's designs?
7. What very evident design did the devil have for the Corinthian church?
8. Why did Paul turn aside from the "door opened to him" in Troas?
9. What event of the first century is Paul using to portray the christian ministry in 2:14-16?
10. What is a "peddler" of the word of God?

APPLICATION:

1. Why are preacher's "pained" when there is division in the church?
2. Does causing grief to one of the leaders of the church hurt the rest of the church? How?
3. How far should church discipline go? When is it too much? What is the church to do about a member who repents after discipline?
4. How does being unforgiving make us vulnerable to Satan's designs?
5. How do we keep ourselves from being ignorant of Satan's designs?
6. Should preachers be allowed to have "special friends" in a congregation?
7. Should preachers ever get depressed and so lonely they can't go through "opened doors"? Do they? What can a congregation do to help them?
8. How does the earnestness of the ministry of the gospel contribute

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to making some preacher's lonely?

9. Is preaching the gospel "a racket"? For whom?
0. How may a preacher handle the problem of loneliness?

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CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE AND VISITS

Taken from the book *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, by H. Wayne House, pub. 1981 by Zondervan Publishing House.

Event	Scripture Reference
Founding of church on second missionary journey	Acts 18:1-17
Leaving Corinth, arriving at Ephesus	Acts 18:18-19
Writing a letter now lost ¹	I Cor. 5:9-13
Receiving a bad report from "some from Chloe's household" and a letter from Corinth	I Cor. 1:11; 7:1
Writing of I Corinthians	I Corinthians
Sending of Timothy and Erastus to Corinth	Acts 19:22; I Cor. 4:17; 16:10
Hearing of serious crisis in Corinth caused by Jewish emissaries in which Paul's authority is questioned	II Cor. 10:10; 11:23; 12:6-7
Making a hasty trip to Corinth ("painful visit")	II Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1
Writing of "severe letter" to Corinth	II Cor. 2:3-9; 7:8-12
Searching for Titus in Troas and Macedonia	II Cor. 2:12-13
Finding of Titus, who reports worst at Corinth is over	II Cor. 7:6-16
Writing of II Corinthians	II Corinthians
Making third visit to Corinth	Acts 19:21; 20:3; II Cor. 13:1

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE

Crucifixion	Friday, April 3, 33
Pentecost (Acts 2)	Sunday, May 25, 33
Peter's second sermon; Peter brought before Sanhedrin (Acts 3:1-4:31)	summer 33
Death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:32-5:11)	33-34

1. Some believe II Cor. 6:14-7:1 is a fragment of this letter.

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Peter brought before Sanhedrin (Acts 5:12-42)	34-35
Deacons selected (Acts 6:1-7)	late 34-early 35
Stephen martyred (Acts 6:8-7:60)	April 35
Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-7)	summer 35
Paul in Damascus and Arabia (Acts 9:8-25; Gal. 1:16-17)	summer 35-early summer 37
Paul in Jerusalem, first visit (Acts 9:26-29; Gal. 1:18-20)	summer 37
Paul to Tarsus and Syria-Cilicia area (Acts 9:30; Gal. 1:21)	autumn 37
Peter's ministry to Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18)	40-41
Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:19-24)	41
Paul to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26)	spring 43
Agabus's prediction of famine (Acts 11:27-28)	spring 44
Agrippa's persecution, James martyred (Acts 12:1-23)	spring 44
Relief visit, Paul's second visit to Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; Gal. 2:1-10)	autumn 47
Paul in Antioch (Acts 12:24-13:1)	autumn 47-spring 48
First missionary journey (Acts 13-14)	
Departure from Antioch	April 48-Sept. 49
Cyprus	April 48
Pamphylia	April-June 48
Pisidian Antioch	first of July-middle of July 48
Iconium	Oct. 48-last of Feb. 49
Lystra-Derbe	March-middle of June 49
Return visit to churches	middle of June-Aug. 49
Return to Antioch of Syria	Sept. 49
Peter in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-16)	autumn 49
Galatians written from Antioch	autumn 49
Jerusalem council, Paul's third visit (Acts 15)	autumn 49
Paul in Antioch (Acts 12:25-13:1)	winter 49/50
Second missionary journey (Acts 15:25-18:22)	April 50-Sept. 52
Departure from Antioch	April 50
Syria and Cilicia	April 50
Lystra-Derbe	May 50
Iconium	last of May-middle of June 50
Pisidian Antioch	middle of June-first of July 50
Antioch to Troas	July 50
Philippi	Aug.-Oct. 50
Thessalonica	Nov. 50-Jan. 51

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Berea	Feb. 51
Athens	last of Feb.-middle of March 51
Arrival at Corinth	middle of March 51
Silas and Timothy arrive from Berea	April/May 51
I Thessalonians written	early summer 51
II Thessalonians written	summer 51
Departure from Corinth	first of Sept. 52
Ephesus	middle of Sept. 52
Jerusalem, Paul's fourth visit	last of Sept. 52
Return to Antioch	first/middle of Nov. 52
Paul's stay at Antioch	winter 52/53
Third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:16)	spring 53-May 57
Departure from Antioch	spring 53
Visiting Galatian churches	spring-summer 53
Arrival at Ephesus	Sept. 53
I Corinthians written	early spring 56
Departure from Ephesus (riot)	first of May 56
Troas	May 56
Arrival in Macedonia	first of June 56
II Corinthians written	Sept. Oct. 56
Departure from Macedonia	middle of Nov. 56
Arrival in Corinth	last of Nov. 56
Romans written	winter 56/57
Departure from Corinth	last of Feb. 57
Philippi	April 6-14, 57
Troas	April 19-25, 57
Troas to Assos	Monday, April 25, 57
Assos to Mitylene	April 26, 57
Mitylene to Chios	April 27, 57
Chios to Trogyllium	April 28, 57
Trogyllium to Miletus	April 29, 57
Ephesian elders' visit with Paul	April 30-May 2
Miletus to Patara	May 2-4, 57
Patara to Tyre	May 5-9, 57
Stay at Tyre	May 10-16, 57
Tyre to Caesarea	May 17-19, 57
Stay at Caesarea	May 19-25, 57
Caesarea to Jerusalem	May 25-27, 57

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Jerusalem, Paul's fifth visit	eve of Pentecost, May 27, 57
Meeting with James (Acts 21:13-23)	May 28, 57
Paul's arrest and trial before Felix (Acts 21:26-24:22)	May 29-June 9, 57
First day of purification	Sunday, May 29, 57
Second day of purification	May 30, 57
Third day of purification	May 31, 57
Fourth day of purification	June 1, 57
Fifth day of purification, riot, Paul's speech	June 2, 57
Paul before the Sanhedrin	June 3, 57
Appearance of the Lord (night)	
Conspiracy (day)	June 4, 57
Journey to Antipatris (night)	
Journey to Caesarea (day)	June 5, 57
Waiting in Caesarea for trial	June 5-9, 57
Trial before Felix	Thursday, June 9, 57
Paul before Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24:24-26)	June 57
Caesarean imprisonment (Acts 24:27)	June 57-Aug. 59
Trial before Festus (Acts 25:7-12)	July 59
Trial before Agrippa (Acts 26)	first of Aug. 59
Voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:29)	Aug. 59-Feb. 60
Departure from Caesarea	middle of Aug. 59
Myra	first of Sept. 59
Fair Havens	Oct. 5-10, 59
Shipwreck at Malta	last of Oct. 59
Departure from Malta	first of Feb. 60
Arrival in Rome	last of Feb. 60
First Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30)	Feb. 60-March 62
Ephesians written	autumn 60
Colossians and Philemon written	autumn 61
Philippians written	early spring 62
James, the Lord's brother, martyred	spring 62
Paul in Ephesus and Colosse	spring-autumn 62
Peter went to Rome	62
Paul in Macedonia	late summer 62-winter 62/63
I Timothy written	autumn 62
Paul in Asia Minor	spring 63-spring 64
Paul in Spain	spring 64-spring 66

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Christians persecuted, Peter martyred	summer 64
Paul in Crete	early summer 66
Paul in Asia Minor	summer-autumn 66
Titus written	summer 66
Paul in Nicopolis	winter 66/67
Paul in Macedonia and Greece	spring-autumn 67
Paul arrested and brought to Rome	autumn 67
II Timothy written	autumn 67
Paul's death	spring 68
Destruction of Jerusalem	Sept. 2, 70

Chapter Three

THE PROBLEM OF LEGALISM (3:1-18)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why is Paul bothered about “letters of recommendation”?
2. How do people become “letters of recommendation”?
3. If the old dispensation was so glorious Israel could not look on Moses’ face, how can the new dispensation be more glorious?
4. What is the “veil” that remained over the minds of the Israelites?
5. Where may we “behold the glory of the Lord” in order to be changed into his likeness?

SECTION 1

It Dooms The Soul (3:1-6)

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; ³and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered 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.

4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, ⁶who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.

3:1-3 Ineffective: Legalism is an almost constant problem for preachers. The problem is either his own legalism or that of members of the congregation he serves. It is probably the most productive tool of the devil to thwart the work of the church on earth! It is a sin much more insidious than sins of the flesh. It damns more souls than for-

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nication and thievery put together! Legalism is a problem, not only for those inside the church, but for millions of impenitent sinners seeking to be justified before God by some meritorious code devised by their own self-righteous arrogance. Legalism is fundamentally an attitude. It manifests itself in behavior designed to conform to specific codes or rules. And those codes of conduct are almost as numerous as there are human beings! Legalism is the attitude that demands justification from God on the basis of having behaved in conformity with an established set of regulations or rules — usually regulations established by the individual. The Pharisees took the law of Moses, made their own code of behavior as “interpretations” (called, “traditions of the elders”) and declared they were justified before God because they had “kept the law.”

Followers of the Pharisees were everywhere in the first century world of Paul. Many of them had infiltrated the christian churches established in the Roman provinces. Paul called them, “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4) and “dogs” (Phil. 3:2). They were the Judaizers who insisted that before any Gentile could become a disciple of the Messiah (Christ) he had to be circumcised according to the law of Moses and keep the traditions of the elders.

Someone in the Corinthian church had impugned Paul’s credentials as an emissary of God because he had no commendations from the Judaizers. Some had come to the Corinthians with letters of commendation from the Judaizers and were received. These Judaizers were there, as in Galatia, Philippi, Colossae, Rome, Jerusalem, and other places, to undo Paul’s work and regiment the Corinthian christians into little cells of legalistic Judaism. They undoubtedly carried with them introductory letters from the Sanhedrin to accredit them. Once upon a time even Paul had had such letters himself (Acts 9:2).

Paul’s argument is that no amount of letters of accreditation from the Judaizers will produce eternal life or the christian freedom cherished by the Corinthians. That is because legalism is totally ineffective in clearing the conscience (*see Heb. 10:1-4*). It cannot produce life in the heart (mind) of man. The law of Moses produces condemnation, judgment, and eternal death. So do all “traditions” and codes of legal justification invented by men, no matter how liberal the code may be (*see Romans 2:12-16*). Man’s conscience tells him he has sinned and defaulted on his own standards, let alone God’s! The only way sinful

man can have a consciousness of life is through a dispensation of divine grace. Grace is dispensed through Christ.

The apostle contends that the converted heathen Corinthians were *living* credentials of his ministry. They proved he was the properly authorized emissary from Christ. Paul had written on their hearts the *eternal* gospel. They had become persons with a consciousness of immorality. They "looked to the things that are unseen . . . eternal" (II Cor. 4:16-18). Their mind-set and lifestyle was "known and read by all men . . ." (II Cor. 3:2). That was Paul's "letter of commendation" from God. The Greek philosopher Plato had said 400 years before Paul, that the good teacher does not write his message in ink that will fade; he writes it upon men. And that is the way the gospel of Christ operates. It becomes fixed upon the character, the personality, the spirit of the humble and contrite person. Christ's word is eternal. It shall never pass away. It never returns to him void but always accomplishes that for which it is sent (see Isa. 55:11). Christ had written his character, through his servant, Paul, upon the hearts of the Corinthian christians, not with that which was destined to fade (the law) — but with the eternal Spirit of God. Their relationship to Christ was Paul's accreditation (see I Cor. 9:2). It is an awesome thought that every christian, whether he likes it or not, is at once a "living letter" known and read by his contemporaries. Christians represent Christ to the world. Men judge the church by its members. The honor of God is in the hands of believers (see Rom. 2:24; John 13:35; I Thess. 1:7-8).

The possessive pronoun in the Greek text is *hemon* and should be translated "our." Some ancient Greek manuscripts (among them the Siniaticus) have *humon* for the pronoun which would read "your." Evidently the RSV translators chose the pronoun *humon* even though the preponderance of manuscripts show *hemon*. For Paul to say, "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on *our* hearts, to be known and read by all men . . ." does not make sense and does not fit the context. Unless Paul's sentence could be separated this way: "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation to be known and read by all men, and you are written on our hearts." Another commentator has suggested that Paul means "the hearts of all christians, in general, not Paul alone." That is, Paul's credentials are written "on all *our* hearts" to be known and read by men, you

Corinthians, too. But Paul goes on to say in verse 3, “and *you* show that *you* are a letter from Christ delivered by us . . .” so he is referring to that which is written on *their* hearts. The RSV translation seems in keeping with the context. *They* were Paul’s verification: *they* were read by all men.

The Greek verbs in this passage are instructive. The perfect tense participle *eggegrammene*, “having been inscribed” means what Christ had written on their hearts through Paul had been done in the past with a continuing result. And the present tense participles, *ginoskomene* (“being known”) and *anaginostomene* (“being read”) indicate that the Corinthians were continually being known and read by all men. Furthermore, the present participle *phaneroumenoi* (“being shown”) indicates they were continually showing that they were Paul’s recommendation.

3:4-5 Insufficient: The Judaizers went to Corinth with letters from the “fathers” at Jerusalem, no doubt. But no human being is sufficient to produce in man what God desires. Paul would not even claim that sufficiency on his own. He would have the Corinthians understand that his confidence is through Christ — his sufficiency is from God. Legalism is insufficient because it does not come from God. God gave the Law. But God never intended the Law to be used in a legalistic, self-justifying way. The Law had a holy and good purpose (see Rom. 7:7-12). It was actually intended to teach just the opposite from what the Judaizers taught. The Law was to bring all who knew it to a consciousness of condemnation and total inability to be justified by it. It is not the law which is insufficient — it is legalistic perversion of the law which is insufficient. The Law is sufficient for its purpose — to produce awareness of sin, the need for grace, and tutoring unto faith.

Paul would not even take credit for what had been produced in the Corinthians through him. He gave all the credit to Christ and God. That is another of the glaring insufficiencies of the legalistic spirit. It dare not be honest and give credit where the credit is due. The legalist is a legalist because he wants all the credit for himself. Grace, unmerited favor, is anathema to him! Let all preachers and congregations beware of legalism. It is ineffective and insufficient. In fact, it produces exactly the opposite of what God’s powerful word produces. Stay with the Word. Preach the word — leave “traditions” and

“codes” to the legalists.

Like it or not, right or wrong, people generally manifest what they have been taught or what they have learned. Teaching and learning is a character-building process. People become “books” to be read by all those with whom they associate. The apostles were “read” as having “been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). That is how people become “letters of recommendation.” Paul told the brethren at Thessalonica they were his “joy and crown” of boasting (I Thess. 2:19-20; II Thess. 1:3-4).

3:6 Incriminating: Legalism dooms men under the judgment of God even more so than the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses was given by God and provisions were made in it for having faith reckoned as righteousness (see Gen. 15:6; Heb. 11:1-40). But legalism takes the Law and prostitutes it into a system of human self-justification. But by the law shall no flesh be justified (Gal. 2:16).

Paul reminded the Corinthians that his credentials testified that he had been qualified by God to be a minister of a *new* covenant, not in a written code which kills, but in the Spirit which gives life. Law condemns to separation from God (death) because man cannot, does not, keep the Law. Man is guilty. God’s penalty for breaking his Law is eternal banishment. But from the very first violation of his Law, God started preparing to forgive and justify men by a totally gracious deed of his own. All who believed in that in the O.T. were justified by God’s gracious deed (redemptive work of Christ). The new covenant was prophesied, typified and proclaimed in the O.T. All those in the O.T. who refused to trust in the coming grace of God through the Messiah (and there were many), but trusted in their legal standing according to Law, never had the salvation of God. Paul plainly says that the *new* covenant was a manifestation of the righteousness of God apart from law, although the law and the prophets had borne witness to just such justification by faith (Rom. 3:21-26).

In this letter to the Corinthians the apostle wants it understood that he has been qualified to be a minister (dispenser) of the new covenant which is all about life. The new covenant does not condemn or sentence anyone to death. It holds forth the word of life. Of course, anyone who does not enter into the new covenant will die forever because all who refuse the gospel must accept law — one kind of law or another (see Rom. 2:12-16). And to trust in law for justification is

the very essence of legalism. Legalism incriminates and kills. The Spirit of God, given gratis (by grace), brings justification and life.

SECTION 2

It Diminishes God's Splendor (3:7-11)

7 Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, ⁸will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? ⁹For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. ¹⁰Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. ¹¹For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor.

3:7-8 Deteriorates: The Law of Moses was a dispensation of death, carved on deteriorating stone. Of course, it had *splendor* (Gr. *doxe*, glory)! Anything God does has glory. All God's actions in history are glorious. His creation of this universe was glorious; his providential intervention (miracles) in creation was glorious; but this universe is destined to pass away, and is passing away because he has subjected it to futility (see Gen. 3:14-19; Rom. 8:18-25). This universe was temporary from the day of its creation for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:42-54). So with the Law of Moses. It was glorious but temporary from the moment of its revealing. It was destined to be fulfilled with that which was permanently glorious — the Gospel.

The Law came to Moses with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, *fading* (Gr. *katargoumenen*, being done away, being brought to an end, rendering powerless) as this was. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, after receiving the Law of God, his face shone so that both Aaron and the Israelites were afraid to come near him (Exod. 34:29-35). Just as objects exposed to light or radiation sometimes glow even after being removed from the light, so Moses, having been with God who dwells in light unapproachable (I Tim. 6:16) had acquired some of the glow

of God (see Rev. 21:23), even though he had seen only the "back part of God" (Exod. 33:23). Jesus' *transfiguration* (Gr. *metemorphothe*, metamorphosis) is described thus: ". . . his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as the light" (Matt. 17:2); ". . . his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them" (Mark 9:3); ". . . the appearance of his countenance and his raiment became dazzling white" (Luke 9:29).

This transfiguration of Jesus was a sign to the apostles that his coming with the dispensation of the Spirit was to be with *greater* splendor than that dispensation of death given to Moses.

If the Law of Moses, which originated with God, revealed a diminishing splendor from the moment of its inception, how much more will *legalism*, a perversion of the Law, diminish the splendor of God. This is Paul's aim in this admonition to the Corinthian church. They must not allow the legalists to come in with letters of commendation (no matter from whom) and diminish the glory of the Gospel.]

3:9-11 Disappears: The Law of Moses, the dispensation of condemnation, would inevitably be superseded should a dispensation of righteousness be inaugurated. And that is precisely what took place. Paul had preached that to the Corinthians. He had converted them to Christ with a gospel of righteousness (see I Cor. 1:26-31; II Cor. 5:11-21). Logic, therefore, demands that the Corinthians not be deceived by the Judaizers into returning to a faded splendor of condemnation because the splendor of righteousness in Christ to which they had been called *must far exceed* the Law of Moses. The dispensation of righteousness, the Gospel, supersedes any and *all legal systems*, whether revealed to Moses or written on nature and the conscience of man (see Rom. 1:18-2:16).

Paul puts it this way, "Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it." The Law of Moses (and all legal systems or legalisms) *have no splendor at all!* All religious, philosophical, or ethical systems advocating justification by law-keeping or self-improvement are bereft of any glory in the eyes of God. It is, therefore, senseless and useless to seek glorification from God in the Law of Moses or in any form of legalism.

The transfiguration of Jesus Christ was an actual, historical event. It was empirically observed (seen and heard). When Jesus was

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“metamorphosed” from his fleshly nature back into his divine glory, there appeared with him (seen by the disciples) Moses and Elijah (representatives of the Law and the Prophets, the dispensation of death) (see Matt. 17:3-8; Mark 9:4-8; Luke 9:30-36). It was at that moment God spoke to the disciples (Peter, James and John) and said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” God thus served notice that Jesus was to supersede, fulfill and abrogate the Old dispensation and surpass it with such divine glory in the gospel that the Old would “have no splendor at all.” After God’s message, the disciples looked and “saw no one but Jesus only.” The Law was to disappear in Jesus.

The New dispensation, the Gospel, *remains* (Gr. *menon*, is remaining or abiding) is *permanent*. It shall never fade away. It was the promise according to faith from the beginning, and the law which came 430 years later did not annul the promise (Gal. 3:10-18). Justification by faith in Christ has always been God’s intent for man. It has been God’s *permanent, most glorious*, dispensation of grace from the foundation of the earth for Jesus was the lamb slain then (I Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8). The Gospel is the *eternal* gospel (I Pet. 1:25-26; Rev. 14:6). Heaven and earth may pass away but Jesus’ words will *never* pass away (Matt. 24:35.)

Hebrews 2:1-4 gives an awesome warning to men to “pay closer attention” to the gospel than to the revelation given by angels (the Law) because the gospel came through the Son (see Heb. 1:1-4). The entire book of Hebrews is a clear and absolute command not to return to the Law (or any form of legalism) for justification. Those who seek justification by legalism are apostates who have no avenue for repentance before God (see Heb. 6:1-8) but only a fearful expectation of judgment (Heb. 10:1-39). Paul’s epistles to the Romans and the Galatians are also unequivocal treatises on the fulfillment and abrogation of the Law of Moses in Christ, and the apostate nature of legalism as a system of justification.

SECTION 3

It Divests People of Freedom (3:12-17)

12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 13 not like

Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; ¹⁶but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

3:12-13 Conceals: Moses put a veil over his face *after* he finished speaking with the Israelites (Exod. 34:33-34) and removed the veil when he went in to speak with Jehovah in the tabernacle. But Moses always put the veil on when he came into the presence of the Israelites. Paul states that Moses put the veil on his face so the Israelites would not see the "end" of the glory that was fading away (3:13). Paul states the veil was because Moses did not have enough hope in the "fading away" revelation to be bold enough to let Israel see the "fading glory." Moses certainly did not veil his face because the Israelites were not allowed to see the glow, or because it was so bright it blinded them, for Moses talked to them *before* putting on the veil. The apostle used the fading glory of Moses' face as a symbol or type (which is prophetic) of the fading glory of the Old covenant (the law). That covenant passed away, like the glow of Moses' face. Even though the Old Testament predicts in a number of places that the old covenant was to be done away (e.g. Jer. 3:15; 31:31-34; Dan. 9:24-27; Isa. 66:1-24; etc.), most Jews refused to accept that doctrine then and Jews do not accept it now! The Israelite people to whom Moses ministered were certainly not spiritually mature enough to be reminded over and over of the "fading glory" of Moses' relationship to God — that is why Moses covered his face. The Jews killed the prophets for predicting the fulfillment of the old dispensation with the Messianic age; they killed Christ for that; and they authored the deaths of a number of the apostles for preaching that doctrine.

Legalism veils the freedom (so did the Law of Moses) God intended to give believers in Christ. The prophets hinted at the freedom that would come to man when the Messiah came (see especially Isaiah 61:1-4 as fulfilled in Luke 4:18-19). But that freedom was concealed and obscured in the Law. Any form of legalism certainly hides the

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freedom which God reveals in the New Testament of Christ Jesus.

3:14-15 Calluses: Legalism hardens the mind against grace. The veil over Moses' face was also a symbol of the hardening of the minds of the Israelites in rejecting Christ. Fourteen centuries after Moses, the Jewish mind was still hardened in Paul's day whenever the Law of Moses was read in a Jewish synagogue — a veil lay upon the hearts of the Jews and they became satisfied with a system of justification by legalism. Twenty centuries after Paul, that hardness is still like concrete over the Jewish mind. Paul told the brethren of Thessalonica that they had suffered the same things from their own countrymen as the christians of Judea did from the Jews, who (the Jews) killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us (apostles) out, and displease God and oppose all men by hindering us (the apostles) from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved — so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them (the Jews) *to completion* (Gr. *eis telos*, unto perfection), see I Thessalonians 2:14-16. That same kind of callused opposition to Christ and his church continues to go on in modern Israel and among modern Jews.

Jewish legalism is not the only legalism which opposes the gospel. All forms of legalism are set against grace! There is an inveterate legalism within the Christian Church which takes an obscurantist and obdurate stand in opposition to christian grace and freedom in Christ. The human arrogance that is proud of its pseudo-righteousness through legalistic justification makes war on the humility which rejoices in its freedom through grace alone.

3:16-17 Constrains: Paul says plainly that when a person "turns to the Lord the veil is removed." Men are *free* only in the Lord. The obverse truth is that men are enslaved in Law and legalism. The apostle states it much clearer in Galatians. He specifically uses the words, "consigned under" and "confined under . . . restraint" in Galatians 3:21-25. In Galatians 4:1-7 he uses the word "slave" to describe those under the Law (see also Gal. 4:21-31 for the allegorical picture of those under the Law as "children for slavery"). Jesus told those who committed themselves to him that they were no longer *slaves* (John 15:15). He told the Jews that if they would continue in his word, they would be his disciples and they would know the truth and the truth would make them free (see John 8:31-38).

Legalism is even more enslaving than the Law, for legalism cannot do what the Law was sent to do — to bring people to an acknowledgment of their sinfulness and lead them to Christ for mercy. Legalism will have none of mercy for it does not acknowledge its need for mercy.

SECTION 4

Defense Against Legalism (3:18)

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

3:18 Transformation: The defense against legalism is a gradual process of transformation into the *likeness* (Gr. *auten eikona*, same image, or, same icon). The apostle uses the Greek word *metamorphoumetha* and it is translated into the English word *changed* by the RSV. This Greek word is a combination of the prepositional prefix *meta* (which can mean “over and beyond”) and *morphe* (which means “form”). Thus we have the English word *metamorphosis* from this Greek word. A “metamorphosis” is what a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly; its form is changed beyond what it was from one degree of glory to another.

The metamorphosis Paul is talking about here for the believer is a spiritual one in this earthly existence. It is spoken of in the New Testament in a number of metaphors; it is called the “new birth”; “conversion”; “salvation”; “partaking of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:3-11); “being born of the Spirit”; “being transformed”; “being conformed to the image of God’s Son” (Rom. 8:29), etc. Nearly all Bible believers agree on these terms as expressing the experience or action required by God for eternal life. The disagreement is usually over the question as to *how* this transformation takes place in the life of the believer.

Paul says in this text (II Cor. 3:18) that it occurs when believers “. . . with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this

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comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." An analysis of this text, as we compare it with other relevant scriptures, will clearly indicate how this action is accomplished. First, it requires an "unveiled face." The Greek verb for "unveiled" is *anakekalummeno*. It is a perfect tense verb indicating action in the past with a continuing action or result. It is a perfect passive participle of *anakalupto* and would be translated literally, "having been unveiled." Passive voice would indicate the unveiling was something done to the believer by someone else. Our "unveiling" is through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Of course, God's Spirit will not unveil our hardened minds unless we wish him to and cooperate with him in every instruction he gives in his Word. The Holy Spirit may be resisted. This unveiling is definitely a continuing, progressive process. It does not all take place at one time. The perfect tense verb clears that up. Furthermore, Paul states that it is a process "from one degree of glory to another."

Second, the "unveiled face" comes as a result of "beholding the glory of the Lord." The Greek work translated "beholding" is *katoptrizomenoi* (we get the English word *optometry* from this word). It is a present tense, middle voice participle. The present tense means action continuing to happen. The middle voice means the subject (the believer) is acting upon himself or in some way that concerns himself. The Greek word *katoptrizomenoi* might be translated, "beholding in a mirror" or, "seeing a reflection." One way or another, the human being must "behold" the glory of the Lord in order to be changed. And Paul says that even the *beholding* comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Now the question is, how has the Spirit made the glory of the Lord visible to human beings?

We believe the New Testament is unequivocal on that point! We believe there is no room for opinion on the matter. We believe it is a clear teaching of the scripture and Scripture is always authoritative above opinions when sound hermeneutics are exercised. Many passages in the New Testament clearly indicate that in conversion and sanctification (being changed from one degree of glory to another, or, being transformed into the image of God's Son) the Holy Spirit operates *only* through the Word of truth: (a) we are made partakers of the divine nature (the nature of Christ) and granted all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ and through his precious and very great promises (II Pet. 1:3-4) — the *knowledge*

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of Christ comes through the Word (Rom. 10:17), and certainly there is no other place for a human being to find the *promises* of Christ except in the written word; (b) we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds motivated to that renewing by the mercies of God (Rom. 12:1-2) — the mind of the human being must contact the mercies of God to be renewed and those *mercies* can only be *mentally* appropriated from the written Word; (c) we are to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29) by setting our minds on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-8) — the mind of the human being must be set on the things of the Spirit and these things are revealed through the apostles (see John 16:7-15, and see our comments on I Cor. 2:6-16) in the New Testament only (see I John 4:1-6); (d) we are called through the gospel so that we may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thess. 2:14) — the gospel is the Word of the Spirit written which is at work in believers (I Thess. 2:13); (e) we purify our souls by obedience to the truth and are born anew of the imperishable seed which is the living and abiding word of God, the preached (or written) gospel (I Pet. 1:22-25) — the "seed" of new birth and continuing purification of the soul is sown in our minds through the written Word of the the spirit.

We might go on multiplying references from the scriptures showing that the Holy Spirit operates only through the Word of truth for there a many. We quote now from Alexander Campbell for clarification of this proposition:

"All moral facts have a moral meaning; and those are properly called moral facts which either exhibit, develop, or form moral character. . . . It so happens, however, that all his (God's) works, when properly understood, exhibit both his physical and moral character, when viewed in all their proper relations. . . . The work of redemption is a system of works, or deeds, on the part of Heaven, which constitute the most splendid series of moral facts which man or angel ever saw. And they are the proof, the argument, or the demonstration, of that regenerating proposition which presents God and Love as two names for one idea. . . . When these facts are understood, or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal or archetype, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. *All the means of grace are, therefore, only the means of impressing this seal upon the heart, — of bringing these moral facts to make their full impression on the soul of man.* Testimony and faith are but the channel through which

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these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the heart and character of man." Alexander Campbell in *The Christian System*, pub. Standard Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, no date, pps. 90-91.

Alexander Campbell also wrote that in human experience, "No living man has ever been heard of, and none can now be found, possessed of a single Christian concept of one spiritual thought, feeling, or emotion, where the Bible, or some tradition from it has not been before him." See the Special Study at the end of this chapter from Alexander Campbell's, *Christian Baptism*, on this proposition.

While we endure the sufferings of this present time being changed from one degree of spiritual glory to another into the likeness of Christ, these sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Rom. 8:18-39). God is preparing for those metamorphosed into the image of his Son an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison (II Cor. 4:16-18) when we shall be clothed with life (II Cor. 5:1-5; I Cor. 15:35-57) and immortality.

And since he (God) is the source of our life in Christ, who is our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption, (I Cor. 1:30-31), let us renounce legalism and boast *only* of the Lord!

APPREHENSION:

1. What is legalism?
2. How was legalism a problem to the apostle Paul?
3. How did the Corinthians become "letters" from Christ delivered by Paul?
4. What is the dispensation of death? *Why* was it a dispensation of death?
5. What is the dispensation of the Spirit?
6. How could Paul say the dispensation of death had glory?
7. How did God show the Israelites that the dispensation of death would fade away?
8. Why would God want the Israelites to know the O.T. was to fade away?
9. What is the splendor of the new dispensation?
10. Is Paul teaching here that the Old Testament was completely and

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- totally fulfilled and abrogated? What other scriptures teach that?
11. What was the purpose of the veil Moses put over his face?
 12. Does it have some symbolic significance for the Corinthians and us? What?
 13. How is this veil removed?
 14. Where may a human being behold the glory of the Lord? Is this the only place? How do you know?
 15. What happens as a result of beholding the glory of the Lord?

APPLICATION:

1. Is legalism a problem with your preacher?
2. Is legalism a problem with you?
3. If Paul were writing to you and your congregation today, what kind of *letter of recommendation* for him would you be?
4. Do you have a consciousness of death or of life from your New Covenant relationship with God through Christ?
5. What do you think about your being saved by grace?
6. Is there a veil over your face when you try to be pleasing to God? Is there some hardness callusing your mind against the free grace of God?
7. Are you satisfied with the glory of the Lord revealed exclusively in the scriptures? Do you think the Lord should manifest himself to you in some physical glory?
8. Would you be more converted, more changed into his character if he would reveal himself to you physically?
9. To whom do you give credit for your changed character, day by day?
10. What kind of glory do *you* anticipate in heaven?

Special Study

NOTES FROM *CHRISTIAN BAPTISM*

by Alexander Campbell

PROPOSITION:

In conversion and sanctification, the Holy Spirit operates only through the Word of truth.

Argument from . . .

1. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MIND

In conversion "no new faculties are imparted — no old faculty destroyed!" "The Spirit of God, in effecting this great change does not violate, metamorphose, or annihilate any power or faculty of the man, in making the saint." p. 236

2. EXPERIENCE

"No living man has ever been heard of, and none can now be found, possessed of a single Christian concept of one spiritual thought, feeling, or emotion, where the Bible, or some tradition from it, has not been before him." p. 238

3. OBSERVATION

"No one, professing to have been the subject of the illuminating, converting, and sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God, can ever express a single right conception or idea on the whole subject of spiritual things, not already found in the written word," p. 239 "I have never heard one suggestion, containing the feeblest ray of light, which was not eighteen hundred years old, and already found in Holy Scriptures." pp. 239, 240

4. CONSISTENCY—"Whatever is essential to regeneration in any case, is essential to it in all cases." p. 240

"If then, the Spirit of God, without faith, without knowledge of the gospel, in any case, regenerates an individual, it does so in all cases. But if faith in God, or a knowledge of Christ, is essential in one case, it is essential in every other case." p. 240

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S OWN METHOD OF ADDRESSING MEN

"He seems to have sought admission into the hearts of the people by these glorious displays of Divine power presented to the eyes (miracles), and these words of grace addressed to the ear. . . . He used means, rational means; therefore, we argue, such means were necessary, and are still, in certain modifications of that same supernatural grandeur, necessary to conversion and sanctification." p. 242

6. THE NAME CHOSEN BY JESUS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT (*Paracletos* - advocate)

"Now as the Spirit is to advocate Christ's cause, he must use means. . . . He was to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. . . . In converting men, the Spirit, the Holy Advocate, was to speak of Jesus. Hence, speaking of Jesus by the Spirit, is all that was necessary to the conversion of men." pp. 242, 243

7. THE GIFT OF TONGUES (LANGUAGE)

"That language is essential to the completion of the commission, is proved from the great fact, that the first gift of the Holy Spirit, under the Messiah's commission, was the gift of tongues." p. 243 "With Plato, then, I say, that God taught the primitive words, and from that, man manufactured the derivatives. With Newton, I say, God gave man reason and religion by giving him speech . . . the Spirit of God, now the Spirit of the Word, is the origin of all spiritual words and conceptions." p. 245

8. SCRIPTURE

I Peter 1:23-"The Word of God is the seed, of which we are born again or renewed in heart and life. . . . Where this incorruptible seed is not, there can be no birth!" pp. 245, 246

James 1:18-"God's *will* is the origin of it; his *Spirit* the efficient cause of it; but the Word is the necessary *instrument* of it." p. 246

I Corinthians 4:15-"The gospel is here the seed, the instrument of the conversion of the Corinthians." p. 247

9. PAUL'S COMMISSION (Acts 26:15-18)

"God would use light, knowledge, the gospel, and would OPEN

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THE EYES of men — turning them from darkness to light, and from the kingdom and power of Satan to God. . . . Illumination is, therefore, an essential prerequisite to conversion and holiness.” p. 248

10. SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

“Whatever influence is ascribed to the Word of God in the Sacred Scriptures, is also ascribed to the Spirit of God.” p. 248

- 1) Enlightenment-Heb. 6:4-Psa. 19:7, 8
- 2) Conversion-Titus 3:5-7-Psa. 19:7
- 3) Sanctification-Rom. 15:16-John 17:17
- 4) Be filled with-Eph. 5:18-Col. 3:16
- 5) Life giving-Rom. 8:6, 11-Psa. 119:25, 50

11. RESISTANCE

“Resisting the Word of God, and resisting the Spirit of God, are shown to be the same thing.” p. 249

- 1) Acts 7:51-53
- 2) Neh. 9:20, 30

12. CREATION

“Every work of creation is represented as the product of his Word.” (Heb. 11:3; Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26) p. 251

“God, therefore, made man in his own image by his Word, and he now restores him to that same image by his Word of power.” p. 251

13. GOD’S WILL AND POWER

“The Lord has imbodyed his will in his Word. . . . The Word of the Lord is the Lord himself.” p. 251 “As the Lord Jesus is the Word of God incarnate, so is his Word an embodiment of his power. . . . The Word of God is, then, the actual power of God.” p. 252 “The power of God to salvation is the persuasive power of infinite and eternal love, and not the compulsive and subduing power of any force superadded to it.” p. 253

14. THE CONVERSION ACCOUNTS IN ACTS

“In not one of these cases did the Holy Spirit operate *without the Word*, but always through it.” p. 254 (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 8:5, 6, 12; 8:35; 9:4-9, 17-19)

Special Study

ARE WE FUNDAMENTALISTS?

Historically

The answer to that is Yes and No! While the Restoration Movement parallels the great revival of religious conservatism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, our Movement predates the historical founding of the movement called "Fundamentalism." It is also evident that the Restoration Movement, although believing in the great "fundamental" doctrines declared at the first by fundamentalism, does not adhere to later theological deviations and dogmatism.

George M. Marsden, Professor of History at Calvin College, in his book, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 1980, sees Fundamentalism rising out of the ashes of the destructive debate which occurred at the 1873 Evangelical Alliance.

Until that time, American Protestantism had been riding the crest of a wave of evangelicalism swept along on the tide of revivalism in the late 1700's and early 1800's. It is significant that the Restoration Movement in America was begun during this time.

This old order correlated faith, learning and morality with the welfare of civilization. Two premises were absolutely fundamental — that God's truth was a single unified order and that all persons of common sense were capable of knowing that truth. The implications of these assumptions were carefully worked out by the philosophical school known as Scottish Common Sense Realism." (Marsden, op, cit, p. 14)

In 1869 Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (who moved in the ultra-liberal Transcendentalist circles in Boston) predicted the imminent demise of christian conservatism, saying: "The truth is staring the Christian world in the face, that the stories of the old Hebrew books cannot be taken as literal statements of fact." Holmes was seduced by the destructive criticism of such men as F.C. Baur, D.F. Strauss, and J.E. Renan.

Throwing fuel on the flame already begun, James McCosh, President of the College of New Jersey (later, Princeton), stated on the floor debate of the 1873 Evangelical Alliance, he thought that evolution and Christianity could be reconciled without violating belief in

God and creation. But others, among them the great Charles Hodge of Princeton, countered that the supernaturalism of the Biblical view was utterly incompatible with the naturalism they saw as essential to Darwin's position.

Almost all the basic battle lines had been drawn, but the battle was far from settled. Higher criticism and Darwinism went far beyond the realm of empirical science and took the leap into philosophies of origins and purposes. This threatened the very foundations of Christian belief.

Most American evangelicals were so firmly committed to both objective science and historical Christianity they were forced, by the severity of the conflict, into one of two extreme positions. They could say with Charles Hodge that Darwinism and higher criticism was irreconcilable with Christianity; or they could redefine the relationship between science and religion until religion would no longer be seen as dependent on historical or scientific fact susceptible of objective inquiry, but would have to do with only the experiential and moral aspects of life — areas not open to scientific and historical investigation. Religion was already, in fact, being redefined this very way by Schleiermacher and Ritschl (advocates of Kant's "categorical imperative"). At this same meeting in 1873, this new direction was suggested by the most popular American preacher of the day, Henry Ward Beecher.

Beecher and others continued to press the new theology of experience. Some say 1877 was the turning point when a minor controversy over future punishment occurred among the Congregationalists. The real shock waves came from abroad. Three strong concussions were felt almost simultaneously — evolutionary naturalism, higher criticism of the Bible, and the newer Idealistic philosophy and theology. Theology was no longer viewed as a fixed body of eternally valid truths. It was seen rather as an evolutionary development that should adjust to the standards and needs of modern culture.

The conservatism of the Blanchards of Wheaton College and Dwight L. Moody's evangelical revivalism played major roles in swinging the religious pendulum away from the new liberalism. Moody's close friends and younger lieutenants (Reuben A. Torrey, James M. Gray, C.I. Scofield, William J. Eerdman, and others) lent their able energies and abilities to shaping fundamentalism.

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There were four main emphases in early fundamentalism: apologetics, holiness, eschatology, and evangelism. In 1910-1915 twelve paperback volumes, written by "the best and most loyal Bible teachers in the world," were published. The funds to publish them came from a Southern California millionaire. Among the authors were men of the caliber of James Orr, B.B. Warfield, Sir Robert Anderson, Reuben A. Toreey, and G. Campbell Morgan. The series gave positive, scholarly, conservative expositions of the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the deity, virgin birth, supernatural miracles, atoning death, physical resurrection and personal return of Jesus Christ, the reality of sin, salvation by faith through spiritual regeneration, the power of prayer and the duty of evangelism. From that time on, it seems to have become habitual for American evangelicals to refer to these articles as "the fundamentals." In 1919 the World Christian Fundamentals Association was formed, and in 1920, a group of evangelical delegates to the Northern Baptist Convention held a preliminary meeting among themselves to "re-state, reaffirm and re-emphasize the fundamentals of our New Testament faith;" whereupon an editorial in the Baptist *Watchman-Examiner* coined the title "Fundamentalists" to denote "those who mean to do battle royal for the fundamentals." The word was at once taken up by both sides as a title for the defenders of the historic Christian position.

In almost every major American denomination, sometime between the late 1870's and World War I, serious disagreements broke out between conservatives and liberals. In these struggles the conservatives were not necessarily fundamentalists in any strict sense. They were first of all denominational conservatives who had their own distinct traditions and tenets. Some, like the conservatives among the Restoration Movement, were regarded as a part of the fundamentalist movement largely because their aims were parallel and in certain of their "battles" they had common opponents. The issues debated most intensely centered on the authority of Scripture, its scientific accuracy, or the supernatural elements in Christ's person and work. There were also parallel and closely related disputes over the distinctive doctrines, such as Calvinism among Presbyterians and the necessity of baptism by immersion for church membership among the Disciples of Christ. This is the way Marsden (op. cit.) views the contribution of the Christian Churches to the fundamentalist movement:

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When fundamentalism became a national sensation, conservative denominational movements with their own traditions and backgrounds temporarily joined in the fundamentalist fray. Some of them had only a tangential relationship to the rest of fundamentalism. Among Disciples of Christ, for instance, although the controversy was as intense as among the Presbyterians or Baptists, their conservative party had a unique set of interests. They shared with the main body of fundamentalists a strong opposition to liberalism, especially the liberalism represented by the former journal of the Disciples, *The Christian Century*. The controversy focused, however, on preserving strict Disciples traditions, particularly Baptism by immersion. This exclusivism separated the Disciples conservatives from other fundamentalists, even though both groups recognized some mutual affinities. By the 1920's the conservative Disciples 'Restoration Movement' had been battling liberals strenuously for a decade and a half. In 1924 at the height of the other denominational controversies, the conservatives established the Christian Restoration Association which seriously threatened to split the denomination. Although a formal schism was averted, within a few years separatism had led to the virtual independence of the liberal and conservative factions within a loose denominational structure.

At the North American Christian Convention Theological Forum, summer 1973, Dr. Jack Cottrell, Prof. of Theology at the Cincinnati Christian Seminary, made an address on *Values in Evangelical Theology*. It has been published in *The Seminary Review*, Vol. 19, No. 4. This address gives an excellent perspective on the relationship of the conservative stream of the Restoration Movement to Fundamentalism. Dr. Cottrell says:

. . . in the 1920's the character and reputation of fundamentalism changed. The change was not basically in its theological position, but in its mood and temperament and attitude. Dispensationalism (including its pre-tribulation pre-millennialism) did become a more widespread characteristic of this view, but the greatest change was the development of a negative attitude, characterized in various ways such as legalism, anti-intellectualism, obscurantism, literalism, separatism, bigotry, harshness of spirit, and other-worldliness. Today when people speak of contemporary fundamentalism, they usually mean this kind of temperament.

. . . It was as a corrective to this negative attitude that the movement called evangelicalism (or the "new evangelicalism") began to emerge in the 1940's. In 1942 the National Association of Evangelicals was formed. In 1947 Carl Henry indicted *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern*

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Fundamentalism. The Evangelical Theological Society was organized in 1949. The aim of this new movement was to retain the conservative theological position of fundamentalism, but to rid itself of the negative attitude.

This brief historical summary has hopefully clarified the options before us. First, one must choose between liberal theology and conservative, orthodox, supernatural theology. Then, within conservative theology, one must choose between fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

Dr. Cottrell concludes that we need to "share with profit" some of the theological positions of evangelicalism while avoiding compromising the distinctives of the Restoration Plea.

Are we Fundamentalists? Are we even Evangelicals? No! Historically, the Restoration Movement was defending the Biblical faith more than a century before the 1920 formation of the Fundamental Association. Alexander Campbell wrote in his personal diary, January 29, 1809, "The Word of God, which is contained in the Old and New Testaments is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him." Mr. Campbell also said: "Reason deciding the testimony is true is believing; reason deciding the testimony is false is disbelieving; reason unable to decide is skepticism."

Are we Fundamentalists? Yes! The Restoration Movement was leading a return to christian foundations and the fundamentals of the faith while others in Christendom were falling away into human creeds and traditions. The Restoration Movement is both historically and theologically more fundamental than the Fundamentalists. Alexander Campbell said, in 1842, "The Bible alone must always decide every question involving the nature, the character or the designs of the Christian institution."

It is true, historically, that in the 1920's the Restoration Movement was invaded with the same deadly liberalism which had ravaged the rest of Christendom. And it is true that there were some faithful and courageous christians who fought the same battles as the "fundamentalists" were fighting. But it is also true that those same brave, Bible-believing christians in the Restoration Movement had been battling for a return to the *real* fundamentals of the faith long before the liberalism of the 1920's.

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Theologically

Most analysts of the phenomenon called "fundamentalism" characterize it by its five great fundamental doctrines: (1) the infallibility of scriptures; (2) the virgin birth of Christ; (3) his substitutionary atonement; (4) his bodily resurrection; (5) and his visible second advent. The most important of these five is the issue of the infallibility of scripture. James I. Packer, in his book, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, 1958, gives a brief definition of the fundamentalist concept of infallibility:

. . . the teaching of the written Scriptures is the Word which God spoke and speaks to His Church, and is finally authoritative for faith and life. To learn the mind of God, one must consult his written word. What Scripture says, God says. The Bible is inspired in the sense of being word-for-word God-given. It is a record and explanation of divine revelation which is both complete and comprehensible; that is to say, it contains all that the church needs to know in this world for its guidance in the way of salvation and service, and it contains the principles for its own interpretation within itself.

When this fundamental is granted (the inspiration, infallibility and authority of the scriptures) the other doctrines of fundamentalism, as originally stated, follow as a matter of course. "We," (of the conservative elements of the Restoration Movement) have no difficulty believing in the five great tenets of early Fundamentalism. In hundreds of Christian Churches throughout this land and the world we would find no deviation from these basic beliefs. Conservative Restorationists should have no reservations about being classified as "fundamentalists" within the tenets just stated. In fact, some of us would classify *obedience* to the gospel terms proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38) and the *unity* of all believers on the basis of the apostolic word (John 17:20-21) as fundamentals.

However, the inclination of present-day Fundamentalists to add to this body of basics, and to be dogmatic regarding their additions, presents a problem to many in the Restoration Movement. Ronald H. Nash, in his book, *The New Evangelicalism*, deplors the tendency of contemporary fundamentalists to reduce the Christian message to one of salvation alone, to the concept of religious faith as something

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separate from everyday life, and the depreciation of scholarship in all fields. To these should be added their dogmatic approach to dispensational eschatology and their insistence on a "latter day" pentecostalism or outpouring of miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Carl F.H. Henry speaks of the temperament and attitude of modern fundamentalism as one of the main factors leading to its being discredited. He speaks especially of the attitude of rancor and negation often found in representatives of the movement:

By some fundamentalism is considered a summary term for theological pugnaciousness, ecumenic disruptiveness, cultural unprogressiveness, scientific obliviousness, and/or anti-intellectual inexcusableness. By others, fundamentalism is equated with extreme Dispensationalism, pulpit sensationalism, excessive emotionalism, social withdrawal, and bawdy church music. (*What Is This Fundamentalism?* by Carl F.H. Henry, 1956, p. 303.)

Contemporary fundamentalism's most conspicuous theological aberration seems to be dispensational-premillennialism. Some fundamentalists of great stature rejected dispensationalism. Reuben A. Torrey came to recognize it as faulty hermeneutics. G. Campbell Morgan also rejected it, saying, "I am quite convinced that all the promises made to Israel have found, are finding, and will find their perfect fulfillment in the Church. It is true that in the past, in my other expositions, I gave definite place to Israel in the purpose of God. I have now come to the conviction that it is the new spiritual Israel that is intended."

Nevertheless, dispensationalism is a widely *influential* position within contemporary American fundamentalism. Millard Erickson says in his book, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, 1977, pp. 109-110:

Because the rise of dispensationalism roughly paralleled that of the fundamentalist movement, it became virtually the official theology of fundamentalism. Some commentators have practically identified the two. Some proponents of dispensationalism consider it to be not an interpretation of the Bible, but simply a restatement of what the Bible says. Some have made it a test of orthodoxy, regarding one who fails to hold all of its points as one who denies Scripture itself. In many cases a whole mind set or collection of attitudes is involved. . . . For the dispensa-

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tionalist . . . the truth of the dispensational system implies the truth of pretribulationism, and the falsity of pretribulationism implies the falsity of dispensationalism. For such a person, then, an attack upon pretribulationism appears to be an attack upon the whole Christian system of belief. His entire Christian experience has been associated with this way of believing, and even conditioned to particular terms and expressions. . . . We must therefore bear in mind that their sense of religious security is bound up with what appear to them to be essentials of Christianity.

Many dispensational premillennialists are so thoroughly convinced their eschatological system is essential to loyalty to Christ, they have excommunicated dissenters or categorized them as apostates. All sorts of anathemas have been pronounced upon non-premillennialists:

- a. "The real hypocrites of our day are those who turn their backs on the real message of our day, the Second Coming of our Lord . . . Scripture indicts ministers and pastors who refuse to investigate the signs of the time leading to Christ's return, and warn the unsaved to prepare, as being ignorant, hypocrites, and false prophets. 1974-1978 - Jewish Temple rebuilt; 1981-1985 Beginning of the Tribulation; 1997-2001 - The Beginning of the Kingdom Age." (*The Gospel Truth*, pub. in Oklahoma City, OK)
- b. "Israel is invincible unless God is vulnerable." (from a church paper of one of our Christian Churches)
- c. "Opposition to premillennialism had its rise in the attackers of true Scriptural doctrine. . . ." (*The Millennial Kingdom*, John F. Walvoord, p. 39)

James Barr writes in his book, *Fundamentalism*, "The forecasting of the end comes to be the central preoccupation, and other things fall into the background . . . Millennial interest is also a dangerous threat to the unity of evangelicals: millennial schemes are many, and quarrels among their adherents are often bitter."

Clearly, the Restoration Movement's conservative brotherhood would be "fundamentalist" in its theology if *early* fundamentalism is our touchstone. Perhaps our Restoration Movement is *more* fundamental than the Fundamentalist!

But we must, for the most part of our Movement, disclaim the reductionism, the dogmatism, and the hermeneutical aberrations of contemporary fundamentalism's theology.

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For those interested in further study of the relationship of the Restoration Movement to Fundamentalism and/or Evangelicalism, I strongly urge the reading of Dr. Jack Cottrell's address cited earlier in this essay. Dr. Cottrell forms this conclusion:

I have suggested that this (Evangelicalism) is a theological position which the central stream of the Restoration Movement should and can share, with profit and without compromise. This is not a call for organic union with any evangelical bodies. This is not necessarily a call for overt cooperation with other evangelicals in any kind of projects. Indeed, such cooperation is impossible in some areas without compromising our plea. For instance, any cooperative effort which presupposes a common view of the nature of the church, and common view of the way of salvation (or which takes our differences as a matter of indifference) is a compromise of the Restoration Plea and must be avoided. In other areas, however, such cooperation is possible and even advantageous. This is true especially in areas relating to apologetical interests.

Let me conclude this presentation with an exhortation Bro. R.C. Foster made to the Cincinnati Bible Seminary chapel audience on November 11, 1958:

The Cincinnati Bible Seminary arose amid the wreckage of our older educational institutions, and our missionary organizations. The silence of pacifism had fallen like a pall upon the restoration movement. Many feared to proclaim the plain commands of the Gospel lest they offend their denominational friends. They feared to speak of the apostasy of the great organizations of the restoration movement, of the unbelief that sat in the high places, lest they be dubbed controversialists, and the heavy hand of the hierarchy be raised against them . . . then it became evident that unless a dynamic generation of preachers would be produced, men who believed and were able to defend the Gospel against all attacks, men who knew and could meet the critical issues at hand, then the extinction of the restoration movement is in sight. . . . If the student body of this institution once allows itself to be seduced by such ideas as this, then the curse of half-hearted pacifism will descend even upon the Seminary.

Let us here, today, resolve we shall not relax our faith in and our proclamation of the fundamentals of the "faith once for all delivered."

Chapter Four

THE PROBLEM OF DISCOURAGEMENT (4:1-18)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Who would "tamper" with God's word?
2. Is there a "god" of this world who is not Jehovah?
3. What "treasure" did Paul have in an "earthen vessel"?
4. What is the "inner nature" of man?
5. How can "unseeable" things be seen?

SECTION 1

Machination (4:1-6)

4 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ²We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. ⁵For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

4:1-2 Constraint: Discouragement is a problem for all christians, and especially for preachers of the gospel. We have already discussed "despair" in our comments on II Corinthians 1:8-11 (see notes there). Any preacher who says he has never been disappointed or discouraged is either lying or he lives a life completely isolated from any confrontations between truth and falsehood and other human beings. Even Jesus registered disappointment. He was "angry . . . and grieved" (Mark 3:5) at the blasphemy of the Pharisees; he "marveled" (actual-

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ly, was astounded or disappointed) at the unbelief of some Jews (Mark 6:6). Paul certainly had many discouragements (Most prominent was his discouragement at the behavior of these christians at Corinth!); Paul was also disappointed with the christians of Galatia (Gal. 1:6; 4:16; 5:7, etc.).

The word, "Therefore" in 4:1 connects what he is to say here immediately to what he has said in chapter 3. The primary cause of Paul's discouragement and disappointment was the hardness and perverseness of the Judaizers, "secretly brought in, slipped in to spy out . . . freedom which we have in Christ Jesus . . ." in Corinth as they had done in Galatia (see Gal. 2:2). What disappointed Paul was the enslavement, the constraint, the circumscription, the blinding of minds that always accompanied the Judaizing of a congregation of christians. Paul contrasts his ministry with that of the Judaizers in Corinth who were slandering his reputation as one of their methods in seducing the congregation. He says, "We (my co-workers and I) have *this* ministry by the mercy of God. . . ." On the other hand, "They have *their* (the Judaizers) ministry from disgraceful, underhanded ways of cunning and tampering with God's word. . . ." The very fact that the Corinthians could not recognize the difference between the two was discouraging and disappointing to Paul.

Paul infers that he once was a "Judaizer" himself, when he says, "We have *renounced* disgraceful, underhanded ways. . . ." He once was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, considered himself "blameless as to the law" Phil. 3:6 and had persecuted the church of God and had tried to destroy it, because he was convinced Christianity was blasphemy (Gal. 1:13; Acts 9:1-2). At one time in his life Paul gloried in his self-righteousness (Phil. 3:4, 9) and made void the word of God by his traditions. But when he received the grace of God *he renounced* all that. And he recognized that in his former life he had done *disgraceful* (Gr. *aischunes*, shameful, fearful) and *underhanded* (Gr. *krupta*, cryptic, secret, hidden) things. He had to practice *cunning* (Gr. *panourgia*, literally, "all working, or doing anything" thus, deceit, subtleness) and he had to *tamper* with God's word (Gr. *dolountes*, to dilute, to water-down, to adulterate) in order to be a Pharisee (see Matt. 15:1-20; 23:1-39). Paul knew exactly how the Judaizers were deceiving the Corinthians. He knew because he had been one!

Now the Corinthians must be warned. These Judaizers are "deceit-

ful workmen" (II Cor. 11:13); they conduct their work secretly (Gal. 2:4); they adulterate the word of God by their traditions (Matt. 15:6). The necessary consequence of adopting legalism as a way of justification is "watering down" the word of the gospel. By suggesting that Christians voluntarily come under the law or Pharisaic traditions the Judaizers would have to dilute the spiritual obligation of the Christian to go *beyond* the law (as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, and as Paul taught in I Corinthians 8, 9, 10), in his devotion and obedience toward God. This is always the way of legalistic living. Those who preach legalism think they are making godliness more certain, when, as a matter of fact, they are diluting the power of godliness. Legalism always creates self-righteousness and that is a drastic dilution of total righteousness imputed to believers through the grace of Christ. It is true that man needs divine guidelines and principles to help him determine what the will of the Lord is for a life of holiness under grace, but these guidelines and principles must never be perverted into legalism as a means of justification.

As Applebury points out, "There are various ways to use the word of God deceitfully, or to tamper with it. Using a Bible text to preach a 'sermon' that has little or nothing to do with the Bible is one of the common ways of doing it. Teaching it accurately, but refusing to live by it is equally deceitful." (see our notes on II Cor. 2:17 for comments on "peddlers of God's word").

We usually think of "watering down" God's word as an exclusive practice of liberal-minded theologians who deny the supernatural element of the scriptures, or the moral absoluteness of Christianity. Legalists always think of themselves as protecting the word of God from being adulterated. But Paul is talking about the legalists "watering down" God's word!

The Greek phrase, *pros pasan sunidesin anthropon*, could well be translated, ". . . to every kind of consciousness of men. . . ." Paul continually *commended* (Gr. *sunistanontes*, present tense verb, "standing-with") himself to all men by his *open statement of* (Gr. *phanerosei*, manifestation of) the truth (the gospel). He openly stated the gospel to every consciousness of men; he made his appeals for their loyalty to God to every kind of judgment that men use — to logic, to gratitude, to feeling, to scriptures, to common sense. He was underhanded with no one!

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While Paul was discouraged and disappointed that the Judaizers were using disgraceful and underhanded ways and tampering with the word of God; and while he was disappointed that some of the Corinthians had been robbed of their freedom by these legalists, Paul did not lose heart. He did not "cave in" and give up his ministry. He had confidence in the gospel stated openly and clearly. He knew the "seed" (the gospel, Luke 8:11; Mark 4:14) had the power *in itself* (Mark 4:26-29) to accomplish that for which God sends it (Isa. 55:10-11). Paul knew that the matter of sowing seed required patience, humility and faith on the part of the sower. He knew that the "seed" grows slowly, and in divine order — first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. He did not lose heart. He knew that even if three-fourths of the seed fell on unproductive soil in Corinth he would be judged by Christ only on his faithfulness to sow the seed and not on his "success" in making the seed grow and mature. The responsibility for germination, and growth, lies with the soil and the seed — not the sower! **DO NOT LOSE HEART, PREACHER.**

4:3-4 Confounding: Of all the machinations of the legalists, their league with the devil to blind the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel is the most insidious. The scriptural, spiritual blindness of so many is one of the most discouraging things a preacher of the gospel must face.

In spite of his open statement of the truth, Paul acknowledges that the gospel truth had not won universal acceptance. Some, even of the Corinthians, had been blinded to it. The Greek work *kekalummenon* is the perfect tense participle of a verb we have already seen in II Corinthians 3:13-14, and signifies here that the gospel had been previously "veiled" and continued to be "veiled" in the minds of these unbelievers. The perfect tense participle *kekalummenon* is used in both instances in 4:4. This definitely connects the subjects of chapter three to the subjects of chapter four. The "veil" was Judaistic legalism and it had been accomplished by the Judaizers long before Paul wrote this letter and it was continuing.

The gospel is "veiled" to those "perishing" (Gr. *apollumenois*, present tense participle of *apollumi*, to kill, to utterly destroy, to bring to nothing). They were in a continual state of perishing. Legalism as a means of justification is *condemning*. The legalist is under the judgment of God because he seeks to be justified by law, while the Scrip-

tures unequivocally say, "By the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

The scheme by which the devil (working through legalists) brings about the destruction of the unwary is "blinding the minds of the unbelievers." Legalism (the system of justification by works of the law) blinds and veils the minds of those who do not believe in justification by the free gift of God's mercy apart from the law. The Greek word *etuphlosen* is translated "blinded" and comes from the root word *tuph* which means, "to burn, or, to smoke." It is used metaphorically of the dulling of the intellect (John 12:41; I John 2:11). Paul says the "god of this world" puts up a "smoke-screen" which bedazzles the unbeliever's mind.

The phrase, "this world," is a translation of the Greek words *tou aionos*. This does not mean the devil is ruler of creation. Jehovah God is the absolute Sovereign of all creation — including the devil. There is *no* religious dualism taught in the Bible. There is no Biblical doctrine of two eternal, coexisting deities, one evil and one good, engaged in a "showdown" for supremacy over human life. Such supernatural dualism is Zoroastrianism (Persian religion) and not Biblical. God alone is God. Satan, however, has usurped the place which God should have in *some* minds and *deeds*. Jehovah rules the world. The devil is only the *pretended* ruler (see Jer. 27:5-11; Psa. 50:10:15; Daniel 2:21-22; Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-17; John 12:31; 16:11). Jesus was able to order demons (colleagues of the devil) to do anything he wanted them to do. He cast demons out of people; sent them back to the abyss; gave them permission to inhabit swine. Jesus even commanded the devil to leave him after his temptation, and the devil obeyed. The devil is referred to as a "god" in the Bible because some people have been seduced by him into believing they can be justified by works of law — legalism. This is a deception by the devil. God never intended his law for justification. By this deception the devil has blinded their minds and brought them under his influence.

The phrase "this world." means, "this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4). It means, a worldly-mentality, a fleshly orientation (see Eph. 2:1-3, etc.). Satan is the "prince" of the spirit of disobedience and rebellion against God. He is the leader, the first rebel, and totally opposed to the mind of the Spirit. Out of Satan's obsession for everything hateful, hurtful and hellish, he seeks to influence every

human being he can to surrender to his wicked influence. Satan wants to rule, and pretends to rule, but he also knows he is subject to the sovereignty of God (see our comments on Revelation 12:12, in *26 Lessons on Revelation*, pub. College Press). The devil is the leader (“god”) of rebellion against Almighty God, but he is not the ruler of anything or anyone. The devil is not even the ruler of hell. Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone along with every other rebel sinner and will suffer torment just like the others. Jehovah-God, through the Lamb, Jesus Christ, rules as Absolute Sovereign *forever*. He, alone, is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. He alone has the keys of Death and Hades. Of course, the devil has the major portion of the world deceived into believing that evil rules this world and will triumph — that truth and goodness has been subjected to wickedness and injustice. But the incarnation of God (Jesus Christ) and his resurrection from the dead proves just the opposite. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is precisely that “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” upon which the devil focuses his most intense deception. If he can blind the minds of unbelievers as to the reality of the resurrection of Christ, he can keep them from seeing the sovereignty of God and Christ and thus seduce them into thinking he is the “god of this world.”

4:5-6 Conceitedness: A discouraging and disappointing thing to Paul, the preacher, was the conceit of those at Corinth who “preached themselves.” They were probably Judaizers or some who had been “discipled” by the Judaizers. The promotion of self was definitely a characteristic of legalism (see Gal. 6:11-16). Self-glorification is the very *essence* of legalism. Thinking oneself to be justified by works of the law is always accompanied by conceit, pride, hypocrisy and arrogance.

The people stirring up trouble and attacking the reputation of Paul in Corinth, whether Judaizers or not, were preaching themselves. They were comparing themselves and measuring themselves “with one another” instead of Christ, the perfect standard, and were, as Paul says, “without understanding: (II Cor. 10:12).

Paul preached nothing of himself among the Corinthians. He always preached Jesus Christ as Lord, and apostles as *servants* (Gr. *doulous*, bond-slave) for the sake of Christ. Jesus was Lord, apostles were slaves serving every command of Jesus. That is the way Paul

preached and lived. The Corinthian christians could not deny that! Paul never measured himself by other human beings, nor even by his own standards (see I Cor. 4:1-5). He always measured his ministry and his life by the standard of God — the perfect Son. That is why Paul was always thinking of himself as a slave for Christ.

This conceit of the Corinthians was the cause of the divisions within the congregation (see I Cor. 1:10ff). They measured one teacher against another instead of measuring them all against Christ.

Paul always preached Christ Jesus (not himself) because God chose to enlighten the minds of men through the knowledge of Christ. Legalism blinds (because Satan uses it to blind men's minds); knowledge (intellectual and experiential) of Christ enlightens man about the glory of God, (see John 1:4-5; 8:12; Acts 26:12-18). God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (I John 1:5-10), but legalism which refuses to admit sin is a lie and is darkness. Conceit is darkness — it cannot behold the glory of God — it cannot abide in God.

The Lord Jesus was disappointed and discouraged with the conceit of the self-righteous Pharisees and Jewish rulers which made them so spiritually blind (see Matt. 15:14; Luke 6:39; Matt. 23:16, 17, 19, 26; John 9:39-41). Paul rebuked his Jewish brethren for their spiritual blindness (Rom. 2:19). Peter warned against spiritual blindness through conceit (I Pet. 1:9). Christ accused a whole church of spiritual blindness because of its arrogance (Rev. 3:17).

The practice of legalism resulting in arrogance and self-righteous comparisons have wreaked havoc within many modern congregations of christians and caused untold numbers of preachers of the Gospel to become discouraged and quit their ministries.

SECTION 2

Mortality (4:7-15)

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so

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that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death is at work in us, but life in you.

4:7 Of The Dust: The servants of the Lord have their "treasure" (the glory of God in the Spirit of Christ) in "earthen vessels." The Greek word *ostrakinois* is translated "earthen" and is the word from which we get the English word *ostraca* (inscribed potsherds) — a word familiar to archaeologists. The Greek word *skeuesin* is the regular word for "vessel."

Paul is reminding the Corinthians of the mortality of human beings, even of apostles, for the purpose of puncturing the inflated egos of the Judaizers in their midst. Human mortality is a stark reality that often produces moments of discouragement and depression for all preachers of the Gospel. The Judaizers were proud of themselves. They gloried in their own greatness (self-righteousness). The apostle states a truth that all human beings should remember constantly — man is as frail as the dust from which his earthly body is made. He is worthless when compared with the treasure he holds — the glory of Christ.

This constant fact demonstrates that the power available to man through Christ in him *transcends* anything of which he is mortally capable. The gospel transforms the very being of man. It regenerates and renews him. He sees nothing from a human point of view after the gospel has been received in his heart and mind. He has a divine perspective (see II Cor. 5:16ff). He has hope, faith, and power to overcome wickedness. But he has all this in an "earthen vessel" that is dying, wasting away. So he knows the power does not come from himself. Legalism, on the other hand, has only self-righteousness and is powerless because it is self-condemning. It has only the "earthen vessel" to glory in and aggrandize — and that is manifestly futile!

If christians did not have the precious promises of God's grace through the Spirit of Christ, the fact of their mortality would be depressing and unbearable. There are still moments, in every christian's life (even of apostles) if they are honest, that their mortality is discouraging and depressing. Only by resting in the hope of eternal life in heaven is such depression overcome. The *grace of God* is the

“treasure” believer’s hold in “earthen vessels.”

4:8-10 Often Downtrodden: Paul, and his co-workers in the Gospel were continually, and in every way, pressured. The Greek word *thlibomenoi* is translated “afflicted” but means “pressed, compressed, squeezed.” In addition to all the emotional and mental pressures brought to bear upon Paul from his enemies, there was his constant anxiety (Gr. *merimna*, “care,” II Cor. 11:28) for the churches, and for individual brothers-in-Christ. There is tremendous pressure upon the emotions and mind of any person in the ministry. The constant carping and criticism most preachers and missionaries have to endure just from church members is enough to cause “ministerial burn-out.” Couple criticism with the miserly financial remuneration most full-time gospel workers are often grudgingly allotted, no wonder that many of them pursue other vocations for the spiritual and physical survival of their families. Many faithful preachers struggle mightily under pressure, refusing to follow personal inclinations to “quit the ministry” while they watch their own children rebel against the church, destroy their own marriages, and occasionally suffer untimely heart-attacks or other diseases which cripple them in the prime of life.

Perhaps part of the fault for “ministerial burn-out” may be attributed to a lack of commitment or lack of faith on the part of the preachers. But the churches must bear part of the blame for this tragedy, too, just as the congregation at Corinth was part of the reason for the constant pressure experienced by the great apostle Paul.

Although Paul literally experienced the pressures of the ministry, he never considered himself “crushed.” Actually, the Greek word is *stenochoroumenoi* and means, “crowded into a narrow place.” We get our English word *stenography* from the two Greek words, *steno* and *graphe*, meaning, “shortened writing.” It is impossible to eliminate pressure in the ministry. It will never cease this side of Glory. But it is possible for ministers to *endure* pressure until the Lord calls them home. Paul learned to be content in whatever state he found himself (Phil. 4:10-13). He cast all his cares upon the grace of God and found that when he was weakest, he was strongest (II Cor. 12:7-10). Paul rested in the fact that while God allows men to be tested under pressure, God also provides a way of escape so that no man is tested beyond what he is able to endure (I Cor. 10:13). Let no preacher

think he is tested or pressured where no other preacher has ever been pressured, or that he cannot endure it.

Next, Paul declares he has been "perplexed" (Gr. *aporoumenoi*, from two Greek words, *a* privative, and *poros*, "a way," meaning literally, "deprived of a way," or "without means"), but "not despairing" (Gr. *exaporoumenoi*, a compound of the previous word *aporoumenoi*, this time with the prefix, *ex*, "out from" attached). Paul is saying there were times when he was "perplexed" but he always came "out from his perplexity." Barclay paraphrases, "We are at our wit's end, but never at our hope's end." Indeed, every minister of the gospel has experienced perplexity, puzzlement, confusion and perhaps doubt. And he gets discouraged. He sometimes blames himself, sometimes he blames others. Occasionally he burdens himself with guilt because he believes that he, as a spiritual leader of God's flock, should never experience confusion or doubt. But the preacher (and every christian), even though experiencing times when he does not know what is to be done, can be faithful to Christ never doubting that something *can* be done, and *will* be done, ultimately by the Lord to serve his glorious purpose. Even Jesus experienced perplexity and a "troubled soul" (John 11:33; 12:27; Matt. 26:38; Luke 12:50). But Jesus endured it (did not resolve it) by resigning himself to the care of God's blessed will ("... nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.").

The next statement is: "persecuted but not forsaken;" (Gr. *diokomenoi all' ouk egkatalaipomenoi*). *Diokomenoi* may be translated, "pursued." That is what a persecutor does — pursues in order to catch and abuse or destroy. The Pharisees pursued Jesus like a pack of hounds. The Jews pursued Paul from city to city trying to destroy him and his ministry. Persecutors never give up, they stay "hot on the trail" of their victim. *Egkatalaipomenoi* is an intense form of the word which means to "leave behind." Jesus used this word on the cross when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" While God *forsook* Jesus, punishing all sin in him, God will never forsake the minister of the gospel or any other christian because of Christ's gracious death in their place. It is a real temptation for any servant of the Lord who is persecuted for his loyalty to Jesus to despair and consider himself abandoned by the Lord. Elijah, hounded by Jezebel, believed he was all alone because God had not

come down in a whirlwind or fire (I Kgs. 19). Jesus has promised that he will not leave us "desolate" (John 14:18, Gr. *orphanous*, "orphans"). Jesus has promised that he will be *with* us until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). The question, when we are being hounded by the persecutors, is: DO WE BELIEVE HIM . . . DO WE TRUST HIM?

The apostle's last phrase in this quadruplet is poignant with allusion to boxing in the Greek games. Paul says, ". . . struck down but not destroyed" (Gr. *kataballoumenoi all' ouk apollumenoi*). J.B. Phillips translates, ". . . we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!" That is a good translation. Barclay says, "The supreme characteristic of the Christian is not that he does not fall, but that every time he falls he rises again. It is not that he is never beaten, but he is never ultimately defeated. He may lose a battle, but he knows that in the end he can never lose the campaign." Paul, himself, was knocked down many times, but never knocked out. And when he was in prison, apparently facing the executioner's axe, he eagerly anticipated the ultimate victory — the "crown of righteousness" (II Tim. 4:6-8).

This is the only recourse for the "knocked down" minister of the gospel today. There are no "quick fixes" or "sure-fire defenses" against being "knocked down" if one takes up full-time service in the vineyard of the Lord. There is only the assurance that there will be "knock-downs," "bumps," "bruises," "persecutions" (see Mark 10:30; Matt. 20:22-23; John 15:18-21; II Tim. 3:12). Life is full of defeats for every christian (and especially preachers) just as well as for non-christians, but the christian hopes in the blessed assurance of Christ's word that finally, and eternally, he will have nothing but victory in the next life. That is a hope the non-christian does not have. The Bible promises the unbeliever an existence in the next life of eternal defeat! The eternal destiny of the unbeliever is to be "crushed, despairing, forsaken, destroyed" — just the opposite of Paul's hope.

Finally, the christian minister, as Paul states, may be tempted to despair because he has covenanted with Christ to "always carry in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested. . . ." Paul is not talking about the physical death of Jesus here. No man, not even Paul, may duplicate in his body the substitutionary, atoning death of Jesus on the cross. Paul is talking about the *death to self* that Jesus accomplished in the flesh on earth in total sur-

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render to the will of God. Paul states the idea clearly in Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14. Paul discusses it at length in Romans, chapters 6 through 8. Jesus demanded it of those who would follow him (Matt. 10:38-39; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14:25-33; 17:33). Jesus demonstrated it in his every action, but especially in his willingness to put self to death and go to the cross (see John 12:27; Matt. 26:36-39). For the finest discussion of this in writing today, see *Learning From Jesus*, by Seth Wilson, chapter XVI, "New Life Through Accepting Jesus' Death." pg. 495, pub. College Press.

Paul is talking about "bearing about" (Gr. *peripherontes*) in his life ("body") the same surrender of self (death to self) demonstrated by Jesus. Paul was eager to "share" (participate) in his (Christ's) sufferings (Phil. 3:10-11), and become like him (Christ) in his death, in order to attain the resurrection from the dead. Paul "died every day"! (I Cor. 15:31). By all this Paul did not mean, of course, the kind of death Jesus dies on the cross, which only Jesus, exclusively, could die. Paul meant the kind of death Jesus died every day to *self*.

One of the reasons the preacher sometimes despairs in his daily crucifixion of self, is the seeming injustice and unfairness in such constant abnegation. He often questions, "Will my sacrifice of self ever be vindicated?" "Will it ever be rewarded with something besides the exploitation I experience on this earth?" Jesus, the Messiah, experienced the same depression (see Isa. 49:1-7; 50:4-8; 53:1-12)! But God vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead!

The only way the preacher and the christian manifests the "life of Jesus" while he is dying to self in this mortal body is by his faith in the word of God as he trusts it and obeys it. There is no physical, material way for mortal man to manifest eternal life which Jesus manifested in his physical resurrection. No one has risen from the dead since Jesus (and those resurrections performed by the apostles). Not one of the apostles literally, physically arose from the dead. Paul, then, is talking about a manifestation of faith in obedience to God's word. That is how we manifest the life of Jesus — in dying to self!

4:11-12 Obviously Dying: Paul says, "while we live (not after we die, but while we live) we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake." In verse 10 Paul spoke of the "death" the christian chooses when he decides to follow Jesus. It is the self-surrender made by deliberate, free choice of the individual. In verse 11 Paul tells us God

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also places us in circumstances where we have to die whether we like it or not. The Greek verb *paradidometha* ("being given up") is passive!

Everyone experiences, sooner or later, situations in which no matter how much they want to exalt self they cannot. God knows how to give us all "thorns in the flesh" to keep us from "being too elated" (II Cor. 12:7ff). That is exactly where God wants every person, occasionally, because out of such situations and experiences God is "slaying" the sinful self so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortality.

And, as Paul said of his "dying," others are perhaps being given life because of the "death" to self we are dying (v. 12). We must die (spiritually), not only in order that we may live, but that others may live also! Our "death" to self must be obvious so that others may see and glorify God in their own lives. God in his providential disciplining offers us ways and means to make that "death" obvious. But it takes strong faith to accept the ways and means! It seemed to Paul that he was "always" being "slain" by God (see II Cor. 1:3-11; 11:22-33; 12:1-10). The Greek work *energeitai*, present tense, middle voice, means, death is *operating*, or *being energized*, in the christian as he daily "dies" to self.

The "death" of self is not easy. Christ never pretended following him would be without pressure, persecution and provocation. The way of self-surrender is narrow and difficult (Matt. 7:14; 19:24). But look what happens!

In verse 13 Paul quotes from Psalm 116:10. That entire Psalm should be read to get the benefit of the context. The Psalmist declares by faith that the trials and pressures he is going through are going to have some effect and impact in his surroundings. He cannot see it yet, but he says it is going to be true because God has promised it. Paul affirms that since christians have the same spirit of faith as the Psalmist, they may believe just as surely that their "dying" to self will produce the same praise for God and his Son in the life of the believer and in others to whom it is obvious.

Verse 14 is one of the most precious promises in the New Testament. On the basis of the historical, actual, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, the believer may anticipate being *presented* by Jesus to God the Father. Our resurrection and ushering into the presence of our gracious Heavenly Father is dependent upon Jesus' atoning

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redemption and justifying resurrection. He is the first fruits of our glorification (I Cor. 15:20ff). Peter wrote that Christ died for us that he might present us to God (I Pet. 3:18). And Paul wrote, "And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has not reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him" (Col. 1:21-22).

If we "die" to self through faith in Jesus, because of his resurrection, it will be obvious, and it will be not only for our sake but for the sake of all others who know us. And "as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." Has anyone thanked God lately, because they know you have "died" to self through the grace of Christ?

SECTION 3

Misgivings (4:16-18)

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

4:16 Wasting: Paul looks back to the statements he made earlier about the "life" that is available in Jesus (4:6, 10). This "life" is verified by the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the basis upon which Paul is able to say, "So we do not lose heart." Without this historical basis depression and despair sets in when one contemplates his mortality.

One of the great problems which each of (including preachers) has to face is, "I am going to die!" Sooner or later, it strikes all of us that "our outer nature is wasting away!" Infirmity, disease, the death of loved ones or close friends, or even the knowledge of the death of those in our own neighborhoods or communities makes us ever aware that our turn at death is inevitable. We often make concerted effort to

sublimate such thoughts, but they keep recurring nevertheless. And even christians occasionally succumb to depression when contemplating their "wasting away." Depression at the contemplation of death was most certainly a temptation to the saints of the Old Testament (see Isa. 38:9-20; Job 17:1-16, etc.). Almost everyone, if they are completely honest, have moments of misgiving, fear, anxiety and discouragement knowing they must die.

But, says Paul, we *need* not "lost heart." The Greek word Paul used was *egkakoumen*, from *ek* and *kakos*, literally, "eviled out." In other words, there is no need for the christian to be "wiped out" or completely "devastated" by the fact of his physical mortality. There are times when even Paul was at the point of despair over his mortality (see II Cor. 1:8; II Tim. 1:15; 4:9-16). But he always conquered that temptation by remembering the life that was his in Christ Jesus.

The "outer nature" is, in the Greek text, *ho exo hemon anthropos*; literally, *the outer of us, mankind*. Paul is speaking of the humanness or the fleshly part of our being — our mortal bodies. That part is *wasting away* (Gr. *diaphtheiretai*, being disabled). Our disabilities prove our mortality.

But while our body is decaying, our *inner nature* (Gr. *ho eso hemon*, lit. "the inner of us") is being *renewed* (Gr. *anakainoutai*, lit. "again made different"). The Greek word *anakainoutai* does not mean *renewed* in the sense of recently, but in the sense of *differently*. It is best explained in Paul's statement in II Corinthians 3:18 — ". . . being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another. . . ." This *renewal* is *not* something that is determined emotionally or mystically. It is something that may be judged objectively by comparing the transformation that is taking place in our minds and wills and choices as we compare our lives with the life of Jesus Christ documented in the Bible. It is the process of sanctification. We are sanctified by the truth (see John 17:17) John wrote his first epistle to tell christians that they may *know* when they are being *renewed*. John says we know it when we know we are keeping Christ's commandments. God created us and sent Christ to redeem us in order that we may be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:28-29). And, God works that conformity in our lives through disciplining our minds so we set them on the things of the Spirit (see Rom. 8:1-25). Thus when our inner man (our spirit) is in agreement with His Spirit

(according to His written word), (Rom. 8:12-17) we *know* we are children of God and we *know* our inner man is being made different (renewed). The experience is *not* to be judged subjectively, but objectively.

This renewal is *not* something that only happens at "mountain top" moments of spirituality. The apostle says it occurs, *hemera kai hemera*, "day after day." It happens in the every-day experiences of life. It takes place during "the sufferings of this present time" (Rom. 8: 18:39). It takes place when we "share in his (Christ's) sufferings" (Phil. 3:10-11). It takes place during our earthly chastenings (Heb. 12:1-17). Even the constant reminder of our "wasting away" contributes to it. But primarily, it happens in the every-day conformity of our minds and lives to the commandments of the Spirit of God in his word.

4:17 Weariness: Next Paul mentions the "slight momentary affliction." It is "slight" and "momentary," but it is affliction nevertheless! There is a depressing weariness about the constant afflictions reminding us of our "wasting away." It haunts us and tires us out as it hounds us every day of our life on earth. It may come in many forms, but it is always there.

Paul was always "in a strait betwixt the two" (Phil. 1:23) when he contemplated his mortality. The Greek word *sunechomai* is translated "strait" in Philippians 1:23. It means, pressed together, pressurized. The thought of departing this life for the next bothered and pressured Paul.

And another pressing problem by all mortals (including preachers) surfaces in this text. "What is waiting for me when I die?" Most atheistic philosophies answer, "Nothing!" They believe (they *believe* because they have no empirical knowledge about after-death) human beings perish or cease to exist after death. There is no life beyond death for the atheist. Such belief leads to hedonism (see I Cor. 15:32-34) which leads to immorality and ultimately, to despair. Atheistic unbelief in eternal life has spawned the existential "meaninglessness" of life in our century which has produced so much despair, depression, civil disobedience, and suicide. (For illustrations, of this, see Special Studies, *Evolution; Unscientific & Immoral; Unbelief Is Deliberate*; and, *God - Fact or Fiction* at the end of this chapter.) On the other hand, the common "philosophy of Main Street

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U.S.A.” is that in the after-life, anything can happen! The possibilities are so multitudinous you simply live your life and take your choice (or your chances). This view is based on wishful thinking and the delusions of human self-righteousness. It is also kindled by uncertain and controversial experiences of people (perhaps demonic deception) who claim to have died and returned to life. Such experiences are so vague, contradictory and non-verifiable, they are not worth considering genuine. They are based on no objectivity — only the individual’s subjective experience. The resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, was verified objectively and empirically by hundreds of eyewitnesses.

Because of Jesus’ historically verified resurrection, we believe his claims. We therefore believe the claims of his apostles that what they have written is divine revelation, inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, and inerrantly delivered to mankind in human language. What the apostle Paul says about the existence of life after death and the nature of that life is acceptable as a reality. “Faith (the christian faith) is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). The christian faith in the nature of life after death is based on the teaching of the only man (Jesus Christ) who, as far as history records, has ever clearly, openly, and ultimately survived death. According to the eyewitnessed record of his life, this Jesus not only raised others from the dead, he completely conquered death himself. He sent his apostles to promise a glorious existence for all who believe in him and keep his commandments after the death of their bodies. They are promised “paradise” with him (see Luke 23:43).

We must never forget, however, that there is a direct tie between the afflictions of our “wasting away” in this physical life and the glory that is to be ours in the next life. The one is preparing for the other. No matter how great the trial may seem to us, compared with what is coming it is relatively slight. No trial, no pain, no isolation, no heartache, no loneliness, no weakness or failure, no sense of being put aside, is without significance. All of it is playing its part in accomplishing God’s work in our lives and the lives of others. It is building for us an *incomparable* weight of glory. This one verse (4:17) is perhaps the most majestic verse in all the Bible! *The hope of the christian is a glory that has nothing on earth by which it may be com-*

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pared! Gather together all the fame, riches, power, beauty, glory and capabilities ever experience in all of history — put all this in one huge pile, and it is *not even worth comparing* with the glory that shall belong to the christian in the next life! It staggers the imagination! It is beyond human language, beyond human experience — not even an apostle could find words to describe it (see II Cor. 12:2-4).

The Greek verb *katergazetai* (“is preparing” or “is achieving, accomplishing, producing, working”) describes the action being done by the subject of the sentence which is *to parautika elaphron tes thlipseos*, “the slight momentary affliction.” It is the affliction of this present life which is producing for us the eternal weight of glory. The Greek verb *katergazetai* is present, active, indicative, meaning that the affliction is continuing, is constantly, *working* or *preparing* our glory. The preparation (affliction) never ceases so long as we are in this life.

Affliction, trial, testing can never defeat the faithful believer in Christ. God uses it all to work out ultimate good. That which seems bad and undesirable becomes man’s servant through the merciful grace of God.

The believer’s afflictions are working an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. That phrase, “beyond all comparison,” is in the Greek test: *hyperbolen eis hyperbolen*. The phrase might be translated, “excessively unto excess.” The word *hyperbolen* literally means, “cast beyond.” It is a magnificent sequence of Greek words to express the incomparable — the unimaginable, the incomprehensible. What God has laid up for the faithful believer is inexpressible. It is unsearchable (see Job. 5:9; Psa. 145:3; Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:8).

That literary giant, C.S. Lewis, has given perhaps the best human attempt (outside the Scriptures) to describe the “eternal weight of glory . . . beyond all comparison” in his book entitled, *The Weight of Glory*. Lewis says it is “fame with God, approval or . . . appreciation by God.” He continues:

. . . no one can enter heaven except as a child; and nothing is so obvious in a child . . . as its great and undisguised pleasure in being praised . . . and that is enough to raise our thoughts to what may happen when the redeemed soul, beyond all hope and nearly beyond belief, learns at last that she has pleased Him whom she was created to please. There will be no room for vanity then. She will be free from the miserable illusion that it is her doing. With no taint of what we should

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now call self-approval she will most innocently rejoice in the thing that God has made her to be, and the moment which heals her old inferiority complex forever will also drown her pride. . . . If God is satisfied with the work, the work may be satisfied with itself. . . . The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination (the judgment), shall find approval, shall please God. To please God . . . to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness . . . to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son — it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.

In another paragraph, C.S. Lewis waxes even more eloquently:

We are to shine as the sun, we are to be given the Morning Star. I think I begin to see what it means. In one way, of course, God has given us the Morning Star already. You can go and enjoy the gift on many fine mornings if you get up early enough. What more, you may ask, do we want? Ah, but we want so much more — something the books on aesthetics take little notice of. But the poets and the mythologies know all about it. We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words — to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. (And then he adds these words:) The door on which we have all been knocking all our lives will open at last.

The three apostles, Peter, James and John, were permitted to glimpse a veiled portion of that incomparable glory when they saw Jesus *transfigured* (Gr. *metamorphothe*, “changed in form”) (see Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:29). It will be, as nearly as human language can describe it, somewhat similar to John’s description of the pre-existent Christ (John 1:1-18) and the risen, glorified Christ (Rev. 1:12-16; 5:16-14; 19:11-16). Peter describes his experience of Christ’s transfiguration from mortality to immortality in II Pet. 1:16-21. Paul describes what he experienced of the glory of Christ in Acts 9:3-9 - 22:6-11; 26:12-15; II Cor. 12:2-4). And even those fall short. For our eternal weight of glory is, by definition, *beyond* comparison, outside human experience. All intelligible descriptions of it, however, must be of things within our experience — and all the while

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we must believe it is beyond that. If Heaven could tell me no more of my future glory than my own experience in this life would lead me to expect, then Heaven would be no higher and greater than my experience and no greater than this creation. But it is higher and greater. And that I trust on the word of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. And that is Paul's next point. There is a weariness while we suffer this slight momentary affliction. But we must not lose heart. We must believe that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

4:18 Wistfulness: One of the problems preachers often face is a temptation to cast a wistful (pensive, melancholic) "eye" on the things of the world. He is occasionally tempted to look back, after having "put his hand to the plow," and wish he could find relief from his affliction by indulging in "the things that are seen." This text (4:16-18) deals with that problem.

The Greek participle *skopounton* may be interpreted as having conditional force. The RSV clearly translates 4:17-18 as a *conditional* sentence when it separates the two verses with only a comma and connects them with the word "because." Verse 18 is the conditional clause (or, the protasis) which modifies the principle clause (or, the apodosis) of verse 17. In a conditional sentence, the conditional clause states a supposition and the principle clause states the result of the fulfillment of this supposition. In the sentence before us (4:17-18), the protasis is verse 18, and the apodosis is verse 17. In other words, the preparing of our eternal weight of glory is *conditioned* upon our looking *not* at the things that are seen but looking *to* the things that are unseen. It is not enough that believers suffer affliction — this in itself does not work glory. Affliction works glory only if the believer focuses his mind's eye intently on the things that really matter. To keep from "losing heart" in the throes of affliction and mortality, and to have the blessed hope of the incomparable glory, the believer must set his mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5ff) — on the things that are above (Col. 3:1-4).

The Greek phrase, *me skopounton hemon ta blepomena*, may be translated, ". . . because we are not contemplating the things being seen. . . ." Both participles are present tense and active. The Christian, rather, looks to the "things not being seen" (Gr. *ta me blepomena*). Does this mean the Christian is not to look at trees, stars, sky, houses, physical bodies or other natural objects? Not at all! It

would be absurd to interpret Paul's statement into such a meaning. Paul means the christian is *not* to set his mind on the values and standards of worldliness. Paul means the christian must decide that the things of Heaven, the values and standards and promises of God (disavowed by the worldly mind-set) are the *realities*. What the carnal mind-set calls realities (materialism, sensuality, atheism) are not realities at all because they are transitory. All that is physical and material (although not unreal and not evil in itself) is not abiding. All of it, too, shall pass away. Paul calls all that "is being seen" *transient* (Gr. *proskaira*, temporary — Paul uses the same word in Hebrews 11:25 to speak of the "fleeting" pleasures of sin). Only that which is unseen by the physical eye, and of God, is real! Only what is in heaven last forever. All that is real is promised and described, as nearly as human language can describe the unseen, in the Bible — and in the Bible only! The unseen (and unseeable) things of Heaven are present realities to the christian by faith (see Heb. 11:1). And that faith is founded on empirically-verified evidence that such unseen powers and qualities do exist beyond the realm of the physical and empirical.

It has always been difficult for men to believe that there are unseen realities, invisible to human eye and investigation, but nevertheless very real and very important. The mind of man struggles with the descriptions of the supernatural and the promises of life beyond death (both as to its existence and its quality) because it all seems to be contrary to his experience. But man must learn not to trust his own presuppositions and limited experiences. Even the physical sciences (uninterpreted by evolutionism) teach man that there is a reality beyond that which is seen with the physical eye.

As man realizes his mortality, and as he approaches more surely the end of his existence in this life, these "unseen" realities become more and more significant to him. And nothing is more encouraging to a person with the problem of discouragement than to realize that when he believes the word of God he has found eternal reality. This is what life is all about.

APPREHENSION:

1. Was Jesus, the perfect man, ever disappointed? When? Why?

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2. How does the word "therefore" beginning chapter 4 indicate the source of Paul's disappointment? What was that source?
3. Does Paul infer that he once used disgraceful, underhanded ways with the word of God? When? How?
4. What is "tampering" with God's word?
5. Who is a "tamperer" with God's word?
6. How did Paul commend his ministry to mankind?
7. Is the devil the "god of this world"? In what way?
8. What proof is available to man that the devil is not a "god"?
9. Does Paul infer some Corinthians were "preaching themselves"? Why?
10. What does Paul mean by "earthen vessels"?
11. What is the believer's "treasure"?
12. Did Paul experience "pressure" and "anxiety"? Why?
13. Why did Paul say he had experienced "perplexity"?
14. To what may Paul be alluding when he says "struck down"?
15. What "death" is Paul talking about when he says, "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus"?
16. How is "death at work in us"? What is death working in us?
17. What is the "outer nature"? How do we know it is wasting away?
18. When do we know that our "inner nature" is being renewed?
19. What is the direct tie between our afflictions in this life and the glory that is to come to the believer in the next life?
20. What, according to C.S. Lewis, is the "eternal weight of glory"?
21. What may we surmise about the "eternal weight of glory" from the Scriptures?

APPLICATION:

1. Should preachers ever become discouraged, disappointed? Does your preacher?
2. Have you ever been guilty of legalism? What makes you feel alright with God?
3. How many people do you know who think of the devil as equal with God in power?
4. What does it mean, "to measure themselves by one another"? What is wrong with that?

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5. Why is it that young people seldom think of their mortality?
6. Should christians think of death often? Is that being morbid? Can it be good to do so?
7. May christians expect to be afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and knocked down? How often?
8. Is there an answer to such a life? What is it? Have you found it workable? Have you told anyone else about this answer?
9. Do you always carry in your body the death of the Lord Jesus? How?
10. Do you expect God to help you die to self? How do you think God will accomplish this in your life?
11. Do you feel like you are being renewed in your inner nature every day? Why? How? What can you do to insure that you are?
12. What is waiting for you when you die?
13. Why do you think God will say to you, after you die, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . ."?'
14. What is really real to you? Have you come to the place in your life yet where everything in this world is "unreal"?

Special Study

UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

by Paul T. Butler

Introduction

“First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.’ They *deliberately ignore* this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.” II Pet. 3:3-6

I. UNBELIEF ALMOST INCOMPREHENSIBLE

- A. Faced by what seems so logical and reasonable, so sensible and so beneficial evidence . . . so true and right . . . we do not understand why there is unbelief.

Why do so many people who seem sensible, sincere, reasonable, not acknowledge the same truths we hold to be so self-evident?

Why, in a world of so many intelligent, relatively moral and upright people, is there so much unbelief?

- B. Peter, in our text, I believe, shows the primary cause of unbelief — DELIBERATE IGNORANCE

The Bible has a great deal to say about this . . . we will discuss it in just a moment from the aspect of Peter’s entire 3rd chapter of this 2nd epistle.

II. SOME UNBELIEF IS DUE TO A SIMPLE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

- A. “Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.” Rom. 10:17
- B. Often times children grow up, even in Christian homes, without ever having been given a faith with foundations in facts or evidence (cf. Deut. 6:6-25)
- C. The church has not fulfilled her mission until she has presented the good news founded on the evidences of factual

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history.

- D. But even a lack of knowledge will not be accepted as an excuse by God since all men have had enough knowledge of God revealed to them that they stand condemned by God if they disbelieve (cf. Rom. 1:18ff)

SO, PRIMARILY SPEAKING, UNBELIEF IS MORAL REBELLION

Discussion

I. UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

- A. "For this they willingly are ignorant of . . ." another translation says, "They purposely ignore this fact . . ." v. 5.

1. Unbelief comes to men because they deliberately choose to ignore the facts as these facts reveal a God to whom they have a moral responsibility

2. Rom.1:21 men . . . "became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." v. 25, "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie . . ." v. 28 "they refused to have God in their knowledge."

3. "But the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Rom. 1:20

Men may deny the facts if they wish . . . but they are without excuse because God is so sufficiently revealed even in nature that unbelief condemns men . . . the evidence, the facts are so abundant that any man who says there is no God is a fool, for only a fool is willingly ignorant.

Dr. G.G. Simpson, famous Paleontologist from Harvard once said concerning some highly improbable evidence as to the origin of the horse, "it is improbable as to be unacceptable *unless* we can find no hypothesis more likely to

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explain the facts." IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS WILLING TO ACCEPT AN UNACCEPTABLE EXPLANATION IF THERE IS, IN HIS ESTIMATION, NONE BETTER!

4. Jesus once made a most shocking accusation against the Pharisees, "But because I say the truth, ye believe me not" John 8:45*

The very reason they would not believe Jesus was the fact that He told them the truth. There is hardly a worse state man can get himself into than this!

5. Those who hate the truth will be deceived and believe a lie (II Thess. 2:10-12). These do not love the truth therefore they are not attracted to it and even when they see it, they hastily reject it and rationalize their reaction.
6. The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not (II Cor. 4:3-4). These refuse to listen to the truth when it condemns the unrighteous things in which they find pleasure and which they are determined to continue. . . . Thus they seek for some message which will assure them that the unrighteous thing is right and thus permit them to continue in it without being rebuked by their conscience. God sends such people strong delusions. He has ordained the laws of man's heart and of morality, and that person who has no love for the truth and who lives in and takes pleasure in unrighteousness will unfit his heart for the reception of truth and fit it for the reception of strong delusions which comfort and assure him in his error and unrighteousness.

Dr. Henry Morris, when on the OBC campus for the 1966 Science & Scripture Forum, emphasizing the impact of the 2nd law of thermodynamics upon theories of evolution concluded that **ANY SCIENTIST AWARE OF THIS LAW (AND ALL SHOULD BE) WHO REMAINS AN EVOLUTIONIST OR UNIFORMITARIAN, MUST DO SO BY DELIBERATELY IGNORING THIS FACT!**

7. Jeremiah put it this way. . . . "Behold their ears are closed, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn, they take no pleasure in it." Jer. 6:10 (see also Jer. 6:16-19).

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- B. “scoffers . . . *walking after their own lusts . . .*” v.3.
1. Unbelief comes to men because they choose to walk after their own lusts (Rom. 1). “God gave them up to the lusts of their own hearts . . . unto vile affections . . . they not only do these things but even take pleasure in seeing others do them.”
 2. The people of Israel cried out to Moses as Pharaoh approached, “It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness . . . would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full . . .” Exod. 14:10-12; 16:1-3.
Desire to satisfy the flesh chokes out the word. Matt. 13:13-23
Unbelief is due to the fact that men choose deliberately to have physical security, or sensual pleasure, or pride
 3. Agrippa’s lust for a woman not his own caused him to deliberately refuse to believe Paul, Acts 26:28
 4. “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were *evil*. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reprov’d (exposed for what they really are).” John 3:19-20
 5. “For the time will come when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths.”
 6. One of man’s lusts which causes him to deliberately disbelieve is PRIDE
 - a. Pride from wealth, Deut. 8:1-20
 - b. Pride from power, Exod. 5:2; Dan. 4:30; 5:23
 - c. Pride from security, Obadiah 3
 - d. Pride from self-righteousness, Job 33:9; Luke 18:11; John 9:39-41; Rev. 3:17
 - e. Pride from self-sufficiency, James 4:13-17
 - f. Pride is man’s desire for human autonomy over

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against the sovereignty of God . . . a proud man *does not need* a Provider, Protector, Guide and Saviour. BUT HE IS NOT FREE FOR HE HIDES — ONE WAY OR ANOTHER HE HIDES

ANIMAL LUSTS OF MEN DECEIVE THEM INTO DELIBERATELY DENYING GOD, THE BIBLE, HEAVEN AND HELL, BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SATISFY THEIR FLESHLY DESIRES. . . . THEY DO NOT NEED GOD FOR THEY ARE SELF-SUFFICIENT, THEREFORE THEY “WANDER (deliberately) INTO THE MYTHS OF EVOLUTION, HUMANISM, COMMUNISM, AND JUST PLAIN STUBBORNESS.

ALL OF US HAVE HEARD PEOPLE SAY, “I KNOW THE BIBLE IS HISTORY AND IT’S TRUE AND I OUGHT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT ITS DEMANDS, BUT I’M NOT READY TO GIVE UP THIS AND THAT, AND SO ON.” OR SOME WILL SAY, “I CAN’T BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS TRUE BECAUSE THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS IT CONDEMNS WHICH I FEEL ARE ALRIGHT.

C. “they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest the scriptures* unto their own destruction” II Pet. 3:16

1. Unbelief comes to men when they wrest the scriptures
2. Satan, the father of unbelief, perverted the scripture at the temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:5-6)
3. Paul had to contend with the Judaizers who corrupted (II Cor. 2:17) and dishonestly handled the word of God deceitfully (II Cor. 4:2).
4. The prejudiced and biased mind is a form of deliberate unbelief (cf. John 8:12; 7:24) so also is the one who allows himself to be influenced by rumor or opinions of so-called intelligentsia (cf. John 7:12; 7:40-43; James 1:6-7; Eph. 4:13-14).
5. Cowardice or conformity also leads to deliberate unbelief (cf. John 12:41-43; John 9)
6. Liberalism, Modernism — a result of men who have deceitfully and dishonestly handled the Word of God has infected hundreds of thousands of gullible people who feel they must conform in churches all around us and within the Restoration Movement.

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7. Existentialism, by deceit, has duped many into unbelief
8. Men, by their traditions, have made void the word of God and led many unto belief.

THE WRESTING OF THE SCRIPTURES TO MAINTAIN DIVISION WITHIN CHRISTENDOM BRINGS UNBELIEF . . . JESUS PRAYED IN JOHN 17 . . . "THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE, THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU DIDST SEND ME!"

WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES IS CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF DISRESPECT FOR GOD AND, ON THE OTHER HAND PRIDE IN SELF!

WHEN MEN EXCHANGE THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE, THEY BEGIN TO WORSHIP THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR . . . PERHAPS NOT FROGS AND CROCODILES LIKE THE EGYPTIANS . . . BUT MAN WORSHIPPING MAN IS JUST AS DESPICABLE FOR IT IS CREATURE WORSHIP!

9. The Jews of the Prophet's days wrested the scripture by interpreting the promise of the Messiah and His kingdom as one of fleshly indulgence . . . their hearts were filled with unbelief
10. The Pharisees wrested the scriptures to declare their goods "Corban" . . . they deceitfully handled the Word of God to take oaths by the gold of the altar rather than the altar itself and robbed people and refused to pay pledges (Mt. 23)

THE SEEMING SLACKNESS OF GOD IN BRINGING JUDGMENT UPON DISOBEDIENCE OR PERVERSION OF GOD'S WORD, CAUSES MEN TO FEEL THEY CAN USURP GOD AND DO AS THEY PLEASE WITH HIS WORD . . . WRESTING IT TO SERVE THEIR LUSTS.

It is clear that the evidences for Christianity are of such nature that they bring to the surface what is in a man! If one is unwilling to follow Christ — because of the demand which such would make on his life — he can think up "reasons" to justify his unwillingness. The real reason — his unwillingness — will be hidden from others by these "rationalizations" and finally even from himself because he does not think beyond these "reasons."

The fact that one must love the truth indicates that the attitude of heart has something to do with whether or not one will believe. He

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who wants a careless, immoral life, will not want the faith which is a constant rebuke to such a life.

II. BELIEF IS DELIBERATE

- A. Saving faith is voluntary. Had the revelation of God been so strong that anyone beholding could not disbelieve, it would have overridden moral freedom and this would be evidence unsuitable to moral subjects
- B. The true purpose of God is not to produce obedience by force, but to treat men as free moral agents.
- C. Belief comes to an informed mind
 1. Peter writes to "stir up their mind and to call to remembrance the revealed word of God." II Pet. 3:1
 2. God's revelation was made intelligently and he expects man to apprehend it with the use of intelligence (Rom. 10:17)
 3. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" I John 1:3
Paul "reasoned" with the Jews from the scriptures about the Christ (Acts 17:1-4; 18:3,19).

WE MUST DELIBERATELY LEARN AND RECEIVE THE FACTS ABOUT GOD, JESUS, AND THE BIBLE, BEFORE WE CAN BELIEVE . . . PETER IS ONE WHO PUTS A PREMIUM ON KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST THROUGH THE WORD FOR HE KNOWS THAT BELIEF COMES THIS WAY! (I Pet. 1:22-25; 3:15; II Pet. 1:3-11; 1:12-15; 1:16-21; 3:18)

- B. Belief come to a submissive will
 1. "If any many will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17
 2. The Pharisees of Jesus day were filled with unbelief because they would not let the word of Christ "have free course in them." John 8:37
 3. THIS SAME STUBBORN UNWILLINGNESS TO DO GOD'S WILL LED THE PHARISEES TO REJECT THE COUNSEL OF GOD, REFUSING TO BE BAPTIZED OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (Luke 7:29-30)

UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

4. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" I John 2:3
 5. GOD GAVE MAN A WILL . . . HE GAVE HIM A FREE WILL . . . MAN IS FREE TO SURRENDER TO WHATEVER HE WISHES . . . BELIEF OR UNBELIEF
- C. Belief comes to a pure heart
1. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Does not Jesus mean believe in God?
 2. The honest and good heart is the soil upon which the seed (the word of God) falls and brings forth much fruit, Luke 8
 3. "But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." John 3:21

A HEART CALLOUSED BY IMPURITY, GREED, LASCIVIOUSNESS, AND SIN IS HARDENED AGAINST ANY KIND OF BELIEF EXCEPT UNBELIEF! THE HEART THAT IS PURE, CLEAN, AND WHOLESOME IS MALLEABLE, SOFT, COMPASSIONATE, EASILY ENTREATED, RESPONSIVE TO THE HIGHEST AND NOBLEST . . . RESPONSIVE TO THE DIVINE LOVE LETTER . . . GOD'S BOOK OF LOVE!

Conclusion

HOW DOES MAN, SNARED IN THE TRAP OF THE DEVIL, BLINDED BY THE DEVIL, DECEIVED BY THE DEVIL INTO UNBELIEF, COME TO BELIEF??

- I. There must be an *a priori* which must be admitted. Man must admit that he is rational and that there are objects and facts to be known. To deny he thinks he must think. Even to represent himself to irrational he must think rationally!
- II. Many facts (truths) are MORAL FACTS. That is they exhibit, form or display moral character or attributes. All of God's works (both natural and supernatural) exhibit His moral attributes and character . . . His wrath upon sin; His love for the sinner (cf. Rom. 1:18-22; Acts 14:15-17; Acts 17:22-31; John 3:16, etc.)

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- III. The Will or the "Heart" or the Mind of man must be changed or moved or transformed by a presentation of "moral facts" (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Rom. 10:17)
- IV. Man then makes a choice or gives assent to what he knows to be true and moral and right. An emotion is "an experience brought about by the prospect of some value's being gained or lost." We become emotional about something after receiving the moral facts and reasoning on them — then we make a choice . . . WHICH IS MOST TO BE DESIRED . . . MATERIAL OR SPIRITUAL?
- V. MAN THEN COMES TO FAITH . . . Faith is trust, love, obedience, commitment. Faith is an experience — based squarely on the foregoing steps (See chart on page 123.)

The infamous Madalyn Murray O'Hair, drop-out from humanity, speaking on the campus of Drake University, asked why she speaks on college campuses, replied, "To corrupt the youth!"

Mad-at-God-Madalyn says, "I believe this would be the best of all possible worlds if everybody were an atheist or an agnostic or a humanist."

"I don't think the church has ever contributed anything to anybody, any place, at any time. I can't pinpoint a period in history or a place in the universe where religion has actually helped the welfare of man."

"There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that Jesus ever really existed, even as a mortal. I don't believe he was a historical figure at all. Until someone proves otherwise, therefore, these stories about him must be considered nothing more than folk tales consisting in equal parts of legend and wish fulfillment. But there is never going to be any way of verifying them one way or the other."

WOULD YOU SAY THIS WOMAN IS A FREE-THINKER . . .
ALWAYS WILLING TO INVESTIGATE EVIDENCE . . . OPEN-
MINDED . . . OBJECTIVE!!!!?

"Also, I reject the idea of a life hereafter on the same grounds. Do you know anybody who has come back with a first-hand report on heaven? If you do, let me know. Until then you'll pardon me if I don't

UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

FAITH

Faith is trust, love, obedience, commitment. All the below are instrumental in developing faith. Faith is an experience . . . based squarely on the below pre-requisites.

ASSENT — CHOICE

Emotion: an experience brought about by the prospect of some value's being gained or lost.

We become emotional or feel about someone or something after receiving the moral facts and reasoning on them and — then we make a choice! The problem is to convince men which is most real — this world or the spiritual!

THE WILL or the "HEART"

The will or heart of man must be changed or moved by a presentation of "moral facts" (cf. II Cor. 10:3-5; Rom. 10:17).

FACTS

Many facts (truths) are Moral Facts: i.e., those facts which exhibit or form moral character or display moral character. All of God's works (both natural and supernatural) exhibit His moral attributes and character (cf. Rom. 1:18-22; Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31).

The *a priori* which must be admitted or presupposed which is absolutely necessary to all reasoning, feeling, believing, willing, or acting.

RATIONALITY

Cogito, ergo sum!

OBJECTIVITY

"I think, therefore, I am!"

HOW DOES A PERSON BELIEVE IN GOD?

"The central problem in today's theological scene lies in the area of epistemology — the truth question" — John Warwick Montgomery in a book review in *Eternity* magazine, January, 1968.

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buy it.

I agree with Mark Twain, who wrote about the hereafter, that there is no sex in it; you can't eat anything in it; there is absolutely nothing physical in it. You wouldn't have your brain, you wouldn't have any sensation, you wouldn't be able to enjoy anything — unless you were queer for hymn singing and harp playing. So who needs it? **SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I'D RATHER GO TO HELL.**"

UNBELIEF CAN'T GET ANY MORE DELIBERATE THAN THAT!

It is a matter of choice! Choose ye this day whom you will serve. Why go ye limping between the two sides if Baal be God worship him — Jesus depicted life as a choice between two ways — not three (*no neutrality*)

Special Study

GOD — FACT OR FICTION?

(Gen. 1:1)

“In the beginning, God. . . .”

(Heb. 11:6)

Introduction

I. THE HUMAN MIND IS ABLE TO COME TO REST IN A FIRST CAUSE

A. Some say we cannot argue at all about the First Cause which is Uncaused since we have no faculties for comprehending the Infinite

1. This may be true but it is only part of the truth. His nature and attributes are too great for any human mind to fully comprehend and for any human language to express completely

2. But the same is true of many finite things also

- a. Man cannot even know himself in any ultimate sense
- b. The forces of nature are all unseen and unknowable in themselves . . . simply for lack of knowledge of the ultimate essence of the force which holds the world in place we have called it “gravity.”

Reminds me of a discussion Dr. Harry Rimmer was having with a reknowned physicist who was criticizing the Bible for its “unscientific” nature. Dr. Rimmer asked the good Dr., “What holds the world in place.” “Gravity, of course,” came the erudite reply. “Then what is gravity,” said Dr. Rimmer. “Well, I suppose the best answer I can give is it is that which holds the world in place,” said the reknowned scientist.

- c. Man is still at a loss to understand all he knows about the atom and the sub-atomic particles, and DNA, and RNA and LSD and on and on we could go.

YET WE KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT ALL OF THIS FROM THE EFFECTS. . . . AND IN EACH CASE WHAT WE KNOW IS NOT INCORRECT

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BECAUSE IT IS YET INCOMPLETE OR INCOMPREHENSIBLE . . . IN MOST CASES EVEN THIS PARTIAL KNOWLEDGE IS SUFFICIENT FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES

- B. And so, it is true that the existence of a person or a thing may be proved although its nature may not be perfectly understood. The great truth of the existence of God is capable of being established in the same rational certainty which assures all the great verities, duties and practical interests of human life and welfare.

II. BELIEF IN GOD IS TIED TO RATIONALITY AND OBJECTIVITY

- A. Some erroneous ideas of what faith is
 - 1. Something mystical, indefinable and beyond grasping in any reasonable fashion.
 - 2. Something that cannot be defined because it is something subjective, something you *feel*, and cannot be tied to anything objective.
 - 3. Something that enables a person to go on in the face of all the evidence to the contrary — a movement out of relationship to the known and into the unknown . . . a leap in the dark
- B. The correct way to faith
 - 1. Faith (trust, commitment) must, by its very nature, be tied directly to objectivity, to evidence, to knowledge. **BY FAITH WE MAKE JUDGMENTS WHICH ARE BASED UPON KNOWLEDGE WHICH IS SUPPLIED BY EVIDENCE!**
 - 2. **WHEN REASON PLAYS UPON THE EVIDENCE SUPPLIED BY GOD IN NATURE, HISTORY, THE BIBLE, MAN, IT IS PLAYING ON EVIDENCE EQUALLY OBJECTIVE TO THE EVIDENCE BROUGHT TO CONSIDERATION BY ANY BIOLOGIST, GEOLOGIST, ETC.**
- C. Edward J. Carnell says, “. . . *all* belief (faith) rests on authority . . . the authority can be direct or indirect . . . and what is authority if it is not the power of sufficient evidences to elicit assent?”

CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP AT ITS BEST IS THE APPLICATION OF THE METHODS OF SCIENCE TO THE EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, A SIFTING AND RE-SIFTING OF ALL THE EVIDENCE AND OBJECTIVE MATERIAL THAT CAN BE FOUND AND CONSIDERED.

IF WHAT A MAN BELIEVES IS NOT SUPPORTED BY OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE THEN WHAT HE BELIEVES IS UNWORTHY, AND HE MAY WELL BE LIVING IN A DREAM WORLD.

Discussion

- I. GOD KNOWN FROM THE FACTS OF NATURE (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; Psa. 19:1-6; Acts 14:14-17; Acts 17:22-34)
 - A. Our judgment that God exists from reasoning upon the evidence supplied in nature begins with what we call the *cosmological* argument or reasoning from "effect to cause."
 1. For every effect there has to be an adequate cause
 2. Effects are all about us . . . we are an effect . . . the universe is an effect . . . neither made themselves . . . each is dependent upon some higher cause.
 3. Any given entity is either dependent or not dependent. If it is not dependent it is self-contained, self-caused and is therefore an Uncaused First Cause. If an entity is dependent then it is an effect from some extraneous force, which is again, either dependent or not . . . and so on to an Uncaused Cause
 4. It is irrational and unreasonable to talk about an infinite regression of causes and effects.
 - a. The very statement of such a proposition is self-contradictory. . . .
 - B. The observed 2nd law of thermodynamics proves the universe to be an effect. YOU CANNOT HAVE A RUNNING DOWN PROCESS UNLESS AT SOMETIME OR ANOTHER IT WAS WOUND UP OR BEGUN . . . AND

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WILL AT SOME FUTURE TIME RUN DOWN OR STOP!

1. Benjamin Franklin, in Paris, made a model planetary system showing the earth and the planets nearest it. Many astronomers copied it to use in their studies. One day an atheist friend saw it and asked, "Who made it?" "No one made it," replied Franklin, "it made itself, it just happened." "What," cried the man, "you're joking." "And so is the man who says the universe just happened, without a cause," said Franklin.
 2. Two friends slept in their tent on the desert. One put his head out the following morning, "Some camels passed here last night." "How do you know, did you see them," replied his friend. "No, but I see their tracks." **EVEN IF WE CANNOT SEE THE INVISIBLE GOD WE SEE HIS HANDIWORK AND KNOW HE HAS BEEN HERE!**
- C. Our judgment that God exists from reasoning upon the evidence supplied in nature comes secondly from what is called the *teleological* argument or the argument from *design*.
1. This argument is appealed to in scripture: "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye shall he not see? Psa. 94:9"
 - a. In other words, can we believe that the purposiveness of OUR sensory organs can be explained without an Intelligent Purposer or Designer who also hears and sees?
 2. Nature, large and small, shows adaptation of means to ends — it shows purpose, design, intelligence, balance
 - a. If there is no Intelligent purposive Mind as originator of both man and the universe, two unbelievable things happened: (1) Man developed an intelligence, sense of purpose, design from that which was non-intelligent, illogical, non-purposive, and (2) man, having thus miraculously gained intelligence from non-intelligence, was able to read in the cosmos vast and continuous meanings, rational to him, which had never been put into the universe by any mind or power whatever, and had never been thought at all

until man discovered them or read them into that which was non-intelligent, non-purposive **BUT REASON REJECTS BOTH PROPOSITIONS!!**

- b. And yet, Haeckel (an evolutionist) had the audacity to say, "No where in the evolution of plants and animals do we find any trace of design. . . ."
3. Evidences of purposive design
 - a. The embryo of the hen makes provision for 2 ovaries and 2 oviducts, but only the left ovary and its duct reach maturity! Why? H.G. Wells was probably right when he said, "Female birds have only one ovary and oviduct doubtless to provide against the accidents that might occur if two large and brittle eggs were to knock about simultaneously in their insides."
 - b. The Yucca moth and the yucca plant . . . each is dependent upon the other for its very existence in exclusive manner . . . the yucca plant is the only food the moth can survive on . . . while the yucca moth is the only insect which pollinizes the plant.
 - c. There are certain types of insects (wasps or bees) which alone can pollinize certain kinds of imported fig trees . . . these wasps had to be imported to bring the imported fig trees to bear fruit.
 - d. Another type of wasp stings the grasshopper in exactly the right spot so that it is paralyzed but not dead. In this way the meat is preserved. The wasp then buries it in the spot where she will lay her young later on. The larvae will then feed on this grasshopper. **THINK, NOW, THE VERY FIRST WASPS MUST HAVE DONE THIS ON COMMAND FROM THEIR CREATOR OR THE WASPS WOULD HAVE CEASED TO EXIST. . . . IT WAS NOT A SLOW LEARNING PROCESS THROUGH TRIAL AND ERROR!**
 - e. The Venus fly-trap. A carnivorous plant. When a fly alights upon the leaf it closes over it and sucks the fly dry. If a dead fly is dropped on the leaf, the plant closes and then reopens immediately having

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- discovered it to be dead. The plant knows when it has had enough to eat to satisfy it for present, and will not close upon flies when it has had enough. The plant will not close in the rain . . . unless it is fooled by a drop of water when the sun is shining. It never closes when it is raining normally during cloudy weather because it would miss too many good meals.
- f. The spider weaves the outer spiral portion of his web in a sticky substance and any insect alighting upon it is stuck. But the inner web is non-adhesive. Why? The spider needs a place to rest where he will not be trapped in his own sticky web. But if an insect is caught in the sticky portion, how does the spider get his meal? He has little glands in his legs which secrete just enough oil substance to allow him to do this without getting trapped. But too long a stay on the outer web would cause just enough of the adhesive material to cling to the spiders legs to hinder his work . . . so he weaves a non-sticky place to which he may retreat.

Statements by famous scientists:

Sir Isaac Newton: "This admirably beautiful structure of sun, planets and comets could not have originated except in the wisdom and sovereignty of an Intelligent and Powerful Being."

Edwin B. Frost: "In a purposeful creation, I find it not at all inconsistent to believe that there must be a Mind behind it developing the purpose."

Sir Oliver Lodge: ". . . there must be some Intelligence in all the processes of nature, for they are not random or purposeless, but organized and beautiful."

Sir James Jeans: "If the universe is a universe of thought, then its creation must have been an act of Thought."

II. MAN HIMSELF IS EVIDENCE THAT GOD EXISTS

A. Man's body (Alexis Carrel in "Man, The Unknown.)

1. "An organ builds itself by techniques very foreign to the human mind. It is not made of extraneous material, like a

house. Neither is it a cellular construction, a mere assemblage of cells. It is, of course, composed of cells, as a house is of bricks. But it is *born* from a cell, as if the house originated from one brick, a magic brick that would set about manufacturing other bricks. Those bricks, without waiting for the architects drawings or the coming of the bricklayers, would assemble themselves and form the walls. They would also metamorphose into windowpanes, roofing slates, coal for heating, and water for the kitchen and bathroom. An organ develops by means such as have been attributed to this "magic brick." It is engendered by cells which, to all appearances, have a knowledge of the future edifice and synthesize from substances contained in blood plasma, the building material, and even the workers." (DNA and RNA)

- B. Man's moral nature bespeaks a Moral Creator (Rom. 2:14ff)
1. He has a sense of right and wrong. When he does what he thinks is wrong, his conscience condemns; when he does what he thinks is right, his conscience approves.
 2. He believes justice will be done, some way, somewhere, sometime.
 3. NOW IF WE HAVE THIS SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG, THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOMEONE WHO MADE THIS SENSE IN MAN . . . THAT WHICH IS MORAL CANNOT ORIGINATE FROM THAT WHICH IS NON-MORAL OR AMORAL
 4. Man is also placed in the midst of an environment that integrates with his moral nature, giving him a chance to choose between right and wrong and to develop and discipline moral character.
 5. The "red claw" of nature is one of predators and prey . . . there is balance and design there . . . but nature knows nothing of justice or morality . . . TO DESTROY THE BELIEF THAT RIGHT WILL TRIUMPH, THAT THERE IS A GREAT MORAL RULER, GOD, WHO WILL SEE THAT TRUTH PREVAILS, IS TO REMOVE THE VERY FOUNDA-

TIONS OF MORAL AND SOCIAL RECTITUDE. . . IT IS UNTHINKABLE THAT ALL THE SPLENDID CHARACTERISTICS OF MAN SUCH AS JUSTICE, LOVE, FREEDOM AND OTHERS (MARRED BY SIN THOUGH THEY BE) SHOULD HAVE BEEN PRODUCED BY AN AMORAL ABSTRACTION OR BLIND, UNGUIDED, UNFEELING CHANCE!

- C. Man is a person who enjoys and creates beauty. The ability of the human mind to perceive and appreciate beauty is not accidental but the purposeful plan of a Master Artist who made both for man's benefit.

WHEN ANYONE TRIES TO DENY MAN IS MORAL, ASK HIM IF OUR STATEMENT THAT MAN IS A MORAL BEING IS RIGHT OR WRONG, OF IF HIS DENIAL IS RIGHT OR WRONG!!

- D. Man exhibits a universal belief in a Higher being or a Religious Instinct
1. No animal, not even the most intelligent, has ever been known to have built an altar or worshipped a higher being . . . but all histories of man, written or otherwise, speak of worship
 2. When any group of people is discovered, it is always found that they have a god or a system of gods
 3. When the communication lines with Helen Keller, the blind and deaf girl, were finally established and she was told that there was a God, she replied, "I knew it all the time."
 4. If there is no God, how could the idea of God ever have arisen in the human mind? Could a God-idea evolve of its own accord out of a non-God ground or basis?
 5. The atheist occupies an untenable position. Over him there will always hang the possibility that there is a God. He alone claims there is no God. Before one can proclaim there is no God he must have made extensive explorations in every inch of heaven and earth, in every essence of both material and spiritual (including the realm of thought), in all time and eternity. Before a man can

KNOW there is No God he would himself have to be God — omniscient — or THE ONE THING HE DID NOT KNOW MIGHT BE THAT THERE IS A GOD . . . and omnipresent, or THE ONE PLACE WHERE HE WAS NOT, MIGHT BE THE PLACE WHERE GOD IS!

III. GOD IS KNOWN BY HIS SPECIAL REVELATION OF HIMSELF

- A. The abundance of evidence that leads to an unshakable faith in the Divine Being and in His Revelation of Himself is overwhelming.
 - 1. Even more surely do we seek His handiwork in His special revelation in His Son, Jesus Christ, and His word, the Bible
 - 2. Merely to believe in God is not enough, we need to know Him, His personality, His purpose, His will for our lives (Heb. 11:6)
 - 3. When we have definite evidence that God has spoken, do we need any further argument that God exists?
- B. God has invaded the natural with the supernatural. . . . He has stepped into history in many ways and in many specific times to demonstrate to man His existence, His power, His wisdom, His will, His nature.
- C. He has, in His Son, performed miracles (also in O.T. through angels)
 - 1. The flood, passing through Red Sea, healings, resurrections, conquest of enemies (cf. Heb. 11)
 - 2. Jesus stilled tempest, walked on water, changed water into wine, fed 5000 from 5 loaves and 2 fish, healed all manner of diseases
 - 3. Jesus raised at least three person from the dead in presence of both friends and enemies
 - 4. Jesus commanded the spirit world, predicted His own death and resurrection, His betrayer was predicted, the destruction of Jerusalem was predicted
- D. The Bible is its own best proof containing hundreds of fulfilled prophecies . . . history written 1000s of years before its fulfillment
 - 1. History of the Jews, Deut. 28

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2. Destinies of Gentile nations, Dan. 2, 4, 9-11
 3. Destinies of individuals before they were born, Isa. 44-45
 4. Life, birth, ministry, death, words, birthplace of Jesus . . . His whole life could be reproduced from O.T. prophecies
 5. The church, beginning, nature, purpose predicted and fulfilled
- E. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST . . . THE BEST ESTABLISHED FACT IN ALL OF HISTORY

Conclusion

THE FOOL HATH SAID IN HIS HEART, THERE IS NO GOD!

No, we cannot prove Jehovah is the god for which the philosophers and scientists have searched, but we believe the evidence is sufficient to lead the honest philosopher, honest scientist, and **ALL HONEST MEN AND WOMEN** to believe Jehovah is God. We accept God by faith, but that faith **IS BASED UPON THE INTELLIGENT CONSIDERATION OF AN OVERWHELMING ABUNDANCE OF EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF HIS EXISTENCE.**

The unbeliever lives in the world of myth, make-believe, inconsistency. The unbeliever is the schizophrenic (withdrawing from reality) John 3:19-21. He lives in the darkness of ignorance and sin (in most cases willfully!) He does not find God for the same reason a thief does not find a policeman! **BUT GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO ALL WHO WILL INVESTIGATE THE FACTS AND ACCEPT THE FACTS.** The Bible is the record of God's intelligent revelation to the intelligent portion of His creation — mankind.

GOD IS! HE CREATES, HE JUDGES, HE LOVES, HE FORGIVES, HE SAVES, HE SPEAKS

ONE OF THE GREAT DEMONSTRATIONS OF HIS EXISTENCE AND HIS POWER IS THE CHANGE HIS WORD WORKS IN THE HEARTS AND LIVES OF MEN. . . HE WILL CHANGE YOU —

MAKE YOU A NEW MAN OR WOMAN — OLD WAYS, OLD FEARS, OLD ANXIETIES, OLD THOUGHTS, OLD INCONSISTENCIES, OLD FAILURES WILL BE DONE AWAY . . . GUILT WILL BE LIFTED . . . INSTEAD OF DARKNESS THERE WILL BE LIGHT . . . INSTEAD OF DESPAIR THERE WILL BE HOPE.

Henry R. Luce, founder of Time, Life, Sports Illustrated, Fortune Magazines, worth 106 million when he died in early 1967, said before his death when asked about the current "God is dead" theology, "After all the argumentation is done, I believe that God revealed in the Scriptures is, quite simply, God; and therefore, not only living, but the creator and source of all life."

Contrast with this the statement of Russian Cosmonaut Gherman Titov, May 6, 1962 in Seattle, Washington, when proclaiming his disbelief in God he said, "In my seventeen orbits of the earth I saw no God or angels." We seriously doubt that Mr. Titov could have seen every square inch of space in 17 orbits; furthermore, neither Mr. Titov nor anyone else can explain or understand everything they see; and last of all God is Spirit, so Mr. Titov could have orbited the earth 17 thousand times, 17 million light years out and still not have seen God with his physical eyes!

IT IS THE CONSISTENT, INTELLIGENT, RATIONAL, HONEST-HEARTED PERSON WHO BELIEVES IN GOD SO IT SEEMS THAT, IN LIGHT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF EVIDENCE, THE INCONSISTENT, UNINTELLIGENT, IRRATIONAL, SELF-DECEIVED PERSON WHO DISBELIEVES!

Special Study

EVOLUTION, UNSCIENTIFIC & IMMORAL

Introduction

I. THIS PSEUDO-KNOWLEDGE REPRESENTED BY EVOLUTION IS NOT SOMETHING NEW

A. Paul had to deal with it among the philosophers of the first century

1. Read Colossians 2:8 and I Timothy 6:20
2. A literal translation of Colossians 2:8 would go something like "See to it that no one victimize you, or carry you off as his prey or booty, through philosophy or false, foundationless deception, according to traditionary assumptions of man by deceiving you into believing that the elementary, rudimentary things of the universe are the ultimate truths, denying that Christ is THE ULTIMATE"
3. Paul told Timothy, literally, to "Avoid, or, Turn Away from profane (polluted), false, foundationless discourses (babblings) and oppositions (antitheses) of pseudo-knowledge."

B. There were theories of uniformitarianism or evolutionism being proposed by men who walked in the darkness of sin long before Charles Darwin. Dr. Henry Morris says the Devil was the first evolutionist

1. Democritus and Aristotle were proposing such theories in the Greek civilization at least 300 years before Christ
2. Before them the Persians, the Babylonians, the Canaanites were all proposing such theories

II. SCIENCE, PER SE, MAY BE USEFUL: A BLESSING TO MAN AND A GLORY TO GOD

A. Scientism, and all the other God-denying "isms" attached thereto is our enemy

B. Although I am not a scientist, I believe the information I shall present in attacking evolutionism is valid since

1. Many of the statements made are well-known and established findings and laws of science
2. Some of the statements and propositions may be verified

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by your own experience

3. Practically all the statements are quotations from widely recognized scientists, even by admitted evolutionists!
- C. This presentation of the FOUNDATIONLESS, EMPTY, IMMORAL bases of evolution is to keep you from being victimized by the false, pseudo impractical, irrational, irrelevant, unreasonable, immoral claims of evolutionary doctrines!

III. SOME WOULD OBJECT TO THIS TYPE OF DISCOURSE FROM THE PULPIT, DECLARING THAT IT IS NOT PREACHING THE GOSPEL

- A. The apostles spent a great deal of time exposing vain philosophies
- B. We are promised, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought unto obedience to Christ." II Cor. 10:4-5
- C. If the church doesn't take up the battle against evolution, who shall? HOW MANY OF YOU ARE DOING SO? THE TELEVISION? THE NATIONAL MAGAZINES? IT SEEMS AS IF EVERY AVENUE OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION (AND EVEN GREAT SEGMENTS OF SO-CALLED CHRISTENDOM) ARE BEING USED IN VERY ATTRACTIVE WAYS TO PROMOTE EVOLUTION!!

IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. Science: the search for, observation of, and recording of natural phenomena (facts) — I recognize this may over simplify science but I insist that anything beyond this and one leaves the realm of pure science and gets in the realm of philosophy (especially when the scientist seeks to determine means and ends or meanings and values).
- B. Evolution: "a one-way process, irreversible in time, producing apparent novelties and greater variety, and leading to higher degrees of organization, more differentiated, more complex, but at the same time more integrated." Julian Hux-

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ley, evolution's chief present-day spokesman

- C. With these definitions in mind, let us examine the question of whether there is any evidence that such a process as Huxley defined is NOW taking place or has ever taken place. As Dr. Henry Morris says, we shall find, in the evidence investigated, that "the answer both Scripturally and Scientifically, is, unequivocally, NO, NO, NO!"

THIS EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS — LEADING TO HIGHER DEGREES OF ORGANIZATION — FROM SIMPLE TO COMPLEX HAS NEVER BEEN OBSERVED AND RECORDED AS A NATURAL FACT!!! IT IS NOT SCIENTIFIC. AND, AS WE SHALL SEE, THE DOCTRINES OF DARWINISM, IF APPLIED TO MANKIND LEAD TO WAR, CHEATING, BREAKDOWN OF ALL STANDARDS EXCEPT THAT MIGHT MAKES RIGHT!

Discussion

I. PHYSICS

- A. There are three basic laws of science; no laws of science are more firmly fixed and established than these three laws. They hold priority over all other laws of science. They are so basic they are referred to as the "first, second and third laws." **THERE ARE NO KNOWN VIOLATIONS OF THESE LAWS!**
1. They are; biogenesis — 1st law of thermodynamics--2nd law of thermodynamics; we shall discuss the law of biogenesis in a later section on biology.
- B. For now let us deal with the first law of thermodynamics which is the law of the conservation of energy.
1. Energy can be transformed in various ways, but it can be neither created or destroyed.
 2. This universally observed and accepted law squarely contradicts the evolutionary theory that creation (i.e., increasing organization and complexity and development, or bringing something out of nothing which is really what creation is) is continually taking place in the present.

3. The creation of the physical universe must have preceded this observed first law and therefore scientific law testifies to creation — not evolution
 4. Matter and energy cannot be created, while the 1st law of thermodynamics is valid. This law is observable . . . subjective whims or wishes or extralogical statements of the evolutionists cannot over-ride the cold facts of observed nature.
- C. The Second Law of Thermodynamics: “there is an irreversible tendency for processes in a self-contained system to go toward lower order — toward decay, disorder, disintegration, a “running down.” Systems run down hill — they don’t wind themselves up.
1. Dr. Morris says, “It would hardly be possible to conceive of two more completely opposite principles than the one of the 2nd law of thermodynamics and the theory of evolution.
 2. NOW IT IS A LAW OF LOGIC AND REASON THAT TWO CONTRADICTORY PROPOSITIONS CANNOT BOTH BE TRUE . . . BOTH MAY BE FALSE, BUT BOTH COULD NOT POSSIBLE, RATIONALLY BE TRUE! And yet the 2nd law of entropy is the best established law of science known to man! Even evolutionists are forced to admit its validity, Biologist Harold Blum says, “One way of stating this law is to say that all real processes tend to go toward a condition of greater improbability (disorder).”
It is hard to believe that evolutionary-minded scientists overlook this universal law through ignorance, yet in the great Darwinian Centennial in 1959, held in Chicago, in three volumes of scientific papers published from this meeting, it is almost impossible to find any mention of this problem at all!
SCIENCE ACTUALLY PROVES THE EVOLUTIONARY THEORY TO BE FALSE . . . EVOLUTION ACTUALLY CONTRADICTS THE THREE BEST KNOWN, UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED LAWS OF SCIENCE!!! EVOLUTION IS NOT ONLY NOT

SCIENTIFIC IT IS DISPROVED BY SCIENCE!

II. BIOLOGY

- A. Consider next the universally accepted law of Biogenesis which says, "life comes from life — every living organism came from some other living organism." This is observed and demonstrated in every instance and there are no known violations of this law — so called spontaneous generation of life has never been observed.
1. In fact, Louis Pasteur demonstrated conclusively that there was no such thing as "spontaneous generation of life" by laboratory experiments
 2. Prof. Geo. Wald (an evolutionist) says, ". . . there are only two possibilities: Either life arose by spontaneous generation, which the professor had just refuted: or it arose by supernatural creation, which he probably regarded as anti-scientific . . . for my part, *I think* the only tenable scientific view is that life originally did arise by spontaneous generation. . . ." HE MIGHT AS WELL HAVE SAID, "IT IS MY SUBJECTIVE OPINION . . ." because that is all it is . . . the law of biogenesis says NO!
- B. It used to be that evolutionists tried to prove man's biological and evolutionary descent from ape by comparing blood
1. In the first place all claims for the evolutionary process by comparing blood did not take place with tests of whole blood but with tests using blood serum (the watery substance of the blood) and this is far different from using whole blood.
 2. In the second place the primary factors of heredity do not lie in the blood but in germ and sperm cells so evolution cannot be proved by blood.
 3. Blood types are so different that there are two ladies (one in Canada and the other in the Philippines) who alone have the same type of blood in all the world . . . any other blood type injected would kill either one of them.
- C. Variations
1. The minute variations between species and within species as observed by Darwin:

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- a. Kellogg says, "The results of modern biological study have shown that many of these small variations are not inherited. They are merely fluctuations around a mean to which the offspring tend constantly to return."
 - b. A classic example of Darwin's foggy thinking: He cited the long neck of the giraffe as an outstanding example of natural selection. As a result of recurrent and extended droughts the supply of green leaves from the lower limbs of trees diminished so that the shorter animals died off and after centuries of natural selection, the long-necked giraffes survived, and grew long necks in stretching after remaining green leaves. BUT THE FEMALE GIRAFFE IS ABOUT 2 FT. SHORTER THAN THE MALE SO THAT ALL THE FEMALES WOULD HAVE PERISHED LONG BEFORE THE MALES . . . SO HOW ARE BABY GIRAFFES BORN!?! AND EVEN IF THEY WERE BORN HOW DID THE LITTLE ONES SURVIVE?
2. Acquired characteristics
 - a. They are not inherited, consider the small feet of chinese women — why are they bound generation after generation — what about circumcision, scars, missing limbs?
 - b. Even if we suppose they might be inherited, no new kind or species has ever been known to have originated from such variation!
- D. Mendel's Law
1. What Mendel has proven both as to animals and plants is that *NO VARIATION OUTSIDE THE LIMITS OF SPECIES IS POSSIBLE*
 2. It is now a fixed law of biology that "the factors which the individual receives and none other are those which he can transmit to his offspring."
 3. Weismann, an evolutionist who experimented with mice cutting off their tails for 19 generations gave up in disgust for the tails of the last were just as long as the first.

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4. There are no known violations of Mendel's law!!
- E. Mutations (freaks, etc.) caused by mixing up of genes
 1. Mutant forms are almost exclusively lethal . . . those that are not lethal offer no help to the specie for the struggle for survival.
 2. In all mutations no genes can be shown to have originated or to have changed . . . mutations are simply mix-ups of genes transmitted from the parents (probably caused by radiation)
 3. Experiments with fruit fly for 1000s of generations shows evolution from one species to another does not happen, even given many generations in which to occur
 4. All mutations, even if inherited (and there is some question about this), are fully in line with the 2nd law of thermodynamics so a mutation is A DISORGANIZATION . . . NOT HEADED TOWARD ORGANIZATION OR COMPLEXITY . . . A MERE RE-SHUFFLING OF GENETIC FACTORS ALREADY PRESENT BY INDUCED RADIATION IS NOT EVOLUTION

F. Fixity of Kind

1. The species are fixed, rigid. Varieties do not pass beyond certain limits. They do not transform into species. There are no transitorial forms to be found. Evolutionists have never produced complete evidence of any one species from a preceding form unrelated to its successor!!
2. To the contrary, present species as far as all observable evidence thus far discovered, are identical with their oldest ancestors.
3. Furthermore, all present varieties within one species, left to natural breeding, will eventually revert to one species. This has been demonstrated by observed experiments.

Evolutionists are constantly vacillating between one line of alleged evidence and another. For awhile they appealed to paleontology as the most likely evidence to support their theories . . . now it seems the paleontologists are turning to biology to produce the best evidence . . . G.G. Simpson, reknowned paleontologist of Harvard wrote in the Ency. Brit. Yearbook, 1965, "Molecular and organismal

biologists are now beginning a cooperation that will surely prove fruitful. Numerous efforts have been initiated in the last year or so to interpret molecular biology in evolutionary terms. It is too early to say just what the results will be, but they are certainly promising."

Mr. Simpson is an ardent evolutionist and a world reknowned paleontologist and yet in 1965 he admits the fossil record does not prove evolution and cites us to the field of biology, hopeful it will soon bear fruit to prove evolution. Simpson even returns to the disproved theory of spontaneous generation hoping to save his theory, saying, "The spontaneous generation of the first living things did occur." BUT WHAT PROOF DID HE OFFER? NONE! JUST AN EMPTY ASSERTION. Isn't it strange indeed that evolutionary scientists leave their own field and point the student to another for the "proof of this theory of evolution?"

III. GEOLOGY (Paleontology)

- A. The whole geological series as theorized and charted in textbooks by evolutionary geologists can be found intact in not **ONE PLACE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH SO FAR INVESTIGATED!**
- B. Literally any rock system in the so-called geologic series or column may be found lying directly on the oldest or youngest rocks or reversed, or in any combination of arrangements at any given location
 1. In fact, in an area covering some 10,000 square mi. in north U.S. and Canada the geologic scale of evolution is found **UPSIDE DOWN, COMPLETELY REVERSED! YOUNGEST ON THE BOTTOM AND MOST ANCIENT ON TOP!**
 2. Dr. Walter E. Lammerts, among others, have investigated thoroughly the various places where scientists have tried to explain these reversals by "thrust faults" and reports that there is absolutely no evidence for such — the rock strata gives no evidence of any grinding, disturbing process but each strata lies conformably undisturbed on top of the other.
- C. At least some paleontologists have been honest enough to admit the fallacy of the geological argument in a circle. R.H. Rastal of Cambridge U. says in Ency. Brit., 1956, Vol. 10, pg.

168, "It cannot be denied that from a strictly philosophical standpoint geologists are here arguing in a circle. The succession of organisms has been determined by a study of their remains buried in the rocks, and the relative ages of the rocks are determined by the remains of the organisms they contain." **THEY USE THE ROCKS TO PROVE THE AGE OF THE FOSSILS AND THEN SAY THE AGE OF THE FOSSILS PROVE THE AGE OF THE ROCKS.**

- D. Again from the famous paleontologist, Simpson, an evolutionist, "Fossils are abundant only from the Cambrian onward. . . . The case at present must remain inexplicable; and may be truly urged as a valid argument against the views (evolution) here entertained." from Great Books of the Western World, pub. by Ency. Brit.

BESIDES ALL THIS, NORMAL RATES OF SEDIMENTATION AS POSTULATED BY THE UNIFORMITY PRINCIPLE ARE MEANINGLESS AS FAR AS THE FOSSIL RECORD IS CONCERNED BECAUSE FOSSILS ARE NOT FORMED BY NATURAL PROCESSES OVER LONG PERIOD OF TIME . . . BUT BY SUDDEN CATASTROPHIC EVENTS!

- E. The geologic evidence observed thus far shows a sudden outburst of living forms exactly like the species we have today with a few minor exceptions.

1. Dr. Austin H. Clark, of U.S. National Museum, "No matter how far back we go in the fossil record of previous animal life upon the earth, we find no trace of any animal forms which are intermediate between the various phyla. . . . Since we have not the slightest evidence, either among the living or the fossil animals, of any intergrading types following between major groups, it is a fair supposition that there never have been any such intergrading types." **NO INTERMEDIATE FORMS MY FRIEND! LIVING OR DEAD!**
2. **AND THE PROBLEM IS NOT TO FIND ONE MISSING LINK, BUT TO FIND 1000s AND 1000s OF MISSING LINKS WHICH WILL CONNECT THE MANY FOSSILS SPECIES WITH ONE ANOTHER!**

In 1938 deep-water fishermen, who were fishing off the coast of S.

Africa, brought to the surface a fighting, threshing fish 5 ft. long and 127 lbs. such as they had never seen before. Scientists, being called to investigate, called it the Coelacanth, identical in every respect with the Coelacanths whose fossils are found in considerable numbers buried in the strata of the U.S., Germany, and elsewhere. These strata are said by evolutionists to have been formed in the Triassic Age, and the fish whose fossils these strata contain are said to *have become extinct 90 million years ago!* Another fish of the exact same type was caught off Madagascar in Dec. 1952.

IV. THE ANTIQUITY OF MAN

- A. When we examine the evidence upon which evolutionists have reconstructed the different "pre-historic ape or pre-ape men" we find things both ludicrous and dishonest.
1. In the first place their evidence is extremely fragmentary: only a scraps of skulls, bits of bone, teeth and sometimes a whole bone . . . yet whole men, whole races, whole civilizations have been constructed with a bone fragment or two and a wild, bizarre imagination!
- B. Prof. E.A. Hooton of Harvard says, "Some anatomists model reconstructions of fossil skulls by building up the soft parts of the head and face upon a skull case, and thus produce a bust purporting to represent the appearance of the fossil man in life. When, we recall the fragmentary condition of most of the skulls, the faces usually being missing, we can readily see that even the reconstruction of the facial skeleton leaves room for a good deal of doubt as to details. . . . To attempt to restore the soft parts is even more hazardous. The lips, the eyes, the ears, and the nasal tip leave no clue on the bony parts as to their appearance. . . . These alleged restorations of ancient types of man have very little, if any, scientific value, and are likely only to mislead the public. . . . We do not know anything of the minutiae of the appearance of the Pithecanthropus, Heidelberg, Neanderthal types. We have no knowledge of their form, hair distribution, pigmentation, and the detail of such features as have been mentioned."
- C. Mistakes (the "convincing finds of science")
1. Pithecanthropus Erectus, found in Java, 1891, consisting of a part of a skull cap, a fragment of a left thighbone

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and 3 molar teeth . . . NOT FOUND TOGETHER, SCATTERED 50 ft. apart, numerous other bones of animals found scattered among them. The skull unusually large and the thighbone too small for it proportionately, yet 7 eminent men pronounced it the skull of a man; 6 others that of an ape; 7 others divided between ape and man . . . undaunted by disagreements, they bundled up the bones, made a bronze bust of their imagination, put it in the American Museum of History and proclaimed that a whole race of ape-men had been discovered to exist half a million years ago

2. Second Java Man, found 1926, near same as first, a skull cap ONLY was found. Vouched for by 2 eminent English scientists and heralded all over the world as the most important discovery of the decade. THIS SUPPOSED MILLION YEAR OLD SKULL OF NEAR HUMAN TURNED OUT TO BE, AFTER SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION, THE KNEE CAP OF AN ELEPHANT!
3. Hesperopithecus: from a tooth found in 1922, in Nebraska and introduced into the famous Scopes Monkey Trial as evidence of a race of men who lived in No. Amer. millions of years ago, men discovered only a few short years after Darrow had tried to humiliate Bryan that the tooth was that of a species of extinct pigs!
4. Readers Digest, Oct. 1956 shows how the famous Piltdown Man regarded until recently as one of the 3 most important of the "missing links" in man's evolution, has now been formally declared to have been a clever hoax which fooled all the anthropological specialists for 40 years!!!! A DELIBERATE TRICK BY MANIPULATING THE BONES, ARTIFICIALLY AGING THEM ETC.

Byron C. Nelson, in *After Its Kind*, shows how the profile of Marquis de Lafayette, Rev. war hero could be placed in exact conformity, slanted forehead and all, right over a supposed Neanderthal skull fragment. The Cro-Magnon man's skull has an even higher and nobler forehead and larger brain capacity than the so-called brilliant Charles

Darwin!

What do we have then when we sum up all the evidence: NOT ONLY IS THERE NO EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE THE THEORY, THERE IS, IN FACT, SCIENTIFIC, OBSERVED, DEMONSTRATED EVIDENCE THAT SUCH A THEORY IS FALSE . . . SUCH A THEORY IN NO WAY CONFORMS TO OBSERVED, PROVEN SCIENTIFIC PHENOMENA

JESUS SAID OF TEACHERS AND TEACHINGS . . . “BY THEIR FRUITS SHALL YE KNOW THEM. . . .” LET US LOOK AT THE FRUIT, THE CONSEQUENCES, THE RESULTS OF BELIEVING AND LIVING THE GREAT LIE . . . EVOLUTION! DOES IT BRING FORTH GOOD FRUIT OR EVIL FRUIT!?

V. THE FRUITS (CONSEQUENCES) OF EVOLUTION

A. Bernhardt and Nietzsche

1. “War is a biological necessity of the first importance . . . War gives a biologically just decision . . . Might is at once the supreme right.” Bernhardt
2. “Man shall be trained for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior: all else is folly.” Nietzsche
3. Hitler (Nietzsche’s follower) “The whole of nature is a continuous struggle between strength and weakness, an eternal victory of the strong over the weak.”

B. Clarence Darrow and Loeb and Leopold

“In May, 1924 two youth, Loeb and Leopold, cruelly murdered a 14 year old boy, Bobby Franks, by name, in Chicago. At their trial in the following August these 2 young men were defended by the celebrated criminal lawyer (himself an evolutionist) Clarence Darrow. His speech is regarded as one of the greatest judicial masterpieces in American history. During the course of his remarks in defense of Leopold, Darrow said, “I will guarantee that you can go down to the Univ. of Chicago today — into its big library — and find over a 1000 volumes on Nietzsche, and I am sure I speak moderately. If this boy is to blame for this, where did he get it? Is there any blame attached *because somebody took Nietzsche’s*

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philosophy seriously and fashioned his life on it? And there is no question in this case but what it is true. Then who is to blame? The University would be more to blame than he is. The scholars of the world would be more to blame than he is. The publishers of the world — and Nietzsche's books are published by one of the biggest publishers of the world — are more to blame than he. Your Honor, it is hardly fair to hang a 19 yr. old boy for the philosophy that was taught him at the university."

- C. Bertrand Russell: "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and on his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless ways; for man condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that enoble his little days. . . ."
- D. H.G. Wells: "In spite of all my desperation to a brave looking optimism, I perceive that now the universe is bored with him (man), is turning a hard face to him, and I see him being carried less and less intelligently and more and more rapidly, suffering as every ill-adapted creature must suffer in gross and detail, along the stream of fate to degradation, suffering and death."
- E. Will Durant: "Life has become in that total perspective which is philosophy, a fitful population of human insects on the earth, a planetary eczema that may soon be cured; nothing is certain in it except defeat and death — a sleep from which, it seems, there is no awakening. . . ."

EVOLUTION BEARS FRUIT ALRIGHT . . . WAR, SLAVERY, MURDER, PESSIMISM, DESPAIR! IT BRINGS A PHILOSOPHY OF SUB-HUMAN MORALS . . . EVERYTHING IS RELATIVE TO THE INDIVIDUAL'S DESIRES . . . MAN CLAIMS HE CANNOT HELP BEING WHAT HE IS . . . FREEDOM MEANS DOING AS EACH ONE LIKES . . . IT BRINGS SENSUALITY, CRUELTY, IGNORANCE.

Life magazine, May 25, 1962, editorial of a reporter interviewing students in some of America's most prestigious Prep-schools heard

them say to him: "Nothing's solid; there are no values to depend upon." "I have no values because there is no basis for them." "I haven't any goals because I don't know what to aim for." "Everything's gray; there aren't any values." WHERE DID THEY GET THESE STANDARDS? BY THEIR OWN MOUTH, "CHARLES DARWIN, SIGMUND FRUED, SARTRE, CAMUS, ARTHUR MILLER, J.D. SALINGER." READ IT YOURSELF!

F. Evolution is IMPRACTICAL AND IMMORAL

1. It has no basis in fact or truth therefore it is a lie.
2. It is inconsistent with known fact and is therefore impractical.
3. It has never been a help but in every instance a hindrance.

Conclusion

THE WORD OF GOD, ON THE OTHER HAND,

- I. Is a revelation of God, much of which took place in HISTORY, seen and heard by eyewitnesses and is FACTUAL AND DEPENDABLE
 - A. The propositions and truths which are not verifiable by experience in the Bible may therefore be trusted since it substantiates its claims to be a divinely revealed book from God.
 - B. The Bible does not ask us to formulate a philosophy of life based upon theories and assumed "pre-historical happenings." BUT ON VERIFIED, OBSERVED EVIDENCES OF A SUPERNATURAL GOD AND CHRIST!
- II. Agrees with other true and pure scientific observables
 - A. Fixity of kind; Aqueous cataclysm forming fossils
 - B. Anthropological discoveries; Three basic laws of science
- III. Shown to be accurate in all its history by archaeological finds
- IV. Traceable to almost the very hands of the eyewitnesses who wrote it
 - A. No other literature of antiquity can make that statement
 - B. Preserved, believed in, proclaimed, practiced by millions, many of whom have gladly died to do so.

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V. Supernaturally verified by fulfilled prophecies; hundreds of years of history written 1000s of years before it occurred, yet fulfilled to the very detail.

VI. Is Practical

- A. Promotes love, compassion, truth, justice, freedom, law & order
- B. It is reasonable and consistent
- C. Brings morality, hope, satisfaction, fulfillment, answers to life's perplexities

Billy Graham tells of a young college girl, just recently voted "Queen" of her campus here in America, who had been involved in a fatal automobile accident. The mother was summoned to the dying girl's side only to hear these heart-rending words, "Mother, you taught me everything I needed to know to get by in college. You taught me how to light my cigarette, how to hold my cocktail glass and how to have intercourse safely. But Mother, you never taught me how to die. You better teach me quickly, Mother, because I'm dying."

EVOLUTIONISM IS TEACHING YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER THAT THERE IS NO GOD . . . THEY ARE MERE ANIMALS . . . SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST . . . ALL MORALS ARE RELATIVE TO SATISFYING ANIMAL PASSIONS . . . WAR . . . MURDER!

MOTHER AND FATHER, YOU'D BETTER BE TEACHING THEM HOW TO PREPARE FOR ETERNITY!

Chapter Five

THE PROBLEM OF PERSPECTIVE (5:1-21)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why does Paul suggest the possibility of “nakedness” at death?
2. How are we “away from the Lord” while we are “in the body”?
3. Would christians ever “pride themselves on a man’s position”?
4. How is it possible for humans to “see no one from a human point of view”?
5. How was “he (Christ) made to be sin who knew no sin”?

SECTION 1

Frailty of the Human Body (5:1-5)

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

5:1-3 Provokes: The problem of perspective (outlook, view, vista) is as old as man! It began in the Garden of Eden. When God created man, he gave (or revealed) to man his divine perspective. This divine perspective (outlook) was to be applied to every human experience. But Satan (the rebel from heaven) came to earth and seduced man into *rejecting* the divine perspective. Man prostituted his viewpoint and perverted God’s creation. At that point, for the sake of wooing man back to himself. God “subjected the creation to futility” (see Rom. 8:18-25). This was a part of God’s plan to redirect man’s perspective. God intended to reclaim man’s viewpoint so that it would become

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divinely oriented.

Part and parcel with the "futility" of creation is the *frailty of the human body*. As a result of man's sin, his physical body was condemned to dissolution and death. That very mortality of the body has presented a constant problem for man in the matter of perspective or viewpoint. The ultimate problem of human philosophy remains: there is no satisfactory metaphysical system (perspective, or viewpoint). The mortality of the human body frustrates all human metaphysical systems! And that is precisely where God wants all human metaphysical systems! The frailty of man *provokes* him to cry out for a perspective that is superhuman.

The Bible bears witness that perspective is a problem that may plague preachers and saints. The cry for a divine viewpoint for mortal man is the essential focus of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon). The O.T. prophets were sent by God to call Israel to think and act according to the divine perspective revealed in the Law of Moses and in the messianic prophecies. Jesus, God incarnate, came to *live* the divine perspective as a human being thus proving it is possible for man to do so. Jesus saw, heard, thought, lived everything from God's viewpoint, and he did it all as a human being within the human experience. All the epistles, and especially the book of Revelation, are revelations of the Holy Spirit directing and guiding man toward the divine perspective.

Loss of divine perspective was the crucial problem with the christians at Corinth and Paul dealt with it pointedly in I Corinthians, chapter 15. Here, in II Corinthians 5, Paul admits that his own mortality gives him occasion to "groan" and "sigh with anxiety" and struggle with the need for a constant divine perspective. Christians, preachers, missionaries are not immune from this problem. They, too, are mortal.

Unlike unbelieving philosophers, Paul knew where to find and how to appropriate a divine perspective. Paul could look *beyond* human mortality to a perfect and eternal existence by faith based on the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:14-15).

The word "For" in 5:1 connects what follows to Paul's statement of the christian perspective in 4:16-18. Christians are to see their total experience in this life from the perspective of the "eternal weight of

glory" which is "beyond all comparison." And that includes the mortality of the human body. The Greek word *oidamen* is present tense meaning, "We are continuing to know. . . ." In other words, the divine perspective needs to be a continuing experience. The christian needs to remind himself every day to look at everything and every person from God's viewpoint. The only place to find God's viewpoint is in the Bible. The mind of Christ is revealed no place else (see comments, I Cor. 2:1-6). Christians are to look to the Bible for God's viewpoint on every aspect of life. Paul's knowledge went beyond human philosophy or logic for he knew everything from a divine perspective, that is, from divine revelation.

The Greek phrase, *he epigeios hemon oikia tou skenous*, would be literally translated, ". . . our dirt-house, this tent. . . ." The word *epigeios* is translated, "earthly" and is a compound of *epi* ("down") and *ge* ("soil, land, ground"). The human body is emphatically of the soil! It is marvelously fashioned, but essentially dirt. It is bound to and inseparable from the soil. The word *skenous* ("tent" or "tabernacle") is poignant. Our human bodies are like tents — temporary and uncomfortable. Nomads and pilgrims live in tents. They are always looking for permanent dwelling places (see Heb. 11:8-16).

The Greek word *kataluthe* is the very word which was used by the ancients for "striking down a tent" in preparation for moving on. When Paul said "For we know that *if* this earthly tent we live in is *destroyed* . . .", he meant *when* this earthly tent is destroyed (or, "struck down"). He had no doubt that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50), and this human body of dust must perish and/or be changed (I Cor. 15:51-54).

Taking his stand on the revelation of God, Paul's viewpoint (perspective) transcended earth and time. He saw eternity! Thus he was able to say, "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The Greek word *echomen* is a present tense participle. We *now* have an eternal building. The word *oikodomen* means "a strong edifice" in contrast to a temporary tent. God has already prepared our heavenly body ("building") and it is there waiting for us when we "strike our tent" in this pilgrim-land. We do not know what we shall be (I John 3:2); just what our eternal body will be is yet a "mystery" (unrevealed), but it will be somewhat like the body put back into the earth at death (like the plant resembles

the seed), and it will be glorious, imperishable, powerful, spiritual, immortal, and eternal (I Cor. 15:35-54). The phrase, "not made with hands" is simply an idiomatic way of saying our eternal body is spiritual, not physical. It is the best human language can do in trying to describe something outside the human experience. What words would one use to depict a human body that is not flesh and blood? It is a "forever" body, and it is located in the other world ("in the heavens").

In verse 2, Paul is very careful to explain the need for a divine perspective in light of the frailty of the present body of dust. He does not want to be misunderstood. When he writes about the "heavenly dwelling" he is not writing about a disembodied, ghostly existence. We are in this body of the earth now. And we know it will soon be going back to the dust from whence it came. So we "groan" (Gr. *stenazomen*, complain, grieve) and greatly desire (Gr. *epipothountes*, long) to "put on" our heavenly building or dwelling.

Paul keeps switching metaphors of our eternal existence between "building" and "clothing." Man envisions himself as "naked" (Gr. *gumnos*, bare, exposed, Matt. 25:36; Acts 19:16; I Cor. 15:37; Heb. 4:13; Rev. 3:17), dispossessed, insecure, without a body. Man fears the death of this body because of the anticipation of disembodiment. So Paul repeatedly affirms in this text (and in I Cor. 15) that the christian should not view death as a time of exposure, dispossession or disembodiment. When the christian's earthly body dies, he *immediately* (see notes on II Cor. 5:6-13) becomes "further clothed."

5:4-5 Pressures: The word "anxiety" is a translation of the Greek word *baroumenoi*, which more literally means, *burdened*, or *pressed down*. Paul used it to describe the anxiety and pressure the christian feels as he anticipates the dissolution (death) of this physical body. No christian, not even the apostle Paul, is in such perfect command of his emotions that he is completely unafraid of death. All christians feel some anxiety as they anticipate death and the next life — especially anxiety about the next body, about consciousness, about where they will be and who they will recognize. The prospect of death is not pleasant for any one, and to insist that the Scriptures require believers to face death without anxiety or fear is a false interpretation of the Bible. Paul's faith was sure; his confidence was firm. Yet, he shrank from

the idea of being without a body and "naked." This is what "burdened" Paul. But again, Paul was able to bear this anxiety (burden, pressure) because he had the divine perspective. Those without the divine perspective are devastated by this pressure.

Paul reveals here an *immediate embodiment* for christians who die. He knew nothing of some disembodied spiritual existence, or soul-sleep, or intermediate temporary-body existence after death. For Paul, the state of existence for the christian immediately after the death of this earthly body was one of being "further clothed" (Gr. *ependusasthai*). For Paul, the instant the christian puts off this earthly "tent," his life is "swallowed up" (Gr. *katapothe*, absorbed, overwhelmed, consumed, devoured) by eternal life and by victory (I Cor. 15:54). Later, Paul will describe the next existence for the christian as "at home with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8).

There is even the hint here that Paul was *anxious* to die and put off this earthly body because he *knew* he would *not* be naked at death, but rather abundantly "clothed" at home with the Lord. He expresses just such anticipation in Philippians 1:22-23, ". . . Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better."

Ray C. Stedman says of this passage, in his book, *Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians, Power Out of Weakness*:

"What Paul means, of course, is that when we leave this body we also leave time. It is not easy to re-train our thinking along these lines, because we project time into eternity, assuming eternity is simply time going on forever, but it is not. . . . In *time* we are all locked into the same rigid sequence of events. . . . But in eternity there is no past or future; there is simply one great present moment. Therefore, the events we experience in eternity are never anything we have to *wait* for, they are always what we are *ready* for, what we are spiritually prepared for. . . . The Scriptures clearly teach that when a believer dies, he experiences immediately the coming of the Lord for his own."

So in verse 5 Paul says that God has been *preparing* (Gr. *katargasamenos*, moulding, fitting, working, shaping) us for this very thing. That "thing" for which we are being "moulded" in this existence is the "building from God," the "house not made with hands," our "heavenly dwelling," with which we shall be "further clothed" and "swallowed up." And this shall be the state of the

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believer immediately after being “unclothed” from this earthly body, for he will never be “naked.”

I Thessalonians 4:16-18 says that when Jesus comes again, he will be accompanied by all those who have been dead in Christ. But it will only *appear* to those left alive on earth that the dead have been raised first, when in actuality we are all raised together, to be always with the Lord. That is the way it will *appear* to men because of their finite conception of eternity! The believer goes immediately to be with the Lord in a conscious, embodied state when he sheds this earthly body at death (see I Sam. 28:14ff; Luke 16:19-31; Luke 23:43; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-12). His existence after death is *very far better* (Phil. 1:23), and therefore could *not* be a disembodied state.

God prepares us for this very far better existence by these “slight,” momentary afflictions” (see Rom. 8:18, 28; II Cor. 4:16-18), and by “forming Christ in us” (Gal. 4:19). In fact, God’s Spirit in us is his *guarantee* (Gr. *arrabona*, down-payment, earnest) that we shall have a very far better “clothing” in the next existence (see Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:13-14; I Pet. 1:3-5). The Spirit, living in our minds through his Word (John 6:63; I Pet. 1:22-24) gives us a foretaste of the very far better life and creates in our spirits a longing for the full redemption (Rom. 8:18ff). And if God guarantees it, who can prove it otherwise (see Rom. 8:31-39).

While the frailty of the human body provokes and pressures, and makes us fear the possibility of dispossession after it dies (and it is certain to die), Christians may *know* with abiding assurance that God is preparing them for an elegant (glorious) “body” beyond all imagination. They need not fear dispossession or nakedness, because when they are absent from this body, they are immediately at home with the Lord. That is the divine perspective. Without the divine perspective there “remains only a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:27).

SECTION 2

Frustration of the Human Soul (5:6-15)

6 So we are always of good courage; we know that while we

are at home in the body we are away from the Lord,⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.

¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. ¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a man's position and not on his heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

5:6-10 Unfulfilled Vindication: A very present problem with human perspective is man's need for vindication. It is an urgency within the soul of every human being that cries out for satisfaction. The fundamental desire for righting all wrong was created in the human soul. But in this fallen world, rebelling against God, wrong is not always righted. Most of this world chooses to be "away from the Lord." It does not acknowledge that righteousness and justice are present only when the Lord is present (see Isa. 26:9-10). It has been seduced by the devil. The world's perspective is flawed, and thus men are frustrated. Even christians may become frustrated if they are not careful to maintain the divine perspective.

But Paul made every effort to constantly view the wrong in this world (especially wrong done to him personally) in the light of divine, justice. The apostle kept the divine perspective and it made him "always of good courage." The Greek word *tharrountes*, translated "of good courage," is related to the Greek words *thero* and *therme* from which we get the English word *thermal*, thus, "warm, tempered, bold, confident, courageous, etc." *Thero* was a favorite word of the Stoics. But Paul's courage (*thero*) was not at all like the detached im-

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passiveness of the Stoics.

“At home in the body” is from the Greek words *endemountes en to somati*. *Endemountes* is a compound of *en* and *demos*, and literally means “among one’s own.” In this text *endemountes* is contrasted with *ekdemountes* which means, “away from one’s own.” Paul is saying that when we are “among our own” in the body, we are “away from our own” in the Lord. Paul did not mean that the Lord was absent from him in his earthly existence. The Lord is the Holy Spirit, and the reality of his presence, his actual presence, is mediated to the believer through the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Yet in spite of Christ’s constant presence through the Spirit of God in us (Matt. 28:20; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:9-10, etc.), there is a sense in which the christian is away from, separated from, the Lord as long as he lives in this world. While we are “in the body” the Lord’s presence is not direct and unmediated with us, but is indirect. It is not until we are “away from the body” that we shall have his direct presence (see Rev. 21:3; 22:3-4).

In the meantime, we must “walk by faith and not by sight.” We must view everything in this “away-from-the-Lord” existence through the divine perspective. And it is important that we understand our “away-from-the-Lord” existence as something inferior to what our “at-home-with-the-Lord” experience will be. Our eagerness to proclaim the christian life in this world as the ultimate experience occasionally leaves people with the impression that there is nothing better to come! We must never do that! The christian life even at its best in this world is far inferior to that which it shall be in the next world. Christians must never de-emphasize the strength and courage derived from walking with Christ by faith in this life. On the other hand, it would be difficult for the christian to over-emphasize the glory and blessedness of the promised life to come for all believers.

Having such a divine perspective, says Paul, makes the believer *ambitious* (Gr. *philotimoumetha*, lit. “to search for honor, to love honor”) to please the Lord whether in the earthly body or in the heavenly existence. Of course, Paul would *rather* be away from the body and at home with the Lord. With this statement Paul dispenses with any theories that life after death is in any way inferior to this existence. We are, therefore, to assume that in the next life the believer will be conscious, embodied, immortal, spiritual, holy, good, just,

beautiful, joyful, and in the direct presence of Christ. Whatever it was like for those believers to have enjoyed the incarnate presence of Christ in the Gospels, will be magnified millions of times in heaven. And the one thing which pleased Christ most about men when he was here on earth was their readiness to believe him and obey him.

A significant part of having the divine perspective is to believe the coming *judgment* of Christ, and to act in accordance with that belief. The person who refuses to see the world, history, or himself as inevitably coming under the scrutiny and sovereignty of the Absolute Redeemer, has a flawed perspective. Such a person will surely suffer the frustration of having no hope for ultimate vindication of right over wrong. Such a person will have no hope that final justice will ever be accomplished. Such a person's perspective can only lead to irrational stoicism, at best, and existential despair, at worst.

The word "For" in verse 10 connects Paul's appeal for a judgment-perspective to his "ambition" to be always pleasing the Lord. In other words, the christian's magnificent obsession should be to always please the Lord *because* he must inevitably appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The word *appear* is from the Greek word *phanerothenai* and means, "made manifest, revealed, unveiled, exposed." What Christ is going to do at the judgment for the christian is to reveal the christian to himself! Christ certainly does not need a special time to put people on trial in order to discover their deeds or motives. Christ already knows the "secrets of men's hearts." This is not a judgment to settle final destiny. This is a personal evaluation given to each individual by the Lord himself of what the individual's life has really been like. Paul looked forward to this judgment because he believed the Lord would be showing many things Paul thought were failures that were really successes. The Lord will reveal many things that pleased him which no one else heard of or applauded (see Matt. 25:31-46; Mark 12:41-44). Everyone who has made it his aim (ambition) to please the Lord is going to be surprised by joy at this "manifestation." It will be a time of disclosure and evaluation when all mankind learns for the first time, and perfectly, who was right and what attitudes men should have had or should not have had. It will also be a time of encouragement where believers will see and learn the real value of many things that they thought no one knew and which they themselves often did not understand. The evil that men have done

will also be exposed, evaluated and repaid.

Thinking and living in the light of perfect evaluation should drive men to seek the divine perspective. Christ is primarily concerned with our motives. That is why Paul said he always made it his "ambition" to please the Lord. It is "ambition," aim, motive, that counts most with Christ. Our "ambition" here (not the quantity of our accomplishments) determines the degree to which we will be rewarded in the next life! The person who has understood this will not be frustrated with life in this world where one's "ambitions" for the Lord often exceed his opportunities and capabilities. He has the divine perspective.

5:11-15 Unmitigated Vanity: Another frustration of the human soul is the unmitigated vanity with which the christian is surrounded in this world. While the christian is in this earthy existence he must live among proud, arrogant, malicious people who are always attacking his motives and his veracity. Jesus even experienced this as incarnate God! It was a constant source of frustration to the apostle Paul that men should slander his motives. Paul's answer here is that his motives are vindicated as pure because of his divine perspective.

Someone in Corinth had persuaded the christians there that Paul was seeking to win the favor of men for his own selfish ends. Paul answered that he was busy trying to persuade men to follow Christ, not for his own selfish ends, but because he was always trying to please the Lord. And his ambition to always please the Lord was because he "knew the terror of the Lord."

The *fear* (Greek, *phobon*, phobia, terror) of the Lord is not as uncommon to the New Testament as some people think! Jesus taught his disciples to *fear* God (see Matt. 10:26-33; Lk. 12:4-7). See also Hebrews 12:28; I Pet. 1:17; 3:2; I Tim. 5:20; Heb. 4:1; Rev. 14:7; 19:5; Phil. 2:12; Jude 23, etc. The Old Testament makes the *fear* of the Lord (reverence, awe) one of the fundamental bases of holiness (Eccl. 12:13; Job 28:28; Prov. 1:7; Psa. 15:4; 22:23; 33:8; 34:9; 115:11, 13; 118:4; 135:20).

The fear Paul points to here is *his* fear (reverence) for the Lord. This is what motivated Paul to persuade men. His motives were not selfish in the least. Paul preached to men to bring glory and honor to God, not to himself. Paul's view of life, his perspective, included the fear of God and the judgment. Therefore, he was able to keep his

motives pure, as well as his actions. It would not be out of order for all christians to have this perspective. It well behooves the Church today to "restore" a proper fear and awe of God. More reverence would be a good thing! It would solve the problem of perspective!

Paul uses the Greek word *peithomen* to speak of his efforts to convince the Corinthians of his sincerity. Knowing fully the fear of the Lord and that his every ambition is clearly open to the Lord and will be "manifested" by the Lord Paul wants to *persuade* (Gr. *peithomen*, conciliate, win favor of, satisfy; see Matt. 28:14; Acts 12:20) those in Corinth who doubt that his motives are pure. Paul wants the Corinthian christians to grasp the divine perspective and judge him in light of that.

Verse 12 is Paul's answer to any possible misinterpretation of his words as self-glorifying. He says that his real reason in defending his sincerity was that the Corinthian christians might have an answer to give those who were criticizing him. Evidently there were some who had come to the Corinthian church (probably Judaizers) who took pride in their position (being probably from the Jerusalem church and claiming the sanction of the "pillar" apostles, Peter, James, etc.) and were slandering the apostle Paul's motives. Paul has already mentioned these Judaizers in II Corinthians, chapter 3. An interesting Greek phrase, *en prosopo kauchomenous*, "in face-boasting," is translated, "pride in position." The Judaizers were manipulating these Corinthians with their "appearances" or their religious facades, rather than bringing any honest or factual evidence against Paul. They were throwing their weight around rather than allowing anyone to search their hearts and motives. They were presenting exactly the opposite perspective that Paul was presenting to the Corinthians. They were presenting the *human* perspective — Paul was presenting the *divine* perspective!

Look at Paul's fervor and total commitment from the human perspective and he appears crazy (mad)! (see Acts 26:24ff). It may be that some of the Judaizers pointed to him as an example of an egomaniac (or perhaps a paranoiac) because he appealed so often to his own sincerity, his fervency for the gospel, and his wide ministry. His enemies may well have accused him of a mania for recognition, that he was "mad" for position or power over his converts. But Paul argues that the Corinthians must look at his writings and his works

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through the divine perspective. Paul declares if he is an egomaniac, greedy for personal exaltation, God will judge. Only God can know that perfectly, and God will reveal it at the judgment; but Paul charges the Corinthians that they can judge whether he is outwardly following sensible behavior toward them or not. They can make this judgment if they will evaluate Paul's actions in light of the divine perspective. If they will only measure Paul's actions according to the revealed Word of God, they will conclude that he is acting sensibly and not as an egomaniac.

Paul continues to prove that his perspective is antithetical to that of the "lovers of position." He says that his motives are controlled by the love of Christ. He has died to self by accepting the death of Christ as his own death. The fact of the substitutionary death of Christ has flooded Paul's soul with love and "constrained" him to live no longer for himself, but for Christ. The Greek word *sunechei* is a compound of *sun* and *echo* and means literally, "to press together." It is the same word used in Luke 12:49 to describe the "pressure" or "constraint" propelling Jesus to the cross! The love of Christ should pressure, control, impel and motivate the christian. The love of Christ drives and guides by setting the limits to what we should and should not do.

And why did the love of Christ control Paul? Because Paul was *convinced* that Christ had died *for* him (and for all men). The word *convinced* comes from the Greek word *krinantas* and is a word meaning "legal conviction." It shows that Paul's conviction was based on *evidence* and not just emotion. It was the evidence that produced the emotion and not vice versa! The evidence that Christ's death was a vicarious, substitutionary atonement is the bodily resurrection of Christ. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the supernatural stamp of authentication on the doctrine of Christ's atonement. Without the resurrection, the death of Christ as a vicarious atonement for anyone's sins is unvalidated. It is the atoning death of Christ for sinful man that sheds God's love abroad in man's heart (see Rom. 5:1-11).

Now the critical issue in this text is: What does the atonement mean to an individual, personally, existentially, subjectively? It means that when Christ died, the believer died! If I accept Christ's death in my place, I have actually accepted my death! In other words, I agree

with God that my sins put *me* there on the cross "in" Christ. "All" died, therefore "I" died when Christ died. "I" no longer live; "I" have no right to myself, to control myself, to live for myself any longer. "I" have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer "live" (see Gal. 2:20). Having accepted, by faith, the grace of God in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, we are also privileged to accept by faith, the gracious *life* of Christ as a *substitute* for the old sinful life of self. "He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." We live that life of Christ vicariously in our lives by *faith* (Gal. 2:20).

II Corinthians chapter 5 is one of the greatest treatises on the experiential impact of the atonement in all the Bible! It is paralleled by such great passages as Romans, chapter 6; Colossians 2:20 — 3:17; Ephesians, chapter 2; and Hebrews, chapters 2 and 10. (The reader is directed to *Learning From Jesus*, by Seth Wilson pages 495-503, pub. College Press, for significant studies on this passage).

In the midst of unmitigated vanity by those who take pride in human position and other vagaries of life apart from faith in Christ, a personal, existential absorption of the fact of Jesus' vicarious death is absolutely crucial to a divine perspective. Paul had accepted Christ's death on his behalf. He had accepted Christ's life as his own life. Now he wants the Corinthians to judge his actions toward them from this perspective. Paul insists that as christians the Corinthians have no right to any other perspective.

SECTION 3

Fallibility of the Human Spirit (5:16-21)

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and

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entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

5:16-17 Egocentric: The main problem with the human perspective is its egocentricity. It is selfish! It centers and focuses and devotes itself to self. In the Bible this is called "the things of the flesh" (see Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:5-11; 13:14; I Cor. 1:29; 5:5; Gal. 5:16-17; 6:13; Eph. 2:3; Phil. 3:3-11; Col. 2:23; 3:5ff; I Pet. 4:1-5). Paul wrote to the Romans, ". . . the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7). Now Paul did not mean there that simply living in a fleshly body makes a person inexorably hostile to God. Jesus lived in a fleshly body. Paul is talking about a worldly-mindedness, an attitude that makes the flesh and the world its priority. The "human point of view" in the Greek text is, *oidamen kata sarka*, literally, "know according to flesh." Jesus called the "fleshly viewpoint" idolatry — serving Mammon — in Matthew 6:24-34.

There are essentially only two viewpoints for man — human or divine. Man either sees everything from the limited, fallible, perspective of human wisdom, or from the infallible, revealed perspective of God in the Bible. The perspective of the unbeliever is limited to this world, by the limitations of this existence. He sees nothing beyond this existence. Everything is relative to this earthly experience. That is why human perspective alone leads to degradation, depravity and despair. Every human experience is evaluated and acted upon from an animal-fleshly-materialistic perspective (see Rom. 1:18-32). But as for the believer, Paul says, from the very moment he accepts by faith the atoning death of Christ, he gives up his right to think or evaluate or act by himself or for himself. He no longer views anything from the limitations of flesh or matter. He sets his mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5ff). He surrenders his thinking and evaluating and acting to the mind and behavior of Christ revealed in the Bible. The Bible takes over his mind and his life. Every aspect of life — home, job, education, entertainment, finances, hobbies, sexuality, emotions —

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everything, is brought into conformity to the precepts and principles of the Holy Spirit revealed in the Scriptures. The christian surrenders all right to say, "It's my life, and I'll think the way I please and live the way I want."

Non-christians view Christ from a human point of view. They think of him as being no more than merely another human being, having no authority to exercise over anyone else. Non-believers reject the idea that Christ was God in the flesh. They refuse to accept his death as an atonement for their sin. They may grant that he was a wonderful, wise, compassionate religious teacher, but they will not accede Christ any right to do their thinking for them. They reserve the right to disagree with any viewpoint Christ might dictate in his teachings or those of his apostles. But, Paul says, once a person becomes a christian he views Christ no longer from a human point of view. The christian *never* claims the right to disagree with any New Testament viewpoint.

Thus, if any man is *in* Christ, he *is* a new creature (or creation). Paul is not dealing with the possibility of the new creature here as much as he is dealing with the *fact*. He is saying, "It is a matter of fact that those who are in Christ are new creatures with a totally new perspective!" This is the way it *must* be for a christian! The old, human perspective, has passed away; behold, the new, divine perspective, has come and is continuing to come (Greek *gegonen*, perfect tense verb, "has come with a continuing action"). The new creation with the new, divine perspective, is a continual, growing, ever-expanding experience. It is the experience of being changed into the likeness of Christ from one degree of glory to another (II Cor. 3:18) by "beholding the glory of the Lord."

This transformation of the mind of man so that he might have the divine perspective was the purpose of the Law of God revealed through Moses. It was the very core of the writings of the O.T prophets. All the great theophanies (throne visions) in Isaiah 6:1-13; Ezekiel 1:1-28; Daniel 7:1-28 and Zechariah's visions were *specifically* given to insist that their Jewish listeners see all their circumstances from the perspective of the *throne of God* (the divine view of history). And the highly symbolic book of Revelation in the N.T. urges from the very first (the vision of the victorious, reigning Christ ch. 1, coupled with the vision of the Throne of God and the Lamb ch. 4-5) that the

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churches of Asia Minor must view their "great tribulation" from the divine perspective. History, even the terrifying, destructive, depraved aspects of history, is all under the sovereign control of God and the Lamb. It is imperative that the saints of God have this perspective. Without it they cannot possibly remain faithful!

5:18-21 Estranged: The reason the human perspective is egocentric is that the human being is estranged from God. Man, the rebel-sinner, has chosen to exclude God from his life. He is at "enmity" (war) against God (see James 4:1-4). The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit — these are opposed to each other (Gal. 5:16-17). The mind of the flesh is "hostile" toward God (Rom. 8:7). Man, not reconciled to God, is against God! There is no neutral-zone. There are not three categories: for God, against God, and neutral. We are either for Christ or against him — gathering with him or scattering (Matt. 12:30).

So, Paul says, the only possible way any human being can acquire the divine perspective is through the redemptive work of God in Christ which reconciles man and God to one another. Reconciliation is purely and simply by the grace of God. God took the initiative; God accomplished the redemption by giving his perfect Son as the ransom. *It is all from God!*

To attempt to discuss the concept of *reconciliation* in these notes would require such a lengthy digression contact with the exegetical flow of the text would be lost. The reader is therefore referred to the *Special Studies* at the end of this chapter for thorough treatment of the subjects of Propitiation, Justification, Redemption, Reconciliation, Faith, and Obedience. Treatment of all these subjects is necessary to understanding the concept of Reconciliation. Suffice it to say here that when man declared war on God, the Divine Father, in keeping with his very nature, had to declare war on man. God could not love man for his good without acting hostile toward that which would destroy man! So God "withdraws" himself from man. This is taught consistently throughout the Bible (Hosea 5:15; Isa. 64:7-9; Psa. 51:11; Rom. 5:10-11). The very word "propitiation" assumes there is Someone who has to be "appeased." The *wrath* of God is revealed in the very forces of nature (Rom. 1:18ff). The absoluteness of God's justice must be satisfied. Until all this is accomplished, there could be no "reconciliation" between God and man. God's absolute justice

must be satisfied and his wrath appeased, and man must be wooed back to humble surrender and faith toward God.

This is precisely what God did through Jesus Christ. God sent his Son to earth incarnated as a man (John 1:1-18; Heb. 2:5-18; 10:1-25; Phil. 2:1-11). Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. He pleased God in everything he thought, said and did. He kept the commandments of God, the Law of God completely. And then, the Son willingly laid down his life (John 10:14-18) as a ransom for sinful mankind. He became the curse of God in our place (Gal. 3:10-14; I Pet. 2:21-25). God punished Christ for all the sins of all the ages and thus God's wrath was appeased and man was justified all in the same redemptive work (see Rom. 3:21-26). The Absolute God was reconciled to man through the absolute atonement of Christ, and man is wooed back to God through the divine demonstration of love at the cross and the empty tomb. God does "not count" men's trespasses against them if they accept God's work of redemption and reconcile themselves to him by faith and obedience to his Son.

Quickly Paul shifts from the subject of personal salvation and reconciliation to the *ministry* of reconciliation. Every christian is obligated by the grace of God's reconciliation given to him, to proclaim the good news of God's offer of reconciliation to the whole world. Paul used the Greek word *themenos*, an aorist participle of *tithemi*, and it is translated, "committed." The Greek word means, "assigned." God has *assigned* to all christians the work of ministering the *rationale* (Gr. *logon*, word, logic) of reconciliation. No christian is exempt from this assignment! It is written in the "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:18-20). Paul considered himself a "debtor" and thus obligated (by his own redemption) to preach the gospel to as much of the world as he could humanly reach (Rom. 1:14-17).

All christians are "ambassadors" (Gr. *presbeuomen*, presbyters, elders, legates, ambassadors) allowing God to make his "appeal" (Gr. *parakalountos*, paraclete, to call alongside) through them. The ministry of reconciliation is calling sinners to come to the side of God! Paul said the "ambassador" of reconciliation was to "beseech" (Gr. *deometha*, beg, plead, pray) people to come to the side of God for the sake of Christ. And the motivation in the message of that ministry is the vicarious atonement of Christ. Could it be that "ambassadors" of reconciliation are to have the same qualifications as elders (I Tim.

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3:1-7)?

How did God "make" Christ to become sin for our sake? Most certainly God did not *force* Christ to *sin*! Christ was personally without sin. But since Christ was free from sin he was under no obligation to suffer the consequences of sin. That left Christ free to *choose* to become, vicariously, sin for all who were obligated by their own sin to suffer its consequences. He was not only free to choose to do so, he had the right and authority, by his perfect life, to do so if he chose. No human being may dare to gainsay Christ's right to assume sin vicariously if he chooses unless that human being himself is perfectly sinless!

Through the centuries there have been unbelievers, posting in righteous indignation, rejecting the revelation of God that Christ suffered vicariously for man's sins.

Ethan Allen, Revolutionary War hero of Fort Ticonderoga, a Deist and Unitarian, wrote in his book, *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, "The doctrine of the Trinity is destitute of foundation, and tends manifestly to superstition and idolatry. There could be no justice or goodness in one being's suffering for another, nor is it at all compatible with reason to suppose that God was the contriver of such a propitiation."

Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, former head of the World Council of Churches, wrote in his book, *A Testament of the Faith*, pg. 144:

We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved. I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of some one else. It is my sin. I must atone.

Canon Vernon F. Storrs is quoted in a book by T.H. Hughes, entitled, *The Atonement: Modern theories of the Doctrine*, pg. 61:

We are in no way bound to accept Paul's interpretation of Christ's death. I dismiss from my mind all ideas of substitution, or of the innocent paying the penalty of the guilty because these ideas offend my moral consciousness.

However, Jesus himself said that he came to die as a ransom for man's

sins (see Matt. 20:28; 26:28). The New Testament is filled with statements about the vicarious, substitutionary death of Christ (I Tim. 2:5-6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 1:18-19; 2:24; Rev. 1:5; Gal. 3:13). The substitutionary death of the Messiah was predicted graphically and unmistakably in Isaiah 53:1-12 and in Zechariah 12:10-13:1. To reject the revelation of God is to fly in the face of a document that has been historically authenticated and validated by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. To reject the vicarious death of Christ as atonement for sin is infidelity and rebellion. It is the spirit of the antichrist. It cannot be made respectable by couching it in moral revulsion. To disavow what God has plainly stated should offend moral consciousness!

We suspect the rationale behind disavowing the vicarious death of Christ is the rebellion against surrendering one's mind and life to the divine perspective. That is exactly why Paul emphasized the substitutionary death of Christ here; because it is absolutely crucial to the divine perspective. It is the one critical pre-requisite to the "new creation." The world-perspective arrogantly insists on atoning for its own sins. Those who glory in the flesh intend to earn their standing before God with self-righteousness. Throwing oneself upon the mercy and grace of God will not do for the "autonomous man." He must rule himself. And God must be satisfied with that! There is no repentance in that frame of mind. That is apostasy. Reconciliation to God with that attitude is *impossible* (see Heb. 6:1-8). No man's moral consciousness has a right to be offended at any divine fiat or directive. God told Abraham to slay Isaac as a sacrifice — Abraham had no right to do anything but obey. God told Hosea to marry a woman of harlotry — Hosea had no right to resist on the grounds of moral consciousness. We must believe and obey God whether it seems right to us or to other men or not!

So Paul closes this text by contradicting all presumptions of earned righteousness. God "made" (Gr. *epoiesen*, aorist tense, at a point in time past), or imputed, all sin punished vicariously in Christ who willingly accepted it at the crucifixion in the days of Pontius Pilate. Then the apostle adds God did that in order that "we" might "become" (Gr. *genometha*, aorist subjunctive) the righteousness of God in him (Christ). When any person believes the gospel and obeys the truth (I Pet. 1:22) he is purified and *becomes*

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righteous. The aorist tense means our righteousness happens at a particular point in time, and the subjunctive mood means it is something done upon us, to us, or for us — *not by us*. God imputed our sins to Jesus, and imputed Jesus' righteousness to us! The cross was a *trans-action*, initiated by God, worked out by God, declared by God and accepted by God. So man has no righteousness or goodness by which he may boast before God (see Rom. 3:27; I Cor. 1:29-30; Eph. 2:8-9). God *made* Christ our righteousness (I Cor. 1:30). By Christ's perfect obedience many (believers) are *made* righteous (Rom. 5:19). The Christian's righteousness is not his own but that which depends on faith in Christ (Phil. 3:8-11). Righteousness is not attained by pursuing it, but by believing in Christ (Rom. 9:30). God only imputes righteousness, however, to those who are *in* Christ by believing and obeying Christ's commandments (I John 1:8-2:6; Rom. 6:1-23). We retain that imputed righteousness *provided* we continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which we have heard (Col. 1:21-23).

Because we have that righteousness already, we do not have to earn it. It is our delight to begin with it, to start acting righteous because we *are* righteous. I hope you understand this, because this is the "good news." It is no good news to come to a person and say, "Christ forgave all your sins up to now, but from now on you'd better watch it. You are going to have to pay for all those." No, no, that is not the gospel. The good news is all your sins are forgiven, all your life long, including those you have not even committed yet.

God knows your struggle. He has dealt with that. He is never going to retract his solution; he is never going to act any different way toward you. Because the sin problem is settled he can come in alongside of you and help you learn how to act righteously on that basis. And he will — lifting you up, forgiving you, restoring you, strengthening you and staying right with you until this life is finally done.

So this is the glory of it. We learn how a God of justice can come to a loveless, hard-hearted, self-righteous, selfish, hurting and hurtful sinner like you and me and not count his trespasses against him. That is the way he does it because "he who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—Ray. C. Steadman, *op. cit.*, pg. 116-117.

Non-christians, in rebellion, unreconciled to God because their sins are unforgiven and they have no righteousness that will meet the

THE PROBLEM OF PERSPECTIVE

absolute demand of God, have no perspective beyond this world and this life. They cannot see things as God sees them, because they are determined not to. But remember, Paul is writing to the *christians* at Corinth in this epistle. He is begging them that they not let their perspective slip from the divine to the human. Their faithfulness in a world of temptation and trial, and their hope for the eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison depends on retaining the divine perspective. The same holds true for christians in the twentieth century — and especially for preachers!

APPREHENSION:

1. What relationship does God's subjecting the creation to futility have with the problem of perspective?
2. Where does the Bible document the human cry for divine perspective?
3. What chapter in I Corinthians deals with the problems of divine perspective among the Corinthian christians?
4. Why does Paul call our human body an "earthly tent"?
5. What is the significance of saying we "have" a building from God?
6. What does Paul mean by the word "naked"?
7. What do christians "sigh with anxiety" about while in their earthly body?
8. What do the scriptures say about "being at home with the Lord"?
9. What has the judgment of Christ to do with the christian having divine perspective?
10. Why did Paul have to explain that some had thought him "beside himself"?
11. Why did the love of Christ control Paul?
12. What convinced Paul that Christ's death was for all men's sins?
13. Why must the christian never "regard anyone from a human point of view"?
14. Define: Propitiation, Justification, Redemption, Reconciliation, Faith and Obedience (you will need to study the Special Studies to answer this question).
15. What is an "ambassador" of reconciliation?

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16. How did God "make" Christ to be sin on our behalf? What if we have some moral reservations against another person being punished on our behalf?
17. How did Christ's righteousness become ours?

APPLICATIONS:

1. Do you have a problem keeping the daily news reports in divine perspective?
2. How do you deal with the every-day trials and tribulations of your own life and those intimately associated with you?
3. Do you read your Bible daily for answers to your daily problems?
4. Are there really answers in the Bible for *every one* of man's problems?
5. Do you give much thought to your *own* death and what comes afterward?
6. Are you ever anxious about where *you* will be after your body is put in a grave?
7. What do you anticipate about the next existence?
8. Do you look forward eagerly to the judgment of Christ as a place where wrong will be righted?
9. What is your "ambition" in life?
10. Can you truthfully say that in every undertaking you've made in life (every ambition) you have sought first to please the Lord in it?
11. Is reverence (fear) of God a motive in your life? Do you think the Church today could use more reverence? In what way?
12. What does the atonement of Christ mean existentially (subjectively, personally) to your viewpoint, perspective, way of living?
13. Do you see "self" in you as having actually died on the cross with Christ?
14. Have you determined, with God's gracious help, to let Christ live his life out to the world through you?
15. Do you struggle with the command of Paul in this chapter that Christians are no longer to see anyone from a human point of view?
16. Where do you think the Christian must turn for solution to this struggle?

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17. Does it seem fair to you that Christ must be punished for your sins? Do you believe he did? All of them? Forever?
18. Do you feel like God considers you a righteous person? Why? Do you think some of the good you have done in your life ought to be taken into account by God when he takes you home to be with him?
19. What do you feel like saying to God in light of his punishment of your sins in Christ and his giving you Christ's perfect righteousness as your own?

Special Study

PROPTIATION

Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; I Pet. 1:18-19;
I John 2:2; 4:10; Rom. 3:21-26

I. MEANING

- A. (Heb. *kipper*), means "to cover or wipe-out or wipe clean, to annul" by offering a gift
- B. ἱλαστήριον *hilasterion*, means, "to avert wrath."

II. USAGE

- A. *Kipper* is translated "appease" in Gen. 32:20 (literally, "I will cover his face with a present.")
- B. *Kipper* is translated "atone," "expiate" in Isa. 47:11 (literally, "thou shalt not be able to charm it away, or bribe it away.")
- C. *Kopher* is used to describe the "protection money" paid by the Jews to avert a plague (Exod. 30:12).
- D. *Hilasterion* in the LXX is translated "mercy seat" and the word is employed in exactly this sense in Hebrews 9:5.
- E. *Hilasterion* might even be thus translated in Rom. 3:25 and would say that God appointed Jesus to be the "mercy-seat" for sinners, in order that some place and means might be provided for securing a friendly meeting with the Deity, offended by man's sin.

Discussion

I. THEOLOGY

- A. Understanding the nature of God is necessary to understand the idea of propitiation
 - 1. A God of holiness is of necessity a God of wrath
 - a. The wrath of God is mentioned 585 times in the O.T. alone and although not as often in the N.T., it is surely there (Rom. 1:18, etc.). Ordinarily we think of the cross as being necessary for our sakes, but this is true only in a secondary sense. Certainly our salvation depends on the cross; YET IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE CROSS IS NECESSARY NOT

PROPITIATION

JUST BECAUSE WE ARE SINNERS, BUT
BECAUSE GOD IS GOD!

- c. Justice or righteousness is that characteristic of God which requires Him to punish sin. **GOD MUST BE TRUE TO HIMSELF OR HE IS NOT GOD. WHEN MAN SINS IT CONTRADICTS THE VERY NATURE OF GOD. GOD MUST PUNISH SIN . . . HIS JUSTICE DEMANDS IT.**
 2. The sinner is a standing assertion that there is no God. He is against God, and God therefore must be against him.
 - a. For God to ignore the sinner as a sinner would be an unacceptable compromise of His nature even though in His love He has no personal desire for vengeful malice in His motive
 - b. God's love for the victim of the sinner has been called in question by what He, the Sovereign, has allowed to happen in His realm.
 - c. Even though God may want to relate Himself to the sinner in ways of love, that relation must be predicated on an objective reckoning of some act of Justice where the record is put straight.
 - B. God's love is a personal attitude which is passionately concerned about genuine relationship.
 1. When God's love to man does not elicit love in return there is a necessary estrangement.
 2. Eliminate the possibility of wrath and God's love is meaningless.
 - C. Some act had to be completed that would permit God to maintain His holiness and justice and also to forgive the sinner, and let God be true to the other side of His nature — love!
- ## II. TRANSACTION
- A. What God did at Calvary He did actually and objectively and not merely in the minds of men.
 1. God acted to appease His own wrath in an event on the basis of which He can actually and objectively cover man's sin
 2. God paid Himself off, as it were!

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3. After Calvary God could be toward man as He could not be toward man before
- B. A propitiation is that which satisfies the wrath — the righteous and judicial demand for justice — of God.
 1. That which satisfies the wrath and justice of God is the punishment of sins.
 2. The Bible describes the death of Christ as a propitiation (Rom. 3:25), which means that in His death Jesus satisfied the wrath and justice of God by bearing the penalty for sin.
 3. The divine necessity is not just to forgive, but to forgive in a way which shows that God is irreconcilable to evil, and can never treat it as other or less than it is.
 4. Sin makes a real difference to God, and even in forgiving God treats that difference *as real*, and cannot do otherwise. He cannot ignore it, or regard it as other or less than it is. If he did so, He would not be more gracious than He is in the atonement; He would cease to be God.
 5. Men have been able to appreciate and accept the thought of a benevolent God, **BUT NOT THE THOUGHT OF A COMPLETELY HONEST GOD!**
- C. But God must remain honest to His own nature or we have a God no better than all the pagan gods and religions of all the ages
 1. God does what the supreme Judge must do. He refuses to waive the demands of the law. Rather than that, in love He Himself meets the law's demand through the propitiating death of Jesus Christ.
 2. Thus instead of making void His law (His word) (His nature), He *establishes* it (fulfills it) (Rom. 3:31).
 3. Jesus' death has a penal aspect to it. He became the object of retributive justice and hence bore our punishment.
- D. There are those who refuse to accept this idea:
 1. Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, in his book, *A Testament of the Faith*, (p. 144) "We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all sin of the world, then why discuss

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forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved. I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of some one else. It is my sin. I must atone."

III. TRANSFER

- A. But if the N.T. is true, and it is, and if words have any literal meaning, and they do, then God transferred my sin to Jesus Christ and He is the propitiation for my sin and the sin of all the world.
 - 1. According to the N.T. Jesus Christ in love identified himself with us and we in faith identify ourselves with him
 - 2. God treated the sinless Christ as if He were guilty, and inflicted upon Him the punishment which our sins deserved; **AND THIS INFLICTION MADE IT POSSIBLE TO TREAT THE SINFUL AS IF THEY WERE ACTUALLY RIGHTEOUS** (II Cor. 5:21, etc.)
- B. When Christ satisfied the wrath of God, He satisfied it in our place, as our substitute
 - 1. He was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13)
 - 2. He bore the full force of the wrath of God against sin. In thus allowing the penalty of sin to be inflicted on himself, Christ satisfied God's justice and became the appeasement for our sins.
- C. Because the cross is what it is, God can forgive our sins and justify us and be just at the same time.
 - 1. If Christ suffered the penalty for our sins, then our sins have already been punished in Him.
 - 2. The fiery wrath of God due to us has already burned itself out on Him
 - 3. When God says to us, "Your sins are taken away," He is not simply **BRUSHING THEM ASIDE**.
 - 4. Quite the contrary, every sin which is forgiven in us has already been punished in Christ.

Conclusion

I. JUSTIFICATION IS FREE TO US

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- A. It is not something that we have earned or deserved
 - 1. God's love, not our works, solved the problem which justice raised
 - 2. The righteousness which justifies us is no more our own than the sins which Christ took were His own.
 - 3. This righteousness is something God in the flesh earned and gave to us as a gift
- B. We can serve God with peace and joy, knowing that our salvation does not depend on our ability to perform a certain number or quality of good works.
 - 1. Our Christian service is not an effort to earn something we do not have, but rather an expression of thanks for something we have been given.

II. JUSTIFICATION COST GOD

- A. His only unique Son. Forgiveness of sins is no casual thing!
- B. Forgiveness of sin is not merely a matter of a few spoken words on our part, and the snap of a finger on God's part
 - 1. Our sins are washed away, not by the tears of a soft-hearted, sentimental God, but by the blood of the Son of a Just and Righteous God.
 - 2. All sins for which we ask forgiveness have been fully punished in Christ. Only because they have already been punished in Christ can they be forgiven in us. Christ has borne in His body and soul all of the agony and all the anger of God that are due to those sins for which we so casually ask pardon.

Special Study

JUSTIFICATION

Rom. 3:21-26; I John 1:5-10; Rom. 5:1-21; Heb. 10:4-14

Introduction

I. MEANING

- A. Heb. *tsadaq*; Gr. *δικαιοῦν dikaioon*; "to pronounce, accept and treat as just; to treat as not legally liable; to treat as if innocent; therefore entitled to all the privileges due to those who have kept the law."
- B. To justify means to set right, or to put on a right footing by declaring a verdict of acquittal.
- C. Literally it means "to get the verdict." It is a legal term.
- D. Defined as "that judicial act of God, by which, on the basis of the meritorious work of Christ, imputed to the sinner and received by him through faith, God declares the sinner absolved from his sin, released from its penalty, and restored as righteous."

II. JUSTIFICATION IS THE CENTRAL FACT OF BIBLICAL RELIGION

- A. Justification determines the whole character of Christianity as a religion of grace and faith.
- B. It defines the saving significance of Christ's life and death, by relating both to God's law.
- C. It displays God's justice in condemning and punishing sin; His mercy in pardoning and accepting sinners, and His wisdom in exercising both attributes harmoniously, in Christ.
- D. It makes clear what faith is — trust in Christ's atoning death and justifying resurrection for the sinner's righteousness
- E. It makes clear what Christian morality is — law-keeping out of gratitude to the Saviour whose gift of righteousness made lawkeeping needless for acceptance
- F. It explains all types, prophecies and instances of salvation in the O.T.

Discussion

I. ARRAIGNED

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- A. The entire O.T. and N.T. teach emphatically that man is a guilty criminal who must be hailed into the court of the Judge of all the Earth.
 - 1. The O.T. teaches that a day of judgment was to come in which God would condemn and punish all who had broken his laws
 - 2. That day would terminate the present world-order and usher in a golden age for those whom God judged worthy.
 - 3. The N.T. confirms that God will judge the world in righteousness in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God (Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16)
 - 4. Man is guilty; the whole creation testifies against him; his own conscience — the revelation of God — his fellow man — nature itself — and last but not least, the great adversary, the devil accuses man.
- B. Man has been arraigned; judgment is certain
 - 1. The principle of judgment will be EXACT RETRIBUTION — he will get what he deserves — what he has earned
 - 2. The standard of judgment will be GOD'S LAW
 - 3. The evidence will be THE SECRETS OF MEN
 - 4. The Judge is the omniscient, omnipotent, searcher of hearts
 - 5. Only those who can hope to escape are those who have kept His law in all its parts
 - 6. But there are none — all are guilty!

II. ACQUITTED

- A. The good news from heaven's judgment hall is that the guilty have been justified, pronounced "not guilty."
 - 1. There has been a reversal of God's attitude toward the guilty
 - 2. What is involved?
- B. Remission of punishment
 - 1. The believer is declared to be free of the demands of the law because those demands have been satisfied in Christ's death (Rom. 4:5)
 - 2. Christ paid the penalty Himself and the believing sinner is

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no longer held accountable (Rom. 6:7)

3. BUT IT IS MORE THAN MERE PARDON. IT IS A DECLARATION THAT THE GUILTY IN FACT, ARE NO LONGER GUILTY . . . THE VERY FACT OF HIS GUILT IS REMOVED . . . HE IS INNOCENT OF WHAT HE WAS ONCE GUILTY
IT IS AS IF HE HAD *NEVER* SINNED!
HE IS WASHED CLEAN . . . HE IS A NEW CREATION!

C. Restoration to favor

1. God treats the sinner as if he had never sinned since the sinner is now regarded as being personally righteous in Christ (Gal. 3:6)
2. There is not only acquittal, but approval; not only pardon but promotion

D. Imputed righteousness of God

1. Granted to the believer through Christ's presence in him
2. The believers covenant relationship to Christ imparts the quality and character of Christ's righteousness to him
3. Christ is the Justifier through whom a new life is inaugurated in the believer (I Cor. 1:30).
4. Man can never be saved apart from participating in the person of Christ because only as we accept His will and His nature and His death in our place can He serve as our justification and as our righteousness.

III. ACCLAIMED

A. Justified and declared Righteous, we are Adopted as Sons

1. "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,"
2. and . . . "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."
3. ". . . those whom he justified he also glorified . . . what then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? . . . Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? . . ." etc.

B. But remember this, we are justified by God and we are permitted to accept it by believing it

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1. We are not justified on any merit of our own
2. The N.T. is very emphatic on this point (Rom. 3:28; 4:1-5; Gal. 3:6ff)
3. The book of James states that men are justified by works but what James is saying is that when a man's actions show that he has a living, working faith, it shows the man has been justified.
4. James is talking about a man proving or demonstrating his faith by his life . . . but all the demonstrating in the world will not obtain our justification.

THE DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH (WORKS) IS MERELY THE EXPRESSION OF OUR THANKFULNESS FOR WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE . . . WE NEED ONLY BELIEVE IT AND OBEY IT TO HAVE IT APPLY TO US!
A PARDON IS NOT A PARDON UNLESS IT IS ACCEPTED.

Special Study

REDEMPTION

Rom. 3:21-26; Titus 2:11-14; Gal. 3:13;
I Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:8-15; Heb. 2:1-18

Introduction

I. MEANING

- A. Heb. *padah*; Heb. *ga'al*; meaning literally "to break or tear away."
- Gr. ἀγοράζω *agorazo*; meaning "purchase or buy" and λυτροῦμαι; meaning "ransom or deliver."
- B. Redemption is a word closely allied to the word salvation but redemption is more specific, denoting the *means* by which salvation is achieved — namely by the payment of a ransom.
- C. Heb. *goel*'; "one who asserts a claim or one who vindicates for another." A favorite term of Isaiah who speaks of Jehovah as the *Goel* of Israel.

II. USAGE

- A. Connected to re-purchase of property (Lev. 25:26; Ruth 4:4ff; Psa. 74:2; Deut. 9:26; II Sam. 7:23; I Chron. 17:21, etc.)
- B. Connected to release of slaves (Exod. 21:7-8; Lev. 25:47-55; etc.)
- C. Connected to "redeeming" firstborn sons (Exod. 34:20)
- D. Connected with God's great acts of delivering national Israel from Egypt (exodus) and from Babylon (restoration).

Discussion

I. PRODUCT/PROPERTY — Man

- A. Polluted by sin
 - 1. Sin is more than weakness/mistake; it is **REBELLION, INSURRECTION**
Man is an enemy of his Creator; man mocks his Benefactor; man is a spiritual whoremonger (willfully committing spiritual adultery). Man is a rotten renegade.

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Rom. 1:18-32

2. Inhuman — sin drives man to be worse than an animal, sensual, selfish, sadistic
 3. Insane — sin robs man of a right mind (I Cor. 15:34)
- B. Prisoner of Satan
1. Deceived — the Evil one has captured the minds and wills of men by lies.
 2. Defeated — the Evil one has imprisoned and enslaved man. Whomever we yield to becomes our master (Rom. 6:12-19). So long as we are willing to believe a lie we will yield to it and we cannot break the chains of enslavement ourselves for we are incapable of arriving at truth/reality without God revealing it to us.
 3. Dead — the Evil one has alienated us from God, we are strangers, separated from His kingdom, DEAD, as far as God is concerned.
 4. Ideas and thoughts master/control us. Ideas come from persons. The devil and God both think and we are controlled by one or the other.
- C. Precious in the Sight of God
1. No matter how polluted, still Man is God's precious property. God made man, He made him in His own *likeness* (Double emphasis in Hebrew — Hebrew word in Genesis is *tzelem* and is the same word used for idol and images exactly like him, Dan. 2:31,35.) and breathed into man a part of Himself. Man is God's child, God's son.
 2. Man is precious to God (Isa. 43:4; Lam. 4:2)
 3. Man is God's great concern (Isa. 49:14-16)
 4. This universe was created *for* man — Man is the apex of all God's creative genius

II. PRICE

- A. What price is sufficient to "buy" or "redeem" the property?
1. It must be commensurate with the *worth* of the property
 2. It must be able to satisfy the *demands* of its indebtedness
 3. It must be sufficient to *restore* the property to the demanded usefulness of the owner
 4. Is there anything in all the world that will meet the above price-tag? (Micah 6:6-8; Mark 8:34-38)

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5. There is NO thing or group of things in all the world that will be an acceptable redeeming payment for lost mankind (cf. Psa. 49:5-15). Not even another human being can redeem another for all are lost!
 6. The guilt of one individual's sin against another cannot be morally transferred to a third party. All forgiveness, human and divine, is in the very nature of the case substitutional or vicarious. No one ever really forgives another, except he bears the penalty of the other's sin against him. When we pray "Father, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," we are not asking God to forgive us by a vicarious sacrifice while we forgive each other by merely overlooking faults which cost us nothing. And when we say Christ died as our Substitute, we do not mean that He was a third party . . . because
 7. The guilt of one individual's sin against another can morally be borne *either by the sinner*, or by the *one sinned against*.
 8. Christ was not a third party at Calvary . . . HE WAS THE GOD SINNED AGAINST.
 9. All those illustrations of a third party taking another's place and bearing another's punishment are logically and Biblically erroneous.
- B. Perfection — God had need to come from heaven to conquer the devil and to free man. Man would have been forever enslaved to self had God done it otherwise.
1. Man must conquer the devil. Man must conquer sin. Man must fulfill the holiness of the law of God. Man must live in perfect obedience and harmony with the will of God.
 2. Man, imprisoned by the devil and rebelling against his Creator was hopelessly unable to meet the price of perfection to God's Law.
 3. In His unsearchable wisdom He decided to step into the stream of human history and work out a plan which would bridge the gap between Him and His fallen children. HE DECIDED TO KEEP HIS OWN LAW . . . IN THE PLACE OF HELPLESS MEN! (Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:6-8)

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4. God took upon Himself the nature of His children in order to meet the devil on the battlefield of the flesh and conquered sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:1-8).
5. God obedient to the Law which He Himself had given! He who was above the Law willingly put Himself beneath it as the divine Substitute for those who, because of their spiritual bondage, were unable to do it for themselves.
6. Just as Adam was my representative and I sinned in Adam, so the Son of Man is my representative and I may be counted righteous if I am in Him by faith. (Rom. 5:12-21; II Cor. 5:14-21)
7. Jesus Christ, God-Man, was willing and able to pay the price of perfection for me — perfect faith, perfect obedience, perfect motives, perfect service, perfect surrender to God, perfect love, perfect justice.

I NO LONGER NEED TO FEEL GUILT, FRUSTRATION AND ANXIETY OR FEAR . . . I HAVE BEEN REDEEMED BY HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS . . . I AM FREE TO REACH THE HIGHEST GOAL OF GODLINESS I AM CAPABLE OF BY FAITH AND TRUST IN HIM WHO TAKES CARE OF ALL SHORTCOMINGS I MAY HAVE.

- C. Punishment — Demanded by the very moral nature of God and man
1. Without a penalty there is no law, without law there is no morality
 2. When law or justice is violated the penalty must be paid
 3. This principle is true even in human institutions. The demands of justice must be met and the majesty of the law sustained or otherwise the bonds of the association will be destroyed and anarchy will prevail.
 4. God, in order to establish and vindicate His sovereignty and His trustworthiness must execute the penalty of His law when it is violated.
 5. In His unsearchable mercy He decided to step into the stream of human history and PAY THE PENALTY OF HIS OWN LAW HIMSELF! No third party could forgive man. Man's sin — all of it — ultimately is against

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God. Only God could forgive man. God had to pay the price Himself if it was to be paid at all.

6. This is how God was both JUST and the JUSTIFIER OF HIM WHO BELIEVES (Rom. 3:21-26). God became man and willingly gave Himself to suffer the penalty for sin — death (WHAT THEN HAVE WE TO BOAST OF IN ANY THING WE MAY DO OR BE???)
7. Some scriptures:
God made Him (Christ) to be sin on our behalf (II Cor. 5:21)
Christ died for our sins (I Cor. 15:3)
By Him we received the atonement (Rom. 5:10-11)
He bore our sins in His own body (I Pet. 2:24)
He redeemed us from the law becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13)
He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9ff)

III. PAYMENT

A. Anticipated

1. Throughout the centuries of the O.T. the believers looked forward to an act of deliverance which would forever free them from the guilt, the power and the punishment of sin.
 - a. They looked forward to a heaven-sent Deliverer
 - b. They looked forward to a great act of atonement
2. Where did they get this anticipation?
 - a. Revealed through God's spokesmen, Patriarchs, Prophets
 - b. Revealed through God's Law
3. O.T. believers made payment for their sin by symbolically transferring their guilt to an animal, and then sacrificing that animal as a symbolic atonement for their transgressions . . . in symbol the sinner transferred his guilt to the innocent, and the innocent died in the place of the guilty.
4. How could the death of an animal make good for the sins of a human being? IT COULDN'T! High on the great divide which still lay centuries in the future stood that

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Great Sacrifice which alone could give meaning and value to all the rivers of blood which were shed in Jewish temples.

5. The death of Christ was the *real* thing . . . the death of the animal had atoning value for the O.T. believer only because he had put his faith in the promised One and the promised Act of God who was to make final payment for all his sins.
6. A 10 dollar bill has value, not because of the worth of the paper it is printed on, but because of secure collateral which may lie 1000's of miles away . . . so the death of the animal in the O.T. had value only because of the collateral which was 1000's of years away.

B. Arranged

1. The Son of God left the glory of Paradise to give Himself in payment and to cancel our debt
2. He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men . . . and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, Phil. 2:5-11.
3. He came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give His life a *ransom* for many, Matt. 20:28.
4. No one took His life, He laid it down (John 10:17-18).
5. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).
6. The Great Arrangement is documented in Hebrews 10:5-18. Animal sacrifices did not pay the debt — a body was prepared for the Son of God (according to the O.T. scriptures, i.e., "the roll of the book") — then The Son said, Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God.

AND BY THAT WILL WE HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE OFFERING OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST ONCE FOR ALL!

FOR BY A SINGLE OFFERING HE HAS PERFECTED FOR ALL TIME THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED

WHERE THERE IS FORGIVENESS OF THESE, THERE IS NO LONGER ANY OFFERING FOR SIN. PAID IN FULL!

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C. Accepted

1. All of this theology about a substitutionary, redeeming death is vain without validation
2. It may sound great for a man 2000 years ago to walk up and down Palestine and say I will die for you and pay your debt to God **BUT DOES GOD AGREE?**
3. This was answered for all men and for all time on the first Easter morning. Christ not only died for the sin of men; **HE ROSE AGAIN!** If Christ had remained in the grave, all talk of His having paid the debt of human sin would be idle and vain . . . we would still be in our sins (I Cor. 15:17-18).
4. The resurrection of Christ not only demonstrates He is the Son of God, **IT ALSO DEMONSTRATES THAT GOD IN HEAVEN HAS ACCEPTED THE SACRIFICE OF HIS SON FOR THE SINS OF ALL THE WORLD.**
5. The Easter miracle is Heaven's **RECEIPT**, presented to all men of all ages, saying: *Payment Received — Paid in Full!* (II Cor. 1:20).
6. God says in effect, "I have accepted the ransom which My Son has brought in payment for your sin. His resurrection is the stamp and seal of My divine approval. His resurrection is not only *His* vindication — but *yours* also. For, because of His payment which I have now accepted in your stead, you are free!"
God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing (charging) their trespasses unto them, (II Cor. 5:19).
7. Christ has, as it were, picked up all the moral I.O.U.'s of the human race, all of the accumulated moral debts of every member of the human family which were owed to God and has "blotted them out" **AND GOD HAS VALIDATED FOREVER THE PAYMENT AND HAS MADE IT PUBLIC FOR AS LONG AS TIME SHALL LAST BY DOING SO IN THE GREATEST HISTORICAL EVENT OF ALL TIME . . . THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.**

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Conclusion

- I. We may be redeemed by taking *citizenship* in His spiritual Kingdom.
- II. We then experience the redemption and renewal of every facet of our life.

Special Study

THE WORK OF RECONCILIATION

Text: Eph. 2:11-22

(See Also II Cor. 5:11-21)

Introduction

What does the word *reconciled* or *reconciliation* mean? Webster's Collegiate Dict. says the English word is from French and Latin meaning: "To cause to be friendly again; to bring back to harmony."

"Reconciliation" — in our English Bibles is a translation of the Greek words *katallasso*, *katallage*, or *diallassomai* — all of which literally mean "to exchange, or to change over."

There are two Hebrew words, *kaphar* and *racah*, translated in the KJV sometimes by the English word *reconciliation*, but usually should be translated *atonement*. (see I Sam. 29:4; II Chron. 29:24; Ezek. 45:15; Dan. 9:24, etc.).

Most of those of us who have to watch closely how we spend our money do something every month which should illustrate our word. We take the *statement* we get from our bank and *compare* it with what our check stubs say, and hope the two are *reconciled* — that is, *in harmony with one another*. That is what it is called — reconciling your bank statement. What it really means is *surrendering* your estimate of your account to the bank's statement — bank's make no mistakes! We had one little girl at college one year who never had learned that you had to reconcile your check book with the bank's statement. She thought you could go on writing checks as long as you had blank checks in your book — until one "bounced"!

When a printer *reconciles* a margin, he brings the printed type into harmony with a pre-established margin-line so everything is *even* and *squared*. That is what *reconciliation* means. So if you've been reconciled to God you've been made square with God. God makes us "come out even" when he reconciles us.

Reconciliation to God — being in harmony with our Creator, our Father, our Judge — is the *feeling* we *really* want! Everyone is talking and writing and singing about spiritual, religious feeling and what it all boils down to is the need to *feel reconciled* to God.

THE FEELING MUST BE PRECEDED BY FAITH AND

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FAITH MUST BE PRECEDED BY FACTS — *FACTS ABOUT GOD AND CHRIST AND THE WORK OF RECONCILIATION* — AND THOSE FACTS ARE FOUND NOWHERE BUT THE BIBLE!

“Peaches and Herb” sang, in the 70’s, “Reunited, and it feels so good.” That is what reconciliation is all about.

Discussion

Man’s reconciliation to God is impossible without the work of Christ. Therefore, when we speak of the work of reconciliation we are talking about the work of God (in Christ) exclusively.

I. **ESTRANGED** (Part of God’s work of reconciliation is estrangement)

A. God is a person, not an idea — he is a personal entity apart from our thinking and imagining.

1. God, as a person, is the ultimate lover — He loves, He is love. But the love, real love, true love, of a person is more than emotion.
2. Love is character — character made of likes and dislikes (even hate), of attractions and repulsions, according to the person’s attraction or sympathy for, or the aversion to, the character and conduct of those with whom it comes in contact.
3. God is a person, not a force. He loves and hates, like and dislikes. He can, and does, discriminate between the righteous and the wicked.

B. God’s love is capable of being turned to hostility

1. If that were not true, **HOW COULD GOD LOVE US FOR OUR GOOD WITHOUT SHOWING HIS HOSTILITY TO WHAT WOULD DO US HARM?**
2. When divine love is forced back, refused, scoffed at and mocked by our rebellion so that it cannot flow forth to bless as it wishes, it *chafes* against the rebellion out of sheer love.
3. Divine love, real love, is *goodness in earnestness* trying to make others good. And when it cannot have its way, it is grieved. When it is deliberately and maliciously thwarted,

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it is angry! Mark 3:5

C. We have estranged ourselves from God!

1. We are impudent, thankless, petulant children; we are a faithless bride of God.

We have said: "I will have my own way; I want my Heavenly Father's indulgence, but I do not want his way!" "I DO NOT WANT TESTS AND TRIALS AND THE CROSS (death to self)."

2. Our own selfishness has created a barrier, a wall of hostility, between us and our God.
3. We have declared ourselves *enemies* of God and His only response or the only course left for Him is to be our enemy. God loves every man with self-giving love, but he loves his own sovereignty and his own faithfulness more. **GOD MUST KEEP HIS WORD: HE MUST VINDICATE HIS FAITHFULNESS: WITHOUT THAT HE CANNOT TRULY LOVE ANYONE!**

D. Man has rebelled and there is hostility:

1. Man's selfish hostility — God's hostility of love.
2. Does that sound like an impossibility? **HOSTILITY OF LOVE!?**

Read again the record of David and Absalom. Absalom's was the hostility of selfishness, rebellion and hatred for his father; David's was the hostility of selflessness and love, longing deeply for reconciliation with his son. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" II Sam. 18:33. Absalom was never reconciled to his father because he would not surrender to David's love — David did all he could to reconcile him.

E. The closest analogy to our condition is probably to be found in the human family relationship; parents with rebellious children; spouses with rebellious mates, estranged because of selfishness — "I WANT MY WAY, I WILL HAVE MY WAY. . . ."

1. *Barriers* to peaceful, harmonious, communicative, loving, growing, intimacy are formed.
2. Though one person may deeply desire the barriers to be broken down, the offended person may still be angry

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with the offender *because* of the *hurting, destructive* actions the offender continues to do toward a relationship that would only bring blessing to both!

Classic Biblical illustrations of human estrangements and reconciliations are found in the lives of Jacob and Esau — Joseph and his brothers — Hosea and his wife — Saul and David; then there is the parable Jesus told of the Prodigal Son, his father, and his elder brother.

Listen to these words: You'll never suspect their origin:

God's love extends to everyone, no matter how good or how bad, but it is a love whose *integrity* is grounded in his *holiness*. It is holy love, and is therefore not hobbled by the sentimentality and easy tolerance that passes for love today. The cliché (my words) "God will understand" is neither love nor grace: it is flaccid indulgence. It doesn't care enough to *demand* growth or change. It just leaves people alone, and wants the same for itself.

As usual, C.S. Lewis is helpful here. He writes, "To ask that God be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God. Because he is what he is, his *love* must, in the nature of things, be *impeded* and *repelled* by certain strains in our present character, and because he already loves us he must *labor* to make us lovable. God is committed to nothing less than restoring in us his image broken in the fall of man, and making us like his Son, (Eph. 2:10) — we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. Because of this, Lewis concludes, *his love is more sensitive than hatred itself* to every blemish in the beloved . . . of all powers he forgives most, but condones least, he is pleased with little, but demands all."

God understands, that is true. But he understands in a way that is more fiery and more shattering than we can ever imagine this side of glory, if even then, I read somewhere of an artist who was commissioned to paint a mural on the great window at the entrance to Macy's department store in N.Y. City. A few weeks after he finished he walked to the store to look again at his work. It was then that he discovered that the store had hired someone else to make some alterations in what he had painted. He was so horrified and enraged at the distortion of his creation that he hurled his body through the window.

This is a vivid picture of God's holy love and the wrath that is, of necessity, a part of that love. He resists us as we are, not because he doesn't love us, but because he does. His grace is love that will not let us go, even when it would be perfectly just and easy to do so. (by Ben Patterson in "Wittenburg Door," Feb.-Mar. 1983)

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WHEN WE ARE HOSTILE TOWARD GOD, HE IS HOSTILE TOWARD US . . . BECAUSE HE MUST BE TRUE TO HIMSELF, AND TRUE TO LOVE . . . THAT IS TRUE LOVE, DIVINE LOVE.

WHEN WE ESTRANGE OURSELVES FROM GOD, HE ESTRANGES HIMSELF FROM US . . . HE MUST BE FAITHFUL TO HIS OWN INTEGRITY AND HOLINESS . . . HE MUST BE TRUE TO *REAL* LOVE. HIS HOSTILITY AND ESTRANGEMENT, IS HIS LAST RESORT ATTEMPT TO ALLURE US BACK TO HIMSELF.

Please read the 2nd chapter of Hosea

Please read Isaiah 54:4-8

Please read Christ's seven letters to his bride, the Church in Rev. 2-3

GOD LONGS FOR US, BUT HE WANTS US TO LONG FOR HIM . . . WITHOUT THAT THERE IS NO REAL *RECONCILIATION!*

"I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress they seek me, saying, Come let us return to the Lord; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up." Hosea 5:15-6:1. (Read the rest of Hosea 6).

II. EMBRACED (Part of God's work of reconciliation is to embrace)

A. The One offended initiated the work of reconciliation. God took the first step toward reconciling us to him and himself to us. **THAT IS THE WAY IT MUST BE DONE . . . IT CAN'T BE DONE ANY OTHER WAY — NOT TRUE RECONCILIATION.**

THERE CAN BE NO FORGIVENESS UNTIL THE ONE OFFENDED BEARS THE BURDEN OF THE OFFENSE!

1. God embraced man, by becoming man Himself in Christ Jesus.
2. God erased the enmity (barrier, the offense) to the relationship between Himself and man by *appeasing Himself*

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in the atoning death of His Son.

3. In Matt. 5:24 Jesus instructs us that if we know a brother has anything against us, we are to go (make the initiatory move) and do something to try to remove our brother's estrangement, and so bring about a reconciliation. What we do or say may not allure him to be reconciled, but we are to make the initial move!
4. This is exactly how God acted in Christ. He did everything in His power to remove the barrier — even to “becoming sin for us”! He bore our offense in order to allure us into being reconciled!

HE DECLARED HIMSELF, HIS JUSTICE, HIS HOLINESS, SATISFIED AND VINDICATED IN THE VICARIOUS ATONEMENT OF CHRIST. HE PROMISES THAT IF WE ACCEPT HIS HOLY WAY IN FAITH, WE NEED NOT FEEL HIS HOSTILITY AND ESTRANGEMENT ANY MORE. IF HE IS NOT ESTRANGED . . . CERTAINLY WE *NEED* NOT BE — BUT WE *MAY* BE IF WE CHOOSE!

A missionary at Dorchester, England, relates: “I frequently visited the penitentiary there. One day an officer called my attention to a prisoner and told this story — When he was a young man he was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to life imprisonment. After several years, Queen Victoria granted the man a pardon. Freedom, however, lost its attraction, and after a few days' liberty he returned to prison, requesting to be re-admitted. His request was granted, and there he was. By the grace of his sovereign, a free man, entitled upon request to walk through the gates as readily as the warden himself. Yet, so long as he preferred prison life, he must submit to prison discipline, prison food, and wear prison garb. Each night, when the bell rang, he must fall into line, walk into his cell, where the iron door clanged behind him and listen to the heavy bolt grating harshly in the lock and where night after night the receding steps of the turnkey revived the consciousness that he was still a prisoner, *unreconciled* to his sovereign and to free society.

What kind of stupidity had taken possession of this man's mind? And

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yet, how like thousands living today? Preferring the false security of enslavement by conformity to the world, rather than *responsible freedom by transformation and reconciliation* to their sovereign God!

B. God reconciled Himself to man. God embraced man.

1. Christ's atoning death supplied the means by which God could forever after have a gracious attitude toward the sinner.
2. God himself performed the actual, *objective deed* on His own Son that changed God's attitude and God's relationship toward the estranged sinner.

Frank Weaver tells this story: Two men who had been friends and companions in their youth met in the police court, one on the magistrate's bench, the other the prisoner before the court. The case was tried and the prisoner was found guilty. The judge pronounced the sentence: 14 days hard labor or a fine of \$1,000. The condemned man had nothing to pay the fine. The judge rose from the bench, threw aside his magistrate's robes, and, stepping down to the prisoner, stood beside his friend, paid his fine for him, and then said, "Now, John are you coming home with me to supper."

The Judge justified both the integrity of the law and the guilt of the law-breaker. They were reconciled.

God, in Christ's death and resurrection, was both just and the Justifier of those who believe and obey. **GOD AND SINFUL MAN ARE RECONCILED!**

- C. Reconciliation is the very *essence* of the good news.
1. Reconciliation is the goal of God's redemptive plan from the garden of Eden to the throne of the Lamb in Revelation.
 2. Reconciliation is the goal of our faith in Christ. To be restored to personal, mental, spiritual fellowship with God is what the soul of man longs for.
 3. We are more than merely saved — we are embraced, endeared, reconciled.

IF WE ARE NOT ALLOWING OURSELVES EVERYDAY TO BE

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MORE AND MORE CONQUERED BY GOD THROUGH CHRIST, WE ARE NOT BEING RECONCILED TO OUR FATHER . . . WE ARE STILL PRODIGALS, FAR AWAY FROM HOME AND THE FATHER'S ARMS

III. ENDEARED (Part of God's work of reconciliation is to endear himself to us).

A. IT is this very deed of God performed on His only Son that not only changed God's relationship—

1. But it also provides the *possibility* and *power* for the estranged sinner, influenced by God's love and grace, God's justice and faithfulness, to desire reconciliation and to seek it.
2. God is the first mover. He makes the reconciliation. He accomplishes what is impossible for man He declares man pardoned, forgiven, embraced, reconciled.
3. And the fact of God's work of grace, moves us to accept, and change our attitudes and relationship.

B. It is therefore the privilege of men to respond to such great grace.

1. God, in his great wisdom, provided the appeasement by which He is reconciled toward the sinner.
2. And at the same time provided the *power* for *us* to be reconciled toward him.

John 12:32 — "If I be lifted up. . . ."

I John 4:10 — ". . . not that we loved God, but that he loved us. . . ."

II Corinthians 5:18-19 — "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. . . ."

Romans 5:8,10 ". . . while we were enemies, Christ died for us. . . ."

C. We have access to the Father

1. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes: "Now the important thing to realise here is that the Lord Jesus Christ does not merely prepare or open the way to this. He actually effects it, He actually produces it Himself. It is He who introduces us to the Father, brings us, takes us by the hand and ushers us into His presence. I am anxious to em-

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phasize the fact that this is really the grand end and object of salvation. And I suppose there has never been a time when this needs to be emphasized more than today. We have all become so subjective, and are so much interested in our own moods and states and feelings and conditions, that when we give our testimonies we say that what salvation has done is to make us happy, or to take away this or that; and there we stop. *But the grand object of salvation is to bring us into the presence of God — nothing less, nothing short of that.*" (*God's Way of Reconciliation*, p. 251)

2. The object of salvation is reconciliation — happiness on God's terms, not ours.

The object of God's redemption and salvation is to make us love him and long for clear, unfettered, access without any hostility toward God and his kingdom.

THE OBJECT OF VICARIOUS ATONEMENT IS TO SATISFY GOD'S HOLINESS AND JUSTICE, AND TO AFFECT MAN'S UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER TO HIS WISDOM AND LOVE! IN ORDER THAT GOD AND MAN MAY ENJOY ONE ANOTHER'S PRESENCE!

IV. EVANGELISM (Those who have been reconciled have a work to do in God's program of reconciling the world unto himself).

- A. First, we are to regard no one from a human point of view.
 1. Everything and everybody we now think about, view, regard, relate to, according to the *mind of Christ*.
 2. We do not regard people or God's kingdom from *even our own point of view, but only as Christ directs us in his word*.
 3. Enough of this indulgent, destructive sentimentality that wants to sacrifice another person's reconciliation to God for the sake of being popular, being thought well of, not creating tension. Beware when *all* men speak well of you! Christians live in constant tension against worldliness!
 4. If we, as *ambassadors* of Christ, expect to do our work in reconciling the world to God, we must present the terms

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of peace and reconciliation the sovereign has authorized. THE TERMS ARE *COMPLETE SURRENDER*! Christ views his kingdom as one whose members have counted the cost of complete surrender. It is not a mental half-way house. The Bible repeatedly says those of a divided mind and heart are not in the kingdom.

RECONCILIATION, BY ITS VERY DEFINITION, DEMANDS UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER, AGREEMENT OR PACIFICATION OF THE HOSTILE REBEL TO THE SOVEREIGN VICTOR.

THOSE AMBASSADORS WHO REPRESENT THE SOVEREIGN ARE AUTHORIZED TO PROCLAIM NOTHING LESS!

The work of reconciliation cannot be accomplished by baptizing bodies with minds left in worldly rebellion. People cannot be friends of the world and friends of God at the same time. If their minds are set on worldliness — they are enemies of God! James 4

- B. Second, we are appealers and beseechers, not manipulators.
 - 1. Paul wrote in II Corinthians that since we know the *terror* of the Lord we *persuade* men to be reconciled. He also said that the love of Christ *constrains* us to preach.
 - 2. No one was ever truly reconciled by being manipulated into the kingdom. As ambassadors of Christ we are to appeal to, beseech, and persuade as many as will be persuaded, as long as we have breath. **THOSE WHO WILL NOT BE PERSUADED ARE NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY.**
 - 3. There are two pre-requisites to becoming an *ambassador* of reconciliation.
 - a. **KNOW THE MESSAGE THOROUGHLY.** We are not reconciling people to how we feel — but to what God has declared!
 - b. **KNOW HOW TO COMMUNICATE THAT MESSAGE.**
We cannot do people's thinking for them, but we must develop the communicative skills to get them to

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think about what God says in His word.

THERE IS SO MUCH *NON-THINK* IN THE WORLD TODAY, IN THE AREAS OF FAITH, MORALS, IMMORALITY . . . AND THAT AMONGST THE SO-CALLED INTELLIGENT-SIA OF OUR WORLD!

J.B. Phillips says, in *Making Men Whole*, p. 76ff: "It is not enough for us who are preachers or writers to give an adequate *performance* before the eyes and ears of our (audiences) . . . instead we have the formidable task of *reconciling the Word of truth* with the thought-forms of a people estranged from God; interpreting without changing or diluting the essential Word. . . .

Doubtless there are times when we all bewail the particular pains and distresses of our calling, and even think enviously of someone else's vocation, but the plain fact is that if we are called of God to bear a part in His purpose, there can be no evasion of its cost.

Let us then be clear what is involved in making our vocation serve God's purpose of reconciliation. Christianity is full of joy, but it is not a *joyride*. . . . It is as if we were called to be, as Sir Winston Churchill said in one of the darkest hours of the late world war, both grim and gay. The grimness comes from our knowledge of the strength of the forces arrayed against us; the stubbornness of human self-will, the sheer dead weight of apathy which above all else would quench the fires of our spirit. But full of joy we must be too, because day by day we have the deepest satisfaction this world can afford, of knowing that we are co-operating with — and even being allowed to share the cost of — the purpose of God Himself."

Conclusion

We do not comprehend the essence of reconciliation until we love deeply and intimately, and are hurt by a loved one's estrangement. I suppose we begin to understand when we have children. They are a part of us. We love them more than ourselves. When they estrange themselves from us we discipline and chasten them — not because we are unwilling to be hurt, but because we are unwilling for *them* to be hurt. Sometimes the reconciling time is long and difficult. It takes

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great patience and much prayer. We have children here at OBC. You are our children in the faith. We have many of your brothers and sisters all over the world. We long for them — to see them — to give to them — to love them. We pray for them. We are unwilling for them to be hurt.

We have great expectations for you. We love you. We are unwilling for you to be hurt. We will not indulge you so that you will be hurt. On the other hand, we will give you everything in our power to keep you from being hurt. We want, first, to see you totally reconciled to God — totally surrendered — Unconditionally surrendered to Christ. **THEN, WE LONG TO SEE YOUR BECOME AN *AMBASSADOR* OF RECONCILIATION**

I think God has given us human family relationship so we may have an existential and even experiential knowledge of personal relationships which may be as humanly analogous as possible to the ultimate personal, spiritual brethren.

When I was a teen-ager, I alienated myself from my father. I didn't hate him, I just didn't want to be around him. I felt like he was too bossy — too demanding — didn't understand about my desires. I didn't fight him or openly disobey him. But I did not feel like I wanted to be close to him. It was not his fault. All this time he was forgiving and forgetting all my prodigal stubbornness.

After marriage and two children of my own, I learned a lot. I finally admitted whose fault the alienation was. The last eight years of his life he lived right across the street from me. I got to know my Dad. We worked together, we took trips together, we went everywhere together. We became like one person. I was reconciled to him. **NOW THAT HE HAS PASSED FROM THIS LIFE, I LONG FOR HIS PRESENCE!**

That is what God has for us — reconciliation. He desires for us to be reconciled to him, to be at peace with him, to *long* for him!

When we, like the apostle Paul, find that war raging within ourselves

THE WORK OF RECONCILIATION

so that we cry out for deliverance from our wretched selves, we may find reconciliation when we acknowledge that God has atoned for our sins in Christ and when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit (found in the word of the Spirit) and are led by the will of the Spirit (found in the word of the Spirit).

When the Spirit of God, through the Word of God, bears witness with our spirit that we are a child of God, then we have begun our reconciliation — we have come home to our Father and we are one with him.

The WORK OF RECONCILIATION is beautiful and emotionally put to poetry by Francis Thompson in his poem, "The Hound Of Heaven."

It closes like this:

"How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which they child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?

"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!

Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me!"

Special Study

FAITH

(In order to appropriate the death of Christ)
5th lecture in a series of six on the
Meaning of the Cross; for Life of Christ

Introduction

I. SOME DEFINITIONS

A. Hebrews 11:1ff (*πίστις, pistis*)

1. Not so much a definition as it is a statement of faith's results — gives assurance of things hoped for, conviction about things not seen. In other words faith supplies *reality* to that which is behind the sensory world.
2. Faith is best defined when it is exemplified; in the lives of the saints of O.T. and N.T. — but especially as exemplified in the earthly life of Jesus.

B. Alexander Campbell, Dec. 7, 1834, in an address on Reason and Faith, New York City Concert Hall,

1. "Reason deciding that the testimony is true, is *believing*; reason deciding that the testimony is false, is *disbelieving*; reason unable to decide, is *skepticism*."
2. Faith involves the whole man — but it must **FIRST** involve the intellect.

II. THE BASIC ELEMENT OF PERSONAL FAITH

- A. Trust responding to evidence
- B. Commitment responding to need
- C. Fellowship responding to love

Discussion

I. AN INTRODUCTION

A. We must *know* whom we believe

1. In the case of eternal life or eternal death it is never trite to repeat that before we can commit our souls to anyone we must first **KNOW** them
2. We cannot believe in Jesus until we know Him

FAITH

- B. Alexander Campbell once said, no savage ever shed a tear over the death of Christ where it was not known
 - 1. He was not being facetious
 - 2. Rom. 10:17, "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."
- C. The creation of faith in all men was the primary purpose for the recording of the facts about Jesus' life (the gospels). "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." John 20:30-31
- D. So the first step in appropriating the death of Christ to sinners is that sinners be introduced to just who Jesus is, and that factually, He died, rose again, and that according to this same Jesus Christ, He died in the sinner's place.
IF THEY DON'T KNOW HIM, THEY CANNOT BELIEVE IN HIM, AND HIS DEATH WILL NOT APPLY TO THEIR SINS

II. AN IDENTIFICATION

- A. We must *identify* with Him
 - 1. We must believe Him to such an extent that we trust Him to be Who He claims and to be able to Do All He Claims
 - 2. Here is where we "accept His death as our own death."
 - 3. Here is where we accept, by faith, that when He died, we died
 - 4. Seth Wilson said, "If I accept His death as my death so that my death is past, and it is no more my life that lives, and I am united with Him so that God sees Him in me, because He now lives in me, and sees me in Him, then He died my death."
- B. Galatians 2:20 states our position as believers
 - 1. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself up for me."
 - 2. It is our belief and trust in Christ that causes us to acknowledge that our "old man" died with Him on the

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CROSS.

3. Galatians 6:14 "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."
 4. Jesus uses the incident of Moses and the serpent in the wilderness to illustrate how His being lifted up will save men who "look" upon Him in faith
 5. Galatians 3:26-27 — "For in Christ Jesus are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
- C. Obedience is a definite part of our identifying with Him
1. But this is a subject to be treated separately
 2. Suffice it to say her that a faith without obedience is a false faith
 3. It is possible for men, in a christian nation, to know the facts about Jesus (some facts, though probably distorted by false teachers) AND STILL REFUSE TO IDENTIFY WITH HIM BECAUSE THEY SIMPLY DON'T WANT TO DIE TO SELF

III. AN INFUSION

- A. Our relationship to Jesus Christ must be deeper, more intimate than identification
1. If His death is to become ours, and His life is to become ours we must by unreserved faith (trust) let His personality be so infused into ours we find that unity with Him which the N.T. urges
 2. It is expressed so aptly in II Cor. 5:14-17 . . . "For the love of Christ controls us; because we are *convinced* (note that word) that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; (because we don't live to exercise our own minds and to have our own feelings and to make our own judgments . . . we simply don't have a life of our own anymore . . . we are bought with a price). . . . Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new

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has come.”

B. Seth Wilson

1. “The greatest mistake the Christian can make is to say, ‘it’s my life, and I’ll live it.’ Because that just rejects our salvation, just like that. The only salvation there is for any sinner, is to give my life up to Jesus and to receive His death for mine. And anytime anybody thinks ‘It’s my life and I’ll live it,’ he has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. He has forgotten his Savior, he has renounced His master, and he has immediately taken all his sins upon himself afresh.”

C. This infusion must be a union of His nature with ours

1. We must dwell in Him and His will and His character (doing what He did, saying what He said, trusting in the Father as He trusted).
2. He is the source of our thinking, feeling, willing, acting
3. He is the Vine and we are the branches

D. We trust Him, believe in Him, commit ourselves to Him to the extent that we cease to live as we formerly lived. . . . We died . . . and when we enter into covenant relationship with Him, two lives are blended together and His Spirit fills me, and my guilt is upon Him, and His righteousness is upon me.

1. “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and *become partakers of the divine nature.*” II Pet. 1:3-4

Conclusion

- I. SALVATION IS NOT JUST AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE
- II. SALVATION IS BY FAITH . . . AND FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE TESTIMONY

- A. Our salvation or redemption focuses on the objective deeds of God in history

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- B. "Reason deciding that the testimony is true, is *believing* . . ."
- C. When we use our reason, investigating the evidence (testimony), and decide that the testimony is true, and we are willing to accept and commit ourselves to the consequences of the testimony . . . **WE ARE REDEEMED!**
- D. Of course, accepting the consequences of the truthfulness of the testimony is to accept our own death!!! and our new life!!! in Christ.

Special Study

OBEDIENCE

6th in series of 6 lectures for Life of Christ,
Semester VI, The Meaning of the death of Christ

Introduction

I. MEANING

- A. Heb. *shama*; to hear, hearken, obey
- B. Gr. *ὑπακούω*, *hupakouo* (most frequent in N.T.); to hearken, lit. to hear under denoting the obligation of compliance

II. USAGE

- A. Obedience in the Bible signifies active response to something one hears — not just passive listening
- B. One cannot truly hear God's word without acting upon it
- C. Obedience is the fundamental O.T. virtue
 - 1. I Sam. 15:22
 - 2. Jer. 11:7 (It is the one thing God requires and which from the first determines His attitude to His creatures)
- D. Just as important in the N.T.
 - 1. It is both the cause and condition of salvation; through one act of obedience (Rom. 5:19) Christ became to all His followers the author of an eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9). But this salvation is only to be obtained on condition that they also obey.
 - 2. In His farewell address to His disciples Christ makes obedience the supreme test of love (John 14:15,23)
 - 3. Paul declares that the obedience of the Christians should extend even to one's very thoughts (II Cor. 10:5)
 - 4. We are exhorted: (I Pet. 1:22)
to obey the truth (Gal. 5:7) (Rom. 2:8) and not to obey wickedness
to obey the gospel of God (I Pet. 4:17) (II Thess. 1:8)
to obey the Son (John 3:36)

Discussion

I. OFFERED OBEDIENCE

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- A. Too often we look at obedience as an obligation
 - 1. Actually God is doing us a favor in offering to let us obey Him
 - 2. Man's most basic need is fellowship with God . . . without God we become, in spite of all our human efforts, totally and helplessly alone
 - 3. Fellowship with God is made possible by ". . . loving the Lord your God, walk in all his ways, and cleave unto him. . . ." Only when we respond to God's love by loving obedience to His will can we experience communion with Him.
- B. Jesus made it clear that the only faith (trust) that counts as a faith that results in obedience.
 - 1. "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). **YOU SEE, THE ONE WHO HAS NO DESIRE TO DO GOD'S WILL WOULD NOT BE HAPPY IN HEAVEN!**
 - 2. "Why do you call me, Lord, and not do what I tell you?" Luke 6:46
 - 3. The Parable of the Two Sons (Matt. 21:28-32). Which one did the will of his father? **THE ONE WHO OBEYED!** Not the one who said he would and didn't!
- C. Faith without obedience is disobedience.
 - 1. Satan and the demons know the truth, but do not obey it (James 2:19)
 - 2. Obedience is not legalism. . . . Legalism is an attitude Obedience is not doing something whereby we earn or merit salvation
 - 3. Obedience is merely acknowledging God's wisdom, love, and authority, and availing oneself of the privilege of sharing or participating in that love, wisdom and authority
 - 4. **OBEEDIENCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO PARTICIPATE IN WHAT GOD HAS TO OFFER!**

II. OPPORTUNITY TO OBEY

- A. God not only offers us obedience, He provides the method or agency by which we may obey

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1. The first great act of obedience which unites us in the death of Christ is baptism
 2. This is what the 6th chapter of Romans is all about
 3. We are not saved simply by Jesus' death, but by our union with Jesus' death, by our entering into Jesus' death, by the applying of His death to us.
 4. Jesus died for the whole world, yet His death does not accomplish the redemption for the whole world, only of those who are baptized into Him. **THAT IS WHY BAPTISM IS SO IMPORTANT, THAT IS WHY FAITH IN HIM IS SO IMPORTANT.**
 5. Of course, there is nothing efficacious in the mere act of being dunked in water . . . hundreds of people do that every summer in swimming pools and bath tubs.
 - a. The faith that leads a person to surrender self-will and self-direction over to God and causes that person to turn to God obeying God's word is what makes baptism efficacious.
 - b. Baptism can be turned into an idol just like the serpent of the wilderness was idolized.
 - c. Baptism without the proper relationship to the Person of Jesus Christ is no better than some pagan religious ritual
 6. On the other hand, baptism is the most appropriate way the Christian may express what he has believed about Jesus' death and resurrection.
 - a. In this act of obedience the believer both symbolizes what he believes in his heart (Rom. 6:17) and has an objective point in time and in deed where he may surely experience doing the will of God (which experience he must have), to say, "I have done God's will."
 - b. It is here the believer declares to the world and to his own heart that he accepts the sentence of death to his own self-will and accepts the new life or new nature of Christ to dwell in his mind, feeling, will and body
- B. The other great act of obedience which unites us with the death of Jesus is the Lord's Supper; we may argue about fre-

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quency, but not the *doing* of it!

1. Jesus definitely instituted the Supper to relate our faith and thinking to His death as a ransom (Matt. 26:26-29 and parallels)
 2. Paul is also definite in I Cor. 11:23-32.
 3. Again, there is no miraculous efficacy in the loaf and the cup in and of themselves . . . we do not earn or merit the blood of Christ by observing the Supper.
 4. But the Supper is the most appropriate way the believer may express what he continues to believe about Jesus' death and resurrection.
 - a. In this act of obedience the believer both symbolizes what he believes in his heart and has, at the same time, an objective point whereby he may experience doing the will of God.
 - b. It is here the believer declares to the world and to his own heart that he accepts the sentence of death to his own self-will and accepts the new life or new nature or Christ to dwell in him.
- C. All the other acts of obedience to the gospel of Christ are God's opportunities for us to participate in the death of Christ in our stead . . . opportunities to put to practice what we believe (that when He died, we died) (and that when He was raised we were raised to a new life) (Col. 3)
1. Stewardship (giving)
 2. Evangelism (spreading truth and light to the world)
 3. Benevolence (ministering, as He ministered and gave Himself)
 4. Worshipping (Christ's act of obedient death was the One Supreme Act of Worship to God) (He was heard for His godly *fear*)

III. OBJECT OF OUR OBEDIENCE

A. Christ, the Lord

1. If it were not for His obedience there would be little motivation for our obedience
2. He pioneered the way in obedience. . . . He demonstrated in the flesh that it was of the very nature of God to serve and obey.

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3. After the great foot-washing incident, Jesus said, "If you know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." John 13
 4. Jesus demonstrated that it is possible to dwell in the flesh and still to obey the Father.
- B. God does not require an obedience we are unable to render.
1. Whatever his requirements may be, we are at the same time given strength necessary to keep them.
 2. There is therefore no legitimate excuse for disobedience.
 3. The same Jesus who requires of his followers that they obey the will of the heavenly Father obeyed.
 4. Furthermore He promised to dwell in us in His Spirit to aid us in obeying the Father.

Conclusion

JESUS CAME AND TABERNACLED AMONG MEN IN THE FLESH, TRUSTED GOD, OBEYED GOD, SURRENDERED HIS LIFE AND LIVED NOT UNTO HIMSELF BUT FOR GOD AND OTHERS.

HE DID SO PERFECTLY. HIS DEATH PAID OUR PRICE, SATISFIED THE JUSTICE OF GOD, SERVED OUR SENTENCE AND CHANGED GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD REBELLIOUS SINNERS.

JESUS DID ALL THIS TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE IN OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD AND DRAW US INTO THE FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNION WITH OUR FATHER AND CREATOR WHO WANTS TO BLESS US ABOVE ALL WE ARE ABLE TO IMAGINE.

WE MAY ENTER INTO THAT OFFERED FELLOWSHIP BY FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

IN SO DOING WE ACCEPT HIS DEATH AS OURS AND HIS LIFE AS OURS. . . . WE NO LONGER LIVE TO SELF. . . . WE ARE NOT OUR OWN TO DO AS WE SELFISHLY PLEASE

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ANymORE. . . . WE HAVE ENTERED INTO A DEATH, AND A RESURRECTION!

THOSE WHO HAVE DIED ONCE, HAVE NO NEED TO FEAR THE SECOND DEATH.

God will not force you to enter into a fellowship (sharing) or covenant of obedience. He will not force anyone to be what he does not want, really want, to be.

No man would be happy being coerced to be good and righteous; e.g. the Parable of the Prodigal and elder Sons; Jesus did not force the Rich Young Ruler to give up his riches and follow Him.

Chapter Six

THE PROBLEM WITH PAGANISM (6:1-7:1)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Which O.T. prophet does Paul quote in 6:2, and why?
2. Why would Paul “commend” himself (6:4) when in 5:12 he disclaimed doing so?
3. What is the point in Paul’s review of his “troubles”?
4. What is being “mismatched” with unbelievers?
5. To what extent is the christian to “separate” himself from unbelievers?

SECTION 1

In Attitudes (6:1-2)

Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to **6** accept the grace of God in vain. ²For he says, “At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.” Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

6:1 Profitlessness: Paul is professing that he is laboring with God to keep the Corinthian christians from coming up empty of the grace of God. The Greek word *kenon*, translated “vain,” stresses the absence of quality. It expresses the hollowness of anything, the absence of that which otherwise might be possessed. Chapter 6 ties into chapter 5. They are to be no longer like the pagan people around them, viewing everything from human perspective. If they do, it is certain they are void of the grace of God. The grace of God demands that those who have actuated it in their lives see everything from the divine perspective! If those who claim to be christians still look at people and things differently than God’s Word directs, the grace of God has been of no profit to them. Grace that is not responded to is an empty grace. It is no grace at all. It has never been received.

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Paul had a problem with some christians who were responding to the grace of God in practically the same way their pagan (heathen) neighbors responded. Though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him (Rom. 1:8-21). Those who called themselves christian at Corinth had probably not fallen to the same depravity as those described in Romans the first chapter, but they were going that direction. They were listening to the Judaizers, glorying in the flesh, and refusing to let the pure grace of God fill them so they might see all from the divine perspective. That is the way heathen respond to God's grace. Preachers still have this problem, either with receiving the grace of God themselves, or with church-members who are empty of God's grace.

6:2 Procrastination: The apostle quotes the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 49:8). Isaiah's statement (49:8) is a messianic prophecy. The "time of favor" in Isaiah's prophecy calls upon the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8ff) as a type of the messianic age. Jubilee was a type of the time of delight and grace that would come when the Messiah appeared (see Isa. 61:2; Luke 4:16ff). Isaiah was predicting the N.T. dispensation (see author's comments in *Isaiah, Vol. III*, pg. 184, pub. College Press).

The Judaizers among the Corinthian christians were seducing some into legalism and a rejection of the dispensation of grace. Paul quotes Isaiah here to refute the Judaizers. Paul is using the O.T. to prove that the gospel he preached to the Corinthians was the true gospel in the Messiah. They need not listen to the Judaizers and wait for another Messiah. To procrastinate would be to miss the "acceptable" time.

God has only one "acceptable" time. That is the time "in Christ." The word "now" is the eschatological now, the now of the Christian age in contrast to the "then" of the Old Testament age. *There is no other age more acceptable.* The first "acceptable" in 6:2 is the Greek word *dekto*. The second "acceptable" is *euprosdektos* (literally, *eu*, well, *pros*, toward, *dektos*, acceptable). meaning "very favorable acceptance."

Essentially, Paul is saying, "Do not be waiting for something better." If ever the Corinthians were going to be changed from their pagan attitudes and pagan ways, the time was "now." Christ was (and is) the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He is the fulfillment of

all that God intended for man when man was created. Jesus filled up full God's purpose for man, and made that fulfillment available to all men who would receive it by grace through faith. The gospel age is the last age there will ever be (see I Cor. 10:11).

To put off receiving the grace of God in Jesus, to procrastinate and wait for something better (in another Messiah) would be to miss the very favorably accepted time of God. And this searching and waiting for someone other than Jesus is not only what the majority of Jews are still doing, it is what the majority of heathen are still doing! Every preacher faces that problem with people today. He is surrounded by people who insist that God surely has a better way than grace through Jesus. Some of these people are even in the Church. They are sure that God still has some dispensation on earth yet to come which will be a "more acceptable time" than this present Christian age.

We must let God's grace fill us now, not tomorrow, not a thousand years from now. There is only one word on God's clock: is *now*. The devil's time is always "tomorrow." God's time is always "today," "NOW"! Now is the day to quit looking at things like the heathen. Now is the day to start seeing everything through the revealed word of God, from the divine perspective. Paul taught this by precept and example.

SECTION 2

In Actions (6:3-13)

³We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as

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punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

11 Our month is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide.

¹²You are not restricted to us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³In return — I speak as to children—widen your hearts also.

6:3-4 Endemic Conflicts: Paganism, which surrounded the christians of Corinth in the first century, and permeated their every circumstance and association, would also present itself as an easier way by which to deal with the crises and struggles of life. Paganism would free an individual from taking a personal, vocal opposition to falsehood, immorality, and indifference. Paganism would demand no forbearance, kindness or good reputation. It would be the path (Jesus called it, “the broad” way) of least resistance; it would be the way of the majority. It is evident from Paul’s “first” letter to the Corinthians that some of the christians there had already been seduced back into paganism. This is a problem that every preacher faces in his ministry. Either he succumbs to paganism as a personal way of life, because of temptation or discouragement, or he is burdened with the paganism of God’s flock.

Once again, the apostle Paul appeals to his own life and ministry as an example and motive by which the Corinthian christians might be victorious over the pressures of paganism. He begins by declaring himself innocent of giving any *obstacle* (Gr. *proskopen*, “offense,” literally, “strike-against”) or hindrance to anyone else. Paul’s motive for this is to keep his “ministry” from being *blamed* (Gr. *momethe*, “faulted, condemned”). That certainly is not the way of paganism. Paganism has no such concern for another’s attitudes or reactions. Pagans just do not care, except for themselves. Unbelievers who offend others seldom concern themselves with the needs of the offended. But it was the apostle’s way of living as a servant of God to *commend* (Gr. *sunistanontes*, “stand, approve”) himself in *every way*. Paul asks the christians at Rome (Rom. 15:30-33) to pray earnestly that his “service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.” Of course, Paul sought to commend himself in every good and godly way. But his actions would not be commended by pagans. They would scoff at his

behavior and call it "foolishness." (Acts 17:16-21; I Cor. 1:18ff).

Human beings learn and adopt behavior patterns more through example than any other source. It is imperative that christian preachers be aware of their conduct under all kinds of circumstances so that no one be turned away from Christ. There are certain conflicts or circumstances which are endemic (go-with-the-territory) to the ministry of the Word. Paul suffered them all. And in it all, he was able to commend his ministry as acceptable to the saints. In verse 4, he lists a few of these indigenous sufferings. "In great endurance" (Gr. *en hupomone polle*) would be literally, "in remaining-under, much." The Greek word *hupomone* is from two words, *hupo*, "under," and, *mone*, "remain." Endurance is not necessarily passive. The same Greek word is used to describe the "patience" or "steadfastness" of Job (James 5:11), who was certainly not passive during his confrontation with his three friends and God! In all the trials and tests of the ministry of the Gospel, Paul learned how to keep himself steadfastly trusting in the grace of Christ (II Cor. 12:7-10). Jesus placed a premium on steadfastness and endurance (Luke 8:15; 21:19; Matt. 10:22; 24:13), and so did the writers of the epistles. "In afflictions" (Gr. *en thlipsesin*) might be translated, "in pressures." Every preacher knows about "pressures." Stress and tension are the constant companions of preachers. Paul knew pressure from his Jewish brethren, from his Gentile brethren, from pagan authorities, from co-workers, and in addition to all this was his "daily anxiety for all the churches" (II Cor. 11:28). And in the midst of *extreme* pressures, which few preachers since have ever experienced, he served God and men blamelessly across the whole Roman empire! Paul did not cave in or quit the ministry or revert to unbelief even in the face of great pressures.

The next word describing circumstances endemic to the ministry is *anagkais* translated "hardships" in the RSV. This word is usually translated "constraint" or "constrained" or "compelled" (see Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45; Luke 14:23; Gal. 2:3; Acts 28:19, etc.) The word is also translated "necessities." Did Paul mean he continually felt "constraints" and "compulsions"? Even though he was an apostle, there were all the ordinary submissions Paul had to make to others. He would be submissive to the elders of the church which sent him out as an evangelist or missionary (see Acts 14:26); he was submissive to civil

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authorities (see Rom. 13:1-8); he suffered the restraints of some sort of physical handicap (II Cor. 12:7ff); and he was willing to forfeit many of his "rights" as a "strong" christian for the sake of "weaker" brethren. Paul suppressed many personal preferences and desires. He experienced frustrating constraints. But in it all he conducted a faithful and commendable ministry.

The final word portraying circumstances that "go-with-the-territory" is *stenochoiriais*. It is a combination of two words, *steno*, "short, narrow, little" (from which we get English *stenography*, "short-writing"), and, *choira*, "need, necessity, distress." This word *stenochoiriais* is translated, "calamities" in the RSV and "distresses" in the KJV. Some might think "calamities" is too strong a word. However, Paul had to deal with a number of catastrophic or fateful situations. The riot in Ephesus was one such situation (Acts 19); the earthquake and the near suicide of the jailer in Philippi was another (Acts 16); the Judaizers, the implacable Jewish enemies, and the pagan rulers continually wreaking destruction on his work in every place, still another. The near ruin of the Corinthian church in his own lifetime was calamitous in Paul's mind. Certainly, not every christian work begun by Paul over the vast empire of Rome remained intact. Undoubtedly he heard of "calamities," at least beginning ones, in the churches he had labored so diligently to start (see Gal. 3:1; 5:1, etc.). Paul may be using the word *stenochoiriais* to mean "short on necessities." In other words, Paul experienced "the short end of the stick" many times in his ministry. He had times of abundance, but times of deprivation and hunger too (Phil. 4:10-13). The majority of modern preachers, even in affluent America, know the experience of needing "necessities." Most preachers live on the razor's edge of "calamity" every day when it comes to salary, health insurance, children's needs, retirement needs, and other "necessities." Many times the calamity strikes! But we must all *learn*, as Paul did, how to be content and able to do all things through Christ who strengthens. Above all, there must be no obstacle put in anyone's way to come to Christ.

6:5 External Tribulations: Along with the problems endemic to the ministry because of its very nature, there also come conflicts and tensions from outside the ministry. Paul uses a number of words to describe these external difficulties. There is the word *plegais*,

“beatings,” “stripes” or “wounds.” We get the English word “plague” from transliterating this Greek word. Paul experienced “countless beatings” (II Cor. 11:23-25). Few American preachers have ever suffered this. However, many native preachers in foreign lands have! Many have been martyred, faithful unto death, and their number constitutes a great host of witnesses for the faith. There is the word *phulakais*, “imprisonments.” He was imprisoned at Philippi (Acts 16), imprisoned at Jerusalem (Acts 21), and imprisoned at Rome (Acts 28) once, and again (II Tim.). There may have been other times (see II Cor. 11:23). Paul spent considerable time imprisoned at Rome — long enough to write four of his epistles (Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians). There is the word *akatastasiais*, translated “tumults” or “commotions.” We have already referred to the “riot” at Ephesus. And the book of Acts and Paul’s epistles indicate that he had to continually suffer tumultuous hostilities from Jews and Gentiles alike (see Acts 13:45, 50; 14:4-6; 14:9; 15:5ff; 16:19-24; 17:13ff; 18:6, 12; 19:9; 19:23ff; 21:27; 22:22; 23:6; 24:9; 25:3ff). It is not easy to serve God and hold forth an acceptable ministry in the midst of constant commotion! But Paul did it. If he did it modern preachers can do it! There are the words, *en kopois*, “in labors.” This Greek word means working to the point of exhaustion. Being a preacher of the Gospel is *hard work* (see Rom. 16:6, 12; Col. 4:13)! Energy must be expended. Weariness, tiredness, beat-downness are physical accompaniments to the ministry. The amount of emotional stress that exhausts the physical body of a preacher is incomprehensible to most non-preachers! Many preachers have literally ruined their health because they were “workaholics” and burned themselves out before their time. Preachers are “on the go” nearly every day of the week, and “on call” twenty-four hours every day. The word *agrupniais*, translated “watchings” but literally, “sleeplessness” (see II Cor. 11:27). Today’s ministers get less sleep than doctors! There are meetings at the church nearly every night, and phone calls often after the preacher has gone to bed to sleep. The last word in this verse is *nesteiais*, translated “fastings” but more likely should be translated “hunger” (see II Cor. 11:27; Phil. 4:12). Paul did fast occasionally (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23) but there is no indication that he practiced fasting regularly. Few ministers of the Gospel in America have to suffer hunger, but many in foreign countries do. In spite of all

these external tribulations, Paul commended himself in his ministry "in every way." An awesome example for all who follow in his vocation!

6:6-10 Efforts at Christian Living: In every way possible Paul, the preacher faces the temptations and pressures of the pagan world around him and deals with them. In it all his ministry remains commendable. It is unassailable by either christian or non-christian. Even in the small details of everyday living — in the confrontations with people and institutions — Paul is the victor over paganism. In these verses he describes his efforts to maintain his christian life in the ministry.

First, such a ministry necessitates *purity*. The Greek word is *hagnoteti*. It means "innocence, chastity, abstinence." The Greek word *hagnoteti* is from the same root as *hagios* which means "holy one, saint, sanctified." Paul lived a life of moral purity. He did not indulge in any of the lasciviousness of the heathenism surrounding him.

The next word Paul uses to describe his christian living is, in Greek, *gnosei*, meaning "knowledge." The apostle does not qualify this "knowledge" as Biblical knowledge. He probably means to include knowledge of all kinds and in all areas that would help him make his ministry "commendable." Paul knew Greek literature and poetry (Acts 17:28). He was a great scholar. He even familiarized himself with Gnostic philosophy enough to be able to expose its fallacies. But above all, he was a great Bible scholar!

Paul commended himself and defended himself against paganism by a life of "forbearance." The Greek word is *makrothumia*, literally, macro-suffering, or "longsuffering." There is no doubt that Paul "suffered-long" with the Corinthians, the Galatians, and even many of the Judaizers. He would not permit himself the "luxury of retaliation or vendettas for personal wrongs.

He was kind. "Kindness" comes from the Greek word *chrestoteti*. It is the word used by Jesus to characterize his "yoke" as "easy." To be kind is to be at ease with people — to make people feel at ease. To be kind is to make things *easy* for others — that is to aid others, to help and assist them. "Kindness" is active, not passive. The heathen world of Paul did not even understand the concept of being kind to one another, let alone doing kindnesses (see Rom. 1:31). The fruits of unbelief are "foolishness, faithlessness, heartlessness and

ruthlessness.” Kindness does *not* indulge others in wrong.

He faced the heathen world with “a holy spirit.” In the Greek text, the words are *en pneumati hagio*. There is *no* definite article before *pneumati* and it should be translated, “a spirit” — evidently referring to Paul’s human spirit and not the Holy Spirit. Furthermore the Greek word *hagio* is a neuter noun, also emphasizing that it is Paul’s spirit that is holy (the Greek noun would be *hagio*, masculine, were it the Holy Spirit). It is possible for human beings to put up an outward show of ceremonial and ritual holiness while inwardly their “spirits” are in rebellion. The Pharisees (in which group Paul once held membership) were experts at this. Paul had changed all that. Now, even his “spirit” was holy.

His inner person being surrendered humbly to Christ’s imputed righteousness, he loved with a “genuine love.” This is a characteristic Paul commanded other christians to cultivate (see Rom 12:9), so he practiced what he preached. The Greek words are actually, *agape anupokrito*, literally, “an unhypocritical love.” Christian love is no facade. It is not surface and superficial. Christians do not “play like” they love. They really, genuinely, earnestly care. They care when they don’t feel like caring. They care when others are not “worthy” of being cared for. Pagans do not understand this kind of love. Pagans love those who love them first (see Matt. 5:43-48),

Next the apostle claims to be different than the paganism around him because he commends himself “in a word of truth.” Once again, the absence of the definite article before “word” (Gr. *logo*) means the “word” is Paul’s word and not the Word of Truth. Heathen philosophy usually defined truth on a purely pragmatic basis. This was Pontius Pilate’s concept of truth — whatever “worked” for his purposes. The apostle continues by asserting that he does not behave as an unbeliever so he puts no obstacle in any one’s way and keeps his ministry free from fault “in God’s power.” The Greek reads, *en dunamei theou*. The “dynamic” for Paul’s life is not heathenism, but God’s power. God’s power is resident in truth, love, righteousness, faith, and selflessness. The heathen would think to attain power through deception, indulgence, skepticism, and selfishness.

One of the main problems the preacher faces in the tension between his convictions about the Gospel ministry and the pull of paganism is the decision about which “weapons” to use to conduct his

ministry! Paul has already stated that he did not use worldly weapons to conduct his ministry (see II Cor. 2:17; 4:2). He will state it again (II Cor. 10:3-6) most emphatically. There is a constant temptation, not only for preachers, but for all christians to use "weapons" (methods, tools, practices, objects) that would compromise Biblical principles simply because such "weapons" seem to "work." It is the old trap, "the end justifies the means." Paul would have nothing to do with that kind of subtle, but pernicious, paganism. He said he conducted his ministry "with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left." He fought the good fight of faith armed completely in righteousness. No underhanded, cunning, one-hand-one-thing and the other-hand-another with Paul. Double-mindedness, divided heartedness, and split-handedness is paganism. We must not only yield our minds and souls, we must also yield the members of our bodies as "weapons" of righteousness in the service of God (see Rom. 6:12-23). The Roman soldier was armed with a sword in one hand, a shield in the other. The sword was a weapon of offense, the shield a weapon of defense. Paul says he conducts his ministry, both offensively and defensively, always careful to do what is right (righteous).

Finally, Paul lists a series of stark circumstantial contrasts he has had to live through as he conducted his ministry. This is an awesome list of clashing experiences. To live through such situations would destroy all except those surrendered in faith to the grace of God. Paul is determined however, that regardless of a life filled with dichotomies, he will bring no discredit on the ministry God gave him. He is committed to proving himself a genuine minister of God whatever he might have to go through.

He begins by stating there were times when he was "honored" (Gr. *doxes*, "glory"), and there were times when he was "dishonored" (Gr. *atimias*, devalued, as in money). In Biblical usage, both the Hebrew and Greek words translated "glory" literally mean "to give weight to." In other words, to assess, to give value to, is what is meant by "glorifying." Sometimes Paul was considered valuable, other times, not. There were times when people spoke well of Paul and times when they spoke evilly of him. He uses the Greek words *dusphemias* ("defamation") and *euphemias* (from which we get the English word *euphemistic*, literally, "well-spoken") to describe contrasting reputations circulated about him. Even though Paul continually strove to

present himself blameless before God and men (I Cor. 8:24-27; Phil. 3:12-16) not everyone spoke well of him! Not everyone spoke well of Jesus! And our Lord said, "Beware when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26) because some men speak well of false prophets!

During his ministry Paul had to endure from christians (especially at Corinth) what is normally expected only from heathen people. Apparently one of the reports circulating in the church at Corinth was that Paul was a deceiver. "Impostor" is not a good translation of the word *planoi* used by Paul in the Greek text. *Planoi* is the word from which we get the English word *planet*, and literally means, "to wander, to stray." Paul was accused of being one who led people astray! Yet Paul's actions were always *true* to the gospel, and his preaching was always *true* to the gospel. He never strayed from the gospel even if it meant a face to face confrontation with a "pillar of the church" (Gal. 2) or with kings (Acts 24:24ff; 26:24ff) or Jewish high priests (Acts 23:1ff) or Greek intellectuals (Acts 17:22-31). Slander is to be expected from those who hate God, but not from those who profess to love God. But every minister of the gospel, if he is realistic, expects it, even from professing followers of Christ.

And though Paul taught that recognition should be given where it as due (Rom. 13:7; I Cor. 16:18) and scrupulously practiced it himself (Rom. 16; I Cor. 16; etc.), there were times when christian people ignored him and deliberately refused to acknowledge him. He says there were times when he was an "unknown" as well as times when he was "well known." But that did not keep Paul from serving the Lord in every way he could. He was not devastated by lack of recognition. If people, even christian people, were oblivious to his importance he was able to deal with it by considering it their problem — not his. He knew that his ultimate recognition would come from the King of the universe (II Tim. 1:11-12; II Cor. 10:18; Rom. 2:29, etc.), so the recognition of men was of little significance.

The christian life presents a continuing combination of paradoxes, even to the christian himself, let alone to the unbeliever. If Paul could see his life and ministry in the Lord as "dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything," how then must the unbeliever see the christian ministry? Usually the sees only the physical, visible aspects of lives totally com-

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mitted to Christ — martyrdom, discipline, sorrow, poverty, and destitution. This was the visible lot of the apostles, many of the first century christians (see Heb. 10:32-39), and is that of many followers of Jesus today. Especially is this the case with preachers and missionaries surrounded by societies which have outlawed freedom of speech and religion. And some of these circumstances apply to nearly every preacher who is unwilling to compromise the message and the ethics of God's word.

Paul is not theorizing here. These words — martyrdom, discipline (Gr. *paideuomenoi*, chastening), sorrow, poverty, destitution (Gr. *meden echontes*, "nothing having") — describe the normal outward circumstances of the christian life. Many christians, especially in free and prosperous societies, are unwilling to admit Paul's statement here as a characterization of the christian life. They find no paradoxical dichotomies between the physical and spiritual aspects of their discipleship because they are physically free, untroubled, and prosperous. But still, the life of any christian willing to sacrifice self and surrender all that he has (Luke 14:33), will experience these paradoxes. And he will be tempted to view them as a pagan would.

However, every preacher or missionary who faces martyrdom, chastening, sorrow, poverty, or destitution, may also experience life, joy, wealth and victory. That is the spiritual side of the christian ministry. And the spiritual experience is the only experience that abides forever. The physical experience is momentary (see Rom. 8:18; II Cor. 4:16-18). Through the divine perspective (faith in God through his revelation, the Bible) every christian can enter into that eternal experience right now (see Heb. 11:1)! Paul did! There is no reason preachers of the gospel or christians should ever be plagued with the problem of pagan perspective!

6:11-13 Extending Christian Love: Christian preachers and workers will always be plagued with the problem of pagan insensitivity when they extend true christian love. Agape-love (God-like love) is love offered even to those who do not "deserve" it. It is love given without any expectation of reciprocation. It is not based on sentiment but it is a deliberate, rational act of caring and helping even when sentiments are contrary.

Paul's expression, "Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide" is graphic. It portrays complete, undisguised honesty. It

offers complete exposure to vulnerability. Both Greek words used by Paul, *aneogen* (has been opened), and *peplatuntai* (has been enlarged), are perfect tense verbs indicating that Paul had extended himself fully in love to the Corinthians long before he wrote this letter and was still doing so. Paul had spoken to them and loved them without any reservations or restraints. He placed no qualifications on his love for them. They had undoubtedly hurt his feelings by their carping insinuations about his integrity (see 1:15ff). They had demonstrated their immaturity and carnality by sinning against his apostolic message. But Paul was still as wide open in his mind and heart toward them as ever. He would verbally expose every recess of his mind and heart to them as before. He would give of himself completely as before. He is holding none of himself from them — protecting nothing of himself from them.

But what plagued Paul was they were restricting themselves. They were acting like non-Christians. The word translated “restricted” is the Greek word *stenochoreisthe*, and means, “to reduce.” The Corinthians were reducing the possibilities of a joyful fellowship with the apostle Paul by their own refusals to be as open and loving as Paul. These words are a classic description of the attitude and approach which must be used for the healing of alienations between Christian brethren and friends. Jesus exemplified this with his apostles (see John 15:12-17; Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-22, etc.). Perhaps the Christians at Corinth had fully repented of their criticisms of Paul (see II Cor. 7:5-11). But they were still limiting themselves the joy of complete brotherliness with Paul by “restricting their own affections.” They would not “widen their hearts” as he had. The Greek word *splagchnois* is translated “bowels” in the KJV, but, rightly “affections” in the RSV; literally the word means, “inward parts,” or “viscera” and encompasses the higher organs of the body such as the lungs, liver, and heart — all considered to be the residence of human emotions. Man is created in the image of Almighty God. Therefore, man is by nature, mind, will and emotions. Paul is saying here that nothing stood between him and open, loving brotherhood with the Corinthians except their own “feelings” toward him. And there was no justification for these “restrained” feelings.

When Paul said, “In return (for my open heart) — I speak as to children — widen your hearts also,” he was not accusing them of

childishness (although their withholding of affection was childish), he was *appealing* to them as a *father* to children. His appeal was one of affection! He was their "spiritual" father. By his gospel preaching they were conceived and born (Acts 18), and by his preaching and epistles they were nourished. When Paul spoke of *widening* their hearts he used the past tense of the imperative (Gr. *platunthete*) indicating their hearts were not yet opened as his (perfect tense, *peplatuntai*) was and had always been. Imperative mood indicates Paul was imploring them to return his affections.

SECTION 3

In Associations (6:14-18; 7:1)

14 Do not be mismated with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

7 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

6:14-16, Yoking: It has never been the will of God that his chosen people should *yoke* themselves unequally (Gr. *heterozugountes*, from which we get the English, *zygotes*, and the prefix, *hetero*, "yoked to one of a different kind") with *unbelievers* (see Exod. 23:2; 33:16; 34:11-16; Lev. 20:26; Gen. 24:3; 28:1; Num. 23:9; Deut. 7:2-3; Josh. 23:6, 7, 12; Jdgs. 2:1-2; Ezra 4:3; 6:21; 9:12; 10:9-15; Neh. 9:2; 10:30; 13:3; 13:23-27; Psa. 1:1; Prov. 4:14; 24:1; Isa. 52:11; Acts 2:40; Rom.

16:17; I Cor. 5:11; Eph. 5:11; II Thess. 3:6, 14; I Tim. 6:5; II Tim. 3:5; II John 10). The fact that God's people continue to do so is a problem that plagues preachers and other spiritual leaders of the church. For the idea of "yoking" see, Matt. 11:29; I Tim. 5:18; 6:1; Gal. 5:1; Acts 15:10; I Cor. 9:9; Phil. 4:3).

Paul is not talking about necessary social associations here. He had already granted that christians would often times have to be "associated" with unbelievers in mundane affairs (I Cor. 5:9-13). What the apostle seeks to forestall here is the uniting of a christian with an unbeliever so that the christian is actually working toward the same purpose as the unbeliever. There is an illustration in the O.T. in the prohibition against yoking together an ass and an ox in order to plough a field or do any other work (Deut. 22:10; Lev. 19:19). The apostle clarifies what he means in the following contrasts and opposites. What Paul says here relates to the opening words of this chapter, ". . . we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain" (6:1). William Barclay writes, "The idea is that there are certain things which are fundamentally incompatible and were never meant to be brought together. It is impossible for the purity of the christian and the pollution of the pagan to run in double harness." For the christian to accept the grace of God and then join with any enterprise which is blatantly opposed to the will of God and dedicated to destroying righteousness and truth is vanity! It is self-deception!

The christian cannot be in partnership with *iniquity* (Gr. *anomia*, lit. "lawlessness"). It is an impossibility! Jesus declared, "No man can serve two masters . . ." (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13; James 4:4). No man can be a friend of God and a friend of the world at the same time. No man can obey conflicting orders or realistically serve two opposing sovereigns! The christian must love righteousness and hate lawlessness (Heb. 1:9).

Paul continues, "What fellowship has light with darkness?" *Light* (Gr. *phos*) has no *communion* (Gr. *koinonia*) with *darkness* (Gr. *skotos*). Where one is the other cannot be! Another impossibility! (see Eph. 5:8-11; I John 1:5).

What *accord* (Gr. *sumphonesis*, from which we get the English word, *symphony*) has Christ with *Belial* (Gr. *Beliar*, lit., "worthlessness, ruin, desperate wickedness"). The word Belial came to be used as a name for Satan. Christ gathers, Satan scatters (Matt.

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12:22-32). Where one is the other cannot be! Another impossibility! Neither can a man be a *believer* and an *unbeliever* at the same time. Therefore the believer must not unite himself, or make himself *part of* (Gr. *meris*) anything dedicated to producing unbelief. If he does, he becomes an unbeliever. It is impossible to be a believer while working at the same time to produce unbelief!

The last phrase, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" is conclusive. The word "agreement" is from the Greek word *sugkatathesis* and means literally, "stand together with." It was a word common to the Greek culture of that day and meant, "to approve by putting the votes together." Idols, false gods, and everything for which they stand, lying, wickedness, and hurtfulness, vote as one. They all agree in opposing the God of truth. Every new idol or image added to history's pantheon of false gods votes the same. But can any one of these false gods be brought into the "temple" of God (the christian's heart), there to speak and vote for truth, righteousness and love? Never! No false god will ever vote in unison with the True God. Christians cannot be joined to idols! (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; I Cor. 10:6-22; 12:1-3; I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:21). Covetousness is idolatry.

Believers, individuals united to Christ in covenant relationship, *are* the *temple* of God. The Spirit of God resides in those who have believed in his Son and obeyed his revealed will. God allowed his chosen people in ancient times to build an ornate temple in which they might congregate and glorify his name. But no building, however ornate, could ever be the residence of God. He does not dwell in temples made by human hands (Acts 7:47-50; 17:24; Isa. 66:1-2; John 4:20-21). In symbolic form God's presence was in the "holy of holies" of the Hebrew tabernacle and temple. But in reality his presence has always been in the hearts and minds of believers (Psa. 51:10-11; 148:10; Isa. 63:11; Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:27; 37:14; Hag. 2:5; Num. 27:18; Rom. 8:5-17; I Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21-22; I Pet. 2:5). Jehovah God is the Absolute Sovereign of everything that exists. There is no other sovereign. Any man who wishes the Absolute Sovereign to dwell in him cannot allow another god to dwell there. Jehovah cannot be "other-yoked" with idols in man's heart. Jehovah votes for absolute truth; idols vote for absolute falsehood!

The RSV double spaces its text between 6:13 and 6:14 and between 7:1 and 7:2. This emphasizes the *parenthetical* nature of the passage.

But that should not necessarily lead us to think of the passage as disconnected to the subject under discussion here! Such momentary digression is certainly in keeping with Pauline literary style in Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews and other works. But remember the context. Paul has been vindicating himself against slanderous opponents. He has also been pleading with the Corinthian believers to reckon themselves "new creatures" in Christ, with new constraints and new perspectives. It is altogether plausible to suggest that the *unbelievers* of 6:14 are those opposing and slandering Paul to the Corinthian church. In fact, it appears there were unbelievers *within* the church there denying the resurrection (I Cor. 15). Paul is exhorting the believers in Corinth to clearly separate themselves from these unbelievers. There also appears there are unbelievers trying to call themselves christians and worship idols at the same time (I Cor. 8, 9, 10). When Paul uses the word *heterozugountes*, "yoked to one of a different kind," he is admonishing the christians at Corinth they "cannot live in the church with someone who does not share their pre-suppositions."

Whatever this passage means, it cannot forbid members of the Christian Church to be married to spouses who are believers from other denominations. There are "believers" in all denominations. We believe denominationalism is a spiritual error. Christ is not pleased with its perpetuation. But then, there are numerous spiritual errors being perpetuated within the Restoration Movement with which Christ is not pleased. Are we to think Paul's plea for separation in this text is for separation from every person who believes the Bible is God's inspired word and Jesus is his divine Son, though they may sincerely obeying differently than we because they have never been privileged to see as we have seen? Never!

Whatever this passage means, it cannot mean the absolute prohibition of the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever. First, the context forbids any such interpretation; no mention is made here of the marriage relationship. Second, the Greek tense of the verb, *heterozugountes*, present tense participle, would literally be translated, "Do not go on being yoked to one of a different kind. . . ." That would *contradict* what the same apostle wrote in I Cor. 7:12-13. While the Old Testament (see references cited above) forbids Hebrews from marrying "foreigners," the prohibition was

clearly concerned with maintaining separation from *idolatry*. Joseph married Asenath, daughter of an Egyptian priest (Gen. 41:50); Moses married a Midianite (Exod. 2:21); Hosea was commanded by God to marry a woman “with a spirit of harlotry” (Hosea 1:2) and when she deserted him and wound up in the slave market, Hosea was told to go “love again” a woman who is an “adulteress” (Hosea 3:1-5).

This passage focuses contextually on all that has been said in chapters 5 and 6. Contextually, Paul is giving a call for believers in the church at Corinth to separate themselves from the unbelieving, wicked opponents who are slandering him. What Paul has done is to take his usual argument against idolatry and apply it to those in Corinth seeking to destroy his ministry to the truth.

6:17-18; 7:1 Yielding: The place of God’s abode is to be always pure. That which is false, in rebellion against God, and hurtful cannot abide where God abides. Otherwise, God is false, impotent and unworthy of trust or adoration. God dwells in believers and believers are the church. The church must not yield to pagan influence of any kind — neither theological nor ethical. The church must “come out and be separate” from false doctrine and false living. And Paul had to deal with both circumstances in his letters to Corinth.

Plainly, he has in mind here the arrogance the Corinthians had in refusing to immediately discipline (“drive out”) the man living an adulterous life with his father’s wife (I Cor. 5:1ff). That is apparent from Paul’s subsequent discourse in II Corinthians 7:11-13.

Paul quotes from (or paraphrases) a variety of Old Testament passages here to prove his point that wickedness cannot be tolerated where God dwells (Lev. 26:11-12; Isa. 52:11; Ezek. 20:34; Jer. 51:45; Isa. 48:20; Jer. 50:8; Zech. 2:6-7; II Sam. 7:14; Exod. 25:8; Ezek. 37:27; Jer. 31:1). For verse 18 see Hosea 1:10 and Isaiah 43:6. God’s chosen people in the Old Dispensation, warned over and over not to “yoke” themselves to gods “of a different kind,” would not separate themselves from idolatry and heathen wickedness. They eventually became, in fact, worse than their heathen neighbor-nations in idolatry and wickedness (see Jer. 2:11; 18:13). In the Revelation given to John concerning the seven churches of Asia Minor, an angel, with authority and splendor, cried with a loud voice to the church surrounded by the idolatry and licentiousness of the Roman empire, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her

plagues. . . ." (Rev. 18:4). No matter how difficult it may be, it will always remain true that christians must separate themselves from anything and anyone that is opposed to God and what God has declared right. The Lord never promises separation from ungodliness will be easy (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24; Matt. 18:23-26; John 15:18-21; Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 12:49-53; 14:25-33). The Greek word translated *separate* is *aphoristhete*. It is a compound of *apo*, "from," and *horizo*, "boundary, limit, fixed point." *Horizo* is the word from which we have the English word, "horizon." Paul is saying that christians must "Come out from the midst of them (unbelief) and fix themselves away from unbelievers." Believers are not to "touch" (Gr. *haptesthe*, "fasten or cling to") anything that defiles or dirties (Gr. *akathartou*, "unclean"). This means anything that defiles spiritually. Anything in opposition to the will of God is unclean.

There is a "cost" which must be paid to follow Jesus — *separation* from whatever is disapproved by Jesus and his word. But what a reward! The "separated one" is "welcomed" (Gr. *eisdexomai*, "taken by the hand, taken hold of") by God into God's eternal family like the "father" welcomed the "prodigal son" (Luke 15:11-24). The "cost" for separation from ungodliness is infinitesimal compared with the reward!

It is unfortunate that our English translations are marked with a chapter division between 6:18 and 7:1. Chapter 7, verse 1, is plainly the concluding statement of this passage about holiness and separation. There were no chapter divisions when Paul wrote this letter in Greek. Chapter divisions were inserted by Stephen Langton in the thirteenth century. And verse divisions were inserted by Stephanus, the Paris printer, in the sixteenth century. We will treat 7:1 here.

Since God has promised judgment (II Cor. 5:10, 11) for the impenitent and gracious adoption (II Cor. 6:16-18) for the separated, it is imperative that we have a *catharsis* (Gr. *katharisomen*, "cleansing") from every *pollution* (Gr. *molusmou*, filthiness, foulness) of *body* and *spirit*. Body, soul and spirit make up the whole man (I Thess. 5:23). A man cannot keep his body pure but sin with his mind and expect Christ's approval (cf. Matt. 5:21-30). Nor should the christian try to justify himself by saying he keeps his mind pure so it doesn't matter what he does with his body. That Gnostic sophistry is thoroughly denounced by Scripture (I John 3:4-10, etc.).

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The last phrase is most significant. Paul instructs Christians precisely as to how this separation and cleansing is to be *accomplished*. It is done by "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (Gr. *epitelountes hagiosunen en phobo theou*). The word *epitelountes* is a present tense participle derived from the word *teleios* which means, "to complete, to finish, to bring to its goal." In other words, we reach the goal of holiness (we are separated, cleansed) in the fear of God! The fear of God is a *healthy* (cathartic) attitude! Peter tells us to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear" (I Pet. 1:17). Only the fear of God will purge a world in rebellion against God of its wickedness. Only the fear of God will restore that sense of awe, respect and worship that is absent from both the church and the world. Isaiah wrote, ". . . when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the Lord." (Isa. 26:9-10). The Psalmist said, "When he slew them (the Israelites in the wilderness) they sought for him; they repented and sought God earnestly." (Psa. 78:34). See sermon notes at the end of this chapter, *Judgment Begins at the House of God*.

The scriptures bear witness that a significant contributing factor to purging the church of its plague of paganism is consistent proclamation of the judgment and fear of God. Paul says so in this very text! The goal of holiness is reached through the fear of God.

And so Paul has dealt with another problem that plagues preachers — the problem with paganism. Paganism now, as then, is at times an attraction in which preachers may be tempted to indulge, or it surrounds a preacher like a plague in those to whom he ministers. And how did Paul deal with it? By first appealing to the brethren at Corinth to remember how much he had opened up his heart in love to them and pleading with them to reciprocate the same kind of openness. And, second, by reminding the brethren of the incongruity of yoking belief to unbelief. And, third, by pointing out that holiness is brought to its goal through the fear of God. Not a bad plan for the church to follow in any age!

APPREHENSION:

1. How does chapter 6 tie into chapter 5?

THE PROBLEM WITH PAGANISM

2. Why does Paul quote from Isaiah about the "acceptable time"?
3. What is Paul's purpose in appealing to his own ministry as free of placing obstacles in people's way?
4. Name four restraints Paul had to endure in his ministry. Do preachers today suffer any similar "restraints"?
5. Are preachers anywhere today suffering beatings, as Paul did? Where, Why?
6. Is preaching and ministering work? Hard work? Who says so?
7. Is scholarship essential to preaching? Scholarship in what areas?
8. What is kindness? Why should those who minister be kind?
9. Can love be hypocritical? When is it unhypocritical?
10. What weapons did Paul use to conduct his ministry?
11. Did anyone ever assail the reputation of the apostle Paul? Why?
12. Should preachers and other christian workers be recognized for their work?
13. What are some of the paradoxes of christian ministry?
14. What does Paul mean, "do not be mismated with unbelievers"?
15. What is the "temple of God" Paul talks about in 6:16?

APPLICATION:

1. Name some ways you have responded to the grace of God.
2. Do you know anyone waiting for a more "favorable" time to be reconciled to God? Why are they waiting? What have you said to them?
3. How do you handle the conflicts and circumstances that go-with-the-territory in ministering as a christian?
4. Do you concern yourself with helping your preacher find relief from the "pressures" of his ministry? How?
5. What can you do to help those today who are being beaten and persecuted for their ministries? How was Paul helped? Can that kind of help still be given today?
6. What is so "hard" about preaching or ministering? Have you tried it? Would you be willing to follow your preacher two days next week and do everything he does?
7. Does your church expect its preacher to devote much time to studying the Bible and preach Biblical sermons? Does it grant him

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the time to do so?

8. How is a person kind to another? Have you been kind to someone today?
9. Can you love when you don't feel like it? How? Why?
10. Is it alright to use whatever works in preaching and ministering?
11. How do you handle defamation of your reputation? Has it ever happened to you as you ministered in Christ's name? What did you do?
12. Does it hurt when you do not receive recognition for some good deed?
13. How do you resolve the paradox of being a christian and yet having so much sorrow surrounding you?
14. Does "do not be mismated with unbelievers" mean do not marry non-christians? Why do you think so?
15. How is a christian to go about separating himself from unbelievers and uncleanness? Do you fear God? Should the fear of God be preached?

Special Study

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

Ezekiel Chapters 15-24

Text: 18:30-32

Introduction

- I. SILENCE IN THE PULPITS TODAY ABOUT JUDGMENT!
 - A. General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, said at the turn of this century, "The chief danger of the 20th century will be: Religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, Forgiveness without Repentance Salvation without Regeneration, Politics without God and Heaven without Hell."
 - B. There certainly is no silence in the O.T. on the subject of JUDGMENT!
 - C. Neither is the N.T. silent about it!
In fact, Jesus talked more often about the judgment than he did grace, or mercy, or practically any other subject!
 - D. In Cruden's Concordance:
 - 1. 666 references to Judgment or Judge
 - 2. 288 references to Merciful, Mercy
 - 3. 108 references to Forgive or Forgiveness
- II. AND, SURPRISINGLY TO MOST PEOPLE, THE BIBLE FOCUSES FIRST ON JUDGMENT UPON THE HOUSE OF GOD (HIS COVENANT PEOPLE).
 - A. From Genesis to Malachi, God's Old Covenant scriptures are primarily a record of God's judgments, chastenings, disciplines upon God's chosen to produce for himself a Messianic people.
 - B. From Matthew to Revelation, the New Covenant is the same — JUDGMENT FIRST UPON THE CHURCH TO PRODUCE A "CITY SET ON A HILL" "A LIGHT UNTO THE WORLD" "A PILLAR AND SUPPORT FOR THE TRUTH."
 - C. When the church of Christ was faced with the depravity and violence of the first four centuries of the Roman empire, Christ began by judging the churches of Asia Minor,

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- D. The epistles are laced with apostolic judgments, and promises of judgments, for wickedness within the churches themselves!
 - 1. In Corinth, division, sexual immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, pride, false doctrine.
 - 2. In the Galatian church, legalism, false teachers
 - 3. Then there is Hebrews, James, Jude, I & II Peter — all warning of judgments if repentance was not forthcoming.

III. AWAKE, REPENT, O CHURCH OF GOD, FOR JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD.

- A. Someone has said that hell is truth seen too late.
- B. The truth is, judgment comes. It is no myth. It is sober fact.
- C. Judgment is not merely something that the Church is announcing to the world. It is something that God is saying to the Church itself.
- D. Judgment must begin at the House of God.
It is clear Biblical teaching that God continues to purge his Church on earth through judgments.
But the church, almost as if it were taking its theology from an unbelieving world, refuses to say much about the Judgment.

Dr. L. Nelson Bell, former missionary, and Billy Graham's father-in-law, once said: "Why is there so little preaching on judgment today? Because man's concept of wrath is so distorted by his pleasure in sin he cannot understand the wrath of a holy and righteous God. Furthermore, men want the approval of their peers and it is not popular to expose the nerve of sin and its consequences!"

Discussion

I. THE PRECIPITATION OF JUDGMENT

- A. First, God's chosen people rejected God's Word.
 - 1. Ezekiel was told, ". . . they will not listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart."
3:7

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2. Then there were the false prophets “prophesying out of their own minds” “crying peace when there was no peace” “hunting down souls for their own profit,” Ezek. ch. 13 and 22.
 3. And those who came to Ezekiel’s house to sit before him and BE ENTERTAINED! They came to church to be entertained . . . for a spectator sport. God told Ezekiel they would listen to his words, but they would not do them. Ezekiel was to them like one who sang love songs with a beautiful voice and like one who played well on an instrument, and the people heard it all (and were *entertained*) but they did not do them.
 4. GOD HAS STORED UP JUDGMENT FOR HIS PEOPLE IF RELIGION IS TO THEM ONLY ANOTHER FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT . . . AN ESCAPISM . . . A PASTIME.
 5. The Church today, with all its electronic flim-flam, its self-serving “star-studded” entertainment syndrome . . . seeking emotional thrills but not doing the word of God, stands just where Judah stood in Ezekiel’s day!
- B. Second, rejecting God’s word leads to unfaithfulness.
1. Having scorned God’s word, there was no basis or reason for remaining faithful to their commitment to belong exclusively to Jehovah.
 2. Ezekiel depicts man’s unfaithfulness to God in the parable about God’s unfaithful wife (ch. 16).
 3. Those who are contemptuous of the sacredness of marriage vows destroy the very basis for faithfulness in that human relationship.
 4. Just so, unfaithfulness toward God, our husband, is due to contempt for the sacredness of our covenant vows with him.
 5. Unfaithfulness comes from a permissive, promiscuous, rebellious attitude. It is a “me first,” “I am responsible to no one,” “I may have promised, but I don’t intend to keep promises” mind-set.
 6. Unfaithfulness is destructive of every social structure

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known to man . . . the family, the church, the nation.

7. God loves his bride, the church, with an everlasting, absolute love. He is jealous for her affection, her commitment, her faithfulness. **AND HE WILL BRING DOWN HIS WRATH ON A CHURCH UNFAITHFUL . . . A CHURCH WHO FLIRTS WITH THE WORLD. A CHURCH PROSTITUTING ITSELF TO EVERY FALSE, VAIN FAD AND FASHION . . . GOING AFTER SOME OTHER SOVEREIGN, WILL SOONER OR LATER COME TO JUDGMENT.**

C. Third, an unfaithful attitude led Judah to immorality.

1. Immorality is more than actions — it is a mind-set. Immorality is choosing wrong rather than right, and then doing wrong. There is only *one* right — and that is what God's word says is right! Therefore, to choose against what God's word says, its immorality!
2. An immoral mind-set will inevitably be lived out in immoral actions. Worshiping other gods, making other things sovereign in our lives, is spiritual prostitution! **MAKING ANYTHING OTHER THAN GOD FIRST IS IMMORAL!**
3. Immoral actions may be wrongs committed or rights omitted.

Large segments of Christ's church have rejected God's word, have violated his covenant, have prostituted themselves immorally in unbelief, and have played the role of whore . . . seeking another love. Turning their back on God's love, offered through his covenant terms (explicitly outlined in his Word), **THEY ARE UNDER HIS WRATH!**

II. THE PURPOSE OF JUDGMENT

- A. For the sake of God's name! This statement is repeated over and over in Ezekiel (ch. 20 and 33)
 1. God judges first the house of God, so it "will know that I am the Lord." God must vindicate his sovereignty — his absolute, exclusive sovereignty.
 2. He must *prove*, with evidence unmistakable, that all other "gods" in which man is tempted to trust are false,

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not sovereign, have no power.

GOD DOES THIS BY JUDGMENT UPON FALSE GODS AND THOSE WHO WORSHIP THEM!

3. There is *nothing more important* (certainly not man's feelings or circumstances) than God *vindicating his name!*

WHAT GOOD WOULD OUR FEELINGS OR CIRCUMSTANCES BE, NO MATTER HOW PLEASANT, IF GOD DOES NOT *PROVE* THAT HE EXISTS AND THAT HE IS ALL POWERFUL, AND THAT HE ALONE IS TO HAVE OUR UNDIVIDED ALLEGIANCE?

4. These people of Ezekiel's day would eventually throw their precious, expensive idols of gold and silver out into the garbage dumps because they had it proven to them Jehovah God was supreme . . . he proved it by JUDGMENTS!
5. God has to prove to "his house" (first) that he is sovereign and that he will judge unfaithfulness and idolatry.

If God is indifferent to immorality and idolatry within his own "house" his name is of no significance to either his own or to the world.

Rom. 1:18ff . . . God has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, and he has revealed it in the things that have been made (i.e. nature) which prove his existence and his omnipotence (sovereignty).

God judges through nature by allowing men to suffer in their own persons the due penalty of their errors (Rom. 1:28).

GOD HAS BUILT INTO HIS REDEMPTIVE PROGRAM CERTAIN NATURAL JUDGMENTS UPON THE WICKED DEEDS OF MEN.

HIS NAME IS VINDICATED SINCE THROUGH THESE JUDGMENTS SOME WILL ACKNOWLEDGE HIS POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY AND TURN TO HIM FOR SALVATION.

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“Sixty-minutes, CBS, March 16, 1986, investigating the epidemic of AIDS among the 70,000 homosexuals in San Francisco. One homosexual man called it “a plague.” He said the homosexual community is gripped with “fear.” The majority see it with fear and are “changing their life-style.” 300 homosexuals are no longer crusading for political power, but are pleading for help. One out of every 2 homosexuals (35,000) have AIDS. “Our community is devastated . . . there is a lot of fear.” But one with the disease said, “Some people are claiming this is a judgment of God upon us for being homosexual, but my God is a different kind of God than that . . . he is a merciful God and would not punish me for being a homosexual.”

GOD IS VINDICATING HIS NAME AND HIS WORD (esp. Rom. 1:18ff) BEFORE OUR VERY EYES!

GOD IS DOING IT RIGHT HERE IN JOPLIN (AND THROUGHOUT THE USA) WITH JUDGMENTS UPON A SOCIETY INDULGING ITSELF IN ILLICIT DRUGS.

- B. To turn men from their sins. The fear of judgment is a major factor running from Genesis to Revelation in God’s message to turn men from sin.
 1. Hear the Psalmist: “When he slew them (the Israelites in the wilderness) they sought for him; they repented and sought God earnestly” Psa. 78:34.
 2. Isaiah said, “. . . when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the Lord” (Isa. 26:9-10).
 3. Paul wrote in II Cor. 5:10-11, “. . . we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. . . . Therefore, knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men. . . .”

C.S. Lewis, in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, writes: “. . . Pain as God’s megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final unrepented rebellion. But gives the only opportunity the bad man can

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have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul. . . . Evil man must not be left perfectly satisfied with his own evil . . . it must be made to appear to him what it really is . . . evil. . . . To condone an evil is simply to ignore it, to treat it as if it were good. . . .”

Hebrews warns christians not to go back to legalism for justification because it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, 10:26-31.

Leroy Garrett points out in *Restoration Review*, Jan. 1986, p. 205-207.

“. . . impressive was the ‘great fear’ that pervaded the primitive church, and we see from Acts 2:43 that fear was a reaction as early as Pentecost. . . .

The angelic cry from heaven is to ‘Fear God and give him glory’ (Rev. 14:7), and man’s ultimate duty has been defined as ‘Fear God and keep his commandments’ (Eccl. 12:13).

“. . . Two very public sins and two very real executions! (Ananias and Sapphira). If the same rule were applied to the church today, we’d likely have a plethora of funerals. But in time we’d have less sinning!

“. . . The fear generated by this chilling incident poured over into the community. While the townspeople held the church in high esteem for its moral standards, the record tells us an amazing fact about their reaction: *None of the rest dared join them* (Acts 5:13). While the church had enjoyed rapid growth, it suddenly came to a screeching halt. For a time no one would join the church, lest the penalty of sin be too severe. Such a conclusion as “If you join the church you may get yourself killed!” was possible. But it was not for long, for as the church continued its powerful witness ‘more than ever believers were added to the Lord’ (Acts 5:14). *The judgment against Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates that God is indeed in control and that he takes sin seriously. And it reveals that there is a place in the hearts and minds of us all for the fear of God.*”

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Mr. Garrett . . . "Only the fear of God will rid our world of its tormenting moral plagues, whether terrorism, drugs, child abuse, crime in our streets. And only the fear of God will restore that sense of awe and worship that is lacking in both the church and the world."

- C. To purge a people for himself through which he may offer redemption to the unbelieving world.
1. Ezek. 18:30-32
 2. Ezek. 20:32-44
 3. Paul says the church is to perfect holiness in the fear of God (II Cor. 7:1)
 4. Peter tells us to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear" (I Pet. 1:17).
 5. If the church will not judge itself, God will!
HE IS DETERMINED TO MAKE REDEMPTION AVAILABLE TO SINFUL MAN THROUGH A HOLY CHURCH.
 6. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Corinthians telling them to judge the immoral man and deliver him to Satan for the death of the flesh. Paul says more in rebuke to the church for its refusal to judge and purge, than he does about the immorality of the man.
Then Paul continues in I Cor. ch. 6 continuing to rebuke them about their indifference to judging themselves.
 7. God brought his judgments upon the Old Covenant people from Abraham to John the Baptizer (2400 years) and purged only a small remnant through which he brought the Messiah into the world.
 8. God began to the church from the moment of its inception on Pentecost. He continued judging the church into the next four centuries during the Roman empire (letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor — Revelation).
A CHURCH NOT JUDGED AND PURGED BY CHRIST IS NOT PREPARED TO STAND AGAINST THE DECEPTIONS OF THE BEAST, FALSE PROPHET, AND HARLOT.
SHOULD WE DARE THINK OUR GENERATION WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM GOD'S JUDGING

AND PURIFYING!

III. THE PROCLAMATION OF JUDGMENT

- A. Each person is responsible for his own sin. Ezek. 18:33
1. No circumstances, environment, deprivation, or other person can be blamed for an individual's sin, in spite of what sociologists and psychologists may say.
 2. The Bible, God's inspired, inerrant word deals with sin from the only divine, omnipotent, omniscient perspective known to man.

Question, CAN THE BIBLE BE TRUSTED TO PROVIDE "ALL THAT PERTAINS TO LIFE AND GODLINES?" . . . IN THE AREA OF SPIRITUALITY?

WHAT DID THE EARLY CHURCH DO BEFORE FREUD, BEFORE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS? DID THEY HAVE ANY RESOURCE AVAILABLE SUFFICIENT TO DEAL WITH SIN?

WERE THE HOMOSEXUALS, TRANSVESTITES, PEDOPHILES, MANIC-DEPRESSIVES, SCHIZOPHRENICS, NEUROTICS, PSYCHOTICS IN SOCIETY BROUGHT INTO THE CHURCH AND THEN SENT TO PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS? NOT ACCORDING TO I COR. 6, etc.

Those who would not follow God's revelation in the N.T. to cure all kinds of socially aberrant behavior were left to "suffer in their own persons the due penalty of their errors" . . . or as Jesus put it in Matt. 18, were as the Gentile and the publican.

Those who were in the church and unwilling to change social behavior rapidly were delivered to Satan for the mortification of the flesh. Those christians who were overtaken in a trespass, and repented, were restored in a spirit of gentleness.

3. The book, *Psychological Seduction*, by William Kirk

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Kilpatrick, a teacher of psychology at Boston College, writes,

- a. In 1952 Hans Eysenck of the Institute of Psychiatry at the University of London discovered that neurotic people who do not receive therapy are as likely to recover as those who do. Psychotherapy, he found, was not any more effective than the simple passage of time.
- b. Dr. Eugene Levitt of the Indiana University School of Medicine found that disturbed children who were not treated recovered at the same rate as disturbed children who were.
- c. Extensive Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study showed that uncounseled juvenile delinquents had a lower rate of further trouble than counseled ones.
- d. Other studies have shown that untrained lay people do as well as psychiatrists or clinical psychologists in treating patients. And the Rosenham studies indicated that mental hospital staff could not even tell normal people from genuinely disturbed ones.
- e. Despite the creation of a virtual army of psychiatrists, psychologists, psychometrists, counselors, and social workers, there has been no letup in the rate of mental illness, suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction, child abuse, divorce, murder, and general mayhem.

The more psychologists we have, the more mental illness we get; the more social workers and probation officers, the more crime;

4. Mr. Kilpatrick continues: "A good deal of research suggests that psychology is ineffective. And there is evidence pointing to the conclusion that psychology is actually harmful."
 - a. He says, "The church has always proceeded on the assumption that reality is what we are built for: the more of it we get, the better off we are. The Christian faith is not founded on beautiful subjective thoughts, but on decisive historical events that occurred during

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the time when Augustus and Tiberius ruled Rome.”

What our Lord came to reveal, moreover, was not a set of inspirational themes, but a transcendent reality, the reality of things as yet unseen but nevertheless fixed and solid.”

- b. The mind's first duty, then, is not to prefer pleasant thoughts but to record things as they are.
- c. And in that revelation of reality from God is the reality of GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY ARE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR BEHAVIOR!
- d. And you should get the book, *Reality Therapy*, and read that! Written by a psychologist practicing in veterans hospitals and delinquent juvenile institutions.

He insists that the cure for anti-social behavior is facing the reality of personal responsibility for one's behavior and changing it, even if it takes discipline and punishment to produce the reality!

IT IS THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PREACH WHAT THE BIBLES SAY, PRACTICE WHAT THE BIBLES SAY . . . AND NOT CALL UPON INADEQUATE (AT BEST) AND PROBABLY HARMFUL HUMANISTIC SYSTEMS CALLED PSYCHOLOGY.

MEN AND WOMEN AND TEENAGERS ARE RESPONSIBLE BEFORE GOD AND BEFORE MAN FOR THEIR ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIONS. THEY MUST HEAR AND BE CONVINCED THAT GOD JUDGES SIN AND WICKEDNESS.

WE HAVE TOO LONG LIED TO OURSELVES ABOUT WICKEDNESS AND CALLED IT, "DISEASE," "MENTAL ILLNESS," "LIBERATED LIVING," "EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES," "DIFFERENT LIFE-STYLE" . . . ETC., ETC.

5. Some people see what I've said as cruel, uncompassionate, unforgiving.

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But get this straight — forgiveness has nothing to do with letting the forgiven have his own way!

Some think if you don't let the one doing wrong have his own way you haven't forgiven him.

THAT'S NOT THE WAY GOD FORGIVES.

PARENTS KNOW THAT!

JESUS ALWAYS SAID, "GO . . . SIN NO MORE, LEST A WORSE THING BEFALL YOU!"

6. It was the apostle Peter who wrote in his second epistle that the world *deliberately ignores* the fact of the judgment of God upon sin. THE FACT OF JUDGMENT IS WRITTEN IN THE FOSSIL RECORD . . . THE GREAT FLOOD IN NOAH'S DAY WHICH IS THERE INGRAVED IN STONE!

SO MAN DEVISES EVOLUTION IN WHICH TO HIDE FROM THE *REALITY OF THE JUDGMENT!*

- B. Proclaiming the judgment is to be a real *burden* to believers! God made it intimately personal to Ezekiel. HE WANTED HIS PEOPLE TO NOT ONLY KNOW ABOUT JUDGMENT, BUT TO BE BURDENED WITH IT AS A MOTIVE FOR PROCLAIMING IT.

SO HE TOLD EZEKIEL, "Sigh therefore, son of man; sigh with breaking heart and bitter grief before their eyes" 21:6.

AND HE WAS TO SIGH BECAUSE OF THE TIDINGS OF JUDGMENT COMING.

1. One of the things the church of the N.T. is to do is "groan and travail inwardly (and outwardly) as we see this present creation subjected to futility (judgment), Rom. 8.
 2. GOD WAS GOING TO TAKE AWAY FROM THE JEWS OF EZEKIEL'S DAY THE "DELIGHT OF THEIR EYES" (THE TEMPLE) SO THEY WOULD BE BURDENED WITH HIS JUDGMENTS.
- C. Judgment upon the world (and that will include the church so long as she is in the world) is a very significant part of "THE ETERNAL GOSPEL."

1. "Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the

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earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water'' (Rev. 14:6-7).

2. In Acts 24:25, Paul preached justice, self-control, and future judgment before kings and emperors.
3. Paul preached the day of judgment as certain and proved by the resurrection of Christ, to philosophers, Acts 17:30-31.
4. Peter preached judgment as ordained by God, Acts 10:42.
5. Jesus said he came to judge the world, John 9:39; 12:31; 12:18,49.
6. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and the judgment, John 16:8-11.
7. Jesus proclaimed the judgment in almost every lengthy sermon he preached. . . .
 - a. In the Sermon on the Mount, ch. 7.
 - b. In the Sermon in Parables, Matt. 13.
 - c. In the Sermon on His Deity, John 5.
 - d. In His sermons during the Feast of Tabernacles, John 7,8,9,10.
 - e. In his last sermon to the apostles, John 15-16.
 - f. In his great evangelistic sermons in Luke 13,14,15,16,17.
 - g. AND IN THE TENDEREST PARABLE JESUS TOLD, THE ONE OF THE PRODIGAL SON, HE SHOWED THAT IT WAS THE JUDGMENT UPON THE PRODIGAL'S REBELLION THAT TURNED HIM BACK TO HIS FATHER!

FRIENDS, IT IS THE CHURCH'S CALLING TO PREACH AND WARN, FIRST ITSELF, THEN THE WORLD, OF THE TERRIBLE JUDGMENT COMING. JESUS IS COMING WITH HIS ANGELS IN FLAMING FIRE, TO RENDER VENGEANCE UPON ALL THOSE THAT KNOW NOT GOD AND OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL, II Thess. 1:8ff.

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THE CHURCH IS NOT PRACTICING EVANGELISM UNTIL SHE DOES THIS. GOD PUT THE JEWS IN THE CENTER OF CIVILIZATION TO PROCLAIM AND PROVE THE SOVEREIGNTY OF JEHOVAH . . . THEY DEFAULTED ON THEIR CALLING . . . SO GOD JUDGED THEM TO PROVE TO THEM AND TO THE WORLD AROUND THEM THAT HE MEANT WHAT HE SAID.

WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES FOR THE REDEMPTIVE PROGRAM OF GOD . . . AND THAT INCLUDES THE FACT THAT, "JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD."

Conclusion

When the great, busy plants of our cities
 Shall have turned out their last finished work,
When the merchants have sold their last order
 And dismissed every last tired clerk,
When our banks have raked in their last dollar
 And have paid out their last dividend,
When the Judge of the earth wants a hearing
 And asks for a balance — WHAT THEN?

When the choir has sung its last anthem
 And the preacher has voiced his last prayer,
And the people have heard their last sermon
 and the sound has died out in the air,
When the Bible lies closed on the altar
 And the pews are all empty of men,
When each one stands facing his record,
 And the great Book is opened — WHAT THEN?

When the actors have played their last drama
 And the mimic has made his last fun,
When the movie has flashed its last picture
 And the billboard displayed its last run'

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

When the crowd seeking pleasure has vanished
And gone out in the darkness again,
When the trumpet of ages has sounded
And we stand before HIM — WHAT THEN?

When the bugle call sinks into silence
And the long marching columns stand still,
When the captain repeats his last orders
And they've captured the last fort and hill'
When the flag has been hauled from the masthead,
All the wounded afield have checked in,
And the world that rejected its Savior
Is asked for a reason — WHAT THEN?

IF THERE IS ANYONE HERE THIS MORNING, WHO HAS NOT OBEYED THE GOSPEL, WE PLEAD WITH YOU TO COME FORWARD NOW, AND CONFESS YOUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, OBEY HIS COMMAND TO BE IMMERSUED FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, AS BOTH HE AND HIS APOSTLES HAVE STATED IN THE BIBLE. . . . *

DO IT TODAY. JUDGMENT IS COMING. IT IS CERTAIN. BUT GOD'S GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS IS CERTAIN, TOO, IF YOU WILL JUST HEAR, AND DO WHAT HE HAS SAID.

Chapter Seven

THE PROBLEM OF REPENTANCE

7:2-16

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why would an apostle have to urge christians to “open” their hearts to him?
2. How could Paul say he did not regret making the Corinthians sorry by his letter?
3. Is there actually a danger that christians might have only “worldly” grief?
4. Can there be grief without regret, even if it is “godly grief”?
5. Why is Paul so concerned about the experience Titus had with the Corinthians?

SECTION 1

Augmentation (7:2-9)

2 Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. ³I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. ⁴I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, I am overjoyed.

5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he told us of your longing your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. ⁸For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into

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repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

7:2-4 Passion: Repentance has been defined by William Chamberlain as “a pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ.” In other words, repentance is an ongoing, constant battle to bring the believer’s *mind* and *body* into captivity unto Christ (see II Cor. 10:3-5). Repentance is not a one-time event in the life of a believer. Repentance and spiritual growth are synonymous. It is an ever recurring problem for preachers — in their own lives, certainly — but also in their struggle to produce it in the lives of those to whom they minister. Repentance is the primary goal of all preaching (see Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 11:18; 17:30-31, etc.). When Christ evaluated the seven churches of Asia Minor in order to prepare them for the “great tribulation” at the hands of beastly Rome, he admonished them to “repent.”

The fundamental problem preachers have with repentance is its augmentation. Even apostles struggled in their ministries to produce repentance in people. Paul had been dealing for a long time with the need of the Corinthian christians to repent of their arrogance toward the sinful man and woman in the congregation (see comments I Cor. 5:1ff). Paul had been severe in his communications with the Corinthians, both face to face, and in writing. This had caused some believers at Corinth to react with hostility toward Paul, slandering his character. This posed another sin from which he admonished them to repent. Paul wrote a “severe” third letter and sent it to Titus. While Titus was away in Corinth, Paul grieved that it had been necessary to be severe with people so dear to his heart. Titus returned with the good news that the Corinthians had repented. Paul was elated! And in this “fourth” letter (better known as II Corinthians) he bared his soul as he related the problem he had bringing them to repentance. The Corinthians had repented, but evidently they were still “stand-offish” toward Paul. Perhaps they were afraid the apostle was still angry with them. They were still smarting from his rebukes and were determined they would not involve themselves emotionally with him so as to be hurt again. They would be christian “brothers” again, but not friends! But true repentance must result in reconciliation!

So Paul shows that *passion* (earnest love) is part and parcel with

the severity that produces repentance. Paul has already plead with them (see II Cor. 6:11-13) to "widen their hearts" to make room for him. He has already stated (6:11-13) that full reconciliation between them awaits only the restoration of their affections — not his. Now, after a brief parenthetical warning against an attitude of paganism, he repeats his fervent plea for a restored friendship. He says, "Open your hearts to us . . ." (Gr. *Chroesate hemas*, "contain us, or, make room for us"). The word "heart" is not in the text, but may be understood from the previous discussion (II Cor. 6:11-13). Had Paul never felt *passionately* attached to these Corinthians, he would never have rebuked them for their sins. He would not have cared whether they would repent or not. He would have justified himself expressing no interest in their reformation, and washed his hands of the entire matter. But Paul did not do that. He persisted. He kept on admonishing them until they changed their minds and their actions. And it was his love for them that made him persist!

He begs them to make room for him in their hearts by considering that he (and his co-workers) had *wronged* (Gr. *edikesamen*, "treated unjustly or unfairly") no one; he had *corrupted* (Gr. *ephtheiramen*, "ruined") no one. The word *ephtheiramen* is a word signifying *corrupting* by means of false doctrine. Paul uses the same word in I Corinthians 15:33 to warn that evil homiletics (sermons teaching that there is no resurrection) *corrupts* good morals. No doubt there had been some in the church at Corinth accusing Paul of "corrupting" the church by his teaching *in favor of* christian liberty. The Judaizers would have been such accusers. At the same time, there would have been accusations by the Gnostic element that his teaching *against* sexual freedom would have a "corrupting" influence. Paul also reminds the Corinthians that he had not *taken advantage* of (Gr. *epleonektesamen*, lit. "seek to get more," or "defrauded") anyone. This Greek word is a compound of *pleonexia* which is translated "covetousness." He writes later in this same epistle that he had not "burdened" the Corinthian church by taking financial support from them (see II Cor. 12:13, 16, 17; and I Cor. 9:15-18). The Corinthians have been given no reason by Paul to "restrict their affections" toward him.

Paul had no recrimination to make, although he might have been justified in doing so, He longed for repentance and reconciliation. He

had already stated that the Corinthians were “in his heart” (6:11-13). And his affection for them was deep. He (and his co-workers) were ready to lay down their lives for the Corinthians. Paul’s passion for these brethren leads him to have *great confidence* (Gr. *polle parresia*, “much boldness”) on their behalf. He is able to be *proud* (Gr. *polle kauchesis*, “much boasting”) of them to others. His only motive in producing repentance and reconciliation in them is to be able to “boast” of *their* spirituality — not his. He will take no credit for what they become. He will give credit to the Lord and to them. He is content to be simply the unheralded instrument for the glory of God and their edification. As a matter of fact, he gave the Corinthians credit for *having filled* (Gr. *pepleromai*, perfect tense verb, past action with a continuing result) his life with *strength* (Gr. *parakleseis*, “paraclete, one called along side to strengthen”), and “overflowing” joy. It was Paul’s passion for the good of his Corinthian brethren that gave augmentation to solving the problem of repentance.

Preachers are plagued with the problems of repentance in those whom they serve because, unlike the apostle Paul, they frequently approach the problem from a selfish perspective thinking only about their own image and not about building up their brethren. Preachers will simply have to “enlarge their hearts” (6:11-13) and make themselves vulnerable and be willing to suffer some “afflictions” if they are going to find the way to produce repentance in believer’s lives. Preachers are going to have to faithfully and fairly preach uncorrupted doctrine with a passion for people’s souls before repentance will ever come to fruition. Preachers must be willing to share their own life and death with their congregations if they wish to witness spiritual growth through repentance. Such passion, such love, will inevitably produce repentance and reconciliation.

7:5-7 Pathos: Any preacher who expects to call his congregation to repentance must have pathos. He must be able to *empathize* (enter into feelings of another) in the chastening, sorrow and spiritual trauma that accompanies personal repentance. Paul had pathos. His pathos or empathy did not come easily. He knew the stresses and pressures of inner spiritual struggle (see Rom. 7:13-25). He knew the “afflictions” of the body (I Cor. 9:24-27) necessary to maintain a life of repentance. He could “feel” with the Corinthians. When he was in Macedonia he, and his co-workers, experienced no physical rest and no spiritual or

psychological rest, (see comments II Cor. 2:12-17). He was *afflicted* (Gr. *thlibomenoi*, "pressured") at every turn. Just what the "fighting without" was, we do not know. We would be safe in speculating that it had to do with the harassment of the Judaizers which was constant and vicious wherever Paul preached. The "fear within" is already described in 2:12-17.

This pathos so necessary to augment a program of repentance in others does not come overnight. There is no such thing as "instant" empathy. Before we can really understand what others must endure to repent, we must have "walked a mile in their moccasins." Paul had walked more than his "mile" in the shoes of repentance (see II Cor. 12:7ff).

The apostle tells the Corinthians that the coming of Titus with the good news from Corinth had comforted (strengthened) him (7:6). But he also states that before Titus came he had been "downcast" (Gr. *ta-peinous*, "laid low, humiliated"). Paul had walked the penitent's path of humiliation and *lowly-mindedness*. He knew what the Corinthians suffered (humiliation) in their choice to repent. He also knew that God would strengthen those who were lowliminded enough to repent. Biblical history is replete with examples of penitent men whom God lifted up and strengthened — Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Nehemiah, Mordecai. It also provides a long list of impenitent men who went from bad to worse — Cain, Nimrod, King Saul, Absalom, Ahab, Belshazzar, Haman and a host of others.

And what was the "good news" by which God strengthened the "downcast" apostle? First, it was the strengthening experience the penitent response of the Corinthians had upon Titus. Paul was so very glad to see the spiritual growth that had taken place in Titus as Titus had seen God's word work in the lives of the Corinthians. This is one of the most important ways by which a preacher finds the courage to go on striving to produce repentance — to see how manifested repentance brings about spiritual growth even in those merely observing it. Sincere, visible repentance elicits sober thinking and holy inclinations in everyone who is fortunate enough to be present when it happens! Paul saw its effects in Titus. That had an effect on Paul!

When Titus told Paul that the Corinthians "vehemently desired" to see Paul (Gr. *epipotesin*); that they "lamented and wailed" (Gr.

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odurmon) for him; that they were “zealous” (Gr. *zelon*) for him, then Paul rejoiced even *more*. How could a preacher rejoice more than “overflowing” (Gr. *huperperisseuomai*) (7:4)? But that is the extent to which a preacher must be willing to relate to or *empathize* with people in order to produce repentance in their lives and in his.

7:8-9 Pain: Finally, preachers must understand that there is no repentance without some pain! Paul had written severe rebukes. He had called the Corinthians “childish” for their divisions; “arrogant” for their indifference to immorality; “shameful” and “incompetent” because they could not judge wrong-doers; “disgraceful” in their corporate worship about the Lord’s table; “immature” in their use of spiritual gifts. All this in “First” Corinthians. We do not know how severe he was in the “unpreserved” letters he wrote, or in the personal confrontation he made with them. One thing we do know — while Paul was, at first, sorry he had to be so harsh, in the long run he did not *regret* (Gr. *metamelomai*) it. This shows the depth of Paul’s love for the Corinthians. Paul knew what he had written and said would hurt, but he knew that the grief and the hurt were necessary.

True love causes pain when it has to. God made the “Valley of Achor (Trouble)” a “door of hope” for Israel (Hosea 2:15). The prophets of the Old Testament are clear that God chastens by hurting the rebellious in order to bring about repentance. We do not show love to someone by withholding the truth. Paul said to the Galatians, “Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). We often let people go on and on in sin, saying we love them too much to hurt them, but nothing is more self-deceptive. What we usually mean by such a statement is that we do not want to hurt *ourselves*! When a sinner is told the truth about his sins, he gets angry with the one who told him — no matter how sincere and loving the attempt to produce repentance. That hurts! No one likes rejection! Paul did not like it! But he was willing to endure it for the sake of the Corinthians. When we say, “Well, I just love him too much to hurt him,” we are really kidding ourselves and saying we do not want to hurt ourselves.

It is appropriate here to make some extended quotations from, *The Problem of Pain*, by C.S. Lewis, pub. Macmillan Co.

... the older type of nurse or parent was quite right in thinking that the first step in education is ‘to break the child’s will.’ Their methods were

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often wrong: but not to see the necessity is, I think, to cut oneself off from all understanding of spiritual laws.

The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it.

. . . pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. A bad man, happy, is a man without the least inkling that his actions do not 'answer,' that they are not in accord with the laws of the universe.

Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has roused him, he knows that he is in some way or other 'up against' the real universe: he either rebels . . . or else makes some attempt at an adjustment, which, if pursued, will lead him to religion.

No doubt Pain as God's megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul.

Everyone has noticed how hard it is to turn our thoughts to God when everything is going well with us.

When I think of pain — If I knew any way of escape I would crawl through sewers to find it . . . I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made 'perfect through suffering' is not incredible.

We have commented on what Paul learned (see II Cor. 1:3-11) through affliction. That God "perfects" (brings to the goal, fulfills) man through affliction, pain, suffering and tribulation is a *primary* doctrine of both Old and New Testaments. It began when God "cursed the earth for man's sake" (Gen. 3:17-18) and subjected the whole creation to futility (Rom. 8:18-25). It is the *primary method* God uses to bring this wicked world to repentance (Rom. 1:18ff). Preachers must face the stark reality that there is no repentance without pain. Jesus clearly indicated that the way which leads to life is

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“narrow and *difficult*.” He said it was “hard” for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Paul said we enter the kingdom through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). Peter and John in their epistles have much to say about suffering and tribulation necessary for a life of holiness. For more discussion of this see, *Isaiah, Vol. II*, Special Study entitled, The Three Dimensions of Discipline, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press.

When you love a person you tell him the truth. But when you do you are risking his friendship for his first reaction will be one of hurt and defensiveness. If you are willing to make yourself vulnerable — to risk his friendship to tell him the truth, you demonstrate that you really love him. Usually, over the long-haul, the fact that you love him will come through.

Paul faithfully confronts the Corinthians with the truth. It hurt him to have to do it. It hurt them to hear it. But it was the beginning of their repentance and salvation. “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11). Even the sinless Lord Jesus was brought to the goal (“perfected”) for which God sent him into the world “through the things he suffered” (see Heb. 2:10; 5:7-9). The grief Paul’s severity engendered is clearly stated to be the *cause* of their repentance (7:9). The apostle goes so far as to say he *rejoiced* that he brought them to grief *because* (Gr. *hoti*, causal conjunction “that”) they were grieved *unto* (Gr. *eis*, preposition “unto,” sometimes used in a causal relation e.g. Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32; Rom. 4:20; Acts 2:38) repentance. In other words the “pain” of Paul’s severe words *caused* the Corinthians to move toward the change of mind and life called repentance. The Greek phrase, *elupethete gar kata theon hina en medeni zemiothete ex hemon*, reads literally, “for you were grieved according to God in order that in nothing you suffered loss from us.” J.B. Phillips translates it, “In other words, the result was to make you sorry as God would have had you sorry, and not merely to make you offended by what we said.” RSV translates *kata theon* as “godly grief.” They were grieved in God’s way — not in the way of the world or the devil. Apparently God has a *way* he wants man to be grieved *in order that* he may be brought to repentance. It is the preacher’s job to find “God’s way” to grieve people so they will repent! And God’s way is not without pain!

SECTION 2

Action (7:10-11)

¹⁰For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. ¹¹For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter.

7:10 Repentance: It sounds pedantic to say the problem with repentance is to get people to repent. But that is precisely the problem. Too many people have either been misled about or do not want to know what Biblical repentance is. William Chamberlain writes that the popular concept of repentance "has been tragically shallow: it has been perverted into emotionalism or sacramentarianism . . . repentance has been almost exclusively associated with an emotional crisis of sorrow for sin and fear of punishment." Chamberlain goes on to say that a proper definition of the Greek word *metanoeo* "calls for a renovation of mind . . . a complete change in mental outlook and of life design. . . ." But mere reformation of behavior is not the crucial matter in *repentance*. To lay stress on change of conduct or reformation of behavior is to lead the minds of people away from the fact that *metanoeo* (repentance) deals primarily with the "springs of action," rather than with the actions themselves. *Metanoeo* deals with the *source* of our motives, not with conduct, or even with the motives themselves. The real meaning of the Greek word *metanoeo* began to be misunderstood when the New Testament was first translated into Latin (about 1500 A.D.) when the Greek word was translated into the Latin words, *Poenitentiam agite*, "Do penance." The Church began to think of so many acts of penitence to cancel a given amount of sin. The emphasis was put on feelings (remorse) and deeds (penance). The emphasis should have been, as the Greek word clearly shows, on "having the mind of Christ." i.e., a transformation of the mind (see Rom. 12:1-2; II Cor. 5:14-17). People may be sorry for their past and they may even reform certain outward ways of living, and still refuse to allow every thought (II Cor. 10:3-5) to be brought into captivity un-

to obedience to Christ. *Metanoeo* means to allow Christ, through his expressed will in the New Testament, to take over our thinking. It means we think everything through the divine perspective. Our minds are no longer ours to think with as we please. Our thinking must please Christ. Tertullian said, “. . . the principle of voluntary obedience consists in similarity of minds.” This is the crucial issue in the christian way of life: similarity of mind between God and his people. Before man can enter God’s kingdom (the church) the thoughts of man must be aimed at becoming the thoughts of God. The principle of voluntary obedience in the Kingdom rests on similarity of mind between God and his people. True *metanoeo* (repentance) has little to do with the emotions. It is a mental metamorphosis. It is conforming one’s thinking to God’s revealed mind (the Bible) *in spite of* how one “feels” about it.

The Greek words *ergazetai* and *katergazetai* in verse 10 are both translated “produces.” The words literally mean, “works out” thus indicating that the “grief” Paul caused by his severe words to the Corinthians “worked” repentance instead of having “worked” death. The difference is simply that the Corinthians were “grieved according to the way of God” (“godly grief”). Here it is plain that repentance involves *more* than merely being *sorry* for sin. Being sorry produces *metanoian* (repentance). Grief according to God’s way “works” repentance which brings *no regret* (Gr. *ametameleton*, remorse). That is because repentance (conformity to the revealed mind of God) brings the experience of reconciliation, forgiveness, sonship, spiritual growth and freedom. Repentance starts with grief (within the limits of God’s will) but blossoms into joyful salvation.

Worldly (Gr. *kosmou* cosmic) grief works out of death because it becomes a substitute for true repentance or *metanoeo* (change of thinking). Worldly grief is being sorry for sin but unwilling to think about things as God thinks about them. Worldly grief wants to make reconciliation happen on the basis of emotion and not a changed mentality. Worldly grief regrets being caught in sin and having to suffer the consequences, vowing not to change the mind about sin, but vowing to be smarter, more self-sufficient, and not to be caught again. Worldly grief is the grief of the criminal mind. Worldly grief starts with hurt, but it is a mixture of anger and self-pity. It causes a person to either retreat into morbid self-judgment and eventually into suicide

(both physical and spiritual) or to rise up in self-justification, fight and strike back to get revenge.

Repentance is clearly an action. It is not something that happens to you. You make it happen. It is an exercise of the human will that brings the human thinking processes into conformity to the will of Christ. Once that is accomplished, human actions are altered to conform to the revealed will of Christ. God offers his help through his Holy Spirit (the "Comforter") to every human being willing to make such a change. But Christ will not overpower any human's will and force him to think God's thoughts (see Rev. 3:19-22; John 7:17; Psa. 25:14). Repentance is *not* an irresistible work of the Spirit. All through the Bible God's messengers lay the responsibility for repentance squarely upon man himself (see Acts 17:30-31).

7:11 Righteousness: How does one make his grief over sin produce repentance unto salvation instead of death? In this verse Paul gives clear-cut indications of whether one's hurt is a godly or worldly grief. The indicator is one's reaction to being hurt. When these Corinthians received the severe rebuke of the apostle Paul they reacted with *earnestness* (Gr. *spoude*, diligence, carefulness). This *earnestness* is a manifestation of *metanoeo* (change of mentality). They did not react emotionally, superficially, but with deliberation. This is the righteous (right) way to react — God's way. Next, they reacted with *eagerness to clear themselves* (Gr. *apologian*, from which we get the English words apology, apologetic, meaning "to make defense"). In this context it is clear Paul does not mean the Corinthians were arrogantly defending themselves against any need to change — they were not self-righteously justifying themselves. Godly grief had worked in them an eagerness to get all differences between themselves and God, between themselves and Paul, out in the open (*apologia*) and sincerely work toward the repentance that brings reconciliation. Next, their godly grief produced in them *indignation* (Gr. *aganaktesin*, vexation, anger, much grief). They were not indignant toward Paul — but toward themselves. They manifested shame for their past which moved them beyond self-pity to self-abnegation. And, even beyond self-abnegation, *indignation* usually produces a corrective attitude and action. Along with indignation, their hurt worked in them *alarm* (Gr. *phobon*, "fear"). This was, of course, *godly fear*. Godly fear is the very beginning of wisdom. It is a state of mind synonymous with

repentance. It is the beginning of thinking God's way. Paul's hurting words, which caused them to rearrange their thinking to God's way of thinking, produced in them *longing* (Gr. *epipotesin*, great yearning) for the one who had "hurt" them! That is evidence of redirected thinking! He mentions again the impression their "zeal" for him had made on him.

Finally, the righteous reaction of the Corinthians termed "punishment" is listed by Paul as proof of their *metanoeo* (change of mind). The Greek word *ekdikesis* is translated "revenge" in the KJV and "avenging of wrong" in the NASV. For other N.T. usages see Luke 18:7, 8; Acts 7:24; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30; II Thess. 1:8; Luke 21:22; I Pet. 2:14, etc. The *punishment* the Corinthians had finally administered to the immoral man (see I Cor. 5:1ff) and to the one who was causing division and slandering Paul (see II Cor. 2:5-11) was visible evidence of their change of mind. Earlier they had been arrogantly indifferent to the need for such *punishment*. But they have changed their mind and disciplined the wrong doers. They have conformed their thinking (and, consequently, their actions) to the will of God as revealed by the apostle. Christ told the church at Thyatira that it must change its mind about "tolerating" the "woman Jezebel" (Rev. 3:19-29) or he would give to each of them as their works deserved. The apostle Paul instructed several churches they needed to change their minds about disciplining the factious, lazy and immoral members. Repentance within the church remains a crucial problem that continues to plague preachers and elders and church members. There is only one divine solution; *know* the Bible and *practice* the Bible. Paul the preacher, and one of his congregations, Corinth, did so and solved the problem of repentance! They proved themselves mentally changed (penitent) in every point of the *matter* (Gr. *pragmati*, practice) being discussed by the apostle. This blessed Paul's ministry with joy overflowing!

SECTION 3

Aftermath (7:12-16)

¹²So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one

who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. ¹³Therefore we are comforted.

And besides our own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all. ¹⁴For if I have expressed to him some pride in you, I was not put to shame; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus had proved true. ¹⁵And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him. ¹⁶I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you.

7:12-13a Revelation: Repentance (orientation of the mind toward God's way of thinking) produces spiritual discoveries! Paul says, "The real reason I wrote those severe things which caused you grief was to bring you to a revelation of just how much you love me as we are in God." Paul had the ultimate benefit of the Corinthians in mind when he had to be harsh with them. When they repented, it proved who they were! The reason they had been arrogant and indifferent toward the wickedness going on amongst them was they had forgotten who and whose they were. Going through the experience of repentance inevitably produces an awareness that one is a child of God. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. 8:1-17).

The chastening and discipline which leads to repentance and "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" is the experience that confirms we are sons of God (see Heb. 12:5-11; I Cor. 11:32; I Pet. 4:12-19; Rev. 3:19). The classic illustration of repentance revealing sonship is the Parable of The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11ff). It was the moment the prodigal "came to himself" and changed his mind about the value of the "far country" and set his mind on his father's house that he became aware of who he really was!

When the Corinthians were brought up short by Paul's severe rebuking they began to grieve God's way and rediscovered their strong affection for Paul in the Lord. There are three factors working together to produce a repentance which confirms that a person is a child of God: (1) The Holy Spirit working his will through his Word (the Scriptures); (2) the surrender of the human will to the

authoritative leading of the Holy Spirit; (3) the preachers or messengers through whom the Holy Spirit ministers his Word. William Chamberlain puts it, "Somehow, a creative activity of God works through the message of a crucified Saviour, preached by sinning men to a world in sin and revolt, and so God changes the minds of men from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ. This is too wonderful to understand, but we see it operate wherever a crucified Saviour is presented by men who have experienced his grace. God provides the initiative, the dynamic, and the means; man responds; and repentance is the result." Repentance (change of mind to conform to God's way) gives divine perspective to everything! It is as if a dark veil were lifted — as if blind eyes were suddenly given sight. History, life, origins, destinies, relationships, and things are "seen" in the light of the future glory for the sons of God. Repentance is more than sorrow for sin — it is more than reformed behavior. It is a renewed mind.

7:13b-14 Relief: The godly change in the Corinthians was a great blessing to Titus. Paul rejoiced at the joy of Titus because "his mind has been set at rest by you all." The Greek word *anapepautai* is a combined word in the perfect tense and might be translated, "being completely put at rest in the past and continues to be at rest." And it was Titus' *spirit* (Gr. *pneuma*) which the RSV equates with "mind." His spirit was put completely at rest.

It was a great relief to Titus when the Corinthians manifested they were thinking according to God again. Titus was going to be sent back to Corinth to complete the arrangements for the collection for the poor brethren in Judea. Besides, when Paul's character was being maligned, Titus' mind and heart would be troubled. Titus was Paul's "true child in a common faith" (Titus 1:4). Paul's affection for Titus and trust in him are unquestionable. The same would be true of Titus toward Paul.

Their repentance was a great relief to Paul. It is probable that Titus had undertaken the mission to Corinth with Paul's "severe" letter with some misgivings but had been encouraged by the boasts of Paul that the Corinthians would repent and be reconciled. Paul was relieved that Titus had seen that come true. He would not want this young evangelist to experience failure by witnessing impenitence. There are enough disillusionments and discouragements for young preachers in the world without having to suffer the disillusionment of

seeing impenitence in the lives of the children or God!

A repenting church will be a church at rest! What the church of Christ needs in this day more than anything else — more than cathedrals, causes, and collections — is repentance. Congregations institute programs for every aspect of ministry except repentance. Have you ever heard of a congregation implementing “a program for repentance”? Yet repentance is the thrust of every epistle written by an apostle to a congregation. Repentance is the exclusive theme of Christ’s program for the seven churches of Asia Minor to prepare them for facing their confrontation with “the beast, the false prophet, and the harlot.” When John the Baptist and Jesus preached the *gospel* it was “repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.”

As William Chamberlain concludes, “The Church must redefine its task. We have had too much preaching that dealt out mild homeopathic doses of ethical exhortation or sought to establish a social utopia by ignoring the fundamental need for a complete change in the mind and heart of mankind. Jesus and John . . . began with this need. The Kingdom was at hand, they proclaimed, and that called for a complete metamorphosis of the mind of man. . . . The Apostle Paul reminds us that our task is to capture the mind of man. This includes the subconscious mind. . . . The Church must be told that becoming a Christian requires a new set of values, a new pattern for life, a new mind. If one’s thoughts begin and end with one’s personal convenience and desires, one is disqualified for Christian living. The preacher must keep reminding the Church that it must become Christian in its ideals, its desires, and its aspirations before it can become Christian in its practice, for the conduct of man hinges on his thought life. A pagan bent in one’s thoughts gives a pagan tilt to one’s life.”

7:15-16 Reconciliation: Titus’ troubled spirit was not only put at rest, but “his heart went out to” the Corinthians all the more. The Greek word translated “heart” is *splagchna* often translated “bowels” in KJV. It means “gut feelings” or “deep, innermost affections.” Titus was “moved” emotionally by this experience. Today, while the Church is “moved” by musical performances, or humorous speakers, it is often indifferent and sometimes chagrined at any accomplishment of true repentance — not merely a show of sorrow — a manifested change of thinking.

What moved Titus emotionally was the *obedience* (Gr. *hupakoē*,

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hearing, obeying) of the Corinthians. The Corinthians were grieved with a godly grief. But it was not their sorrow which impressed Titus — it was their obedience! In most cases today, people get emotional over seeing the emotions of others on display. But the impact the Corinthians had on Titus and Paul was due to their display of obedience. Obedience is what impresses the Lord, too! (see I Sam. 15:22-23; Heb. 11:7, 8; Gen. 22:10-12; Rom. 1:5; 16:19, 26; Heb. 5:8-9, etc.). The fruition of repentance is obedience.

Another thing that impressed Titus about the Corinthians was the “fear and trembling” with which they received him. The Greek words used are *phobou* from which we get the English word *phobia* (fear), and *tromou*, which is the noun form of the Greek verb *tremo* (English, tremor, tremble). Does it seem unchristian for Paul to be rejoicing that the Corinthians responded to Titus’ message with phobia and timidity? How many christians do you know who respond to exhortations to repent with fear and trembling? Usually the reaction to scriptural rebuke, especially if it is “severe,” is first anger, then defensiveness or self-justification, and finally retaliation. But what Titus saw in the Corinthians was godly grief, obedience, fear and trembling. What a difference! It is the difference between repentance and rebellion, between righteousness and ungodliness; it is the difference between christian and hypocrite. We have discussed the imperative part the “fear of God” plays in the perfection of holiness in christian character (see notes on 7:1). Paul adds here the part “fear” plays in repentance. Fear plays a very significant part in holy conduct (see I Pet. 1:15-17). What Titus reported made Paul write, “I am rejoicing because I am having *confidence* (Gr. *tharro*, boldness, courage) in you in everything.” Reconciliation has taken place. Full restoration of affection and brotherly love is made because the Corinthians decided to think God’s way, and Paul’s heart is overflowing.

So, Paul the preacher found himself with a problem about repentance. He faced it squarely, honestly and faithfully. His passion for the Corinthians, his pathos for their need, and his willingness to risk their friendship when he knew only pain would augment repentance helped him provide the solution to the problem. What resulted was true repentance (change from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ) and righteous behavior from the Corinthians. And the blessings which came (self-revelation, relief, and rejoicing) gave Paul,

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Titus and the congregation at Corinth a “taste of the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come . . .” (Heb. 6:4-5). The kingdom of God was theirs (Matt. 5:3-13).

APPREHENSION:

1. What is repentance?
2. Why did Paul have to remind the Corinthians that he had not taken advantage of them?
3. What affliction did Paul have in Macedonia? Why was he in Macedonia?
4. What is the meaning of “downcast”?
5. How did the “comfort” Titus had help Paul?
6. How did Paul make the Corinthians “sorry” with his letter?
7. Why was he not sorry he had made them sorry?
8. What is “godly grief”?
9. What is “worldly grief”?
10. How did the Corinthians prove they had repented?
11. What did Paul plan would be revealed to the Corinthians by his severe letter?
12. What did the repentance of the Corinthians do for Titus?
13. What did the Corinthians do that made Titus “deeply emotional” toward them?
14. Why did the Corinthians react to Paul’s message with “fear and trembling”?

APPLICATION:

1. If repentance is essentially a change of thinking so as to think God’s thoughts, what should preaching and Sunday School teaching focus on?
2. Do you see your preacher as seeking you to “open your heart” to him?
3. Have you opened your heart to him? Has he opened his heart to you?
4. Do you think of your minister as one who has “walked in your

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shoes”?

5. Would it help you to repent if he reassured you that he has or is walking there?
6. When you find you have had to repent (change your mind) about something from God's word, does it draw you closer to your preacher? How?
7. How do you react to your preacher, your Sunday School teacher, or your spouse when they “make you sorry” about your favorite sin?
8. Have you ever had the courage to “hurt” someone with truth in order to bring them to repentance? Are you willing to be “hurt” in return for “hurt” if it produces repentance? Why?
9. Have you ever been sorry about a mistake without changing your thinking about it being a mistake?
10. Do you think the church needs to change its thinking today about church discipline? Why? How?
11. How would you suggest the church could institute a program for repentance today? What areas in congregational life need repentance?
12. Are there places in your church that could be put at rest by repentance? People?
13. Have you ever been emotionally touched by someone's obedience to Christ's word? What was it? How did you feel?
14. Do you think a congregation obeying would have more impact on others than a church entertaining?
15. Do you react with “fear and trembling” when God's messenger delivers a message of God about repentance to you?

Chapter Eight

THE PROBLEM OF STEWARDSHIP — PART I (8:1-24)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Does God expect people to give “beyond their means”?
2. What is the point at which one “excels” in benevolence?
3. If the “readiness” is in our heart is that acceptable whether we give or not?
4. Why should administrators of what has been given be “blameless”?
5. Paul mentions twice that giving is a “proof of love”? Is it?

SECTION 1

Commitment (8:1-7)

8 We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. ³For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—⁵and this, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. ⁶Accordingly we have urged Titus that as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete among you this gracious work. ⁷Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us—see that you excel in this gracious work also.

8:1-2 Poverty No Problem: Call it “giving,” “benevolence,” or “finances,” the problem is *stewardship*. While Paul had no stewardship problem with the brethren in Macedonia, he may have had one with the brethren in Corinth. He gave them directions about steward-

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ship in First Corinthians (I Cor. 16:1-4). Now, in Second Corinthians, he urges them to imitate the Macedonians and *fulfill* (v. 6, Gr. *epitelese*, "complete, fulfill, finish") what they had said they desired to do and had actually begun to do in the matter of stewardship (benevolence) toward the Judean brethren.

It is one of the major problems of the ministry to get believers to actually become *stewards* of God. It is not as much of a problem to get people to "give" as it is to get them involved in *stewardship* (management) of God's grace. Stewardship and giving are not synonymous terms. The Greek word translated *stewardship* is *oikonomia*, and means literally, "keeper of the house," or "manager." It came to mean, "the discharge of a commission." We may not be able to conceive of stewardship apart from giving, but we certainly have seen giving that was not a part of good stewardship. About one-third of the parable of Jesus deal with some aspect of stewardship. In the New Testament idea of stewardship, Christians are "managers" of the grace of God. They are responsible not only for what is given but also for where or to what cause it is given. They are responsible not only for what is given, but also for what is kept and how it is used. They are responsible and will be held accountable by the God of all grace.

While the precise Greek word *oikonomia* (stewardship) never comes into our text in II Corinthians 8 and 9, the principles of stewardship are clearly enumerated. Although there is something of a special nature to the offering Paul is discussing in our text, the principles stated are enduring and should be applied to every aspect of the church and the believer. What Paul is *urging* in II Corinthians 8 and 9 is simply a continuation of his "directions" (Gr. *dietaxa*, "command, ordain, prescribe, charge") in I Corinthians 16:1-4! Make no mistake, stewardship, giving, benevolence is an apostolic *command*! What Paul says in II Corinthians "*not* as a command" is how much is to be given. Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians told precise amounts to be given. Tithing is *not* a New Testament ordinance. Tithing is not a worthy ideal for a Christian. Stewardship involves 100 percent of a Christian's "possessions" — not just one-tenth.

The Christians in Judea were poor. First, they had been "plundered" by their Hebrew persecutors (see Heb. 10:32-34). Second, the land of Palestine was economically the poorest in the whole Roman empire. Third, Palestine was over-populated with Hebrew and

christian pilgrims. One of the earliest problems of the church in Jerusalem was the equitable feeding of the widows (Acts 6:1). Early in the history of the spread of Christianity, the christians at Antioch sent relief to the church at Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:29), because of a fourth circumstance — widespread famine. The leaders of the Jerusalem church asked Paul to “remember the poor” (Gal. 2:10) whenever he preached in Judea.

So, when Paul began his third missionary journey, he planned to raise as large an offering from the Gentiles in Asia Minor and Greece as he could carry back to Judea to care for the destitute christians there.

Paul’s statement to the church at Corinth (I Cor. 16:1-4) mentioning the church of Galatia, indicates his plan for the offering was already well known by the time he wrote to Corinth. Paul mentions the collection to the church at Rome in the epistle he wrote to them while residing at Corinth (Rom. 15:25-26). “Paul’s collection” was widely known. When Paul left Corinth a number of men accompanied him. The book of Acts does not say that these men were taking up the collection, but it would seem that this was the reason for their going. The “committee” consisted of: “Sopater of Beroea, the son of Pyrrhus; of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus” (Acts 20:4).

The apostle knew how destitute the Judeans were. He wanted to carry back to them an offering substantial enough to fulfill the need. Corinth was one of the wealthier cities in the Roman empire and contained some men of substance in the membership of the church. Paul was much concerned that they would respond liberally to the appeal so he holds before them the almost incredible example of the Macedonians.

It seems strange that Paul never uses the word “stewardship” in this discussion. It is apparent that he uses the Greek word *charin*, “grace” as a synonym. He uses this word “grace” nine times (8:1, 4, 7, 9, 16, 19; 9:8, 14, 15). Everything a human being has in this world is granted him by the grace of God. God owns everything but he grants each of us a portion to “manage” for his profit (glory). Whatever we “give” to others really is not ours (I Chron. 29:9-19), but belongs to God. So Paul says, “We want you to know, brethren, about the *grace*

of God which as been *given* (Gr. *dedomenen*, "has been given," not "shown" as in the RSV) among the churches of Macedonia." Whenever we give, we give the grace of God. We are "managers" (stewards) of the grace of God. In all his parables of stewardship Jesus taught plainly that the steward possessed nothing of his own — he simply managed what belonged to the "householder," or the "master."

Macedonia is generally the territory lying between the Balkan highlands and the Greek peninsula. It was both a Greek kingdom and a Roman province. The population was Indo-European, but of mixed tribal elements of which the Dorian (people from Balkan highlands north of Greece) stock was probably a strong ingredient. Plummer records the fact that the Romans had been very hard on the Macedonians expropriating their richest sources of income — the gold and silver mines — and taxing the right to smelt the minerals. They had also reserved to themselves the trade in salt, timber, and shipbuilding. All of this had reduced the territory to deep poverty. Added to the burdens of the christians were the various persecutions which they had experienced. Yet they, of all Paul's churches, were most generous in their support of him (at least the church at Philippi which was in the Macedonian province — see Phil. 4:10-19). Paul says the churches of Macedonia "gave the grace of God" during a "severe test" (Gr. *polle*, "much;" and *dokime*, "proof, trial, examination") of "affliction" (Gr. *thlipseos*, "pressure, crushing, squeezed"). Paul mentions these severe afflictions in his letter to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:14-16).

Under these extreme privations and tensions the Macedonians found enough of God's grace (Gr. *charas* "joy") available to them to "overflow" (Gr. *eperisseusen*, extensive abundance) "in a wealth of liberality" (Gr. *eis to ploutos tes haplotetos*). The Greek word *haplotetos* is translated "liberality" and means, literally, "unconditionally, sincerely, unaffectedly, honestly, singlemindedly." Their response was one of *honest stewards* — they concealed nothing, held back nothing. And this they did under circumstances of "extreme poverty" (Gr. *bathous ptocheia*). The Greek word *bathos* is, literally, "deep" (from it we get the English words *bath*, *bathe*, *bathometer*), and the Greek word *ptocheia* is the same word as the one Matthew used to record Jesus' statement, "Blessed are the *poor* in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). Paul uses the word

“poverty” (*epptocheusen*) in 8:9 to characterize the way Jesus divested himself of his heavenly glory so that believers might become *rich* (Gr. *plouteseite*, “plutocratic”). The word *ptocheia* is often translated simply, “poor,” as in the case of the “poor” widow (Mark 12:41-44), and the “poor” beggar (Luke 16:19-20). *Ptocheia* means *more* than underprivileged or unprosperous or lacking — it means “poverty-stricken,” “bankrupt,” “destitute,” and “impoverished.”

Paul urges the Corinthians to respond like the Macedonians. Not even “extreme poverty” presented a problem to the Macedonians because they responded on the basis of *stewardship* and not merely on the basis of “taking up an offering.” Whether there was a problem in this area in the Corinthian church or not, the apostle urges the example of *stewardship* by the Macedonians as the christian standard of “giving.” Only *commitment* to the New Testament *ordinance* of *stewardship* will solve the financial problem of the church — *not* “tithing,” not “collections.” And the financial problem of the church is *not* fundamentally the *amount* of money or property it does *not* have or may have; the basic problem with christians and their financial responses to Christ is in the area of *motives* — reasons and purposes for giving. Essentially, the problem is that of surrender and commitment to the will of God as he has expressed it in his Word. God’s word clearly demands cheerful, honest, wise, accountable stewardship of *one hundred percent* of one’s worldly possessions. Even the “poverty-stricken” are responsible for good stewardship!

8:3-5 Participation, the Point: The point in christian stewardship is not how much, but why! Paul *testified* (Gr. *marturo*, “witnessed as in a court of law”) from first-hand, personal, eye-witnessed knowledge that the Macedonians gave according to their *ability* (Gr. *dunamin*, power, capability, dynamic). Indeed, they gave *beyond* (Gr. *para*, preposition meaning “beyond, extended, over”) their ability! To what extent does one give in order to give “beyond” one’s ability? The Biblical answer to that may be found in the actual event Jesus observed in the Jewish temple one day when a Hebrew widow (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4), “out of her poverty . . . put in everything she had, *her whole living*.” This Hebrew widow extended herself in giving to the Lord to the ultimate — “all that she had to live by.” She gave “two mites” (about 60 cents in American currency today) while the rich put in “bags” (probably hundreds of dollars worth) of coins. Yet

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she put in more than all of them put together, in God's eyes, because she gave up her livelihood so far as she was able, at that moment, to sustain it (see *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, pp. 467-470, pub. College Press). Is that not extreme? Is that not exceptional? Is that not beyond what Christ requires of the normal christian life? Did the widow of Elijah's experience (I Kgs. 17:12-16) think so? Did Jesus think so? (see Matt. 19:23-30; Luke 14:33). Did the Macedonians think so? Did Paul think so? (see Phil. 4:10-13, etc.). Of course, the Bible says the laborer is worthy of his hire. And the Bible says the one who will not provide for his own (family) is worse than a heathen (I Tim. 5:8). It also says we are to "earn our own living" (II Thess. 3:12). There were other rich followers of Jesus who were never specifically challenged to "sell all they had" in order to give to the poor. When Judas insisted that a costly vial of myrrh could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor, Jesus rebuked him and said, "the poor you have with you always . . ." (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). But Jesus does teach us that we should be *ready*, at any moment, to give *everything* we have, including our very lives, upon demand, in his service. He does command us that we are to live one day at a time without anxiety (divided-mindedness) and to pray daily for our bread (Matt. 6:1-34). Whatever a christian has left over from daily needs he must *commit* (surrender), as an honest and wise steward, to the Master's use. It is normal (Biblically speaking) that the christian *not* lay up for himself treasures on earth, (see Matt. 6:19-21; I Tim. 6:17-19; Luke 16:8-9; 12:13-21). The Macedonians were following the *normal* requirements of christian stewardship when they gave, "of their own free will" (Gr. *authairetoi*), and beyond their ability. They gave when they "couldn't afford it" because that is what a christian steward is to do when the Lord's service requires it. They gave what they had and trusted the Lord to supply what they needed.

What is so incredible about the giving of the Macedonians (8:4) is expressed in the Greek text, *meta polles parakleseos deomenoi*, literally, "with much begging, requesting. . . ." They *begged* to give! In circumstances of affliction and severe poverty, they begged and requested "the favor" (Gr. *charin*, "grace") of giving! They were not doing Paul or the destitute Judeans a favor — they were asking *for* a favor — TO GIVE! They really believed Jesus' promise, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:38). They plead with Paul for

the privilege to give because they wanted to *participate in* (Gr. *koinonian*, share, commune, participate, fellowship) the “relief” (Gr. *diakonias*, ministry, deaconship) toward the “saints” (Gr. *hagious*, holy ones) for Judea. Perhaps more christians would “beg” to give if it could be communicated to them that they actually were *sharing in* the ministry of Christ through those “full-time” servants (preachers, missionaries, teachers, and others) who administer the gifts and grace of God.

What the Macedonians did was beyond the expectations of Paul and his co-laborers. Paul was *surprised* that these brethren could give beyond their ability out of “deep poverty.” People, in deep poverty themselves, begging for the favor of giving, giving beyond what they could afford to give, will surprise almost any christian today! If it were not written by a man (Paul) whose veracity is unquestionable and under the claimed inerrancy of the Holy Spirit of God, what the Macedonians did would be unbelievable! While such stewardship is the theological norm taught in the New Testament, it is *not* the *practiced* norm in the church today! And that is so because most christians have not fully given themselves to the Lord.

The *secret* of such unimaginable giving of one’s possessions is that *first* (Gr. *proton*, firstly) they gave *themselves*. There was not one iota of selfishness in these Macedonian christians because they had given up *self* to Jesus. They considered themselves as no longer belonging to themselves, but unto Christ who had purchased them. They were his, totally, for he had bought them with his atoning death. They were “sold out” to God’s will. It was not ever what they wanted anymore, but what Christ wanted (see Gal. 2:20-21; 6:14). They could behave as their Judean brethren had earlier when, “. . . the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common,” (Acts 4:32). That kind of total surrender of self requires dauntless, courageous faith in God’s veracity. It is important to notice that the Macedonians *gave* themselves. God did not force them to surrender to him to any degree. God worked no irresistible power to overwhelm their will. *They* gave themselves. They could have done otherwise. But they chose to give themselves to the Lord and to Paul *through* (Gr. *dia*) the will of God. That is, *they chose the will of God in place of their own will*. And that is the very essence of salvation in

Christ. Men must be saved from their own willfulness by surrendering in faith to the will of Christ which is revealed inerrantly, completely and finally in the Scriptures. Until a man surrenders his will to Christ he lives enslaved to the exercise of his will directed toward eternal rebellion, falsehood, and banishment from God. Until he surrenders his will to Jesus he follows “. . . the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:1-2). Christ accepts no half-hearted, double-minded, hypocritical relationships. Those who wish to inherit his promises must give themselves completely to his grace. Since few ever enter by this “narrow” and “difficult” gate (as the Macedonians evidently had) it is so extraordinary the rest of mankind can hardly believe it.

8:6-7 Perfection, the Purpose: Titus had already started this “faith promise rally.” Now he would be sent back to Corinth to bring this “ministry” to its *completion* (Gr. *epitelese*, from *teleioo*, “to finalize, to bring something to its goal or aim, to fulfill”). This request for an offering from the Corinthians had as its “goal” a “work of grace” upon the Corinthians themselves. Actually, the Greek text does not have the word “work” in verse 6; it literally reads, “. . . he should complete among you the grace, this one.” “Gracious work” is a proper translation — but “this act of grace” might be an even better translation. The “goal” of giving in such a totally unselfish way is to cultivate the virtue or *character* of grace in the giver. Giving out of extreme poverty, begging to give, in order to participate in the ministry of God to destitute people, is *character-building*! Such giving is at the very core of spirituality. There is no possibility of any mercenary greed as a motive. There is no hypocrisy involved in such selflessness. There is nothing more spiritual than stewardship surrendered to Christ as it was demonstrated by the Macedonians helping the Judeans.

One of the major problems a preacher faces in the ministry of the gospel is Christians who criticize him for emphasizing stewardship. Some Christians think such emphasis is “worldly” and “unspiritual.” But it is doubtful, in the light of so much teaching in the New Testament about it, that anyone can be spiritual unless he faces up to and fulfills Christ’s calling to honest, total, cheerful, and wise stewardship.

Paul insisted the Corinthian Christians “see to it” that they *excel*

(Gr. *perisseuete*, present tense, “continuing action,” “abounding”) in the christian virtue (“grace”) of benevolence. Paul had earlier reminded the Corinthians of God’s grace bestowed upon them. “I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge . . . so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift” (I Cor. 1:4,7). The Corinthian christians spent a great deal of their time boasting about and making comparisons concerning these spiritual gifts. They desired to “excel” in them (especially the more spectacular “tongues” see I Corinthians chapters 12, 13, 14). Paul insisted he could show them a “more excellent” way to practice their faith and glorify God — LOVE (I Cor. 12:31). So in these two chapters (II Cor. 8 & 9) he specifies how the “more excellent” way of love might be expressed — STEWARDSHIP! (II Cor. 8:8, 24). Christians should strive to excel in giving, in stewardship, rather than clamoring after the “showy” (really, immature) demonstrations. How many “excellent” givers are in your congregation? What is an *excellent* giver? In the church today we have “excellent” singers, preachers, teachers, callers, prayers, administrators, attenders, and a dozen other “excellencies” — but *few* “excellent” givers. To be an excellent giver one has to *exceed the norm*. Paul is talking about being *extraordinary* in giving. And, remember, he is talking about the Macedonians, who, in circumstances of extreme affliction and deep poverty, were examples of “excellence” in giving! The apostles left everything they had and followed Jesus (Matt. 19:27); the widow of Zarepath gave all she had to live on to Elijah (I Kgs. 17:8ff); Jesus left everything he had in heaven and became poor for our sake. It *was* done. It can still be done! But it requires extraordinary faith! And extraordinary faith is God’s goal for all believers. He wants to transform every believer into the image of his son (Rom. 8:29).

SECTION 2

Credibility (8:8-15)

8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹For you know the grace

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of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire, ¹¹so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹²For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not. ¹³I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, ¹⁴but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality. ¹⁵As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack."

8:8-9 Piqued: Paul wants the Corinthians to give credibility to their professions of christian faith and love. They have promised to send financial help to their destitute brethren in Judea. Now the apostle asks them to "prove" their love, to prove their credibility. He begins by stating that *he* is not *ordering* (Gr. *epitagen*, *epi* and *tasso*, "ordering or regulating") them to do as the Macedonians did. When Paul says, "I say this not as a command . . ." he certainly is not removing christian stewardship from the realm of divine commandment. As we have already pointed out, he *directed* the Corinthians to take up offerings in I Corinthians 16:1ff. In the Gospels are clearly recorded the *commandments* of Christ about stewardship of all areas of life. What Paul does not want to *order* or *regulate* is the *amount* (see 8:12). Regulating the amount is what the Law of Moses did. Of course, it is also true that in the New Dispensation, stewardship must have love as its motivation — not law. But since love is not self-defining, there must be "commandments" from Christ and the apostles to provide definitive guidance as to what pleases God. God's word therefore "commands" us to give to help any brother who is in need (I John 3:15-18; 4:19 — 5:3). In his *commands* God *defines* love. He cannot love him outside his commandments! Paul is, therefore, not saying here that giving is not commanded. Our motivation for loving, or giving, is because God loved (and gave) to us first (I John 4:19). The apostle stated at the first of this letter (1:24) he did not want to give the impression that he was "Lording it over their faith." He

does not issue a command (although stewardship is commanded by the Lord and his apostles) he *piques* their desire to give by reminding them of the Lord's graciousness.

The Lord Jesus, anointed (Christ) by God for the purpose of becoming poor, is the supreme example of the grace of giving. How rich was Jesus before his incarnation? Paul says he was, in his pre-incarnate existence, "equal with God" (Phil. 2:5-6) but he "emptied" himself of that divine status and took the form of a human servant (Phil. 2:7-9). Speaking of the identity of Christ, Paul said to the Colossians, "he is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities — all things were created through him and for him." (Col. 1:15-16). Paul added, ". . . in him all things hold together." (Col. 1:17). In Jesus dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead, bodily! (Col. 1:19, 2:9). The riches Christ has to offer are "unsearchable" (Eph. 3:8). Moses valued even the poverty ("reproaches") of the Christ "greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). The Son of God, heir of the majestic glory and absolute riches of heaven, divested himself of all he owned and came to earth and *impoverished* (Gr. *ep-tocheusen*) himself in order that (for the very purpose) by the instrumentality of his *poverty* (Gr. *ptocheia*) we might become rich. While birds had nests, and foxes had dens, the Son of man had no place "to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:59). Ray C. Steadman writes, "Remember how he (Jesus) constantly borrowed everything? We may reverently say that he was the greatest scrounger of history. He was always borrowing. He had nothing of his own. He borrowed food, he borrowed clothing, he borrowed a coin to give an illustration, a donkey to enter into the city of Jerusalem, and he finally had to borrow a tomb in which to be laid. On one occasion the disciples all went to their own homes but he went to the Mount of Olives." All these things were his by right of having been Creator of them — yet he gave them all up (not because he had to) in order to fulfill the will of God on our behalf. For the *glory* that was set before him, Christ endured the cross, contemptuous of the shame (Heb. 12:1-2). The glory the incarnate Christ anticipated was the glory he had with the Father before the world was made (see John 17:1-5). And he left it all, to take on human form, and suffer the humiliation of human rejection,

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rebellion and crucifixion, in order to become a substitutionary atonement for sinful mankind. Thus, in his impoverishment, he made man rich. After his humiliation he was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven and the right hand of God the Father, there to inherit all his former glory plus the glory accrued from his incarnate work of redemption. And he made us "joint heirs" (Rom. 8:12-17) of *his* glory! Paul had already told the Corinthians that God was preparing for them "an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (II Cor. 4:16-18). If the unsearchable, inexpressible selflessness of Christ in his abdication of divine riches to accomplish our redemption does not pique our desire to give to others, nothing will!

8:10-12 Proved: It is one thing to *talk* about "love" and another to actually "love." It is one thing to admire, be awed by, and praise the divine demonstration of Christ's love, and another to emulate it! Paul exhorts the Corinthians to demonstrate their integrity. Let them prove their credibility. While he will not, on his own, make his suggestion as an apostolic commandment. He gives his apostolic "wisdom" (Gr. *gnomen*, from *ginosko*, meaning, "to know, mind, wisdom, opinion"). Apostolic "opinion" or "wisdom" in any matter, while not a direct commandment, is to be highly respected and obeyed, so long as it does no violation to divine commandments.

Paul "gives" his opinion, and then suggests it is probably "expedient" (Gr. *sumpherei*, "bring together for profit, profitable, beneficial, advantageous") for the Corinthians that he give an "apostolic suggestion" rather than an arbitrary commandment. The RSV is wrong to include the clause, "it is best for you." in one large clause of verse 10. "It is best for you" stands as a separate clause on its own in the Greek text and reads literally, "for this for you is expedient." That being the case, it is difficult to establish the connection of the statement. Does Paul mean "it is expedient for them" to finish the giving they started a year ago, or does he mean "it is expedient for them" that he gives only a suggestion and not a commandment? Plummer paraphrases, "To offer an opinion, and not give a command, is the method which is suitable to people like you, who were to the front, not only in doing something, but also in desiring to do something, as long ago as last year." Plummer thinks the clause, "it is expedient for you," connects to Paul's "advice." This connection of the clause is more in keeping with the intent of verse 8 and with the at-

titude of the Corinthians expressed in the following clause. The Corinthians had already expressed their desire to give and had begun to do so a year earlier. Those who have never expressed any willingness to do what is clearly a christian duty must be commanded. Those who have not only wanted to do their duty, but have already begun, need only "advice." This may be true of many 20th century church members! Perhaps the "willingness" is already there in their mind and heart — but they need some apostolic "advice" on when to give, how much to give, and what their giving will accomplish. Away with all the slick, secular promotions! Give christians *scriptural* "advice" on giving!

Paul's "advice" is, *ou monon to poiesai alla kai to thelein pro-enerxasthe apo perusi*, literally, "not only the to do but also the to will, previously you began from last year..." The infinitive *poiesai* is aorist but the next infinitive *thelein* is present tense. Plummer says, "This may perhaps intimate that the acting has ceased, and that only the wishing remains. They had been first in both, but now others were before them in acting." The RSV supplies, in verse 10, the word "complete" — it is not a part of the Greek text in verse 10. Paul is not emphasizing in verse 10 the completion, but the eagerness and the earliness. In verse 11 the Greek text uses the word *epitelesate*, "completion," twice. The verb *proenerxasthe* is a combination of three Greek words, *pro*, meaning "before," *en*, meaning "before" and *archomai*, meaning "begin, first," thus we have an emphatic verb. Paul is emphasizing that the Corinthians had been the very first congregation to express their desire and had begun to give before any other group. But at some time after the beginning they had ceased to give and their intended offering was incomplete.

The RSV has taken the first part of the Greek text in verse 11 (*nuni de kai to poiesai epitelesate*, "and so now the to do, complete") and transferred it back by translation into verse 10. Actually, verse 11 begins, "and so now the to do, complete." The verb *epitelesateis* is aorist. It is a combination of *epi*, a prepositional prefix emphasizing intensity, and *teleioo*, meaning "perfect, complete, fulfill, bring to a goal, end." Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to bring what they expressed such eagerness to do, and had actually begun to do, to fruition! He advises them that their eagerness (Gr. *prothumia*, "passionate forwardness") of a year ago should be matched by their

finishing what they started. *Prothumia* is translated "readiness;" *thumia* is from a word in Greek which means "passionate, or hot-tempered." The Corinthians had passionately expressed their desire to contribute to the hungry saints in Jerusalem. It would be a sad thing that those who were foremost in willingness should be last in fulfilling it! Jesus rebuked the church at Sardis because he had "not found their works perfect (completed)." Even though they "had the *name* of being alive" they were dead (Rev. 3:1-2). It is a serious reflection on the integrity and stability of Christ and Christianity for congregations to be "alive" with grandiose projects and plans, but "dead" to the *completion* or *fulfillment* of their promises. Thus Paul urges them to "match" their passionate willingness and their beginning actions with a *completion* of the project. And they need to make the completion "out of what they have" (Gr. *ek tou echein*). Paul means they should give in *proportion* to what they have (see I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 8:14). To prove their integrity they do not need to give beyond their ability, but according to a proper proportion of their means as they have determined. The New Testament is filled with exhortations to personal integrity. A christian's actions must match his words. Jesus even warned would-be followers to "count the cost" of carrying through, finishing, or completing before professing discipleship (see Luke 14:25-35). Christians must not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth (I John 3:18; 4:20-21). Love must be proved.

8:13-15 Prudential: At the same time Paul gives "advice" about proving their integrity, he also suggests that the Corinthians be prudent and sensible about their responsibilities in how much to give.

First, he advises, give in *proportion* (Gr. *katho ean*, "according to whatever") to what one *has* (Gr. *eche*, has, possesses, etc.). He promises that such giving is *acceptable* (Gr. *euprosdektos*, "very favorable acceptance") to Christ. There are a few examples of believers and worshipers giving all they had to the Lord's treasury (see Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4); there is at least one incident where the Lord commanded a rich, covetous man, to give all he had to the poor (see Matt. 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23). These are exceptional cases and not the general rule. Jesus' purpose in these exceptional incidents was to break the idolatry from the soul of the covetous. The general rule of stewardship and giving in the New Testament is proportionate — relative to one's ability — to one's

possessions.

The first century Hebrew christians, had all things common (Acts 2:43-47), and were so generous they sold property and laid the money at the feet of the apostles for distribution to the needy (Acts 4:32-37). But such great generosity was not a requirement! When Ananias and Sapphira lied about their generosity, they were reminded they were not expected to give as much as others if they did not want to — but they were expected not to lie about their giving! (Acts 5:1-11). In every parable of Jesus about stewardship the teaching is that a steward is to be faithful in what he has, not in what he does *not* have.

But what is the “proportion” of a christian’s possessions he should give? Should it be a “tithe” (10%)? Should it be “tithes and offerings” (more than 10%)? If so, how much? *The New Testament does not legislate specific “proportions”!* The New Testament does not teach “tithing” — it teaches stewardship of 100% of a christian’s “possessions.” There are principles in the N.T. which should offer guidelines for christian giving. Christians are not to be covetous. They are not to be greedy. They are not to be *anxious* (double-minded) worrying over food, clothing and shelter (Matt. 6:25-34). They are to remember they brought nothing into the world neither can they carry anything out and so be content with food and clothing (I Tim. 6:6-10). They are not to set their hopes on *uncertain* riches, but to do good, be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous (I Tim. 6:17-18). Christians are to provide necessities for their own families (I Tim. 5:8). The Lord expects christians to maintain their personal lives financially and materially in such sufficiency as permits them to minister to Christ’s kingdom and the needy to the best of their capabilities (II Cor. 9:8-13).

Each christian must decide what “proportion” he should give directly to the church. Each christian must study God’s word and decide for himself how much he keeps to be fed, clothed and sheltered; to care for his own family; to conduct his personal ministry in the name of Christ; to keep from becoming a “burden” on others (see II Cor. 8:13). All beyond these necessities, he should give to the work of the Gospel, clearly understanding that he is accountable for faithful, frugal and wise stewardship of what he has kept back for himself. The true follower of Christ is not permitted the luxury of waste or self-indulgence. There are too many cries for help — too

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many evangelistic opportunities begging — christians dare not squander what God has given them or pamper themselves.

A christian does not have to be rich to give. Every christian, even the poor, is to give and act responsibly toward whatever stewardship the Lord has given him. If a poor christian is “passionately” eager to give, and gives in “proportion” to what he has to fulfill the principles stated above, his gift is “very favourably accepted” by the Lord.

While the Lord expects us to “renounce all that we have” (Luke 14:33), and to be willing, should he demand it, to give up everything we own, the normal rule of christian giving is “in *proportion* to what one has, not according to what one does not have.”

Paul’s explanation of “proportionate” giving is intended to keep some from being eased and others burdened. There must have been those in the Corinthian congregation accusing Paul of discriminating against the rich. Perhaps they thought he was expecting a few “well-to-do” people to carry the whole “burden” of the collection of Judea. Paul clears that up. Everyone is to give something. Let it be according to everyone’s ability. Every christian at Corinth (even a slave) is to make some contribution. The *pressure* (Gr. *thlipsis*, “burden, affliction, pressed-down”) of giving must be on every member’s conscience.

In verse 14, the principle of *equality* (Gr. *isotetos*, “equal, same as, fair”) is applied to christian giving. “Proportionate” giving makes the burden of giving *equal* upon all in the congregation. Everyone is to give something — in proportion to what he has. Those who had little were to give “as they had been prospered” (I Cor. 16:2), and those who had much were to give “as they had been prospered.” However much each had, that “much” would be required (Luke 12:48). It is not the amount, but the eagerness, the equality, the total sharing of every christian to give that pleases the Lord.

Abundance and prosperity, by the grace of God, is dispensed by the Almighty in ways and places incomprehensible to man — but always according to God’s will. The abundance of those he prospers is willed to them so they may supply the *lack* (Gr. *husterema*, “to be in need, be inferior, deficient”) of any one. Christian giving is not to supply what people “want,” but what people “need.” According to the providential shifts in prosperity, those who “have” are to help supply needs to those who “do not have.” Those who give are to do so

freely, without coercion, not of compulsion, not by legislated amounts, but proportionately. Evidently, many people of Corinth had been prospering while the people of Palestine had been suffering drought, famine, earthquakes, plundering of their possessions by persecutors (see Heb. 10:32ff), and other depredations. So, Paul reminds the Corinthians, their *abundance* (Gr. *perisseuma*) was providentially given them by God that they might learn to give to the needs of those not thus blessed.

In the latter half of verse 14 the interesting principle of expected reciprocation is put forward. At the time Paul wrote II Corinthians, the Greeks were prospering and the Jews were impoverished. Paul says to the Corinthians, “. . . but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their (Jews) want, so that their abundance (Jews) may supply your (Corinthians) want, that there may be equality.” While the Corinthians supply the needs of the Jewish brethren at the present, there may come a day when the Jewish brethren may have to supply the needs of impoverished Corinthians! And, if the Corinthians never become impoverished, and the Jewish brethren should some day supply the needs of brethren in Rome, the principle of “equality” is still carried on so the Corinthian brethren participate in the relief to the Romans because they helped the Hebrew Christians. Paul verified the principle of indirect participation when he wrote to the Philippian Christians concerning their support of his ministry (see Phil. 4:15-17). “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days” (Eccl. 11:1; Deut. 15:10-11; Prov. 19:17; Matt. 10:42).

Verse 15 is a quotation from the Old Testament illustrating equality. In the O.T. it was commanded (see Exod. 16:18). Each Israelite was commanded to gather only as much manna as he could eat. Some gathered more. Some gathered not enough. However, when they came to measure the manna, each man's gathering weighed exactly the same! That is the will of God for his kingdom! Even in this imperfect world where Providence decrees that some have more material goods as their stewardship than others, everyone is to join in being faithful to his stewardship — whether it be small or large. Let there be equality (not in the amount) in *participation*! God does not need amounts! All the cattle on a thousand hills are his and if he were hungry he would not ask us. But God does desire equal *participation* in his kingdom —

and he desires it because all kingdom-people *need* participation. They can never have a "servant's heart" until they do participate in giving according to what they have.

Usually, the *emphasis* in church stewardship programs is to produce a certain *amount* of income. Usually, people are urged to give to meet a specific need. But the *emphasis* of Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church has to do with the *needs* of the *giver* while the amount of the gift and the need it is to meet are secondary! Would to God that the modern Church would understand Paul's teaching here and make it a priority in its call to stewardship. Christian people cannot be edified and spiritually matured until they have been taught that giving is primarily for their own spiritual growth and not to meet needs. Paul will have more to say on this in succeeding verses.

SECTION 3

Carefulness (8:16-24)

16 But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. 17For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. 18With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel; 19and not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work which we are carrying on, for the glory of the Lord and to show our good will. 20We intend that no one should blame us about this liberal gift which we are administering, 21for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of men. 22And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. 23As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker in your service; and as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. 24So give proof, before the churches, of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

8:16-19 Of Administration: In this text we have an apostolic admonition concerning *carefulness* in our giving. Christian stewardship involves more than merely giving. It demands careful, discriminating, prudent and conscientious giving. Ray Stedman writes:

The combined amount of Christian giving in the United States alone has been estimated at well over half billion dollars a year. . . . That is a lot of money, and yet much of it is wasted. Much is given to causes that ought not to be supported, or given in ways that are foolish and spendthrift. Much of it goes to line people's pockets, to be used for the enrichment of a few and the exploitation of many. We desperately need to be helped in our giving, learning to give responsibly with intelligence and care, so that the money goes to the right purposes and is used in the right way. (*Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians*, pg. 158)

Paul reports to the Corinthian church that the administration of the money they are collecting for the brethren in Judea will be done properly, honestly and openly. The Corinthians may rest assured their money will go to serve the purpose for which they gave it.

First, it will be administered by more than one person. Paul, alone, will not be handling the money. Accompanying Paul to Jerusalem with the offering will be Titus, Paul's co-worker, "the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel," and "our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters," (8:16, 17, 18, 22). Second, the two unnamed brethren were "appointed" (Gr. *cheirotoneis*, "elected by show of hands," 8:19) or were "messengers" (Gr. *apostoloi*, "apostles; one's sent") of the churches. Titus' veracity and integrity had been tested and is verified by Paul. He says that "God put the same earnest care into the heart" of Titus as was in Paul's heart for the Corinthians. Titus' "earnest care" (Gr. *spouden* "diligence") for the Corinthians was not forced. He gladly responded to Paul's request for help in this matter "of his own accord" (Gr. *authairetos*, comb. of *autos*, "self," and *haireomai*, "choice, option"). The RSV translates verse 18, ". . . the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching . . ." but the word "preaching" is not in the Greek text. Literally, verse 18 reads, ". . . the brother of whom the praise (Gr. *epainos*, "praise, applause, honor, commendation") in the gospel is throughout all the churches. . . ." It may be that this brother's "fame" was for *living*

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the gospel rather than "preaching" the gospel. That would be more apt to commend him to the Corinthians as worthy of administering the collection than merely his preaching. The point to emphasize, however, is that two of the administrators of this offering were specifically chosen by the churches. This provided safeguards for Paul's reputation. It provided the churches with assurance as well as satisfaction that they were personally involved in administering the offering by having chosen these administrators. It is the responsibility of all christians to insist on the practice of this principle of "more than one hand" administering the funds they give for the Lord's work. The christian who gives to a christian organization not following this principle is not being a good steward. It is the individual giver's responsibility to see that it is so. That is why Paul was reporting this to the Corinthians church! "More than one hand" administering is not fulfilled in christian organizations where one "founder" or one administrator controls the financial operations and accounts. Nor is it being practiced in organizations operated by nepotism (family members in all administrative positions). That is why Paul called for those appointed by the churches to help him rather than confine the administration of the offering to himself and his immediate co-laborers.

In verse 19 Paul calls the work of taking the Corinthian offering to the saints in Judea, "this grace being ministered by us." All of Paul's "works" were "works of grace" "works" motivated by "grace" which are in reality, human grace in grateful return for the free grace given first by God. What the Corinthians gave to the Judeans was by their grace. Man, the recipient of divine grace, is to cultivate the virtue of "graciousness" in his own character. Both the offering and its administration were by virtue of human graciousness in the Corinthians and in Paul. The apostle uses the Greek word *diakonoumene*, often translated, "deacon," and the RSV translates it, ". . . the work which we are carrying on. . . ." The NASV is better, translating *diakonoumene* "administered." Paul had two motives for involving himself in the "administration" of the offering from Corinth to Judea. First, to glorify (bring honor to, to praise, to give rank to) the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, to show his own "passionate" readiness (Gr. *prothumian*, see 8:11, 12) to serve the Corinthians in their spiritual pilgrimage. He had written much about his willingness and

desire to serve them — now he wishes to show it by seeing that their offering is responsibly delivered to the Judean brethren.

8:20-24 Of Accountability: Verse 20 is the pivotal sentence in this text. Paul intended that no one should find fault (Gr. *momesetai*, “blame”) with his (and his co-workers) administration of the funds to relieve the Judean christians. To avoid any hint of scandal he “took precaution” (Gr. *stellomenoi*, present tense, middle voice, of “to place, set in order”) or “made arrangement” to make his administration of the offering fully accountable to both the Lord and to men. The RSV translates *stellomenoi*, “We intend.” The NASV translates it, “taking precaution.” The latter is the better translation. It was not merely Paul’s intention to make his work accountable, he *made arrangements* that it would be so!

It was the apostle’s “aim” (Gr. *pronooumen*, “take thought for”) to be accounted “honorable” before the Lord and before men. His “aim” was not some generalization, it was specific — he gave it thought, he reasoned out an arrangement to make it come to pass. He arranged to be accounted “honorable” (Gr. *kala*, “good”) “in the sight of” (Gr. *enopion*, “before,” “in the presence of”) the Lord and of men. Every christian is “accountable” for his stewardship before the Lord (Matt. 18:23; Luke 16:2; Rom. 14:12; Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 4:5) and before men (Matt. 5:16; John 15:8; Phil. 2:14-16; I Thess. 4:9-12; II Thess. 3:10-13; I Tim. 5:7-8; Rom. 14:18; I Pet. 2:12).

All christian churches, missions, and para-church organizations, whose very existence depends on the “gracious stewardship” of individual christians, are obligated by scriptural command and apostolic precedent to make an accounting in the presence of the Lord and the presence of men. It must not only be their aim to do so, they must “make arrangements” or “take precautions” to do so. Those who give must be given an open, honest, “good” report of the administration of their gifts. It is the responsibility of individual christians to support only those christian works which are willing to make arrangements for sound financial auditing, accounting, and reporting. Such financial responsibility is “honorable” (good) before the Lord and men.

In verses 22 and 23 Paul discusses again the character and credentials of those who will be helping him deliver the collection to Judea. The “brother” whose name Paul did not mention, was not his blood-

brother, but a brother in the Lord. He had been tested (by circumstances) many times and in many ways as he labored with Paul, and the apostle had always found him "earnest" (Gr. *spoudaion*, "diligent"). Now, he was "much more diligent" to help Paul because somehow he had gained great "confidence" (Gr. *pepoithesei*, assurance, trust, persuasion, obedience) in the spiritual aims of the Corinthians. Perhaps he had visited Corinth and heard the christians there "passionately" expressing their desire to help the needy Judeans; perhaps he saw that they all participated "equally" in the offering. This brother joins Paul's ministry of the offering under the auspices of the churches. Paul is willing to testify as to the brother's character and capabilities. But he wants it remembered that the "brother" was accredited *by the churches* for this ministry.

Titus gets special mention by Paul. Titus is called, "my partner" (Gr. *koinonos*, "sharer, participant, communicant, partner") and "fellow worker in your service" (Gr. *eis humas sunergos*). And, while Titus was Paul's "child in the faith" (Titus 1:4), he was still a "messenger of the churches" for which Christ was to get the glory — not Paul.

In light of all Paul has said thus far about the offering from Corinth, he now summarizes (8:24); by saying, "So give proof, before the churches, of your love and of our boasting about you to these men." In light of the motives Paul has given them, in light of the method ("equality") he advises, and in light of the management (accountability) he promises, nothing should stand in their way of "completing" what they had so eagerly started a year ago. They had said much about how they loved their Judean brethren and how they were eager to help — now let them "give proof" (Gr. *endeixin*, from *deiknumi*, "to show, to point out, to demonstrate, to make a token") of their "love" (Gr. *agapes*, God-like love). Paul wants the Corinthians to *demonstrate* their love, not to him, but to the churches. Paul had boasted to other churches of their love — now he asks them to *prove* that what he had been telling others was so.

The stewardship of giving, according to apostolic motives, methods and management, is proof of a christian's love! There is no getting around that. We may equivocate and rationalize all we wish but that will not erase these words from the pen of the inspired apostle! Paul stated this earlier (8:8) and will state it again (9:13). Proving

our love for Christ and for men can only be done by giving (I John 3:16-18; 4:19-21; Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 10:29-37; 16:1-9; 16:19-31; 18:18-30; etc.). Perhaps this is why Jesus spent so much time telling parables and teaching about GIVING — it is the one, undeniable way to *prove* one's love; not just giving, but CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.

APPREHENSIONS:

1. What problem was Paul having with the Corinthians about their giving?
2. Why was Paul asking for an offering from the Corinthians? What was he going to do with the offering?
3. How widely known was this effort of Paul to take up such a collection?
4. How "extreme" was the poverty of the Macedonians? Why?
5. How seriously were the Macedonians about wanting to give to Judean brethren?
6. Why didn't Paul "expect" the Macedonians to give as they did?
7. If Paul does not "command" the Corinthians, is any christian giving or stewardship to be "commanded"?
8. Why does Paul mention the poverty of Jesus? How poor was Jesus?
9. What is "readiness"? How is that acceptable?
10. Why is "completing" what one has started so important to Paul?
11. What is "equality" in this text? How is it to be accomplished?
12. Why does Paul mention Titus and the "brothers" who are going to help him deliver this collection?
13. Why is it important that these "brothers" were "appointed" by the churches?
14. What does Paul mean by saying he "intends" no one should blame him?
15. What has giving or stewardship to do with "proving" one's love?

APPLICATIONS:

1. How often do you remind yourself that you are a *steward*, respon-

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- sible to God, for everything in your life? What is a “steward” anyway?
2. Do you know any christians as destitute as the Macedonians? Do you think they should be giving to help others?
 3. If poor people give “beyond their ability”, who will take care of them?
 4. How much does the Lord expect christians to give?
 5. Have you ever begged the church to take your money? Have you ever known anyone who did?
 6. Have you ever been surprised to learn the sacrifices some people make to give? Why were you surprised?
 7. Do you have any “excellent” givers in your church? Who is an “excellent” giver?
 8. What approach moves you to give — command or example or advice? Are there certain approaches which irritate you?
 9. Have you ever been guilty of deciding to respond to a plea for help and never completing it? Why? Is completing a “work” important?
 10. Do you practice “proportionate” giving of that with which God has entrusted you?
 11. What “proportion” should christians give?
 12. Should every member of the church contribute to congregational offerings? Why? Does every member in your church? How may this ideal be attained?
 13. Do you determine the integrity of those administering funds received before you give? How?
 14. Is it possible that some money sincerely given has been misused? Who is responsible? What is the giver’s responsibility?
 15. Should the giver be concerned if those administering his gifts offer no public accountability? Why? What should the giver do?
 16. Have you ever thought that you prove your love for Christ and others by *how* you give more than what you give?

Chapter Nine

THE PROBLEM OF STEWARDSHIP — PART — II (9:1-15)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why is Paul so concerned about “appearances” between the Corinthians and the Macedonians?
2. Are Christians really free to make up their own minds about their giving to the Lord?
3. What is a “cheerful” giver?
4. Is material prosperity the result of a righteous life?
5. What has giving to do with our “acknowledging” the gospel of Christ?

SECTION 4

Compulsion (9:1-7)

9 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the offering for the saints, ²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I am sending the brethren so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; ⁴lest if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready we be humiliated — to say nothing of you — for being so confident. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift.

⁶ The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

9:1-4 Conscientiousness: Chapter nine is clearly a continuation of the subject of chapter eight. The Greek conjunction *gar* is translated

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“Now” (9:1) and connects chapter nine to the subject matter of chapter eight. The most persistent problem of stewardship facing a preacher is the problem of *motivation*. Stewardship is plainly *commanded* by God in the Old Testament and by Christ in the New Testament. But commanding free-willed creatures and getting them to obey commands are two different matters. Man’s freedom to choose will not be violated by a just and righteous God. God will not coerce or exact or force offerings from people (neither should preachers!). Paul calls upon two facts of the human experience to motivate the Corinthians to give: Self-respect and Selectivity.

Paul was “boasting” (Gr. *kauchomai*, sometimes translated “glorying”) of the “readiness” (Gr. *prothumian*, “passionate eagerness”) of the Corinthians (9:2ff) to take up an offering for the saints in Judea to the Macedonians. He boasted of the Macedonians to the Corinthians (8:1-5)! This is true of Paul’s communications to all the churches. He praised one church to another as a motivating factor. While you find Paul criticizing the conduct of one church after another in his epistles to each of them, you never find him criticizing one church *to* another!

Paul says, “It is superfluous (Gr. *perisson*) for me to write to you about the offering for the saints . . .” and then continues to write to them about it! He has already (8:8-15) written that he knows of their readiness and their beginning, but there remains the problem of their “completing” it. He tactfully softens his *lengthy* exhortation on giving by this “superfluous” statement of his “boasting” about them to the Macedonians. Self-respect or conscientiousness is a worthy virtue. Paul was jealous for his own reputation (8:20-24) so he appeals to the Corinthians to be careful to fulfill what he has boasted of them to the Macedonians. An appeal to conscientiousness in a christian is really an appeal to the reputation of Christ! The christian guards Christ’s reputation when he guards his own self-respect. That should be a highly motivating factor in his every action as a christian — and especially in *giving*!

He told the Macedonians that “Achaia” (Roman named province of southern Greece which included the cities of Corinth, Athens, Sparta, Olympia, Delphi, Thebes and Cenchreae) had planned (Gr. *pareσκευastai*, perfect passive, “had made preparations and was continuing to make preparations”) to give to this special benevolence a

year ago. Information about the “zeal” of the Corinthians “stirred up” (Gr. *erethisen*, “provoked, excited”) “most” of the Macedonians.

But he sends “the brethren” (the three mentioned in 8:16-24) to prod the Corinthians into “completing” what they had begun the year before. The very presence of these “brethren” (two of them specifically chosen by the churches themselves for this purpose) will urge them to finish their collection. Paul is urgent! He wants to spare the Corinthians, himself, and the reputation of Christ of any shame should some Macedonians decide to accompany him to Corinth for the reception of the offering and find no offering to receive! The Greek word *kataischunthomen* is a combination of *kata* and *aischuno*, “shamed-down,” an intensive form of the word for “shame” and is translated, “humiliated.” Paul is definitely appealing to *self-respect* as a motivation.

9:5-7 Choice: The second motivational factor Paul appealed to was the freedom every christian has to choose how, when, and how much he will give in any offering he makes unto the Lord. There is no “legislation” whatsoever in the New Testament as to method, frequency, or amount in the matter of christian giving. We repeat, the emphasis in the N.T. is upon *stewardship* (accountability, wise management, motive, attitude, faithfulness). Of course, since the New Testament is a dispensation of grace, *infinite grace*, it is simply assumed that a christian’s giving will be liberal and *generous*. Paul might be saying (9:5), “I consider it necessary to send these brethren to you in Corinth to arrange the completion of the collection ahead of my arrival there because I do not want my presence to be the reason why you give.” (see I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 1:24). The RSV translates the Greek word *pleonexian* as “exaction;” the word literally is “covetousness or greed.” The RSV also translates *eulogian* as “willing gift;” the word literally is, “well-thinking.” What Paul means is what he wants the Corinthians to give “happily,” and not “grudgingly” *coveting for themselves* what they are giving.

It is imperative that preachers solve the problem of stewardship and giving *without* coercion of any sort. Christians must be left free to choose whether they will give, when they will give, and how much they will give. Even the Lord Jesus, when asked about giving, left the questioners free to decide, when he said, “Render unto Caesar the things

that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." While Paul teaches (I Cor. 16) there should be a congregational consensus about "collections" and some specified time and order as to their being taken, he leaves every saint free to decide for himself about his contribution to the "collections."

Nothing will *intensify* the *problem* of stewardship and giving more than coercive, manipulative, deceitful methods used to motivate it! Paul would not even appear in Corinth until after the offering was completed lest his "apostolic" presence (without any threats or duress) make the brethren there feel compulsion. Ray Stedman writes (pg. 163):

What a contrast to many Christian leaders, evangelists and others today who insist that you wait until they come before any offering is taken. They want to put the squeeze on, to tell emotional stories of deathbed experiences, to hold up pictures of crying children to twist your heart, to use competitiveness and rivalry as a means of extracting more funds. This is a terrible thing. It scorns the spirit of grace in a congregation. So this helpful guideline says, do not give to organizations or people who habitually rely on emotional appeals to get you to give. . . . Now we ought to hear needs, but habitual appeals on that basis are wrong, because it is the wrong basis on which to give. . . . In Poland, I was told of organizations that were actually stockpiling Bibles in warehouses because they could not get them into the Soviet Union. But they were still making appeals to people to give for more Bible purchasing when they actually had warehouses full that they could not move. That is the wrong kind of appeal. When we learn of something like that we should stop giving, because we are responsible for what we do.

Nothing will *solve* the problem of stewardship and giving more than the preaching and practice of "the grace of God." Paul, in fact, *begins* (8:1), and *ends* (9:15) the entire dissertation on giving by appealing to the *GRACE* of God! The apostolic word (and practice) tells us, "more preaching of the grace of God equals more willing, cheerful and generous giving"! So when will the church "restore" the apostolic doctrine about stewardship and giving?

The apostle says, "The *point* is this: he who sows sparingly (Gr. *pheidomenos*, "thriftily, forbearingly") will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully (Gr. *eulogiais*, "well-speaking, praising, blessing, benevolently, frankly, liberally") will also reap bountifully." Stedman explains (pg. 164):

The closest analogy to giving that we have in life is the farmer going out to sow his crop. Giving is more than distributing your funds or resources, it is a process that will return something to you as well, like a farmer who sows seeds in the spring. He scatters seed out upon the ground, and he cannot gather it up again. It looks as though it is lost to him, and it is. He actually has to give up control of it and the use of it. He throws it away into the ground where it deteriorates, rots and is seemingly lost. . . . But it is not lost; it is not gone. Let it fulfill its appointed process and the farmer will have it back again and much more besides. That is what God designed. The return is proportionate to the sowing. If a farmer sows a little amount of seed, that is what he will get back, a small and niggardly harvest. If he sows bountifully and scatters prodigally, he will receive a prodigal harvest in return. The analogy is clear. If you give just a little bit, then what you get will be a little bit, too. But if you give abundantly, what you will get will be abundant also.

But the rewards that the New Testament promises are never ultimately material rewards. The Bible promises not the wealth of things, but spiritual wealth — the wealth of character. The man who is generous in giving to the Lord and to others will be loved, respected, sought after for advice, honored, helped when he himself is in need; free of the character-shriveling vices of envy, covetousness, anxiety, and loneliness. People who do not give liberally and cheerfully are self-centered. The boundaries of their experience are extremely limited. They are never satisfied. They have no purpose beyond themselves. Self is the highest goal to which they aspire or shall ever attain.

Paul uses the Greek word *hekastos* signifying specifically, “each one.” No man is to decide for another what he is to give! The Greek word *proeretai* is from *pro* and *haireo*. *Haireo* is the word from which we get the English words *heresy* and *heretic*, and means, “a self-willed choice.” Add the prepositional prefix *pro* and add the phrase, *te kardia*, then we have an emphatic statement that “each one *must* do as he has *made up* (purposed) *his* mind. . . .” Paul expects *every* christian to make up his mind to give *something*; but only what he, himself, has *decided* to give. No other person is to make any decision for him in this matter. It is, in fact, unwarranted for one christian to even “suggest” (unless requested to do so by the individual) to another how much he should be giving. The New Testament course to follow is to teach the unsearchable grace of God and suggest that giving *must* be decided in each person’s heart according to his appreciation of that Infinite grace.

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Any approach to motivate people to give that would cause "reluctance" (Gr. *ek lupes*, "out of sorrow or regret") would be hypocritical. It would destroy the giver! This passage *condemns forever the heathen pragmatism* in the philosophy of so many preachers and religious leaders today who practice any kind of "gimmick" or emotional coercion "because it works"! "Works" for whom? Reluctant, coerced, giving does *not* work for the giver. And God does not need that kind of money! God doesn't need any money! God wants willing, cheerful, liberal givers who give because they have made up their own "hearts" to give. God does not need our money, but we *need* to give!

The Greek words *ex anagkes* are translated "under compulsion" in the RSV and NASV and "necessity" in the KJV. The words mean, "out of distress, constraint, what must needs be." If christian work, benevolent, educational, evangelistic, missionary or any other, must be supported by bringing people (christian and non-christian) under "distress" or "compulsion," it is *not* christian work! So, while christians *need* to give, being coerced to give out of gimmickry or manipulation or circumventing the mind by appealing to the emotions does nothing but *spiritual harm* to the giver. It is altogether possible this is the reason Paul was so reluctant to take financial support (I Cor. 9:12b, 15, 18; I Thess. 2:9; II Thess. 3:7ff) for his ministry. He would "burden" no one. He was careful that no man be pressured into giving out of "compulsion" or "necessity." He made no pleadings for money. He coerced no one. He had every right to be supported financially (see our comments, First Corinthians, chapter nine) but forfeited his rights for the sake of others. This does not mean, of course, that preachers, missionaries and other full-time workers in para-church activities should not be salaried and supported by those who benefit from their ministries (see Gal. 6:6, etc.). But it does focus the searching light of apostolic doctrine and example upon modern religious excesses in coercing and cajoling money from people. It does strip the facade of false spirituality from all the manipulative schemes in today's religious-financial flim flam! Much modern religious fund-raising methodology is justified under the umbrella of "public relations." But "public relations" is often merely a euphemism for deceit, manipulation, self-serving pragmatism, and ethical relativism! "If it works, it must be righteous" is from the devil, not from God!

Finally, Paul says, *hilaron gar doten agapa ho theos* — “for a cheerful giver God loves.” The Greek word *hilaron* is translated “cheerful” and is the word from which we get the English word, *hilarity*, *hilarious*. In the Septuagint (Greek version of the Hebrew O.T.), the word *hilaruno* translates a Hebrew word *lehatshiyi*, “to cause to shine.” “Cheerful” giving makes the soul and the spirit of a man “shine” with the image of the Infinite Giver! Paul is evidently borrowing from Proverbs 22:8 as it appears in the Septuagint (LXX) when he says, “God loves a cheerful giver.” The Greek word *hilaron* is used by the LXX in Prov. 22:8 where the phrase is, “God loves a cheerful and liberal man...” That phrase does *not* appear in the Hebrew text in Prov. 22:8 or in any of our English versions. But since the phrase is here confirmed as inspired from the pen of an apostle, and since the principle is taught in other Biblical injunctions about giving, its absence in the Hebrew text in Proverbs 22:8 poses no problem. In the LXX the Greek word *eulogei* is literally, “thinks well,” whereas Paul uses the Greek word *agapa* literally, “loves,” in II Corinthians 9:7. The word *hilaron* is used only one other time in the N.T., Romans 12:8, enjoining the “one showing mercy to do so with cheerfulness” (*hilarity*). It is also interesting that the Greek word *dotēs*, translated, “giver” appears in Prov. 22:8 in the LXX and in the N.T. only here in II Corinthians 9:7. Deuteronomy 15:7-11 warns God’s people not to harden their heart against giving to the poor — begrudging any help to the needy. Israelites were expected to give “freely” and “open handedly” because there would always be poor people in the land. William Barclay notes an ancient rabbinical saying which goes “to receive a friend with a cheerful countenance and to give him nothing is better than to give him everything with a gloomy countenance.” The people gave with *hilarity* to build the Tabernacle (Exod. 36:2-7) and to build the Temple (I Chron. 29:1-30). There were undoubtedly many other times when Israelites gave cheerfully (such as the widow observed by Jesus in the temple treasury, Mark 12:41-44). Zacchaeus, upon conversion and repentance, gave “half” of his goods to the poor and was ready to make restitution four-fold to anyone whom he might have defrauded (Luke 19:8-10). The Macedonians (II Cor. 8:4) clearly were “cheerful” givers, “begging” Paul for the “favor” of giving to help the Judeans. Paul quotes Jesus as saying, “It is more *blessed* (Gr. *makarion*, “happiness”) to give than to

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receive" (Acts 20:35).

How many people have you observed "happy" to give — giving "hilariously" — "begging" for the "favor" of giving? Most give grudgingly! Most hang on to their money until they are pressured or manipulated through their emotions to give to some "emergency" need. When the offering is taken in your congregation are people stumbling over one another for the opportunity to put something in the plate? Are they laughing or smiling — are they enjoying it? Do members of your congregation ever ask the elders, "May we have the privilege of giving beyond our means"? Do most people in your church conceive of their giving as done "to support the preacher" or "pay the bills of the church"?

There is a reason human beings are reluctant to give their money to the Lord. But it is very subtle. It is hinted at in II Corinthians 8:5. Money, itself, is merely a medium of exchange. But that for which it is exchanged is *life*! Each person who works, expends his time, energies and talents — himself — a large portion of his life. In exchange he receives money (coins and currency or other material properties). So when a person gives his money, he is actually *giving* just that much of *himself*! Those unwilling to give *themselves* to the Lord, are unwilling to give their *money* to the Lord. To pretend that one has given himself to the Lord and then to be unwilling to give his money to the Lord (or to give grudgingly) is rank hypocrisy. Only those who have *first* given *themselves* (first, in priority) will be those who give "hilariously." At the same time, some will give their money (grudgingly) having never given themselves. Paul said, "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (I Cor. 13:3). *Why* we give is so *important*, *what* we give becomes almost *irrelevant*! (see Matt. 6:1-4).

SECTION 5

Confidence (9:8-11)

⁸And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. ⁹As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever.” ¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God;

9:8-9 Ability of God: A most important motivation for giving is the christian’s trust in the ability and willingness of God to supply everything the human being needs to live and serve his Maker to the best of his capacities. Jesus dealt extensively with this factor in the Sermon on the Mount. The Heavenly Father knows what his children need *before* they ask! (Matt. 6:8). The Heavenly Father stores and protects eternally every “treasure” his children lay up in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). The Heavenly Father provides abundantly and gloriously for all the lesser beings of his creation — are not his human children of more value than these? (Matt. 6:25-34). Jesus proved that God is not only able, but passionately eager, to provide whatever is necessary to fulfill God’s purpose in every person who asks! But what God is able and willing to do, and what human beings expect him to do, may be as different as daylight and darkness. Jesus fed *some* hungry people, but not all. He healed *some* ill people, but not all. He restored *some* dead to their loved one’s on earth, but not all. God makes *some* people rich, but not all. God gives *some* people multiple talents, but not all. Paul’s point in this passage is that God is able to provide every *believer* with every blessing in abundance, *so that* the trusting child may always have *enough* of everything to accomplish every good work God wants *him* to accomplish. Wealthy people are rich not because they are more righteous or “fortunate” than others, but in order that they may administer those riches as wise and faithful stewards in the service of God. Poor people are not poor because they are unpleasing to God or less talented than others, but in order that they may administer their poverty as wise and faithful stewards in the service of God. *Every* child of God has been given *enough of everything* that he may do every good work God has for *him* to do. It is not what the child of God *could* do *if he had more* — it is what *he* is doing with what *he* has *now*!

Verse 8, in the Greek text is literally, “And is able, the God, *all*

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grace (charin) to cause to abound (perisseusai, aorist, infinitive) unto you, in order that. . .” Again, Paul uses the word “grace” as a synonym of the material (and the spiritual) goods or means given by God to human beings for a stewardship. Whatever any human being has he has by the *grace* of God and for the service of God. Whatever any human being has is *all* the grace, at that moment, God has “caused” him to have for holy service. God forgets nothing, omits nothing, and is never incapable of providing *all* the grace needed for his purposes. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God has “blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3). Peter writes that christians have been given *all* things that pertain to *life and godliness* by the knowledge of Christ through his great and very precious promises (II Pet. 1:3-5). It is not God who is inadequate. “The man with a bountiful heart finds that God supplies him with something to bestow” (Plummer).

The phrase, “enough of everything” is literally, “all self-sufficiency” (Gr. *pasan autarkeian*). The Greek word *autarkeia* is translated “contentment” in I Tim. 6:6, and is the word from which we get the English word *autarchy*, “absolute sovereignty.” When God supplies, it is *absolutely* sufficient, and we should be content with it! Too many christians are not giving proportionately (and some not at all) because they think they do not have “enough” to give. *Emphatic* teaching needs to be done on these verses (9:8-11) so believers will understand that whatever they have is “enough” for them to give something which will please God. Notice, Paul says willing, cheerful-hearted men will *always* (Gr. *pantote*) have “enough” to give. “Self-sufficiency” for the believer is caused by God, but the believer must cooperate to make it a reality. It is the believer’s responsibility to trust and be content. The less a christian desires for his own hedonistic pleasure (see James 4:1-4) the more he will be content, self-sufficient and able to minister to others. Usually, those who do *not* have “enough” to give for every good work are those who have insisted on too much for themselves! Let every christian be *honest* to himself and to God about this, and the foregoing statement will be correct. The Greek word *perisseuete* is, as earlier in the verse, translated “abound” and means, “overflow, over and above, more than enough, affluence, super-abundance.” God is able to give us grace overflowing so that we may always have enough to “overflow” unto every good work. This

does not mean that we are to give only our “overflow” or our “abundance” (this is what the Pharisees did Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4). It means that we will be able to “abound,” to “sow bountifully” (see 9:6). Believers do not give “left-overs” to God (see Mal. 1:6-9), they give the best and the most, taking the “left-overs” for their own use — still counting the “left-overs” as a stewardship to God.

Verse 9 is a quotation from Psalm 112:9 and its subject is the believer, the *man* who fears God (Psa. 112:1), not God. The Hebrew text uses the word *pizzair* (“scatter or distribute”) and the LXX translates the Hebrew word into the Greek word (*eskorpisen*, English “scorpion”) the same Greek word Paul uses here in verse 9. The Greek word *penesin* is translated, “poor,” and is the word from which we get the English word, “penury” which means, “last, destitute, abject poverty.” The Greek word *eskorpisen* carries the idea of “dispersing or scattering *abroad*, widely, effusively, as in the sowing of seed, scattering grain by winnowing.” The man who fears the Lord is unrestrained, profuse in his giving. That is because he is content with very little for himself and because God has overflowed divine grace to this man to make him always sufficiently capable of sowing bountifully to all good works. That man’s righteousness (Gr. *dikaiosune*) *remains* (Gr. *menei*) *forever* (Gr. *eis ton aiona*, “unto eternity”). The man who “sows bountifully” is like Cornelius, the Roman centurion, whose liberality (and prayers) went up before God as an abiding “memorial” (see Acts 10:1-4). When such a man dies, his works *follow* him (Rev. 14:13). They have become a part of his character that shall never die. The Psalmist said, “he will be remembered forever” (Psa. 112:6). Now God is able to make that happen in every believer’s life — rich and poor! For, you see, it is not the amount in a comparative sense, but the willingness, cheerfulness and equality of participation that is “very well acceptable” to the Lord.

9:10-11 Aim of God: Confidence (trust) in God’s purpose (aim) for giving is necessary. God’s purpose for believers in giving is the glorifying of his Almighty name! It is as God said so often through the O.T. prophets when he extended his mercy and grace “for the sake of *his* name” (see Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22; Dan. 9:18-19). Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed* be *Thy* name. . . .” We are not to give to be seen and rewarded by men

(Matt. 6:1-4).

The God who has never failed to “supply” seed to the sower and bread for food will “supply” and “multiply” the true giver’s “resources.” The word “supply” is a translation of the Greek word *epichoregon*. It is a combined word, *epi*, a prepositional prefix meaning to “intensify or pile upon,” and *choregeo*, the word from which we get the English words, choreography, chorus, choral. In ancient Greece, the *leader (choregeo)* of a chorus, or a dance company (choreography) was charged with the responsibility of supplying *all* the material needs of his group. The group was to devote all its time to perfecting its “performance” and should not have to be anxious about the “necessities” of living. So the word *choregeo* came to be used as a connotation of “all sufficient supplier.” These Greeks at Corinth would especially appreciate Paul’s use of this word from the ancient world of theatrics. God is not only an Almighty Choreographer, he is also an Infinite *Multiplier* (Gr. *plethunei*, the word from which we get the English, “plethora.” God “multiplies” our “resources.” Actually, the Greek word translated “resources” is *sporon* and means literally, “seed,” and the Greek word translated “increase” is the word *auxesei* which means “to grow.” Paul is using these words figuratively. They are words in keeping with the symbolism he has used all through this chapter — words from the vocabulary of the farmer. The growth-cycle in “nature” — from the field of the farmer — is God’s classic lesson on *confidence* in the Creator to choreograph a magnificent harvest from a bountiful scattering of seed. He does it over and over and over in the farmer’s field.

The God who does this in the farmer’s field will also do it through the believer’s pocketbook! The believer must have the same faith as the farmer and scatter seed (dollars) profusely. What the believer cannot forget is that his “harvest” (Gr. *genemata*, “fruits”) is of the Spirit. The believer must have confidence in the aim of God to produce spiritual ends, not material ends. While the believer *uses* material things they are not his ultimate goal. Material things are merely “means” to the spiritual goal he (and God) seeks to produce. God’s goal is *righteousness*, in the giver, in those to whom he gives, and in those who are aware of his giving.

God *enriches* (Gr. *ploutizomenoi*, from the Greek word *Plutus*, god of wealth; the word from which we get the English words,

plutocrat, plutocracy) all believers (wealth is relative) in every way for great generosity (Gr. *pasan haploteta*, lit., "all single-mindedness"). The word *haploteta* originally described the action of spreading cloth flat so that nothing was left hidden in the folds. It connotes "open-handedness, sincerity, liberality, genuineness, guilelessness, healthiness." Paul is aiming at the spiritual foundations of christian giving with this word *haploteta* rather than specific amounts.

God supplies and multiplies, the believer administers his stewardship in a "healthy, open-handed, generous, sincere" way (no matter what amount he is proportionately able to give), and "it produces thanksgiving to God." The Greek word *eucharistian* is translated "thanksgiving." It is the word from which we get the English word, *eucharist*, so often used as a name for the Lord's Supper because of Paul's use of the same word (*eucharistesas*) in I Corinthians 11:24 in his dissertation about the Lord's Supper. The same word is repeated in the Greek text here (9:12). It is significant and indicates that giving and receiving offerings of money in a congregation of christians should be as *worshipful*, as *important*, and as *needful* of total participation as the Lord's Supper! The offering is as much a *eucharist* as is the Lord's Supper.

Paul is emphatic in this verse (9:11) and the following verses that the primary goal of christian giving is to produce thanksgiving to God — to glorify the name of God. This is a major problem preachers face in the matter of christian giving. There is not enough emphasis on God's glory. Too often, when a modern congregation which has produced some extraordinary liberality, the emphasis is put on the faith of the people or their "sacrificial" generosity. The glory goes to God! And if believers are not able to trust God enough to give him the glory for any and all generosity, they are not giving from the right motivation!

SECTION 3

Confessions (9:12-15)

¹²for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God.

¹³Under the rest of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

9:12-13 Proclaimed Clearly: In this text the apostle states categorically that giving (stewardship) is a "test" of "obedience" by which "we acknowledge the gospel of Christ." It is not the *only* test of obedience for acknowledging the gospel of Christ — but it is clearly a part of our christian "confession."

In verse 12 the Greek word *diakonia* (the word from which we have the English, "deacon") is translated "rendering." But the word would be better translated "ministry." Then, the Greek word *leitourgias* is translated "service." *Leitourgias* is literally, "public service." In the LXX it is almost exclusively for the priestly service in the Temple, the offering of sacrifices. Christian giving is a "ministry" and a "liturgy" (worship). It should *never* be done frivolously, as simply a matter of course, or apologetically. Those who give should consider themselves performing a ministry and participating in the priesthood of believers. They should *never* look upon their offerings as "dues," as "spectator's admission fee," or as some sort of "holy tax."

Paul says when christians exercise their "believers-priesthood" and "minister" through giving, they *not only* "supply" (Gr. *prosanaplerousa*, lit. "fill up by addition") the "wants" (Gr. *husteremata*, "things lacking," not merely wants, but needs) of the saints, such a ministry also "overflows in many thanksgivings to God." The Greek word *eucharistion* is again used (9:12) and translated "thanksgivings." *Christian giving is worship* — it is not just to pay bills. It is an integral, indispensable factor in christian worship whether bills *get* paid or not, whether there are any bills to be paid or not.

Preachers will inevitably have all kinds of problems if they hint that a believer's giving is a "test" of his profession as a christian. Yet that is precisely what the inspired apostle *clearly* states in verse 13! Paul uses some interesting and significant Greek words in this verse. The RSV translation does not do them justice; the NASV is better.

First, he used the Greek word *dia* to start the sentence. *Dia* means, "through," or "by this agency." Thus the believer's giving is the "instrumentality" by which he proves his confession of Christ. Second, he uses the word *dokimes*; RSV translates it "test," the KJV translates it "experiment" and the NASV translates it "proof." It means "to prove by putting to test and experience." It is a word from the scientific and judicial vocabulary of the Greeks (confirmed by the Greek papyri). Third, Paul used the Greek word *diakonias*, translated "service." Fourth, is the word *hupotage*, translated "obedience;" that is what it literally means, but it is sometimes translated "submission" (Eph. 5:21, 24). Fifth, is the word *homologias*, translated "acknowledging" in the RSV; it literally means, "say the same as . . ." and is often translated "confession." Finally, the Greek word *koinonias*, appears and is translated "contribution" in the RSV; it is the word from which we get the English word "communion" and would be better translated "participation," "fellowship," "partnership," or "sharing." Christian giving is not disinterested, disconnected "contribution" but personal "participation" and "partnership" with those whom the giving helps. And, Paul adds, the gospel profession of the Corinthians was *proved* not only by the one-time offering for Judea, but in their giving "toward all men" (Gr. *eis pantas*).

Again, Paul is saying Christians are to "put their money where their mouths are!" They are to prove their love (8:8, 24) and their gospel profession (9:13) by their giving. While Paul has been emphatic throughout this entire dissertation (chapters 8 and 9) that Christian giving is "not as an exaction" and "each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion," he definitely makes it a matter of "obedience" and "confession" to the gospel of Christ. Christian giving as Paul has outlined it in these two chapters is fundamentally "saying the same as" (confessing) the gospel of Christ says! Any stewardship short of Paul's instruction here is a denial of the Gospel. Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Constant, repeated, in-depth teaching from these two chapters is really the only divine solution to the preacher's problem of convincing his congregation that *giving* is *proof* of the believer's love and obedience to the gospel of Christ. The world will never see a clear confession (or "profession") of Christ un-

til christian people give as Paul instructed the Corinthian church. What we *say* about our love for, our trust in, and our obedience to Christ must be *proved* by our *giving* (Gen. 22:12; Matt. 25:31-46; John 13:1-35; I John 3:16-18).

9:14-15 Produces Community: Total participation (“equality”) and proportionate (“as a man has been prospered”) giving by christians produces a compassionate, caring “community.” It does not produce communism (at least not as communism is practiced ideologically in the nations of the world today). It does not produce a “commune” where every member throws *all* his possessions into one large treasury. It is a “community” of loving, caring, helping christians of differing “gifts” — all giving proportionate to their “means,” and when called upon, “beyond their means.” All persons in this christian “community” do not have the same resources or amounts of abilities or accouterments. Some have much, some have little, but what each has is enough for him to participate in “every good work.”

Everyone participating (“equality”) according to what they have, is what makes it a community. Those who need it are helped and long for and pray for those who are helping. Those who are helping long for and pray for those who are being helped. This longing for and praying for one another is “because” (Gr. *dia ten*, “on account of”) the *surpassing* (Gr. *huperballousan*, “cast beyond”) grace of God in one another. Such giving as Paul documents here by the Macedonians and Corinthians manifests that these christians so thoroughly appreciated the *grace* of God, it made them *excel* (“surpass”) all expectations in giving for the Lord’s work in Judea. Thus Paul begins (8:1) and ends (9:14) his discussion of the problem of christian giving (stewardship) appealing to the *grace of God* as a *solution*.

Christian churches do not really have a problem with stewardship; their problem is with the *grace of God*. Grace is not preached enough! Grace is not discussed enough! Human works have been stressed too much! Christians have lost touch with the reality that *everything* they have, *everything* they are, *every* circumstance of their existence, past, present and future, is absolutely by the grace of God. Too many, while paying lip service to “grace,” reserve a secret smugness in their hearts that they aren’t such bad people, after all, and what they have and what they are, they have earned (at least a part of it) by their own

hard work and skill. Until christian people become possessed and obsessed with the absoluteness of the grace of God in their very existence, they will never have the power to give or exercise the "excellent" (8:7) stewardship according to the apostolic standards of these two chapters.

The infinite grace of God brought forth this paean of praise, this emotional postscript to Paul's discussion of giving, "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!" The Greek word *anekdiegeto* means "indescribable." Human language is inadequate to give *full* expression to infinite grace. There is nothing in the human experience by which to *compare* (see II Cor. 4:17) *absolute* goodness and graciousness, hence there is no word for it! The best word by which to symbolize infinite grace would be "Jesus"! He was Infinite Grace incarnated. He displayed it as absolutely as it could be displayed to the finite mind of humankind. There was no lack in his manifestation (John 1:14-18), the lack was in the sin-tainted minds of people keeping them from apprehending it. Surely, the extent to which we are willing to let the Spirit of Christ control us and live in us will be the extent to which we apprehend the "indescribable" grace of God! Paul finds himself a number of times unable to find human words to express divine realities (see Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:8; II Cor. 12:4). Peter also experienced this frustration (I Pet. 1:8). But we rejoice that the "Spirit himself interceded for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26-27). While we may be unable to find *words* to express our joy for the infinite grace of God, we certainly need not flounder for actions which will express our gratitude for God's grace and be "very favorably acceptable" to the Lord; passionate, participating, proportionate, careful, chosen and cheerful GIVING. Such giving will multiply itself in multitudes of people worshiping and serving with "thanksgiving" to the Lord by words and deeds. Not even a cup of cold water given because of the grace of Christ (in his name) will go unrewarded. While a christian's efforts by words and by giving to fully express his thanks for God's grace may fall short in this world, every sincere attempt will be "memorialized" before the God who knows all, loves infinitely, and is absolutely faithful (Acts 10:4; II Tim. 1:12; 4:6-8; I Pet. 1:4; Rev. 14:13). The obsession to express "thanks" for the inexpressible grace of God is the solution to the problem of giving or stewardship.

APPREHENSION:

1. How do we know chapter nine is a continuation of the discussion of chapter 8?
2. Who are the "brethren" Paul is sending to Corinth? Why?
3. Why was Paul uneasy about Macedonians accompanying him to Corinth?
4. What is an "exaction"?
5. Why would Paul use the symbolism of "sowing and reaping" to teach about giving?
6. What does the word "cheerful" mean?
7. What does the word "enough" mean?
8. Who "scatters" abroad?
9. How does a giver's righteousness "endure forever"?
10. What is the significance of the Greek word *eucharist*, translated "thanksgiving"?
11. Why is the word "test" used in this discussion about giving?
12. What does the word "acknowledge" mean in connection with giving?
13. What does the word "contribution" mean?
14. How does one have the grace of God "in" him?
15. Why is thanks for God's gift "inexpressible"?

APPLICATIONS:

1. Do believers in your congregation consider their giving as a factor in upholding the reputation of Christ and the Christian faith? Do you?
2. What do you think the community's evaluation of your church's giving is?
3. How do the leaders of your congregation get people to give?
4. Do you think people ought to be told how much to give? Why?
5. How much emphasis is placed on the grace of God in your preacher's sermons and Sunday School lessons?
6. Do you think the grace of God can be emphasized too much? Why?
7. Is each christian really free to decide for himself what he shall

give?

8. Why do christians need to give?
9. Do you give most cheerfully when a need to give is presented, or when you are made aware of God's goodness to you?
10. Are ways to get people to give alright as long as they work?
11. Are all the givers in your church "cheerful" givers? Do you think the church could get along without the giving of grudging givers?
12. Have you ever had so little that you could not afford to give to the church?
13. Do you believe God will always give every believer enough so that he may participate in the offerings given to the Lord?
14. Should the poor give? Why?
15. If God never needs what we give, why do we give?
16. What if someone told you that a christian proves his profession of Christ and his obedience to the gospel by his giving?
17. Does your giving testify that you believe the gospel, and that you are obeying it?
18. Is the grace of God in you? How do you know? Do others know? How?
19. How would you express thanks to God for his "inexpressible" gift?

Special Study

WHY GIVE MONEY TO GOD? Bible Teachings On Giving

by Seth Wilson and Boyce Mouton

The Bible is filled with admonitions for God's people to give. It says that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive. We are told that we should not give by necessity or requirement, but willingly, because the Lord loves a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:7). A thinking person will want to know why?

- A. Recognizes God's ownership.
- B. Shows a willingness to depend upon God's faithfulness (Gen. 28:20-22).
- C. Shows faith that God will supply according to His Word (Phil. 4:19).
- D. Expresses love, honor and worship.
- E. Serves God with the resources that we have to work with.

In Psalm 50:12 the Lord reminds us, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." In the same context He affirms His ownership of all the beasts of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills. God does not need our help because He is weak or wanting; but He depends on us because He takes us into His program for the world.

Consider how much time and money the Jews, under the law, were required to devote to God.

Time Given Completely To God In One Year

A. Sabbaths	52 days - Lev. 23:3
B. Passover	6 days - Lev. 23:4-8
C. Feast of Weeks	1 day - Lev. 23:15-21
D. Feast of Tabernacles	6 days - Lev. 23:34-42
E. Day of Atonement	1 day - Lev. 23:22-32
F. Feast of New Moon	11 days - Num. 28:11-15
G. Feast of Trumpets	1 day - Num. 29:1-6

Total 78 days

Really 7 days in Passover, and 7 in the Feast of Tabernacles, and 12 in the monthly Feasts of the New Moon, but we have counted all the

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Sabbaths and the Feast of Trumpets (which is one of the new moons). This accounts for our total. Add days of travel and preparation for the feasts, and time used in purification rites and offering sacrifices, and there were more than 78.

Property Given To The Lord By The Jews

- A. The Firstborn of Man and Beast; Exod. 13:2,12-15; 34:19,20
- B. A Tenth of the Products of the Land; Lev. 27:30
- C. A Tenth of Increase of Flocks and Herds; Lev. 2:32-34
- D. A Special tithe every Third year; Deut. 14:28-29
- E. According to ability at Annual Fest; Deut. 16:16-17
- F. Firstfruits of Trees and Land; Deut. 26:1-11; 18:4,5; Num. 18:12-18
- G. Animals sacrificed; Deut. 26:1-11; 18:4,5; Num. 18:12-18
- H. The Temple-Tax; Exod. 30:13; 38:26
- I. Day by day giving to the poor; Deut. 24:15,21; 15:11,13,14

How did all of these sabbath days help God? What did He do with all of the money and what good to Him were the ashes of burned beasts?

The whole point is this — giving was never intended to benefit God, it was intended to help us. God so loved that He gave . . . this is the very nature of God and it is also the very nature of love. The man who will not give has neither love nor God; and the miserly are inevitably miserable. Love wants to give. Learn the deep joy of giving as an expression of love.

The Grace of Giving

1. The Christian should not consider giving a burden, but a grace or a favor.
2. This is a grace in which we should abound (II Cor. 8:7).
3. If we first give ourselves to the Lord, we will gladly give of our means to Him (II Cor. 8:2-5). They of Macedonia gave out of their deep poverty (II Cor. 8:2). Not only did these people give out of their deep poverty, but they “abounded” in their liberality.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

4. This giving of ourselves and of our means to the Lord is our reasonable, or spiritual service (Rom. 12:1).
5. We are not our own, but are bought with a price; therefore, we should glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's (I Cor. 6:19,20). We can never repay the price that was paid for our redemption, which was the precious blood of Christ (I Pet. 1:18-20).
6. If we sow, or give, sparingly, we shall reap sparingly; but if we sow, or give, bountifully, we shall reap bountifully (II Cor. 9:6).
7. Can we not take Jesus at His word when He said "It is more blessed to give than to receive," (Acts 20:35) and who has promised that we will receive in proportion to our giving? (Luke 6). Let us cultivate more and more the "grace of giving."

Remember God's promise to the Christian: you will always be rich enough to be generous (II Cor. 9:8 NEB).

How Strong Is Your Faith In God?

How strong is your faith in God? How great is your love for Christ and His Church? Jesus said to Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Peter almost considered it an insult and I am sure many members here would feel the same way if He put the question to them. But the real question is, "Is your faith strong enough to let you love enough to walk by faith in this new year?" In the eyes of the world, walking by faith is the same as throwing logic out the window. How strong is your faith?

Only a small percent of Christians have enough faith and love to give ten percent of their income to the Lord and His kingdom. Does this mean those who don't tithe are afraid God will not help them in their stewardship? Listen, Christian stewardship is a test of logic and faith: How can you believe God will take care of you in the next world if you don't believe He'll take care of you financially in this world? Faith begins now, in this life. (Mark 10:29,30). If we can not believe in God's promises here and now, how can we trust Him there and then? Christian understand how God takes hold of your money matters and improves them. Perhaps you are one of the many who loves and feels

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the need of giving more to your church and to missions, but without the faith to undertake tithing. Instead of trying to reason your budget, merely step out on faith. Throw logic out the window in this matter and walk by faith. Christian faith means walking in the dark where you cannot see, but knowing you will be guided.

Chapter Ten

THE PROBLEM OF MINISTERIAL METHODS (10:1-18)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Paul uses sarcasm in 10:1 — should sarcasm be used in service to the Lord?
2. Is it right to think of christian service as a “warfare”?
3. Is “frightening” people a proper ministerial method?
4. What’s wrong with human beings comparing themselves with one another?
5. When should preachers (or missionaries) “move on” to other fields?

SECTION 1

Spiritual (10:1-6)

10 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away!—²I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of acting in worldly fashion. ³For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

10:1-3 Supernatural: In an age gone wild on pragmatism, relativism and situation ethics, the devil is not adverse to tempting preachers to use ministerial methods befitting these philosophies. With gimmickry, media manipulation, emotionalism, and “PR” rampant and “working” for so many institutions and individuals, the

preacher is tempted to justify the same methods for his ministry. Why? Because the church has succumbed to "measuring" itself by worldly standards of success and has brought ungodly pressure on its preachers "to produce" *numbers* in attendance, financial income, buildings, staff, and "programs." But the Lord never, in all the word of God, approves of "insincere," "underhanded," or "cunning" methods of ministering his truth to sinful men (see II Cor. 2:17; 4:2).

Some, in the Corinthian congregation, had evidently accused Paul of inadequate, and improper methodology in his ministries to them. The first thing he deals with is their accusation that he is a "phony." They were saying that when he was with them, face to face, he was "humble" (Gr. *tapeinos*, "lowly-minded"), but when he was away, writing letters to them, he was "bold" (Gr. *tharro*, "courageous, confident"). They were accusing him of being inconsistent in his methods of approach. They were (probably urged on by the Judaizers) charging him of being a pseudo apostle because of his methods.

Paul appeals to them on behalf of the "meekness" (Gr. *prautetos*, same word as is used in the Sermon on the Mount — "Blessed are the meek . . .") and the "gentleness" (Gr. *epieikeias*, reasonable, suitable, fair, patient) of Christ that they not force him to come to them face to face and be as bold as he is capable! Their evaluation of his methods was — "worldly"! The Greek word is really, *kata sarka peripatountas*, "according to flesh walking." According to them, Paul was using the methods the heathen teachers and philosophers used. Thus, according to them, he was not commissioned by God — not an apostle with a spiritual ministry. Paul's *method* of appeal was to use a little sarcasm. He says, apparently quoting what he had heard some were saying of him in Corinth, "I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away!" The Old Testament prophets used much sarcasm; God speaks in the O.T. in the first person with sarcasm; Jesus used sarcasm; all the writers of the N.T. used it. Practically every preacher, writer, communicator, politician or person with any "cause" to proclaim uses sarcasm. The word "sarcasm" comes from the Greek word *sarkasmos* which means "to tear flesh like dogs, biting, cutting, stinging." Satire is akin to sarcasm and both are speech methods used in the scriptures to rebuke what is wrong and direct the erring to what is right. Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Job, and even Psalms are filled with sarcasms and satirisms. So sarcasm definitely

has its place in methods of ministering God's word to sinful men. Sarcasm can be spiritual! It all depends on the *motives* for using it.

J.B. Phillips translates verse 2: "I am begging you to make it unnecessary for me to be outspoken and stern in your presence. For I am afraid otherwise that I shall have to do some plain speaking to those of you who will persist in reckoning that our activities are on the purely human level." Paul was fully capable of using the sternest of methods, but he did not want to do so. Paul's *preference* for methods of edifying christians was an approach of gentleness and kindness. The Corinthians were "in his heart" (II Cor. 7:3; 6:11). He wanted to spare them any necessity to feel the sting of the apostolic tongue because he was fearful they would shut him out of their hearts (II Cor. 1:15-2:4).

The sharp words of the remainder of II Corinthians were not addressed directly to the whole church, but to a small segment of false teachers and their followers who were destroying the spiritual stability of the church by disparaging Paul's apostolic authority. Paul is fully capable of showing boldness with such "confidence" (Gr. *pepoithesei*, to be persuasive, give assurance) as was necessary to persuade them of the propriety of his methods and the authority of his apostleship. He "counted" on (Gr. *logizomai*, to reckon, to make a record, to put on account) having to put on record his boldness face to face — but he did not desire to have to do so. Some of the Corinthians had been led to "suspect" (Gr. *logizomenous*, were reckoning, were recording) Paul of "acting in a worldly fashion" (Gr. *kata sarka peripatountas*, literally, "walking around according to flesh"). Ancient Greek teachers were "peripatetics" ("walkers-around"). That was their methodology of teaching. Thus the accusation against Paul is that he uses non-spiritual, non-apostolic, non-sanctioned methods. The apostle uses two different Greek words to promise "boldness" toward those who think he is a "phony" apostle. The first word is *tharro* (verse 1) ("courageous, confident") which we have already discussed. The second word is *tolmesai* (verse 2) which means "daring" and denotes boldness in undertaking some forbidding task.

His answer is, "While it is true, we all do live and walk around in the flesh, the battle we are fighting is in the realm of the spiritual." One can be "in the flesh" but not "fleshly-minded" (worldly in mentality and motives) (see Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; John 17:11-19). He

replies to their accusations by affirming that he, like all christians (and other apostles), is carrying on ("walking around in") an other-worldly war. His war is not of this world. Therefore, his methods are not carnal (worldly). The Greek word for "warfare" is *strateuometha*. It is also the word used for "soldier" and "army." *Strateuo* or *strateia* is the word from which we get the English word *strategy*. Paul claimed his "strategy" or "warfare" (or method) was *not* on the level of the world. His "strategy" was *spiritual* (gentle and meek, like that of Christ).

There is still a problem in the minds of some religious people about ministerial methods. While preachers are often tempted to *practice* worldly methods of "ramroding" or "lording" it over the flock under pressures to succeed or to stroke their own insecurity, some church members think preachers *ought to be* "pastors" (dictatorial, one-man executives), sort of arbitrary, autocratic superintendents of the congregation. They think a preacher who does not assert himself, make himself theologically and ministerially above the rest of the "flock," and "run things," is a phony. Paul refused to "lord it over" anyone's faith (see II Cor. 1:24ff). But that did not mean he was a "phony" spiritual leader. His ministry was as *supernatural* as that of any servant of God — and he would demonstrate it if necessary. He would rather they would accept the credentials he had already shown.

The office of apostle ceased with the death of the last apostle appointed by Christ. It was no longer needed when the church matured into one body from the two (Jew and Gentile) (see Eph. 4:11-16). But there is a sense in which every ministry of the gospel (whether by preacher, elder, deacon, S.S. teacher, christian neighbor or christian parent) is *supernatural*. All ministries of the word of God are "strategies" (warfares) or methods of fighting in the spiritual realm. Fundamentally and ultimately, the daily struggles of every christian are in the realm of the Spirit, "against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places" Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 6:10-20). The church is not in a war to conquer geographical territory or to capture human bodies or to amass worldly "loot." It is aiming primarily at capturing people's hearts (minds) and spirits. It is struggling for the victory of righteousness over wickedness, for the surrender to grace by faith. The kingdom of God is entered into voluntarily, through the peace Christ has made between God and man. It is not populated by coer-

cion, by dictatorial methods. It is true, human beings are temporarily residing in "earthen vessels" (fleshly bodies). It is also true that the Lord wants his creatures to use those bodies only for his service and glory. But they cannot be coerced or manipulated into holy use. Therefore, the methods ("strategies") of the christian's warfare is spiritual (mental, rational, persuasive, evangelistic); "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6; II Chron. 32:7; Acts 26:17-18; I Tim. 1:18; James 4:1-4; I Pet. 2:11, etc.). The highly symbolized message of the book of Revelation discloses that the christian's warfare (although the wicked world wars against the flesh) is really against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the physically-invisible world of view-points and ideas.

10:4-6 Strong: Paul now appeals to the *weapons* he has used as a demonstration he is carrying on a warfare that is equally spiritual to that of any other true apostle of Christ! The Greek word *hopla* is translated, "weapons," and is sometimes translated "instruments" (see Rom. 6:13). The point is that the Corinthians must think of Paul as *properly armed* by God with implements capable of fighting a true, apostolic spiritual war and winning the victory! The same is true of every christian in a non-apostolic sense. The christian's weapons are:

1. Not fleshly (Gr. *sarkika*), not oriented or aimed at worldly ends or goals which all perish with the world.
2. But have divine power (Gr. *dunata to theo*), powerful because of God
3. To destroy strongholds (Gr. *kathairesin ochuromaton*), overthrow fortresses, or that which is fortified.
4. To destroy arguments (Gr. *logismos kathairountes*), overthrow rationales or rationalizations.
5. To destroy every proud obstacle (Gr. *pan hupsoma epairomenon*), overthrow every "mountainous" thing hoisted up —
6. Against the knowledge of God (Gr. *kata tes gnoseos tou theou*)
7. Able to bring every thought captive (Gr. *aichmalotizontes pan noema*), able to make every perception a prisoner of war — imprisoned to the control of the revealed mind of Christ (the Bible).
8. To obey Christ (Gr. *eis tev hupakoen tou Christou*), unto the obedient hearing of Christ.

The instruments or weapons in the christian "strategy" for conquest are all, without exception, *mental* (spiritual). They are not made of matter. They have to do with "thought" and with "knowledge;"

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specifically, the thoughts and knowledge of God! One has only to compare this text with that of Ephesians 6:14-20; to see that the christian is to "arm" his mind with the mentality of God for his spiritual struggle (e.g. truth, righteousness, gospel, faith, salvation, word of God, prayer — all are implements of the mind and spirit). That is why there are so many exhortations for the believer to "set his mind on" the things of God (Rom. 8:5-11; 12:1-2; II Cor. 5:14-17; Phil. 4:8-9; Col. 3:1-4; I Pet. 1:13, etc.). When Christ engaged the devil in that great battle of the temptations in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-12) he fought with his mind and spirit focused on the word of God. He used no worldly "strategies" (no human philosophy, no psychology, no emotional appeals, no material things, exaltation of self, nothing mystical or subjective); he needed only knowledge of and faith in the objective, propositional revelation of God.

The revealed word of God (the Bible), because it is an inerrant and infallible record of the ultimate Truth (the person of God), has the power (dynamic) to defeat, cast aside, conquer, depose, pull down *every* "argument" (or rationalization) that stands in the way of any one who *honestly* wants to know God and live with him forever. There is *no* argument, from any source, no matter how erudite or sophisticated, no matter who or how many propound it, that can stand up to God's word honestly studied. His word is able to take captive *every* thought of the human mind and direct it (idea, concept, precept) to the Source of all reality. Every human thought is to be taken captive to the mind of Christ, *imprisoned* to the *constraint* of Christ's grace and love (II Cor. 5:14-21).

The word of God, captured the minds of kings, philosophers, rabbis, fishermen, army officers, doctors, scientists, carpenters, financiers, merchants, murderers, homosexuals, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, slaves, freedmen, rich, poor, learned, ignorant — all kinds of people from all races, cultures, languages, geographical locations, for millenniums. It continues to this day to overthrow the proud and arrogant rationalizations of human beings. It continues to this day to confirm that all humanly "discovered" information, honestly recorded, has its origins and its meanings in a Divine Being.

There is *no philosophy* (argument) so well fortified or exalted *against* God that it cannot be overthrown and captured and brought under obedience to the control and redemptive purpose of God. There

is *no human mind* so well fortified or exalted *against* God that it (or, he) cannot be overthrown, captured and brought into obedience to the will of God and his redemptive salvation. The word of God is living and powerful, able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12-13; Isa. 55:10-11; Jer. 17:9-10; I Pet. 1:23; I Thess. 2:13; John 8:31-32).

This is one of the greatest texts in all the Bible! It promises the christian that he has at his disposal divinely powerful "weapons" with which he may conquer for Christ "every" obstacle to the knowledge of God! There really is, therefore, no excuse for an evangelistic entrenchment of the church. The church, as Paul saw it, was to be *militant*, aggressive, on the offensive, "capturing" even the strongest and highest opposition to the knowledge of God. Yes! The church should be attacking false doctrines, false ideologies, immoral ethical philosophies, and deceitful hermeneutics. Remember, however, the christian's "warfare" is *not* against human beings but against *thoughts* and *ideas* that stand in opposition to people's opportunity to know God. Christians hate falsehood, but love people. Falsehood has its origin in the devil, who is the father of lies and liars (John 8:43-47).

One of the most frustrating problems a preacher faces is that of getting the members of his congregation to believe these "weapons" are for *their* use. *Every* christian should arm himself with these weapons. *Every* christian should be drilling and practicing and sharpening his expertise in the use of the divine weapons. The moment any person becomes a christian, he has enlisted in the army of the Lord (see I Cor. 9:7; II Tim. 2:3-4; Rev. 19:19; Rom. 13:12; II Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:11, 13; II Tim. 4:7). His life has been committed to militant assault upon falsehood. Christians are not to take a defensive position, but an offensive campaign against evil imaginations and anti-Biblical philosophies. He must speak up, speak out, debate, teach, argue (as did the early christians) from the Scriptures, until the King calls him to his reward. As he does, using the divinely powerful weapons promised here, he will overthrow every opposition to the knowledge of God.

The fact is, however, even preachers are being seduced into waging the christian warfare with weapons of the flesh. These are the weapons the world uses to try to solve the problems it recognizes in society. They are coercion, manipulation, legislation, pressure groups, com-

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promises and demonstrations that ultimately result in raised voices, clenched fists and outbreaks of violence — boycotts, pickets and strikes — all attempts to *pressure* people into doing what others want. The universal testimony of history is, these do not work. The world still has the same problems it has had since Eden. With fleshly weapons, the world will never get rid of its problems — it only rearranges them so that they seem to take another form for a little while. Vance Packard, in his frightening book, *The Hidden Persuaders*, p. 3), reveals that public-relations experts are advising churchmen how they can become more effective “manipulators” of their congregations.

The Church has no business focusing its energies, talents and funds on legislation and enforcement. Those are fleshly weapons. They are inadequate at best, and ultimately doomed to failure. Incarceration is only a temporary expediency. Bringing every thought into captivity to the mind of Christ so that people see one another no longer from a human point of view is the only divine and eternal solution. Ray C. Stedman writes:

The problem of history is not the world. It is the church. It is we who do not use the weapons at our disposal. Instead, we give way and go along with worldly approaches, using pressure-group tactics and petitions to seek to overcome with legislation the wrongs of our day. May God help us to understand the nature of spiritual warfare. The weapons of our warfare are not those worldly tactics. But, our weapons are mighty. They will destroy strongholds and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. . . . The cause is not hopeless. We are not helpless; there is much we can do. Let a Christian act along the lines of the revelation of Scripture in this regard and things will begin to change. Any one of us can change things, in our lives individually, in our homes, in our communities, where we work, in our nation itself. Let us begin to learn the truth about life from the Scriptures. . . . We will find tremendous changes beginning to occur quickly as God uses these weapons to destroy the strongholds of darkness and evil around us.

Do not forget! The mighty weapons of the Spirit overthrew fortified and exalted opposition to God in the Roman empire such as our modern world has never experienced! The book of Revelation predicted it — and it came to pass! And the history of the church has testified ever since, that when she uses the weapons God provides she conquers and captures.

SECTION 2

Sanctioned (10:7-11)

7 Look at what is before your eyes. If any one is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that as he is Christ's, so are we. ⁸For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame. ⁹I would not seem to be frightening you with letters. ¹⁰For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." ¹¹Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.

10:7-9 Viewed: Paul warned (10:6) that he was ready to "punish" (Gr. *ekdikesai*, "vindicate, or bring to justice") every "disobedience" of those at Corinth who refused to "complete" obedience like the majority of the church was doing. There was a minority (perhaps only one) not repenting with the rest of the church. This minority was ridiculing Paul's reputation as a preacher of the gospel, and especially as an apostle. They were saying he was a "great pretender." Paul writes, "Look at what is before your eyes." The Greek Verb, *blepete*, can be either present active indicative, or present active imperative. If it is imperative, it would be translated, "Look (a command) at what is before your eyes." If it is indicative, it would be, "You are looking at things as they are outwardly (on the face of things)." We think the context indicates the imperative translation. It might be paraphrased, "Look at things which stare you in the face!"

Paul then begins to cite *visible* credentials for his prior ministry among the Corinthians, which they had seen and might continue to see if they would compare his credentials with the slanderous insinuations of "the one" stirring up the church against him. First, he reminds the Corinthians that if the troublemaker among them has persuaded himself he has authority because he in some special way belongs to Christ, so does Paul! And Paul had proved it to the Corinthian church. And his detractor should "remind himself" (Gr. *logizestho*, reckon, reason, think through) of the facts of Paul's special relationship to Christ. Paul is not referring here to the ordinary manifesta-

tions of being "in Christ" — he refers to a relationship involving "authority" to give apostolic direction to the church. What Paul's opponent was "persuading himself" (Gr. *pepoithen heauto*, perfect tense verb) about his own authority from Christ, Paul *really* was authorized to do, and had done before the very eyes of the Corinthians (see II Cor. 12:12). And it was not only miraculous evidence Paul gave of his apostleship, he also wielded the "weapons" of christian warfare with special Christlike effectiveness overthrowing the fortresses and strongholds of Greek philosophy as well as Judaizing legalism. Had his slanderer done that? No! He was tearing down the church!

And that is Paul's second vindication of his ministerial methodology. He says, "The Lord gave us *our* authority for building you up and not for tearing you down. So if I should appear to be boasting too much about it, I have done nothing for which I should be ashamed as if I were a pretentious bully seeking only to scare people."

Certainly, Paul had spoken authoritatively (and sternly) in his letters to the Corinthians. Evidently he had not felt it necessary to speak with such direct authority when he had been among them in person. But the "authority" (Gr. *exousias*) he had expressed in his letters was geared toward the spiritual maturation of the christians. He exercised his apostolic office and issued commands to direct their lives into paths of righteousness. He waged a warfare with authoritative words of truth in order to overthrow all obstacles to their knowing God. It was not his intention to merely "frighten" (Gr. *ekphobein*, lit. fear-away, "terrify"). There was no threat to his own self-esteem if they did not obey him. He was *warning* them — and doing so authoritatively!

Preaching the *fear* of God and the fear of eternal damnation *is* a scripturally sanctioned method! There is a difference between "frightening" people and *warning* people. Some people need to learn that distinction. The difference is in the motive, or in the end sought. Preachers who "frighten" people as a method to obtain decisions for the sake of building their own ego or glorifying themselves should repent. But *warning* people about hell by the authority of the Scriptures for the glory of God and the salvation of their souls is a method used in every book of the Bible, by every man of God, as well as the Lord Jesus Christ.

Authority is an indispensable method of preaching and teaching.

The authority is *never* that of the preacher, but is *always* the Scriptures. The apostle Paul clearly disclaims any *personal* authority as he says, “. . . our authority, which *the Lord* gave for building you up. . . .” All authority belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18; Matt. 11:27; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11). Christ delegated some of his authority to the apostles (Matt. 16:19-20; 18:18; 28:18-20; Luke 24:44-53; John 20:22-23; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; 1:11,12,15,16,17). The apostles exhorted evangelists and teachers of the churches to preach authoritatively from the Scriptures (I Tim. 4:11; 5:20; 6:2b; 6:17; II Tim. 2:14-15; 3:15-17; 4:2-5; Titus 2:1; 2:15; 3:8, etc.). The use of authority from the Scriptures as a method of ministry is to be tempered with kindness, purity of life, forbearance, gentleness, and patience, but the authoritativeness of the Scriptures must never be undervalued or underemphasized.

It hardly needs to be mentioned that the goal for ministry is edification or building up, or growth (Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 1:24-29). While Paul's opposition in Corinth was methodically “tearing down” the church, Paul was trying to “build it up.” The problem stemmed from the spiritual immaturity of the christians who could not comprehend that Paul's “severe” words and insistence on “repentance” were methods of *building*. Those among them who gloried in the flesh, Judaizers and others, were trying to seduce the congregation to rebel against Paul's “severity.” So, Paul cited the divine sanction for his methods as a method itself.

Churches today must recognize that *authoritative* preaching and teaching by preachers, elders and teachers is an imperative method for the building up (spiritual maturing) of the individual and the corporate “body” unto the fulness of the stature of Christ (see Eph. 4:11-16). It is sanctioned by the Lord. It must be made operative in the church.

10:10-11 Vowed: Paul not only reminded them that he had expressed the word of God with authority to them earlier (in his letters) but he *vowed* he would do so again, if necessary, when face to face with them. His promise confirms the importance of authority as a method of edification. All teaching which seeks to instruct, to communicate, to educate, to produce growth, *must* exercise some form of authoritativeness. Authority, in teaching, is inescapable! Discipline is an imperative of learning. And discipline is possible only from a basis

of some kind of authority. The uninstructed minds of children seek authority in the home. They want to learn. If authority is not there, they will seek it elsewhere. The same is true of the family of God. Even those who decry authority, do so with authority!

Some Greek manuscripts (Vaticanus, some Latin mss. and some Syriac mss.) have the plural verb *phasin* ("they") in verse 10, while the best and oldest manuscripts have the singular verb *phesin* ("he"). The fact that Paul uses the singular pronoun *toioutos* ("such a one") in verse 11 should confirm the propriety of the singular verb in verse 10. In other words, Paul seems to be focusing his warning toward a *single* opponent at Corinth rather than a group. The RSV translates, "For they say . . ." but it should be translated, "For he says 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.'" The Greek word *exouthenemenous* is a present participle, a combination of *ex* and *outhen*, literally, "being from nothing." It is often translated, "despicable, contemptible, worthless." The RSV translates it "of no account" which does not seem to be strong enough to express what Paul's opponents were saying of his "speech" (Gr. *ho logos*, "his word"). It was probably not the delivery but the power and authority of Paul's "word" they were disparaging. His method of communication was plain, straightforward, and economical — he did not waste words or "beat around the bush." His letters are not saturated with sophisticated philosophical rambles. He is not pendantic or verbose. He does not write like a rabbi or a pedagogue. He would probably be snubbed in erudite theological circles today! So the trouble-maker at Corinth dismissed his "word" as "contemptible."

Just what Paul's bodily weakness was we are not told anywhere. He refers to his "thorn in the flesh" (II Cor. 12:7ff). Some think it was impaired eyesight (see Gal. 6:11) from the fact that he had to write "with large letters." Some think he may have been crippled by some of the beatings he had already suffered. Others speculate that he was small and frail in body or that he had an incurable disease. Whatever caused his opponent to say he was physically weak, it did not deter Paul from promising that what he said by letter when absent, he would do when present! His weakness would not keep him from exercising his God-given authority upon his arrival at Corinth should it be necessary to do so. Paul writes, "Let such a one reckon (Gr.

logizestho, reason it out) that what we are in *word* (Gr. *to logo*) through *epistles* (Gr. *epistolon*) being absent, such also we are in our *work* (Gr. *to ergo*) being present." This was no idle threat. It was a warning. They must have this warning if they are to be built up in the Lord. Warnings are methods of ministry!

SECTION 3

Sane (10:12-18)

¹²Not that we venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

13 But we will not boast beyond limit, but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, to reach even to you. ¹⁴For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. ¹⁵We do not boast beyond limit, in other men's labors; but our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, ¹⁶so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's field. ¹⁷"Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."
¹⁸For it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends.

10:12 In Standards: A minister's methods must be sane and sensible. They must conform to divine standards. Of course, the world's standard of what is sane and sensible is usually quite different from what the word of God categorizes as sane. In verse 12 Paul definitely says that human beings comparing themselves by other human beings in order to boast about themselves are "without understanding."

Paul would *not dare* (Gr. *ou polmomen*, "be so bold") to *class* (Gr. *engkrinai*) or *compare* (Gr. *sungkrinai*, judge-with) himself with some of the ones who played the game of "self-comparing." In order to *commend* (Gr. *sunistanonton*, stand oneself with another to get favorable attention) themselves, some of the Corinthians had been

practicing the art of human comparison. It is sometimes called "competition."

Competition, or comparing oneself with others, is a very subtle, but damning, method some preachers use in their ministry. It is really a "dodge" or, in modern vernacular, "a cop-out." It is a well-used practice of many christians in order to justify their past sins or their anticipated ones. It goes, "Well, I'm not like so-and-so, who. . . ." Christians (including preachers) are to compare themselves with Christ.

Evidently there were people in Corinth "comparing themselves with one another and measuring (Gr. *metrountes*, metric, meter, etc.) themselves with one another in order to commend themselves." There is a difference between using other human beings for "comparison to commend oneself" and using them to "illustrate" proper behavior.

When people play the "game" of "measuring oneself by others" they always select "others" who are, in their estimation, less than themselves. That makes the measurer come out ahead. The devil seduces preachers through the temptation to compete and be more "successful" than their peers. There is *no status in the kingdom of God for any human being except servant!* Why, then, should christians compete? Christian "measurements" for faithful service are not one another, but Christ Jesus. Since none of us ever measure up to that standard, we must trust in grace. Every servant of God is approved by God because of Christ's grace.

Surely, we are to "examine ourselves" and "test ourselves" (I Cor. 11:28; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4), but always by the *divine* standard. Human comparisons have no place as methods of ministry! Churches must not get in the game of "competitiveness." In too many people's minds the calling of a preacher or elder or teacher to serve the congregation is done by comparing people with people, instead of the Biblical standard. Jesus never *rated* people by comparing them to other people. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican is Christ's piercing denunciation of this "game" (Luke 18:9-16).

Those who "measure themselves with themselves" are *without understanding*. The Greek words are *ou suniasin*, might be translated in modern vernacular, "do not have their act together." Such people are playing a fool's game and are only fooling themselves. This game *never* fools God, and seldom fools other people! It is insanity!

10:13-18 In Scope: Some in Corinth were either measuring themselves by themselves to commend themselves, or were accusing Paul of doing so. Someone there was accusing Paul of bragging about exercising authority over a territory where he had *done* nothing, and should be *doing* nothing! They were boastfully declaring themselves as the only leaders or "apostles" (II Cor. 11:12-15) with rightful authority in the Corinthian church. They were contending that Paul had no right to "meddle" in the affairs of the Corinthian church.

Paul contends he has every right to exhort and instruct the Corinthians because he was the *first* to come to them with the Gospel (Acts 18:1ff). Paul will not brag or boast or meddle in territories where the Lord has not assigned ("limited" Gr. *kanon*, "canon, rule, standard, limits") him. God had *ordered* Paul to the territory of Corinth to evangelize (for a year and six months, initially, Acts 18:9-11). Where were all these "pseudo apostles" (II Cor. 11:13) when Corinth was being evangelized? Where were they when all the persecution was being handed out (Acts 18:1-17)? Where were they when Paul and his co-workers were supporting themselves, taking no support from the Corinthians, in order to establish the church there?

The trouble-maker in Corinth was "bragging" about all he had done for the church at Corinth, when all along its beginning and present stature in Christ (which still left much to be desired) was due to Paul's ministrations (in person, through co-workers, and through letters). This was Paul's rightful territory. He was ministering where God had assigned him. They were Paul's spiritual "field." One commentator has suggested that the word "overextending" (Gr. *huperekteinomen*, "overstretch ourselves") is a figure of speech from the Isthmian Games for which Corinth was famed throughout the Roman world. In these contests, as in modern track events, runners were required to keep to the lane which had been marked off for them (see II Tim. 2:5). Paul's "lane" (or "limit") had been Corinth (and the Gentiles beyond) assigned to him by God. His opponents were "running in his lane" and disobeying the "rules" set forth by God.

Had these "pseudo-apostles" (probably Judaizers) been building up the congregation in Corinth in faith and love in Jesus, Paul would not have written these "boasts" about his own work there. But they were not. They were tearing down. They were leading people "astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (11:3-4). God is the one

who sets the "limits" (Gr. *kanon*, rules). Those who minister according to God's "limits" are those who really care for the Church and her members. Those who stay within the "lane" God has marked off and do not "stretch" themselves into other lanes are those who will endure hardship and sacrifice themselves for what is right! Others are only pretenders, "pseudo" ministers.

Having settled the issue whether he is in his rightful "lane" or not as he writes corrective admonitions to the Corinthians, Paul expresses his hope that his edifying of them will increase their faith and thus "enlarge" his "field" among them. Actually, the RSV has not translated verse 15b well. The Greek phrase is, . . . *elpida de echontes auxanomenes tes pisteos humon en humin megalunthenai kata ton kanona hemon eis perisseian*, literally translated, ". . . but hope we are having, while growing the faith of you is, in you we will be magnified, according to the sphere ("limits") of us, in abundance. . . ." In other words, Paul was hoping that as his ministry to them increased their faith, his esteem ("magnification") would be enlarged in their hearts. Thus the problems in Corinth would be put to rest and he would be freed to "preach the gospel" in lands *beyond* them, and not have to spend his energies "boasting of work" he would have to do in Corinth. Paul's opportunity to preach in "lands beyond" hinged upon whether the Corinthians repented and restored him to the right honor and obedience he should have in their hearts. The disruption, divisiveness, and disobedience in the congregation at Corinth, caused by the trouble-maker(s), was hindering world evangelism.

Paul knew that the *method* of a true servant of Christ and edifier of the church would necessitate healing and restorative work upon an ailing "body" of christians *before* he could go on to enlarge the "body" world-wide. He was not the kind of evangelist or missionary whose *methodology* was limited *only* to *enlarging* while disregarding the healing and edifying; and he was an apostle with an undeniable mandate for urgency in world-wide evangelism! Paul's *modus operandi* covered every aspect of the ministry (exhorting, edifying, evangelizing, instructing; polemics, apologetics, hermeneutics; administrative, pastoral, practical). He was, at the same time, doing cross-cultural missionary work, ministerial training work, and christian writing and publishing work. He did it all! Can you imagine what Paul could do for the Lord in today's global society through jet air travel, video and

audio techniques, printing presses, computers, political freedoms and economic affluence of the U.S.???

The former Jewish rabbi (Paul) had a "magnificent obsession" — to "preach the gospel in lands beyond" (see Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:18-29). In a world of 4.5 billion people there are 1653 Christian Church missionaries; 972 of those are on the North American continent. That means there are 681 Christian Church missionaries trying to preach the New Testament message to almost four billion people. And of the 972 in North America, 829 are "missionaries" in the U.S.A.! There is one soldier for every eighty-three persons in the world; one doctor for every 1080 persons in the world; one evangelical missionary for every 90,000 persons in the world; one Christian Church missionary for every 2,722,324 persons in the world! The Christian Churches had 200 fewer missionaries in 1985 than they had in 1977! Did you know that 96% of christian finances are spent in the USA which comprises only 5% of the earth's population? Did you know the average American *misplaces* more money each year than the per-member contributions to a majority of U.S. church denominations? According to the IRS, Americans who itemize their deductions give less than 3% of their adjusted gross incomes to church and charity? It costs \$256,000 per year to train a West Point cadet. It cost approximately \$3500 per year to train a missionary at our loyal Bible colleges! About one out of every one thousand Christian Church members is a missionary. Five hundred church members each giving \$20 more per week to missions would make available \$520,000 more per year for missions. If a husband-wife missionary team received \$15,000 per year for missions, that would be about 70 more missionaries supported right now. If one thousand church members increased their missions giving by \$20 per week more to missions, that would double newly supported missionaries to 140 per thousand church members! One million membership of the Christian Church, giving \$20 per week more to missions, could support a staggering number of 140,000 missionaries right now! Christians in the USA spend \$20 per week on "junk food" that is not needed and probably harmful. There are 5103 languages in the world — 3418 of these have no portion of the Bible in their language. Can you imagine living and dying without ever having had the opportunity to read God's word in your own language? God help us to go with the gospel or send it "to

the lands beyond”!

The first three chapters of I Corinthians are the best commentary on II Corinthians 10:17-18! The words of I Corinthians 1:31 are exactly those of II Corinthians 10:17 (and both paraphrase Jer. 9:24). The *Lord* is the *source* of all that any man, believer or unbeliever, is, has, accomplishes, or retains eternally. Man has no right to boast in himself or any other human being.

In verse 18 a basic principle of the christian life is asserted by the apostle as a summation of his defense for his methods of ministering to the Corinthians. It is *not* the one who brags about his own accomplishments and virtues to gain some advantage over others who is “accepted” (Gr. *dokimos*, “approved, sanctioned, sustained, certified). The true servant of the Lord has his ministry and its methods approved (vindicated) by the *Lord’s* word. The genuine servant of the Lord is willing to have his ministerial methodology examined and certified by the divine standard — the Bible. Paul’s ministry to the Corinthians was clearly proved to be commended by the Lord. The church itself, the converted people, was his “letter” of commendation (II Cor. 3:1ff). Thus the Corinthian church should “look at what was before its eyes” (II Cor. 10:7) — they would not be seduced by “pseudo” leaders.

The solution for problems with twentieth-century methods of ministry is the same as it was in the first century — let them be examined and certified only by the divine standard!

APPREHENSION:

1. What were some in the Corinthian church saying about Paul’s different expressions toward them? Why were they saying this?
2. What is the meaning of the word “sarcasm”? Who uses it?
3. Did Paul threaten to be “bold” toward the Corinthians? Why?
4. If christians are not carrying on a worldly war, where is their war?
5. Where are the other references in the Bible to the believer’s “warfare”?
6. What are “worldly” weapons of warfare?
7. What are “spiritual” weapons of warfare?
8. Who are to use the “spiritual” weapons? When? On whom?

THE PROBLEM OF MINISTERIAL METHODS

9. What power is in the christian's spiritual weapons?
10. How did Paul prove that his ministerial methods were sanctioned by God?
11. Why did Paul "boast" of his authority?
12. Does the Bible tell preachers (other than apostles) to preach with "authority"? Where? Who?
13. What were Paul's detractors saying about his "speech"?
14. What did Paul mean when he wrote, "... they measure themselves by one another"?
15. Why is such "measuring" said to be, "without understanding"?
16. What was the "limit" beyond which Paul would not boast?
17. What were the "lands beyond" where Paul planned to preach?

APPLICATION:

1. Do you ever use sarcasm, irony, satire, when you want to get across some helpful information to someone? Where? Would you ever use it in teaching a Sunday School lesson? How do you *respond* to the use of sarcasm?
2. In your experience, is living the christian life like a war?
3. Do you think christians ought to be made more aware of the "war-like" nature of the christian struggle? Or is being a christian *not* a struggle?
4. Should teen-age christians be taught that being a christian is fighting a war? Who should teach them? How often?
5. Do you think preachers and teachers are seriously, and expertly, waging the christian battle for the minds of people today? Why?
6. What could be done to improve the war for the mind of man by the church?
7. Do you really believe the Bible (the sword of the Spirit) is sufficient to overthrow *every* "fortified" and "exalted" argument which stands as an obstacle to man's knowing God today?
8. Will the Bible *overthrow* the theory of evolution? Eastern mysticism? Mormonism, "Moonies," indifference, materialism, humanism?
9. Could you use the Bible to do so? Have you?
10. What other "spiritual" weapons might be used with the Bible to

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overthrow *obstacles to knowing* God?

11. Does Christ really expect *every* thought of a human being to be “taken captive” and imprisoned to the direction of God? Do we have to think *every* thought like God tells us to think?
12. Is it right to “frighten” people into obeying Christ? How do you respond to the preaching of judgment, hell, the fear of God?
13. Do you know people who play the game of “measuring themselves by themselves” to commend themselves? Have you ever played this game?
14. How does one quit the game of “measuring self with others” to commend oneself?
15. Do you think there is a “competitive” spirit in Christianity? Should there be?
16. Do you have any opportunities to extend your “ministry” into the “lands beyond” the USA? How? Are you? Will you?

Special Study

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

Introduction

I. WHAT AN ASSIGNMENT!

A. What is the Restoration Movement? This is like being asked to teach American History in 30 minutes! The two are, after all, chronological contemporaries, and to a great extent, philosophical brothers.

B. I would love to go into the history of the Movement. It is inspiring. And I love history anyway. Besides, I have a family heritage in this movement. My great grandfather and one of my great uncles were preachers in the Movement in the early days of the State of Missouri. My grandfather was a leader in the Christian Church in Dallas County, Mo., at the turn of the century, and my father and mother have been instrumental in starting several new Christian churches in Missouri.

The history of the Restoration Movement takes 64 hours of classroom lectures at OBC to teach. I know you don't want to stay here that long!

C. I have reproduced a one-page chart showing the persons, circumstances and principles of the Movement's origins. Perhaps that will whet your appetite to buy a book or two on the history and learn more about it.

Let me recommend some books on the history of the Movement:

1. *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, by Robert Richardson, pub. Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, Tenn.
2. *The Stone Campbell Movement*, by Leroy Garrett, pub. College Press
3. *Christians Only*, by James DeForest Murch, pub. Standard Pub. Co.
4. *Concerning the Disciples*, by P.H. Welshimer, Standard Pub. Co.

D. I have chosen not to deal with history, but with *TWO* fundamental principles. I believe that all who believe in Christ can, if they will, relate to these principles and seek to restore them

in the church whether they believe and relate to the history of the movement or not.

II. WHAT THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT IS *NOT*!

A. It is not a Reformation movement

In a series of articles in the *Christian Baptist* beginning in 1825, Alexander Campbell, writing under the title "Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things," said *human systems* are properly subjects of *reform* — they may be formed, reformed and re-reformed, but Christianity is not subject to *reformation*.

Christianity was given by the authority of Jesus Christ. It cannot be reformed because it was given in the beginning in the way in which Christ wanted it given. Christianity can only be *restored*.

B. It is not a Church or a Denomination

The Restoration Movement is not a new denomination — it is not a new church. The church of Christ existed long before this movement to return to apostolic Christianity began.

It is a conviction that modern Christianity has deviated drastically from the pattern of worship, doctrine and polity of the church as outlined in the divine Word of God; it is a conviction that Christianity as outlined in the Word ought to be and can be practiced by believers of this age or any age, and an attempt to do so!

C. It is not Ecumenism — it is not a unity-at-any-price-movement. It is not an attempt to be interdenominational.

This seems to be the limits of Christendom's categories. The religious world apparently does not believe the church can be restored to N.T. purity and practice and so we are constantly placed in one of the foregoing categories or another — **BUT THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT IS NONE OF THE ABOVE.**

III. MY DEFINITION OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

A. I think of it as a Repentance Movement

1. The Repentance (or, if you prefer, Restoration) Movement began long before Alexander and Thomas Campbell.

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2. It began with the writers of the N.T. epistles
 3. It was being carried on in the last of the first century A.D. when Paul wrote to the Corinth, and when John wrote to the seven churches of Asia Minor and his epistles.
- B. The Epistles are exhortations to restore apostolic pattern and doctrine which had been proclaimed earlier through preaching
1. There is a concept (rather superficial, I think) which says that since the N.T. scriptures were written *after* the church had existed for some 20-30 years, we cannot claim there is an apostolic pattern in the N.T.
 2. This view claims the N.T. was written only for correcting abuses.
 3. First, this view makes a difference between oral apostolic word and written apostolic word — and there is no difference, in content or authority.
 4. Second, it would seem to me that if the written apostolic word was for the correction of abuses of apostolic pattern, we should expect to find the pattern in these corrections.
We certainly won't find the pattern in the O.T. or in extra-Biblical writings, nor in the practice (at least not the divinely inspired pattern) of the church of the 2nd century.
 5. And that is just the point of this misconceived concept — it says there is no divinely inspired and recorded pattern for the N.T. church, especially in worship and polity.
- C. I believe there is a pattern for the church to follow in every age in the N.T.
1. Pattern for prayer
 2. Pattern for stewardship
 3. Pattern for church discipline
 4. Pattern for observing the Lord's Supper
 5. Pattern for singing
 6. Pattern for evangelism
 7. Pattern for political and social relationships
 8. Pattern for church government
 9. Even a pattern for sermon content and delivery! (Reason-

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ing from the scriptures about the Messiahship, Lordship, Deity of Christ)

10. Pattern for membership in the church
11. Pattern for training and support of a ministry (evangelists)

I believe this pattern can be deduced from clear and unequivocal apostolic commands and/or precedents.

D. It is not the fault of the New Testament that all who profess to believe in Christ have not tried to return to the apostolic pattern —

1. It is the fault of those who profess to believe Christ!
2. They have been unwilling to exert the hard effort to study the N.T.

They have been unwilling to make the sacrifice necessary to give up preconceived and traditional notions

Or some have been unwilling to surrender to the arbitrary pattern of the apostles.

Let all who profess to believe in Christ and trust him for salvation, whether they have strayed away from the structure of the N.T. pattern or whether they have never admitted there is a N.T. pattern — let them focus their minds on the New Testament *alone* and surrender to its arbitrary authority, and they will find the apostolic pattern. **TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR — THE RESPONSIBILITY IS WITH THE HEARER!**

Discussion

I. FIRST PRINCIPLE, THE ARBITRARY AND EXCLUSIVE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

A. The Bible all the way through, and especially the N.T., is emphatic in its declaration that God's Word through his messengers is the only rule of faith and practice for believers.

1. It is the Word, not men's traditions or opinions, which produces the life of the Holy Spirit, gives new birth, and

matures people in Christ (Luke 8:11; John 6:63)

2. Jesus made it plain to his apostles that they should proclaim and bind on believers nothing more and nothing less than what the Holy Spirit would reveal to them. *They* would be led into *all truth*.
3. Paul warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would arise from among the believers attempting to lead the church astray, but as shepherds they should feed the flock of God on the Word. Paul *commended* them to God and the *word* of his grace which alone is able to build them up and give them an inheritance among the saints, Acts 20:29-32.
4. Paul said preachers and teachers are *not to tamper* with God's Word (Gr. *dolountes*, means to mix or adulterate or "water down") II Cor. 4:2.
5. Paul pronounced the curse of God upon any man or angel who should preach or teach any message other than the apostolic gospel (Gal. 1:8-9). THAT IS SERIOUS . . . ETERNALLY SERIOUS!
6. Jude wrote that the faith was once for all delivered unto the saints, Jude 3, *faith* here has to mean doctrine-to-be-believed.
If it was delivered *once for all* when Jude wrote (before 80 A.D.) whatever gave theologians and denominations the authority to change it centuries afterward?
7. The apostle John wrote clearly that every teacher should be tested against the apostolic doctrine, for many false teachers would go out, and whoever did not *listen to the apostles* was not of God (I John 4:1-6).
8. John closed the last book of the whole Bible (Revelation) with these words. . . ." Anyone who adds or takes away from these words . . ." Rev. 2:18 will receive the judgment of God as it is pictured in the Revelation.
9. It is the Word that is:
 - a. to judge men in the last day (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16)
 - b. to be obeyed (II Thess. 1:8)
 - c. instrumental in the new birth (I Pet. 1:20-23)
 - d. equips the man of God for every good work (II Tim.

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3:16-17)

- e. to be preached in season and out — all the time (II Tim. 4:2)
- 10. It is by keeping Christ's commandments that we; (I John)
 - a. love God
 - b. know we are in Christ and are born anew
 - c. know Christ is in us
 - d. know the spirit of truth vs. the spirit of error.
- 11. Paul makes it clear in I Cor. 2:1-16 that *only* the apostles received the mind of the Spirit in revelation and the apostles communicated it to men in human language. What therefore is not in the words of the apostles is not acceptable as a rule of faith and practice for the apostolic church.

But, you see, this is precisely where the church (in its majority, anyway) deviated. Most of post-apostolic Christianity began to think it could not survive unless it broke out of the arbitrary exclusiveness of apostolic revelation. The church, to survive, thought it had to accommodate its doctrine and practices to those who preferred less discipline, less sacrifice, less sanctification and thereby it would gain more adherents. **MOST DECLARED THE CHURCH SHOULD, IN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE, MODERNIZE, PROGRESS, LIBERALIZE TO KEEP UP WITH MAN'S EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL PROGRESSION AND LIBERALIZATION.**

The ironic thing about this view, besides its perverseness, is it inevitably polarizes Christendom! Accommodation of the Gospel to the world polarizes rather than unifies!

B. The Movement to Restore Biblical Authority

- 1. One may trace attempts to accomplish this from the earliest days of post-apostolic Christianity down to today in the history of Christendom. There is a constant golden thread of individuals and small, persecuted, oppressed groups of restorationists through the centuries. Even in the Dark Ages there were people laying down their lives to restore the Bible as authoritative in the life of the

church.

2. The Movement to Restore the church to apostolic pattern really began in America with James O'Kelly in 1792 in an attempt of his to gain some religious freedom from Methodist hierarchicalism. He held his N.T. aloft and said, "Brethren, hearken unto me, put away all other books and forms, and let this be the only criterion and that will satisfy me." (*The Stone-Campbell Movement*, p. 78, by Garrett). In Surry County, Va., August, 1794, at a meeting of people who could no longer conscientiously abide Methodism, the Christian Church was formed with 5 "Cardinal Principles" (*Ibid*, p. 81). No. 3 being: "The Holy Bible . . . our only creed, and a sufficient rule of faith and practice." Rice Haggard joined O'Kelly at this time and became one of the Movement's leaders.

THIS WAS A DECADE BEFORE AMERICA EVER HEARD OF STONE-CAMPBELL MOVEMENT. THIS WAS WHEN ALEXANDER CAMPBELL WAS STILL IN ENGLAND, A BOY OF 10.

3. Barton W. Stone, also a leader in Restorationism long before the Campbells, told the Kentucky Presbytery at his ordination he would believe and practice the Westminster Confession ". . . as far as I see it consistent with the word of God." As a result, later, he had to withdraw from the Presbyterian church and form the Christian Church in Kentucky. (*Ibid*, p. 99)
4. It was the practice of Thomas Campbell, even when a preacher in the Presbyterian church in Ireland, to consult only the Bible. (*Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, by Robert Richardson, p. i. 39).
5. Alexander Campbell wrote in his personal diary, Jan. 29, 1809, "The word of God, which is contained in the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him." (*Ibid*, p. 143).
6. After Thomas Campbell had seceded from the Seceders (Presby. branch) he held a meeting near Washington, Pa. with those who were interested in his preaching, 1808, he

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announced to the gathering the basic rule upon which he and those joining him would henceforth act — “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”

Upon this announcement a solemn silence pervaded the assembly. Never before (acc. to Richardson) had religious duty been presented to them in so simple a form. (*Ibid*, p. i. 236)

7. A. Campbell said in a sermon before the Washington Association, 1 Nov. 1810: “Do not the Scriptures of truth furnish the only established law or way for Christians, whether in an individual or church capacity, to walk to heaven in?” (*Ibid*, p. i. 340)
8. Samuel Rogers (Restoration preacher) born in Virginia, 1789, said that all the preaching he ever heard until he was a grown man was the reading of the Bible by his mother to her children, was converted by Barton W. Stone, who “invited all to lay aside their creeds and take the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. I was pleased with his preaching; it sounded like the truth — like the religion I had read of. He then gave me a Bible, saying, ‘Preach its facts, obey its commands and enjoy its promises,’ ” (*Ibid*, ii. 332).
9. As late as 1842, A. Campbell said, “The Bible alone must always decide every question involving the nature, the character or the designs of the Christian institution.”

THIS IS *THE* FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE. ALL THE REST OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT REVOLVES UPON THIS HUB, THIS FULCRUM!

- C. The Reason for Declaring this as an Emphatic Principle
 1. First, because it is the revealed truth of God.
 2. As a safeguard against *Theologianism*
 - a. The Campbell’s abhorred the clergy-laity system of the denominations (not because they did not believe in a trained ministry) because of its prideful attempts to make clergymen exclusive interpreters of the Scrip-

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- tures. Keeping the laity ignorant helped perpetuate sectarianism.
- b. Thomas Campbell put after his name, V.D.M. (Verbi Divini Minister or "minister of the Word of God.") A. Campbell used, V.D.S. (Verbi Divini Servus, or Servant of the Word of God). They preferred, "Brother."
 - c. Campbell found the clergy in both Europe and America "opposed to reforms; ever on the alert to repress inquiry; ever seeking to exercise complete control over men's opinions, and ever ready to employ against opposition to their authority the unchristian weapons of detraction and persecution." *Richardson*, p. ii, 28.
 - d. The clergy of each denomination arrogated to themselves the claim of being the Bible's divinely-authorized expounders.

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT MUST BE CONSTANTLY ON GUARD IN THIS AREA. LET US NOT SAY IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE — IT *HAS* HAPPENED HERE, RIGHT WITHIN THE MOVEMENT! LEADERS IN OUR BIBLE COLLEGES, IN OUR BROTHERHOOD PERIODICALS AND CONVENTIONS MUST FERVENTLY EXAMINE THEMSELVES AND PURGE OUT ANY TENDENCY TOWARD THIS.

- e. The membership of the churches have a responsibility in this. Their responsibility is to not be Biblical illiterates but to be *students* of the Word.
 - f. Here is where the Campus Ministry must shine. You should be impressing this fundamental upon the hearts of a future leadership from the pews and Sunday School classes of our brotherhood.
3. As a safeguard against *Experientialism*
- a. Experientialism is the theology of Main Street, USA. It is flooding our christian music; it is flooding our christian books; it is permeating our preaching. It is the same old Calvisim that the Restoration Move-

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ment leaders came out of and had to struggle mightily to call others out of.

- b. The first century church “*reasoned* from the Scriptures” with their audiences!
- c. The Restoration fathers had a mania for expository preaching and deductive logic from the Scriptures.
- d. Articles in the *Christian Baptist* by Campbell and Stone were constantly calculated to show that faith comes through testimony of the facts rather than through some subjective or mystical experience.
- e. In a sermon delivered on April 7, 1811, A. Campbell said, “All the promises in the sacred Scriptures are addressed to the understanding, and through it to the will. They appear to the *understanding* true, to the *will* as good.” (Richardson, p. i. 377).
- f. Faith is not a “mysterious and undefined spiritual operation, or an instantaneous and miraculous illumination; it is simply a trusting in Christ, a sincere belief in the testimony and truth of God . . . revealing itself in a willingness to keep God’s commandments, and a readiness to make before the world the acknowledgment of the Messiahship of Jesus . . .” (*Ibid*, p. i. 408).
- g. A case in point was good old brother Samuel Rogers. One of the sweetest, humblest, most sacrificing of all the early preachers. He had joined the Stone movement. Born in 1789, he was christened a Methodist, but was immersed into Christ in 1812. He began to preach, but he was still leaving hundreds of mourners at the bench, as perplexed as they were by the subjective nature of his approach to religion. He heard A. Campbell preach a 2 hour sermon in 1825 when he was 37 years old and old Sam said as he spoke, “cloud after cloud rolled away from my mind . . . letting in upon my soul light and joy and hope that no tongue can express,” (Garrett, p. 300). Sam told Robert Richardson that he thought he might have gone crazy but for A. Campbell . . .”

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who taught him how to read it (Bible) in its connection," (*Ibid*, 300).

- h. Now there is a literal flood of existential, experientialism about to sweep away true faith and replace the content of the Biblical message and practice with the autonomy of human *feelings*. It's sources are human preoccupation with "fadism" — what is religiously chic is what attracts people; faulty hermeneutics — Bible teachers and preachers are simply too lazy or pre-occupied to take the time or make the effort necessary to produce sound reasoning from the Scriptures; and a spiritual schizophrenia that doesn't want to face the hard realities of personal responsibility to do right but wants to make some subjective, outside agent (like the Holy Spirit) culpable for one's disobediences.
4. As a safeguard against *Pragmatism*.
 - a. There is also a pernicious cancer creeping into the Restoration Movement today that says, "If it works, it must be Biblical." I do not know whether the early Restorationists had to contend with it or not — I suspect they did. Later one's certainly did in connection with missionary organizations, evangelistic methods, etc.
 - b. I do know it is a philosophy practiced today in practically every area of the life of the church: evangelistic methods which are unethical and not in harmony with precepts and principles taught in Scripture; methods in fund raising; music; attendance; etc. (Let us read II Cor. 2:17 about "peddlers of God's word" and II Cor. 4:2 about "disgraceful, underhanded ways, practicing cunning and tamper with God's word. . . .")
5. As a safeguard against *Latitudianarism*.
 - a. Proposition 1 of the Declaration and Address reads: "That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in

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Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct; *and of none else can be truly and properly called Christians.*

- b. Early Restorationists knew Christian union could be accomplished only in one of two ways — either in and through the truth and upon principle, or by compromise and accomodation.
- c. Thomas Campbell said, “Let us do as we are there expressly told they did (the apostles), say as they said; that is, profess and practice as therein expressly enjoined by precept and precedent, in every possible instance, after their approved example.”
- d. But there is a contagion of compromise infecting the Movement today. Clear commands and practices of the N.T. church are being either disregarded or disarranged for the sake of numerical growth or the favor of those opposed to Restoration principles.

Brethren, the Bible alone as the sufficient rule of faith and practice for christians is not just a principle of the Restoration Movement — IT IS A DIVINE IMPERATIVE — It is incontrovertible and inescapable!

AND WE HAVE NOT YET ATTAINED! YOU ARE IN A CRUCIAL POSITION TO PASS THE TORCH TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHRISTIAN THINKERS AND LEADERS... MAKE SURE THIS LIGHT OF THE BIBLE ALONE IS BURNING BRIGHTLY!

II. SECOND PRINCIPLE, THE UNITY OF ALL BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

- A. The New Testament *commands* the unity of all believers (as a matter of fact, even the O.T. forbids division within the brotherhood of believers — Psa. 133:1; Gen. 13:8).
 1. Christ poured out his deepest feelings and longings in prayer for such unity. John 17:1ff
ONENESS, such as Christ and the Father manifested is the goal our Lord seeks in His church.

It is not simply cooperation, toleration, or agreeableness the Lord desires, but ONENESS.

Man's proper relationship to Christ is portrayed in both O.T. and N.T. as a *marriage*, the *joining* of two into one!

2. Informed of quarreling and partyism in the church at Corinth, Paul wrote by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ that there be no dissensions among them, but that they be united (Gr. *katartizo*, jointed, fitted together) completely in the same mentality and same knowledge (opinion), (I Cor. 1).

IS CHRIST DIVIDED? WOULD CHRIST FIGHT OR QUARREL WITH HIMSELF?

Spiritual, mental oneness in the body of Christ is not optional — it is demanded!

3. Paul wrote the Ephesian Church that *unity* was their *calling* as the body of Christ. To answer this call would take *all* lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearance and love. The Ephesians are instructed to *give diligence* (Gr. *spoudazo*, "see to it; take care of it; be eager; do it now"), to keep the unity (Gr. *henotes*, oneness) of the Spirit in the bond (Gr. *desmos*, string, rope, chain, band or binding) of peace.

The peace which Christ *obtained* for us from God (reconciliation to God) is that which *binds* us to every other reconciled brother.

WE ARE NOT TO BE BOUND TOGETHER BECAUSE WE DESERVE IT, OR BECAUSE WE ARE INNATELY CAPABLE OF IT, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE BOUND IN THE MERIT OF CHRIST.

We are to receive (Gr. *proslambano*, take to oneself) one another as Christ has received us — by grace and forgiveness, Rom. 15:1ff. Paul told the Ephesians, there is one body and one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. **THE PRIMARY FUNCTIONING OF THE SEVERAL PARTS OF THE BODY IS TO DEVELOP (GROW IN) THIS ONENESS!** *Spiritual coordination* must be developed — it is there but it must be exercised to grow.

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IT REQUIRES: TEACHING, MINISTRY, KNOWLEDGE, MATURATION, STATURE, SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, AND THE *WORKING OF EVERY PART* OF THE BODY OF CHRIST — NOT JUST A FEW!

When honest-hearted and spiritually-minded people get disgusted with the frustrations, contradictions and insecurities of religious sectarianism — and when they decide to turn to the Bible and the Bible alone for the answer — **THEY ARE FORCED TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE ONENESS OF ALL MEN IN CHRIST IS *THE ONE GREAT MISSION* OF THE CHURCH!** It was God's plan that in Christ He would unite all things in heaven and earth in Him (Eph. 1:9-10).

UNITY IS EVANGELISM, MISSIONS, STEWARDSHIP, WORSHIP, EDIFICATION.

B. The Restoration Movement is dedicated to proclaiming and practicing this command of Christ for the oneness of all men who shall believe in Him.

1. Thomas Campbell found that when he wanted to restore the authority of God's word in faith and practice for believers, sectarian jealousy was bitter in opposition and protective of divisions.
2. T. Campbell decided to do something about that. He wrote his Declaration and Address for the Washington Association. Its objective, described in the first article, was "for the sole purpose of promoting simple, evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men."

The Address concerns itself first with pointing out that the "grand design" and "native tendency" of the Christian religion is *toward unity*. That is what Paul said in Eph. 1:9-10!

If the church is *essentially* one, then to speak of a divided church is a contradiction of terms. If it is *intentionally* one, to divide it is to disobey the intentions of Christ. If it

is *constitutionally* one, it implies conformity to a plan or constitutional (Biblical) organization which must be inherent in it.

3. Robert Richardson says in *Memoirs of A. Campbell*: “. . . it is not upon any general principle, or even by the adoption of a few particular truths, that a real Christian union can be established . . . that alone which unites the human soul to Christ can unite Christians to one another . . . a sincere determination to follow the truth whithersoever it would lead,” (p. i. 401).

THREE FUNDAMENTALS TO UNITY

In matters of faith (that which is clearly commanded by Christ or practiced by the church in the divine record as a matter necessary to be joined to Christ and his church) — the Bible and the Bible alone!

In matters of opinion (that which is *not* commanded by Christ or clearly practiced by the church in the divine record as a matter necessary to be joined to Christ and his church) — liberty!

In all things love (even the love that would give up one's own liberties and opinions for the sake of a brother's edification).

4. It was in 1832 when Campbell and Stone agreed to unite their movements that Raccoon John Smith stood up to speak at Lexington, Ky. He spoke concerning the desirability and practicality of unity. Desirable because Jesus prayed for it and the apostles enjoined it. Practical in that God has but one family upon earth and that family is to be united upon the one Book. But union in Jesus is not an amalgamation of sects, and a union of sects would never bless either the church or the world. Since unity upon any system of human inventions is both impossible and undesirable, the only union that is practical and desirable must be based upon the Word of God as the only rule of faith and practice.

Raccoon Smith said he was willing to surrender any opinion for the sake of unity, but he would not surrender one fact, commandment, or promise of the gospel for the

whole world.

5. The Restoration Movement leaders believed that people (sincerely believing in Christ) can all agree on the general truths and facts of Christianity, and it is only here that unity is possible. "That alone which saves men can unite them."
- C. Clearly, the Restoration Movement made spectacular progress in calling sincere believers to oneness on these themes 150 years ago. But in the last 70-80 years the Movement to bring oneness to all believers has settled into a rut and is actually losing ground. Why?

1. Christian church people generally speaking are Biblically illiterate.
 - a. There are some happy exceptions to this. And, by and large, Christian church people are better students of the Bible than many other church people.
 - b. But compared with people of olden days of the Movement, we are illiterate.
 - c. There are many forces contributing to this illiteracy — materialistic affluence and gadgets that occupy the time people used to devote to reading their Bibles. The Uniform Lesson practice of jerking scriptures out of context and churches and Sunday Schools not studying the Bible properly. Hermeneutically lazy preachers and Sunday School teachers.

Richardson says: "To put an end to religious controversy had been one of the chief aims of the Restoration proposed by Thomas Campbell. It was his conviction that, if men would adopt the Bible as the only standard of religious truth, and accept the meaning of its words as determined simply by the rules of language, its true sense would be sufficiently obvious, and there would be universal agreement in relation to the things which is revealed."

A. Campbell in his debate with McCalla said: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself . . . and there is but one meaning in every passage of Scripture, and that one meaning must

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be always found from its context." Campbell believed that by means of these two principles, that Scripture is comprehensible even by the unlearned, and that its sense is always One, all believers could be united in One body in Christ.

BUT FOR SOME REASON MANY CHRISTIAN CHURCH PEOPLE TODAY HAVE BEEN SEDUCED WITH THE MODERN CALVINSIM THAT ANY SCRIPTURE MAY MEAN ONE THING TO ONE PERSON AND ANOTHER THING TO ANOTHER PERSON, DEPENDING UPON THEIR EMOTIONS OR NEEDS OR BACKGROUNDS.

THUS THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT, TO WHICH PROPER HERMENEUTICS AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING ARE LIFE-BLOOD, IS LOSING ITS LIFE!

2. Christian church people are almost totally ignorant (except for its trained ministry) of the *heritage* and *history* of the Restoration Movement.
 - a. Not that our salvation comes from the Restoration Movement
 - b. But those fundamental principles which are so uniquely appealing to a denominational world frustrated and enslaved by division are not being proclaimed.
 - c. Christians are being seduced by a *laissez faire* attitude toward denominationalism. Do not interfere; let them alone; they are alright to keep on setting themselves apart by their distinctive names, structures, non-Biblical doctrines and practices.
 - d. Of course, most people trying to follow Christ in denominational structures are not enemies, but, as Carl Ketcherside says, "they are hostages needing to be freed — not enemies to be destroyed."

BRETHREN, THIS IS A CHALLENGE TO YOU AND TO US (HERE AT THE BIBLE COLLEGE). IT IS A CHALLENGE TO OUR CHURCHES, ESPECIALLY, THAT MORE TEACHING AND PREACHING NEEDS TO BE DONE EMPHASIZING

THESE GREAT PRINCIPLES AND THE HERITAGE OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT.

SOMETHING PRACTICAL SHOULD BE DONE IN EVERY CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE WORLD . . . A CLASS, OR A SERIES OF SERMONS OR LESSONS, EVERY YEAR, OUGHT TO BE GIVEN TO ALL AGES OF CHRISTIANS, FROM HIGH SCHOOL UP, ON THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT AND ITS PRINCIPLES.

3. Then there is the division within this Movement itself which presents to the world and to denominationalists an easy source of ammunition by which to disparage the cause of Christian oneness.
 - a. One part of the division has its roots in liberalism, modernism and unbelief.

Christian oneness with those who disavow the deity of Christ and the Scriptures as the arbitrary and final authority is impossible until they become believers.
 - b. Another part of the division is over a matter of opinion. W.K. Pendleton said that error alone, however gross, is not heresy; but heresy is rather malignity or perverseness of disposition. Heresy is more of a behavioral problem than a doctrinal one.

Heresy is the tyranny of opinionism, the attitude that you must accept my opinion and swear by it as your faith. It is not the error of the opinion that is heresy, but what you seek to make of it — a test of fellowship, and faith.
 - c. How can the Restoration Movement ever hope to convince the denominational world that a return to the Bible alone will produce the oneness of all believers Christ prayed for unless the Movement itself practices what it professes?! **IN SOME PLACES THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT HAS BECOME A DENOMINATIONAL RETRENCHMENT!**
THERE IS MUCH FOR US TO DO WITHIN OUR OWN BACKYARD!

Conclusion

Alexander Campbell, *Address to Reformers*, in *Millennial Harbinger*, Sept. 1831

“The ground assumed in the proposed reformation (restoration) is the highest ground which can be assumed at any time or under any circumstances, and it is the only rational and lawful ground which human ingenuity and Christian integrity can propose. It is not a restoration of primitive Methodism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Quakerism; but a restoration of primitive Christianity in faith, sentiment, and practice — in religion, morality, economy, manners, and customs. If we fail it cannot be in the object proposed; for in this no people can excel us — none can claim higher, more rational, or more Scriptural ground.”

The gospel we preach is not that which is defined by the Campbells, or even that which was practiced in evangelism by Walter Scott, *except* as they were restoring divine truth. The gospel is that message and action delivered and declared by apostolic and prophetic messengers. We are restoring Scriptural truths, not some nineteenth-century theory or theology. We should love the brotherhood of believers — not simply a movement.

Restoration is more than a movement. It is the Scriptural means of producing spiritual unity among men. It is the basis of returning the sinner to God. It is the means of reinstating the wayward Christian. It is a way of life, a Christian commitment, a Spirit-guided devotion that moved men in the 19th century and is still moving men in the 20th century.

The Restoration Movement is a calling of all who take the name of Christ to constant repentance — to a discipleship of learning and returning in heart and mind to the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

The Restoration movement does not have a monopoly on truth. It does profess that the movement is doing its best to restore divine names and Scriptural practice. The ideal is still needed today and we must commit our lives and our churches to the privilege of restoration. A. Campbell had one theme which, it is said, continually consumed

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his thinking processes: "Christianity — its foundation is facts, not theory; its design, the conversion of the world; and its great moving principles, faith and love."

Walter Scott wrote in his book, *The Messiahship, or Great Demonstration*, pp. 13-14.

"In Christianity, the two great generalizations are Christ and His religion. His Messiahship rests on power, and His religion on authority. The former is, of course, the problem; the latter, the dogma. In the Scriptures, the Messiahship is never placed on authority, but on proof; and the doctrine, on the contrary, is never placed on proof, but on authority; the reason for which is this: It being there proved that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, it is consequently assumed that nothing He teaches can possibly be false. The strongest argument which can possibly be offered for the truth of His doctrine is, therefore, this: *Magister dixit* — Christ taught it."

John Oxenham's *Bees In Amber*

Not what, but WHOM, I do believe,
That in my darkest hour of need,
Hath comfort that no mortal creed to mortal man may give—
Not what, but WHOM!
For Christ is more than all the creeds
And His full life of gentle deeds
Shall all the creeds outlive.
Not what I do believe, but WHOM!

Chapter Eleven

THE PROBLEM OF SLANDER (11:1-33)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is slander? Why are preachers slandered?
2. Why would a man like Paul be slandered as “unskilled in speaking”?
3. How did Paul “rob” the Corinthian church?
4. What “disguise” did the “false apostles” use?
5. Why did Paul “boast” if doing so was repugnant to him?

SECTION 1

Unarticulative (11:1-6)

I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ²I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. ³But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴For if some one comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. ⁵I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles. ⁶Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not in knowledge; in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

11:1-4 Unsophisticated: Although the word “slander” is not used in this chapter, that is the burden Paul addresses here. There is no lack of evidence that Paul was “slandered” throughout his life as a christian (see Acts 22:30; 23:28-29; 24:2, 8, 13; 25:5, 11, 16, 18; 26:2, 7; Rom. 3:8). The word “slander,” in Greek, is *diabolos*, or “devil,” (see I Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 2:3). The Greek noun is from the

verb *diaballo*, "to throw through, to thrust through, to accuse, slander, defame." There were "false apostles" at Corinth who had "slandered" Paul to the congregation there. These slanderers were probably Judaizers, who came from Jerusalem, claiming "authority" because of their origins. At the same time they were trying to "deceive" the Corinthians, by their "cunning" that Paul had not shown the proper credentials to be trusted as a "true" apostle. Their first slanderous innuendo seems to be that Paul's approach and his message was too "simple" ("sincere" 11:3). Their accusation seems to be that Paul was unsophisticated and unarticulate. And how does Paul answer this slander? By a "little foolishness"!

In Paul's mind, he was acting *foolishly* when he had to "boast" about his accomplishments in the ministry. The Greek word translated "fool" or "foolish" or "madman" (11:1, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23) is *aphrona* which literally means, "out of one's mind" or "brainless." Throughout these last four chapters Paul says he is doing what he despises. He apologizes every time he has to do so.

The only reason he now "boasts" of anything (he actually takes pride only in weaknesses) is that he knows the important point is not his own dignity, but the dignity and honor of Christ and his Church which is at stake. He is therefore willing to lower himself in his own eyes and do what was very distasteful for him in order to rescue these Christians from seduction by false teachers.

Satirically, he reminds the Corinthians they "gladly bear with fools . . . even if a man make slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face . . ." (11:19-20). He begs them to grant him the same indulgence. He wants to spread only a "little" (Gr. *mikron*, microscopic, tiny) "foolishness." While some people think of the humble, self-sacrificing and spiritually-minded preacher or missionary as a "fool" for "giving up so much" and being so "holy," the same people "bear with" actual "fools" (false teachers) who tell them what they want to hear. Paul wrote to Timothy and explained why people are so "silly" as to willingly enslave themselves to exploiters, who seduce them with sophistry and insult ("slap in the face") (see II Tim. 3:1-9) them. It is incredible, but there are people *eager* to be fooled or follow fools (see Isa. 30:9-11; Micah 2:6, 11; 3:5; I Tim. 4:1-5; II Tim. 4:3-5; II Pet. 2:1ff).

Paul was willing to stoop to the game of “fools” because he had a “divine” (Gr. *theou*, “godly”) jealousy for the Corinthians. He had “betrothed” (Gr. *hermosamen*, the word from which we get the English word *harmony*, *harmonized*, it means, “join, unite, fit together, marry”) them to Christ as a “pure bride” (Gr. *hagen parthenon*, “holy virgin”). Paul had not merely “engaged” them to Christ, he “married” them. He had united them in the ultimate relationship — humanity to deity, deity to humanity. There could be no better relationship to Christ. Certainly, the law of Moses could only enslave them — not “marry” them. If being “foolish” joining in the “foolish” game of comparing credentials and affectionate love would save the Corinthians from seduction, hesitant as he was, Paul would do so.

The spirit of the devil was at work in Corinth. That is the way Paul evaluated the situation. He knew the work of these “super” “pseudo-apostles” was like that of the old “Snake” (Satan) when he *deceived* (Gr. *exepatesen*, tricked, cheated, seduced) Eve in the Garden of Eden. The devil is *cunning* (Gr. *panourgia*, lit. “all-working,” adroit, dexterous, expert, artful, cagey). And notice where he attacks! He attacked Eve at the most crucial point of spirituality — the *mind*, the thoughts. That is why Paul’s statement about the “weapons” of spiritual warfare (10:3-5) are so significant! They all deal with the mind — overthrowing *arguments* and *proud* obstacles to the *knowledge* of God and taking captive every *thought* to obey Christ. The devil “led” Eve’s *thoughts* astray — he was about to lead the Corinthian’s thoughts astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. The devil would deceive the Corinthians through “his servants” who “disguised themselves as messengers of light” (11:12-15). John R. Stott says in his concise little book, *The Mind Matters*:

Faith is not optimism. Faith is a reasoning trust, a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God . . . in Scripture, the deceit of the mind is commonly laid down as the principle of all sin. . . . Clear Biblical knowledge of God’s will is the first secret of a righteous life. . . . The battle is nearly always won in the mind. It is by the renewal of our mind that our character and behavior become transformed. . . . Self-control is primarily mind-control. What we sow in our minds we reap in our actions. . . . Men’s minds need to be fed just as much as their bodies. . . . And the kind of food our minds devour will determine the kind of persons we become.

The word *sincere* is from the Greek word *haplotetos* which means, "simple, sincere, open, elementary, unsophisticated." The devil was about to *lead astray* (Gr. *phthare*, seduce, beguile) the thoughts of the Corinthians from the simplicity of the gospel. This is the way the devil works. He does not now attack bodies. He brings no irresistible force to bear upon people. He plants *cleverly twisted thoughts* in people's minds by *words*. And he is expert at "turning" a word to deceive. He is adroit at using words to make falsehood appear to be truth. What the devil told Eve was clearly false. Eve was not defenseless. God's true word had been spoken to her. But what the devil's words promised was immediate and pleasurable "stroking" of the fleshly nature and Eve chose that. Satan deceived her into believing that what God had said to her was too simple! And any preacher today who proclaims God's word as the answer to life's ultimate and most perplexing problems will be accused of being "too simplistic"! People have been seduced by the master-liar (Satan) that life is too complex, too ambiguous, too paradoxical, too sophisticated to be lived in conformity to the Bible. And this would have been the argument of the Judaizers. Paul taught that living free, under the compulsion and constraint of infinite grace, was sufficient for joy and fulfillment. Peter said that through a knowledge of Christ and his promises God had provided *all* things that pertain to life and godliness and even provided the way for man to become a partaker of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:3-5). But the Judaizers said that was too simplistic — that Paul was teaching people to sin (Rom. 3:8) — that people need to be regimented under the laws of Moses to survive the complexities of life.

When the Corinthians were "bearing with" the "super" apostles, they were "bearing with" *another* Jesus (Gr. *allon*, another of the same kind). The Judaizers believed that Jesus was the Messiah, as Paul did. But they taught that Jesus came to establish Judaism, not to vicariously fulfill the law and abrogate it. The difference was not in the history of the person Jesus, but in the role he was to fulfill as Messiah. There are those today who do much the same thing with Jesus. While they admit his historical existence in the past, they reject his substitutionary death as atonement for man's sins — they present him as an example to follow in living a life of self-righteous goodness in order to be justified before God. That is "another" Jesus! It is cunningly and deceitfully constructed.

They were also "bearing with" those of a *different* (Gr. *heteron*, from *hetero-* "another of a different kind") *spirit* and a *different gospel*. It is interesting that Paul uses the word "spirit" (Gr. *pneuma*) in connection to his opponents. In the context he is talking about those who are *as* "the serpent" (the devil) was with Eve. In other words, the Judaizers brought with them (or in them) the "spirit" of the devil when they came to Corinth. It is possible, then, for people to have "the evil spirit" of the devil without being "possessed" in a "miraculous" way such as were the "demon possessed" in the Gospels and Acts. Demon possession was unique to the public ministry of Christ and the twelve apostles, but does not seem to have been a phenomenon lasting beyond the apostolic first century (see our Special Study on demon possession in *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 153-156, College Press). But the main thrust of the devil's war against man has been to capture his mind (thoughts). If the devil can "lead astray" or "seduce" the mind of a person, he does not need to possess his body. The human body is doomed to return to dust. But the "spirit" (mind) is immortal and that is what Satan wants to bring down to hell with him. The devil can *get into* people without using demons!

There is no "gospel of another kind" in reality (see Gal. 1:6-9). "Gospel" means "good news." What the Judaizers preached was a "gospel" of law. Law condemns — it does not show mercy and forgiveness. But the Judaizers *claimed* that what they preached was the "gospel" of God. They *claimed* it was the only *true* gospel. Paul called their "gospel" the "dispensation of death" (II Cor. 3:1-18)!

While they were slandering Paul as unsophisticated — too simplistic in message — and those who accepted him as an apostle as "fools," Paul was implying that those who accepted the message of the Judaizers were being "fooled." They *submitted* (Gr. *anechesthe*, "put-up-with," endure) readily enough to the "foolishness" of the spirit of the devil, and the preaching of another Jesus and another gospel, so they might well put-up-with a tiny bit of "foolishness" from Paul!

11:5-6 Unskilled: Not only was Paul unarticulate because of the simplicity of his message, said the Judaizers, he was also unskilled in speech. The first thing Paul does to reply to this slander is state that he "reckoned" (Gr. *logizomai*, reason, think, reckon) he "came behind"

in *nothing* (Gr. *meden husterekenai*, "not inferior") compared to these "superlative" apostles (Gr. *huperlian apostolon*, from *lian* and *huper*, "exceedingly-beyond," or "super-duper"). Either the Judaizers were representing themselves as "super" apostles because they were from Jerusalem and had some credentials they believed were lacking in Paul, or Paul was using sarcasm in calling them "super." Perhaps it was both! Did they have credentials? Paul's were in no way inferior to theirs (II Cor. 12:12). Did they say they cared about the church in Corinth? Paul had shown his care was undebatable (11:2, 7, 8, 9, 28; 12:13, 14, 15, 19, etc.).

Next, Paul admitted he might be "unskilled" in speaking compared to the world's adoration of oratorical eloquence, but he was not "unskilled" in *knowledge*. The word "unskilled" in Greek is *idiotes* (from which we get the English word, *idiot*, *idiotic*). This word began by meaning a private individual who took no part in public life. It went on to mean someone with *no technical training*. True, Paul was not a graduate of the Greeks schools of oratory. He was not a glib-tongued rhetorician who could entertain, mesmerize, or seduce with words. He was not in that business! They accused him of being inadequate, unschooled, inferior and therefore, not to be listened to.

Paul never pretended or claimed oratorical skill (see I Cor. 1:17-25; 2:1-16). The gospel is actually "emptied of its power" by oratorical ostentation and philosophical sophistication. The gospel is *fact*, not oratory or myth. It is *history* — the eyewitnessed evidence of the incarnation of God. It needs simply to be reported, transmitted, announced — not orated! Jesus thanked God that his word was "hidden" from the "wise" but revealed to "babes" Matthew 11:25-30. "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!" That is the simplicity of the "good news."

He was not "unskilled" or without technical knowledge of the gospel of grace! Paul had *made plain* (Gr. *phanerosantes*, manifested, cleared) *all things* (Gr. *pasin*) *in every way* (Gr. *en panti*) to the Corinthians. His "First" Corinthian letter alone makes plain every doctrine or practice or principle necessary to the christian life! We know he must have preached and taught many more words to the Corinthians besides those he wrote. They should never have been deceived by anyone who would accuse Paul of being unarticulate! He was able to communicate the facts of the Gospel well enough to convert

thousands of people.

One does not need skill or eloquence to communicate the gospel. There is a difference between being skilled in oratory and being skilled in knowledge. Preachers do not need eloquence, but they do need knowledge. People who are asking questions of the soul and spirit do not want entertainment or oratorical showmanship, they want soberness, seriousness, facts, reasonableness, concern, love and kindness. One may have eloquence with deficiency in knowledge and be inadequate for God's use. On the other hand, one may have knowledge and be deficient in eloquence and still be very useful in the Lord's work. Paul converted many people, though "unskilled in speaking," because he went where people were who had not heard the gospel, and taught it. He was not afraid to declare it wherever he was (to kings, philosophers, rabbis, to the hostile and the heedful), and to whomever he confronted. He was bold, blunt and believable. He was captivated by Christ and concerned for the growth of the kingdom of God. He was *urgent and unashamed!* What did Paul preach? Read the book of Acts. He preached Christ, him crucified, risen from the dead, judgment, repentance, grace, baptism into Christ. He had no time to waste on mythologies, politics, economics, the weather, entertainment, or fads and fancies. He traveled a lot! He wrote a lot! He studied a lot! He worked (making tents) a lot! And he preached and taught when there were opportunities and made opportunities where there were none! Knowing the terror of the Lord, he "persuaded" men (II Cor. 5:11).

SECTION 2

Unassertive (11:7-15)

7 Did I commit a sin in abasing myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel without cost to you? ⁸I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹And when I was with you and was in want, I did not burden any one, for my needs were supplied by the brethren who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. ¹⁰As the truth of Christ is in me, this

boast of mine shall not be silenced in the regions of Achaia.
¹¹And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

¹² And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

11:7-11 Undignified: Paul expresses shock! He had done something that made his detractors in Corinth slander him as if he had committed a gross *sin* (Gr. *harmartian*, “miss the mark”). He had “humbled” (Gr. *tapeinon*, lowly mindedness) himself and preached the gospel of God without cost to them! That is, he did not take financial support from Corinth (see II Cor. 12:13-18; I Cor. 9:15-18). According to ancient Greek culture, it was beneath a “freeman’s” dignity to work with his hands. In that society teachers were supposed to make money out of teaching. Augustus Caesar is reported to have paid Verrius Flaccus, the rhetorician, an annual salary of approximately \$500,000. Every town in the Roman empire was entitled to grant complete exemption from all civic burdens and taxes to a certain number of teachers of rhetoric and literature.

Paul figuratively “robbed” (Gr. *esulesa*, one who plunders openly and by violence) other churches (Macedonian brethren, see Phil. 4:15-18) by accepting “support” (Gr. *opsonion*, “meat, bread, provisions for an army, or a soldier’s pay”) from them. He undoubtedly worked at his own tent-making craft to support himself. This he did to better “serve” (Gr. *diakonian*, deacon, minister) the brethren at Corinth. While he was at Corinth, and needed anything — which he says he did — he did *not burden* (Gr. *katēnarkesa*, the word from which we get the English word, *narcotics*, means “to be numbed or torpid, to grow stiff, to be idle, to be in a stupor”) the Corinthians. Paul was no “dead-weight” or “dead-beat” at Corinth. He did not “flop” there.

But for his independence and self-sustaining work, he was slandered as “undignified” and “humiliating.” A “working-apostle” was humiliating to the church in the sophisticated metropolis of Cor-

inth. Some congregations in the twentieth century are "humiliated" when they have "only" a self-supporting preacher. Would they be humiliated if the apostle Paul were their preacher?

Paul promises that he will continue to refrain from burdening the brethren in Corinth in *any* way. He will not let his favorite method of ministry (preaching free of charge) be *silenced* (Gr. *phragesetai*, stopped, quieted) in the regions of Achaia (Corinth). His *reward* for preaching was to preach it without charging for it (I Cor. 9:18). Someone at Corinth had insinuated that his refusal to take money from them for preaching indicated that he did not really care about them. He did take money from churches who offered it. He would not ask for it. He declared authoritatively the right of preachers to be supported (I Cor. 9). But for some reason, known to him and God, he would not take money from Corinth. His love for them, however, was undeniable!

There is a great deal to be said for the advantage in a self-sustaining ministry. Most importantly, the self-sustaining preacher is free from the temptation to "flatter" and preach what the "itching-ears" of those who support him *want* him to preach even if it disagrees with the Scriptures. Second, such a preacher is perhaps in better "touch" with the frustrations and expectations of the "working-man" segment of his congregation. His industriousness and fortitude would be a winsome example to all the unsaved community around him. But there is also a great deal to be said for the advantages of a congregationally-supported ministry. Obviously, a preacher who is paid by his congregation ("get their living by the gospel" I Cor. 9:14) will have more "prime" time to give to the work of ministry (sermon preparation, "pastoral" counseling and visitation, evangelism, direction to corporate activities, etc.). Second, the fact of his physical dependence on the congregation gives the eldership and membership some spiritual control in his ministry should he go astray from sound doctrine. Third, it affords the membership of the congregation a keener awareness of individual participation in the work of the ministry. Individuals whose vocations and family responsibilities prohibit them from devoting as much time to gospel work as they would like may vicariously enter into this work by financial support of the "paid" minister. There are other advantages in both situations. *Both* methods ("paid" and "free") are scripturally sanctioned. It is for

preachers and congregations to decide for themselves. One thing is certain in the present financial status of American christians — they could *support* hundreds (even thousands) more preachers and missionaries than they are!

11:12-15 Unaffected: The trouble-makers in Corinth were demanding financial support, bragging about their stature in the brotherhood, preaching “another” Jesus, “putting on airs” with grand affectation. Paul was humble, self-effacing, always talking of his weaknesses, uneloquent, unpretentious, working for a living, proclaiming a crucified, risen Christ who saves by grace, so his enemies called him a “fool.” They convinced some of the christians at Corinth that Paul could not be an apostle because he was not like they were.

Paul replies, “I will continue to be what I am and do what I do in order to undermine (Gr. *ekkopso* “cut off”) the claim of those. . . .” Paul intends to expose and stop the “pseudo-apostles.” The only way to deal with deliberately *disguised* falsehood is exposure (see Eph. 5:6-13) and excision! Ray Stedman writes:

This tactic of plain-spoken exposure is missing in the churches today; many are destroyed because no one will stand up and confront false teachers. We are caught up with the world’s philosophy and anything goes. We must be nice to everyone, always. But the apostles never did that, nor did Jesus. Look at the sharp language he employed on occasion with the Pharisees. Right to their faces he called them, “snakes and vipers,” and “dead men’s tombs, full of rotting bones.” filled with an awful stench. That is not the way to win friends and influence people! Jesus set that aside and told the truth.

There would be no affectation from Paul. He would not disguise reality. Those slandering him were in reality “deacons of the devil.”

These Judaizers boasted they were “superior” to Paul. They “disguised” themselves so they might appear that way and not be found out to be what they really were — false. Paul intended to show that they were *not* superior but that they “work on the same terms as we do.” Certainly, Paul was not saying here that his opponents were on the same level as he was in Christ. In fact, he says they are servants of Satan! He evidently means to insist that the Corinthians are to judge his opponents on the same terms he is willing to have himself judged — to measure them all, not by one another, but by Christ and his word.

The Judaizers were “false apostles” (Gr. *pseudoapostoloi*, “fake-apostles”). They were “deceitful workmen” (Gr. *ergatai dolioi*, “alluring, ensnaring, baiting, workmen”). The Greek word *dolioi* is also used in II Corinthians 4:2 of those who ensnare people by distorting (“huckstering”) the truth — mingling the truths of God’s word with false doctrines. This is precisely what the Judaizers did. This was their “disguise.” Paul uses the Greek word *metaschematizomenoi* to expose them as “disguising ones.” We get our English words *scheme*, and *schematic* from this Greek word. They were *scheming* (conspiring and deceiving) against Paul and against the Church at Corinth.

But Paul said he was not astonished (“no wonder”) at this scheming of the Judaizers because even Satan *disguises* himself (puts on a facade) as an “angel” (Gr. *angelon*, messenger) of light. Paul uses the same Greek word (*metaschematizetai*) to describe Satan’s scheming deceit. The KJV translation into the English word “transform” is not exact. Satan is *not* able to *transform* himself into an “angel of light.” He *disguises* himself. The only thing Satan can do is *pretend* or *deceive*. He is only a *pseudo* messenger of truth. There is *no* truth in him at all (John 8:44). He has no power to really rule, really create, or really perform miracles. He can seduce, beguile and disguise himself, but has no power whatsoever to “transform” his nature. Plummer says, “Transform implies a greater change than is meant here, and ‘transfigure’ should be kept for *metamorphoomai* . . . *sunschematizomai* (Rom. 12:2; I Pet. 1:14) means ‘acquire an outward form in accordance with.’ ”

God said of the “serpent” in Genesis 3:1 that he was “more subtle” than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. The Hebrew word translated “subtle” is *aroom* and means “crafty, cunning” — it is translated into the Greek word *phronimotatos* (mental alacrity) in the Septuagint. Satan does not confront people openly and honestly. He will not represent himself as he really is — a liar, a cheat, a deceiver, and a destroyer. He confronts people disguised as one who wants to help, please, give, reward and make life exciting. He is named in the book of Revelation as “the great dragon . . . that ancient serpent . . . the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). Revelation also informs us that he has transferred his deceitful powers to the “beast” (world rulers) who, in turn, transfers deceitful powers to the “false prophet” (religious false

teachers) and to the “harlot” (materialistic, hedonistic, carnal society) (Rev. 13:1-18:24). The devil does not come to us in red leotards with horns, a tail, and a pitchfork. He comes disguised as invincible political power, as a religious “lamb” (which speaks like a dragon), and as an alluring, seductive, desirable companion (“harlot”) whose pleasures we may purchase and enjoy with no untoward consequences at the end of the relationship.

Paul actually calls those slandering him and teaching “another” Jesus and a “different” gospel, *servants* (Gr. *diakonoi*, “deacons, ministers”) of Satan. They had *disguised* themselves as “ministers of righteousness.” But their’s was a “righteousness according to” Judaism — according to the law of Moses. They were ministering the “dispensation of death”! There is *no* righteousness for man in law-keeping (Gal. 2:16). Man’s only righteousness is in the grace of God through Christ, appropriated by faith. It is inevitable for the *servants of Satan* that their end will correspond to their works — that is, they will fall victim to their own lies. They will lose their ability to tell truth from falsehood and they will victimize themselves! They will deceive themselves!

The devil and his servants are very subtle. They are cunning and crafty. They disguise themselves as messengers of light. But the christian has at his disposal mighty weapons through God. He has the weaponry to overthrow all obstacles to the knowledge of God — even the deceit and disguises of Satan! The christian’s primary weapon is the Word of God (the “sword of the Spirit”). The veneer of disguised religiosity is stripped from false teachers by the simplicity of God’s word. Their real character and methods are exposed in such passages as I Pet. 2:1-22; I John 4:1-6; Matt. 7:15-23; 23:1-36; I Cor. 15:1-58; I Tim. 4:1-5; II Tim. 3:1-9; Titus 1:10-16; Jude 3-23. There is hardly any excuse for a christian being led astray by messengers of Satan. The christian need only “prove” a teacher’s manner of life and his doctrine by the Bible and he will be able to see through any disguise of Satan or his ministers! It should not be “strange” (Gr. *ou mega*, “no great thing”) to the christian that the devil has “servants” who “disguise” themselves. The christian should not be surprised or overwhelmed by their machinations. God has supplied weapons by which the christian may not only penetrate the disguises of evil, he has made it possible for christians using these weapons to conquer and capture

evil thoughts and bring them and the person who thinks them under obedience to Christ. But that means a christian must know the word of God, "think on these things" (Phil. 4:8-9), believe them and practice them. *If he does not he is ignorant and vulnerable to the "designs" (II Cor. 2:11) and the "disguises" of Satan and his servants.* David, the Psalmist, said it succinctly a number of times: ". . . the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psa. 19:8); ". . . I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee . . ." (Psa. 11:8-11). And even the Lord Jesus himself, the perfect man, God-Incarnate, depended upon the Scriptures to defend himself against the deceit and disguises of the inveterate Slanderer (see Matt. 4:1-11). The Scriptures expose the schemes of the devil and his servants. Depend on them!

SECTION 3

Unaccredited, 11:16-33

16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish; but even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. ¹⁷(What I am saying I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool, in this boastful confidence; ¹⁸since many boast of worldly things, I too will boast.) ¹⁹For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! ²⁰For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. ²¹To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever any one dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. ²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a mandman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea;

²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. ³²At Damascus, the governor under king Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, ³³but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands.

11:16-21a Unauthoritative: The slander-problem Paul faced was fundamentally a challenge to his *authority*. His enemies charged that, according to their criteria, he had shown no evidence of religious authority. According to his antagonists, he was weak in his message and his methods. Their concept of an authority-figure was one who would move into a congregation and “take over.” Such an “authority” would suppress individual freedoms (enslave), exploit (prey upon), take advantage of, be high and mighty with (put on airs), and insult (slap in the face) people. An authority ought to be somewhat tyrannical and ruthless or he will lose his authority, they rationalized. A religious authority would brag and boast and exude self-confidence just like worldly “leaders” do, according to the Judaizers.

So Paul begins his treatment of this slanderous insinuation. In 11:1 he had satirically asked the Corinthians to “bear with” him in a “little foolishness.” He meant, of course, that he was not really acting foolishly at all, but that his opponents were and if it took that kind of foolish “boasting” to rescue them from the false teachers, he might condescend to a “little” of it. Now he says again, “let no one think me foolish.” The Greek syntax here is strong: *Palin lego me tis me doxe aphrona einai*, “Again I say, not anyone me judge foolish to be!” But Paul was not sure they could see through the foolishness of the false teachers and perceive the wisdom of his behavior. So, again,

he condescends to play the foolish game of boasting in "worldly" accomplishments, just to draw the Corinthians away from the Judaizer's death through legalism, and back to his gospel of life through grace. If they must have a "boasting" fool as their leader, let them "accept" Paul as that "fool."

The next statement (verses 17-18) is parenthetical. The Corinthians must be assured that he was not accrediting his authority, in the long list of boasting he was about to do, on some divine standard or command of the Lord. Not that the Lord would disapprove of Paul's method, but there was no divine order from God that he do it this way. To boast of "worldly things" (Gr. *kata ten sarka*, according to the flesh) was not the standard that the Lord had set up for his apostles. But since Paul's motive was spiritual and only the cause of Christ was his aim, and since everything he would say would be true (as opposed to the falsehoods of his opponents), he could righteously engage in this "contest" of boasting about outward appearances — as repugnant as it was to his soul.

Certainly, if the apostle Paul could, in good conscience (distasteful as it was to him personally), defend himself against slander by entering a "contest" of "boasting" about his credentials and sacrificial ministry for the Lord, it is a precedent that modern ministers may follow — when needed! Paul's aim was to protect the reputation of the gospel and the church of Christ. When slanderous falsehoods are spread about preachers (or other leaders of the Lord's church) the real target is the name of Christ and the church. It is imperative, therefore, that preachers (and other spiritual leaders) be above reproach in their living (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6; Eph. 4:1-5:33; Phil. 1:27-30; I Pet. 2:11-17, etc.). They must also be able, by knowledge of the scriptures, to "stop the mouths of the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9-16; I Tim. 4:11-16; II Tim. 2:14-19; 2:23-26; 4:1-5).

Notice again the *sarcasm* or satire used by the apostle. In verses 19-20 he really bears down! J.B. Phillips paraphrases, "From your heights of superior wisdom I am sure you can smile tolerantly on a fool. Oh, you're tolerant all right! You don't mind, do you, if a man takes away your liberty, spends your money, takes advantage of you, puts on airs or even smacks your face?" We wonder how this was received by all the members of the church at Corinth! In many modern congregations there would be some so "offended" by such sarcasm

they would withdraw membership! Not only that, they would “bad-mouth” a preacher who spoke such satire. But lying slander is such a serious offense to God’s spokesmen and has such *far reaching* evil consequences for the gospel and the church, drastic methods like “boasting” and “sarcasm” are necessary to defeat it.

Paul uses “biting” words to describe the stupidity of the Corinthians. They might as well bear with his “foolish” boasting about his work and his apostleship *because* they bear with the “fools” who are disguising themselves as apostles but are really Satan’s servants. The Corinthians were “fools” themselves (Gr. *aphrona*, “out of their minds”) for they were willing to bear with men who enslaved them, *preyed* upon them (Gr. *katesthie*, “devour” “swallow up”), *took advantage of* (Gr. *lambanei*, lit. “takes them”), *put on airs* (Gr. *epairetai*, “exalt themselves”), or *struck* them in the *face* (Gr. *prosopon humas derei*, “face of you, beats”). What “fool” but a religious fool would allow himself to be dominated, devoured, “taken,” humiliated and psychologically slapped around? What “fool” but a religious fool would think that the true “spiritual leader” sent from God is supposed to tyrannize people, use people and abuse them? Perhaps this is why many people reject all forms of Christianity — they have grown up under a religious system ruled over by “disguised” “pseudo-apostles” who have dominated them, “taken” them, and “slapped them around.” They realized they were made “fools” of and think all Christianity is represented by these “pseudo” messengers of light. Paul minced no words in denouncing the pseudo-messengers and pulled no punches in calling those “fools” who followed them.

Sarcastically, Paul concludes, “To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!” or as J.B. Phillips translates, “I am almost ashamed to say that I never did brave strong things like that to you.” That is sarcasm! Paul’s record with the Corinthian church (even his epistles) stood in sharp contrast to that of the pseudo-apostles. He did everything he could to free them from sin and judgment; he never preyed upon them or “took” them; he was before them in all humility; and even when he had to be “severe” with words, he did so to protect them from those who would enslave them.

11:21b-30 Unqualified: The Judaizers boasted about their qualifications and at the same time disparaged Paul’s. So Paul enters

the "contest" of listing qualifications repeating his disgust ("I am speaking as a fool") that such methods have to be used. How could a man who taught so much about humility be so boastful about his being a "better" servant than others?

Paul was humble. He taught others that humility is what Christ exemplified and what God desires in all men. He wrote, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves . . ." (Phil. 2:3ff). But here, Paul is counting himself "better" than the pseudo-apostles who were trying to seduce the Corinthian church! He considered such "boasting" the last resort he had to rescue the Corinthians. For the sake of the gospel and the Corinthians, not for his own sake, it has to be done. His credentials as the *true* apostle and *authorized* spokesman for God must be established. His true love for the church and the gospel must be vindicated. He spoke in plain, factual, historical terminology because he loved the Corinthians. He took no money from them and appeared to be unsophisticated because he loved them. He is even doing what grinds against his spirit (boasting) because he loves them. There are occasions, hopefully few, when true, humble, serving, working preachers have to "show" they are as knowledgeable, as caring, as able, as committed — and even more so — as the hundreds of pseudo-messengers of God. Too many people follow *messengers* rather than the *message*. Occasionally, the messenger with the true message has to "boast" of his messengership to turn the "fool" away from disguised, deceitful pseudo-messengers.

Are they Hebrews, Israelites, descendants of Abraham? So is Paul. His lineage was unquestionable! (see Phi. 3:4-7; Acts 22:3; 26:5; Rom. 11:1). His attachment to his Jewish heritage was unassailable. His love for Jewish people was close to divine (Rom. 9:1-5)! How many of the Judaizers would be willing to go to hell for their Jewish brethren?

Are they saying they are "servants" (Gr. *diakonoï*, ministers) of Messiah (Gr. *Christou*, "anointed one," Christ)? It is so repugnant to Paul to brag or compare himself with others he thinks of himself as a "madman" (Gr. *paraphronon*, "mentally beside myself," or "out of my mind") for having to do so. But he will condescend to "madness" so Corinth may see who *really* is the "servant" of Christ and who are pretenders! Paul gives an incredible list of personal sacrifices he had

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made already for the gospel. This does not take into account what he will go through in the remaining years of his life, some of which is documented in Acts, chapters 19 through 28. All the following took place before he wrote II Corinthians in 57 A.D.

1. "far greater labors" (Gr. *kopois*, toil, hard word). We know Paul "toiled" at tent-making (Acts 18:1-3) at Corinth and other places. Making tents from animal hair, wool, or skins would be arduous labor. What other labor Paul did we are not told. We do believe him when he says he "toiled" in far greater ways than his opponents. Paul appears to have been skilled in seamanship (Acts 27). Being a world-traveler he probably worked with his hands at many different tasks.

2. "far more imprisonments" (Gr. *phulakais*, caged, locked-up). We know Paul was imprisoned at Philippi, at Jerusalem, at Rome (twice). How many other times he was made a prisoner we are not told. It appears he "fought with beasts at Ephesus" — perhaps he was imprisoned there and made to fight in a Roman arena.

3. "countless beatings" (Gr. *plegais*, wound, blow — English "plague"). Paul had so many beatings he was "plagued" with them. He used the Greek word *hyperballontos* ("countless") which literally means, "thrown upon," or "piled high." This would include the Jewish "forty, less one" and the Roman "rods," plus "countless" others . . . so many beatings he had stopped counting.

4. "often near death" (Gr. *en thanatois*, lit. "in death"). Often in his ministry (at the writing of II Corinthians, approximately 15 years) Paul had been so near death he felt he was "in" it. It began at Damascus (Acts 9), continued at Iconium (Acts 14:5), Lystra (Acts 14:19), Phillipi (Acts 16:22), in Ephesus (Acts 19:30-31), at Jerusalem (Acts 21:31; 23:14), many times at sea (Acts 27; II Cor. 11:25-26), in times of hunger (II Cor. 11:27), in Asia Minor (II Cor. 1:8-9), in Roman arenas (I Cor. 15:32), during travel (II Cor. 11:26-27). He "bore in his body, the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17); he "shared in the sufferings of Christ" (Phil 3:10); in his flesh he completed what was lacking in Christ's afflictions . . ." (Col. 1:24). He was so often near death in the Lord's work he considered himself (and other apostles) as "men sentenced to death" (see I Cor. 4:8-13).

5. "five times . . . forty lashes less one" (Gr. *tesserakonta para mian*, the phrase is simply, "forty less one" which was commonly understood to be the "39 stripes" of Mishnaic punishment. The law of Moses laid down this punishment (Deut. 25:1-3) and decreed a maxim of forty

stripes. There was dire warning against exceeding the maxim. It, therefore, became a practice to stop at 39 stripes. The Mishnah says: "They bind his two hands to a pillar on either side, and the minister of the synagogue lays hold on his garments . . . so that he bares his chest. A stone is set behind him on which the minister of the synagogue stands with a strap of calf-hide in his hand, doubled and re-doubled, and two other straps that rise and fall thereto. The handpiece of the strap is one handbreadth long and one handbreath wide, and its end must reach to his navel (when the victim is struck on the shoulder the end of the strap must reach the navel). He gives him one third of the stripes on front and two thirds behind, and he may not strike him when he is standing or when he is sitting but only when he is bending down . . . and he that smites smites with one hand and with all his might. If he dies under his hand, the scourger is not culpable. But if he gives him one stripe too many, and he dies, he must escape into exile because of him." Five times Paul suffered punishment at the hands of his Jewish countrymen which could easily have killed him.

6. "three times beaten with rods" (Gr. *tris errabdisthen*, beatings with the lictors or "serjeants" [*rhabdouchoi*, lit., "rod bearers"]) — rods of Roman soldiers. These were rods of birch wood. There was no limitation on the number of blows that might be administered. Victims often died. Some were beaten until internal organs were visible through the torn flesh. The Romans often used this as a "trial by the rod" to determine innocence or guilt before further sentencing to death by crucifixion. Three times Paul was forced to submit to this torture. Had any of the pseudo-apostles experienced this in the name of Jesus?

7. "once I was stoned" (Gr. *elithasthen*, large rocks, not pebbles — English prefix "lith" [stone] comes from this Greek word). Paul was struck with stones by his persecutors so severely in Lystra, he was pronounced dead and dragged out of the city where his friends gathered around him and saw him rise up and go immediately about his work of evangelism (Acts 14:19ff).

8. "three times . . . shipwrecked" (Gr. *enauagesa*, from *naus* "a ship" and *agnumi* "to break"). Three times Paul went through the terrifying experience of a ship breaking up beneath his feet on the high seas. It would be three of those "countless" times he had been "in death." Being shipwrecked is being as near death as you can be. There are manifold dangers in such an experience: drowning, predators in the seas, exposure to the elements, dying of hunger and thirst.

9. "a night and a day . . . adrift at sea" (Gr. *nuchthemeron en to butho*, the phrase is concise, *nuch* "night," *hemera* "day" in the *deep*

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(*butho* from the Greek *bathos*). Paul's shipwreck experiences and twenty-four hours adrift at sea occurred before he wrote this letter and he was yet to experience the shipwreck recorded in Acts 27.

10. "on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers" (Gr. *kindunois potamon*, lit. "in peril from rivers" — *potamon* signifies "fresh water or natural water" and is translated "flood" in Matt. 7:25, 27; Rev. 12:15, 16). Rivers in Asia Minor and Greece were often in flood-stage and there were few bridges. Paul would have to cross these raging torrents at the peril of drowning or being swept downstream and dashed against rocks.

11. "danger from robbers" (Gr. *kindunois leston*, the word *leston* is related to the word *leia*, "booty," and signifies those who plunder openly and violently in contrast to *kleptes*, a thief). When Paul traveled the countryside was open to highway robbers (the road to Jericho afforded a place for men to rob a man violently and leave him to die, see Luke 10:29-37). While the empire of Rome had made significant improvements toward safety for travelers, the army could not patrol all the thousands of miles of roadway or the uncharted foot-trails traveled by Paul.

12. "danger from my own people" (Gr. *kindunois ek genous*, in peril from his own "kind" or "genre"). Jews were scattered over all the Roman empire, from Italy on the west to Persia on the East. They lived in their own little communities in every city and village. But Paul was not only unwelcome among the majority of his own race, he was "in peril" from them! It was not only a physical problem but undoubtedly a psychological problem for Paul as well.

13. "danger from Gentiles" (Gr. *kindunois ex ethnon*, "in peril from ethnics or nations"). Anyone who was not a Jew was an "ethnic" or "Gentile." Jews considered all non-Jews to be aliens no matter where the Jew lived. The Jews kept the Gentiles stirred up against Paul and his Christianity, claiming it was anti-Jewish and anti-Roman (see Acts 14:19; 16:19ff; 17:13; 18:12; Acts 24:1ff; 25:7; I Thess. 2:14-16, etc.). And, of course, there was a long standing attitude of contempt and malice from the Gentiles toward the Jews (and Paul was a Jew).

14. "danger in the city" (Gr. *kindunois en polei*, "peril in a city"). Huge metropolises like Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, Damascus, Jerusalem were over populated, festered with slums, disease, crime, prostitution, political corruption, conflagrations, and the ever present gladiatorial games which consumed thousands and thousands of slaves, Christians and others in their deadly struggles.

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15. "danger in the wilderness" (Gr. *kindunois en eremia*, "peril in the deserted places"). Areas between the cities and villages were called "deserts" because they were deserted — uninhabited. These "deserts" were often expansive and required many nights "camping out" in them where there was no civilization. They were populated by wild beasts and robbers. There were no shelters, no stores, no human help available. Paul was *often* in peril traveling through such wilderness. Modern missionaries find such situations even today in many "backward" countries.

16. "danger at sea" (Gr. *kindunois en thalasse*). This was discussed in the statements on "shipwreck" No. 8 and "night-day adrift" No. 9.

17. "danger from false brethren" (Gr. *kindunois en pseudadelphois*, "peril in pseudo-brethren"). Paul specifically mentions "false brethren" in his epistle to the Galatians (Gal. 2:4) who "secretly . . . slip in to spy out our freedom . . . that they might bring us into bondage. . . ." He warned the elders from Ephesus that there would be men "from among your own selves . . . arise . . . speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them . . ." (Acts 20:29-30). A true brother would not imperil — only a false brother would pose danger to a christian minister. Evidently there would be "false brethren" in many places to make Paul list them as perils. Jesus warned his apostles "brother would deliver up brother" among them (Matt. 10:16-25). People posing as followers of Christ were slipping into the congregations in order to bring them under Judaism, perhaps to betray them to civil authorities after Christianity began to be persecuted by the Romans.

18. "in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night" (Gr. *kopo . . . mochtho . . . agrupniais pollakis*, "in tiredness and painfulness and sleeplessness many times"). The Greek word *agrupniais* is from *agreuo*, "to chase," and *hupnos*, "sleep." Paul lost many nights of sleep due to being so tired and pain-wracked in body he could not sleep. He was often what we call "bone-weary." When one considers all he has said to this point, one wonders how he could possibly get his body to go on taking the punishment it did after he wrote this letter. There must have been many days when he wondered if he could physically continue to climb mountains, ford flooded rivers, sleep out in the cold nights, go without food, take beatings, shipwrecks, imprisonments, and stay alive! AND WITH ALL THIS HE WAS "WELL PLEASED" (see comments on 12:10).

19. "in hunger and thirst, often without food" (Gr. *en limo kai dipsei en nesteiais pollakis*, the Greek word *limo* means "famine" or

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“hunger” not self-imposed; *nesteiais* is translated “fastings” and could mean self-imposed abstinence from food for some spiritual reason. Paul did fast (Acts 9:9; probably in Acts 21:26; probably in Gal. 1:17). The word *nesteiais* could also mean “hunger” from famine or lack of food available. The word *dipsei* (see the English word *dipsomania*) always means *thirst*. And Paul says he was “often” in such straits.

20. “in cold and exposure” (Gr. *en psuchei kai gumnoteti*, “cold and naked”). The word *gumnoteti* is stronger than the English word “exposure.” While Paul was undoubtedly often exposed to the elements of nature out in the wilderness areas, this word indicates he may have often been “stripped of all clothing” in certain circumstances. Shipwrecked, he might lose his clothing, imprisoned it might have been taken away from him, when he was being beaten he would be stripped. And taken in conjunction with the word *psuchei*, “cold,” it probably means there were many times when his clothing was not sufficient to keep him from being very cold.

21. “. . . daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches . . .” (Gr. *he epistasis moi he kath hemeran he merimna pason ton ekklesion*) *Epistasis* literally means, “standing upon, or burdened upon” me. *Merimna* means “divided mind” or “anxiousness” — it is the same word Jesus warned against in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:22-34). Jesus told us we should not be “anxious” — but about what? He meant not to be anxious about matters of the flesh! Paul had “learned” to be content in whatever state of the flesh he found himself (Phil. 1:20-23; Acts 25:11; II Tim. 4:6-8). But he was pressured or “burdened” and “mentally distracted” about the churches! Paul’s “care” for the churches was a *daily* affair (*hemeran*), not monthly or annually. It was a burden he carried each day (and sleepless night). It kept his mind occupied. His thoughts were constantly distracted to the trouble of the churches. He cared about their persecutions. He cared about their divisiveness. He cared about the false teachers seducing them. He cared about their need for spiritual growth. He cared about their need to give. It is not wrong to occupy our minds with cares and pressures of the church and spiritual things. Jesus wants us to be “distracted” *from* the things of the world and “attracted” to the things of the Spirit! If we worried and fretted and cared half as much about spiritual things as we do about physical things, thousands more people would hear the gospel and thousands more parents would direct their children to be preachers and missionaries. *Concern* for the church is not a lack of faith!

Concluding this long list of weaknesses and perils, Paul declares his credentials as a true apostle are found in his “scars.” He asks the

rhetorical question, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?" In other words, he would have the Corinthians (and his opponents there) understand that the sign of true allegiance to Christ inevitably produces "weaknesses and perils." He is a full participant in these marks of the true servant of Christ. Paul always taught that "weakness" (as the world thinks of weakness) is the way of the christian (see I Cor. 8:11-12; 9:22; Rom. 14:1-2). His second question has two interesting Greek words — *skandalizetai* ("fall" or "stumble") and *pyroumai* ("indignant" or "burn"). He is thinking of the Judaizing slanderers who have been trying to seduce the Corinthians by their false teaching. They would be causing the Corinthians to "fall" from grace by going back to the law of Moses and they would be "boasting" in the strength of fleshly self-righteousness. This would make Paul, whose gospel was that of the weakness of the flesh and the power of grace, "burn" with indignation.

11:30-33 Unassuming: Paul's approach to the ministry, especially the apostolic ministry, is incredible in the light of the world's view of religion. He *summarizes* in these verses his whole philosophy of evaluating a person's service to the Lord! And he says, "If I must boast (compare my ministry to others) I will boast of things that showed my weaknesses."

The Lord gave a signal about "weakness" in ministry at the very beginning of Paul's service. Paul refers to the time he was let down over the wall in a basket. After his conversion he was obsessed with showing the *Jews* that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and of converting the Jewish nation! He was eminently qualified for this ministry to the *Jews*. That was his burning desire (Rom. 9:2-3). So he started out to do it (Acts 9:1-31) but things kept falling apart until they reached such a terrible state that his friends, fearing for his life, took him out to the Damascus wall and let him down from the city in a basket. "The night I had to sneak out of Damascus . . . that is the event I boast about," he says.

Isn't that interesting? Looking back, with all his *own* plans and dreams of conquest and glory for Christ collapsed around his feet, that was the night he began to learn a great truth: self-made men and self-made plans are not what qualify a person as a servant of Christ.

Today's world is being swamped with the philosophy that such

things are what make us usable as christians (a strong personality, an outgoing, optimistic outlook, gifts of leadership, handsome frame and body, musical ability, speaking ability). All these are the things that some people believe are prime prerequisites for ministry. But Paul says *that is a mistake. God uses weakness!* All the physical, outward attributes Paul once counted gain he decided were nothing but a pile of manure in contrast to what he learned in *weaknesses*.

There is no truth the Lord wants us to learn which is greater than this! The opponent of Paul at Corinth slandered him as “weak.” Paul replies, “I gladly boast of my weaknesses . . . I am content with them (ch. 12). Strengths without Christ’s sovereignty over us are garbage — weaknesses with Christ are priceless jewels!

Slander. Untrue aspersions. Censorious criticisms about lack of ego, personality-power, and sophistication. How should a preacher deal with it? By accepting in faith that the Lord will one day vindicate his faithfulness. And, when necessary for the preservation of Christ’s honor and the church’s stability, by “boasting” of his weaknesses as they have been of service to the Lord in toil, peril, and hardship.

APPREHENSION:

1. Did Paul really intend to act like a “fool”? How is he using the word “foolishness”?
2. What does the word “betrothed” mean as Paul used it about his relationship to the Corinthian church?
3. Where did the devil (serpent) direct his attack upon Eve?
4. How could someone preach “another” Jesus?
5. What was the “different” spirit some were receiving?
6. Was Paul “unskilled” in speaking? What did he say about that in I Corinthians?
7. Why did Paul preach the gospel to the Corinthians without “cost”?
8. How did Paul support himself while he preached at Corinth?
9. How did his preaching free of charge “undermine” the false teachers in Corinth?
10. Where does the word “disguise” come from in this text?
11. How does a “servant of Satan” disguise himself?

THE PROBLEM OF SLANDER

12. Why did the Corinthians “bear with” those who enslaved them?
13. What do you know about Paul’s Jewish lineage? Why did he recite it here?
14. How many times did Paul suffer “beatings”? What kind of beatings were they?
15. How many times did he experience being shipwrecked?
16. Name 7 “perils” Paul faced.
17. In addition to all these, what psychological burdens did he bear? How often?
18. Why does he relate the story about his sneaking out of Damascus in a basket?

APPLICATION:

1. Why is it “foolishness” to compare one’s “accomplishments” in the ministry? Is it ever *not* “foolish”? How can you be sure about practicing it?
2. When you win someone to Christ do you feel like you have played the part of the Bridegroom’s friend in “betrothing” them to Christ? Have you ever been instrumental in “betrothing” anyone to Christ?
3. What is significant about Paul’s information that the devil (serpent) attacked Eve’s *thoughts*? Do you now see how important it is to “bring every thought captive to obedience to Christ”? (II Cor. 10:3-5). What is your congregation doing to bring people’s “thoughts” captive to Christ?
4. If people (like the Corinthians) receive the “spirit” of false teachers, whose “spirit” are they receiving? Can the evil spirit of Satan inhabit people without the phenomenon of demon possession? Isn’t that Satan’s most important method? Why? Do you know any “Satan-spirited possessed” people now?
5. Are you “unskilled in speaking”? Should that hinder you from speaking the gospel to others? What do you need to say to speak the gospel? How do you need to say it? Why can’t you?
6. What are the advantages of self-supporting preachers? Disadvantages? Which do you think would make the kingdom of Christ grow most? Why?

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7. Are there religious leaders in the world today claiming to be "apostles" of Christ? Who? Are they? Why? What should be done about their claims?
8. Have you discovered any messengers of Satan in disguise recently? Who? What did you do about it? Are you obligated to warn others about it?
9. Is it alright to use sarcasm? When?
10. What do you think of all the perils and difficulties Paul went through to preach the gospel? What do you think of Paul?
11. How would you compare in self-sacrifice with Paul? Does his example make you want to do more for Jesus? Will you?
12. Is it alright to be "pressured" and "anxious" about the church? Are you?
13. Why has Paul made such a point to list all his "weaknesses" and "troubles"?
14. Do you really believe the man of God's credentials are his "weaknesses"?
15. What would you do if a man like the apostle Paul became the preacher at your church? Would you run him down, slander his credentials and methods? Would you admire him and work with him?

Special Study

A WATCHMAN FOR GOD

“And at the end of seven days, the word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.’ ” Ezek. 3:16-17

Introduction

Some two thousand, five hundred years ago, a young Hebrew priest was taken as a Prisoner of War (POW) to a city and land far away from his homeland. Thousands of his countrymen were taken there with him. Some had already preceded them there. They were not tortured or starved to death by their conquerors. Some of them had risen to places of great prominence in the government of their conquerors.

But they were thrust into a culture and circumstances that reeked of idolatry and lasciviousness. The Hebrew people had been enamored of idolatry and wickedness and playing with it for 400 years, ever since the divided kingdom. Now God has shaken them among the nations (Goyim) like one shakes a sieve. If they think idolatry and worldliness is the reason for man’s existence, God will give them a full blast of it. He will let them see it “up close and personal”! God is risking his reputation on this experiment. Many, in fact all, will have the choice of either embracing the idolatry which surrounds them and beckons so alluringly, or they may reject it. But what is the other choice? That is what the watchman was called to do — proclaim the other choice. The other choice is redemption thru faith and obedience to God.

You see, God, ever since the tragedy of Eden, had been promising to redeem man from his self-made destruction — and God had promised to do it by A Man! First, he started the human race over through one man and his family; out of that man’s seed, and through that nation, God intended to produce the *perfect man*. He would redeem the world.

And for the moment, some 2500 years ago, the whole redemptive process falls upon the shoulders of a few, faithful, courageous watchmen like this priest-prophet. If a remnant of faithful people are to be saved from this wicked, blasphemous world, it will be through these

few watchmen. Their's is an almost overwhelming responsibility. It will take total trust in the word of God and total commitment to the call of God. Whom shall God send, who will go for him, and be a *watchman*? BY NOW YOU KNOW I'M TALKING ABOUT EZEKIEL, THE PRIEST, THE PROPHET, THE *WATCHMAN*

- I. SEE THE GLORY OF GOD, Ezek. ch. 1 (also 3:22-23, and 10:1-22)
 - A. See God's Control
 1. Ezekiel was given a great mental vision of the Almighty God enthroned above all his creation. It showed God in control of all animate and inanimate creation (the creatures and the wheels).
 2. At great crises in the history of redemption, God called certain men aside and gave them such visions of his majestic glory (Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, John the apostle in the Revelation, Zechariah)
 3. At a critical point in the calling of the apostles the Lord Jesus took three of them aside, up to the mountain top, and there he let them see himself transfigured in all his divine glory.

IF EVER GOD SHALL HAVE A MAN TO BE A WATCHMAN, HE MUST BE A MAN WHO HAS SEEN THE MAJESTIC GLORY OF GOD IN CONTROL OF ALL CREATION, IN CONTROL OF ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AND ALL OF IT WORKING TO GOD'S GLORY! THAT IS WHAT EZEKIEL SAW OF HIS PEOPLE'S CIRCUMSTANCES . . . GOD IN CONTROL . . . GOD WORKING THEM TO SERVE HIS PURPOSES! THEN HE WAS SENT TO TELL THE PEOPLE WHAT HE HAD SEEN OF THE GLORY OF GOD!

One of the reasons there aren't more watchmen for God today is God's people have not seen the glory of God!

J.B. Phillips says in his little book, *Your God Is Too Small*: "The trouble with many people today is that they have not found a God big enough for modern needs. While their experience of life has grown in

a score of directions, and their mental horizons have been expanded to the point of bewilderment by world events and by scientific discoveries, their idea of God have remained largely static. It is obviously impossible for an adult to worship the conception of God that exists in the mind of a child of Sunday-school age, unless he is prepared to deny his own experience of life . . . he worships or serves a God who is really too small to command his adult loyalty and cooperation.”

“If it is true that there is Someone in charge of the whole mystery of life and death, we can hardly expect to escape a sense of futility and frustration until we begin to see what He is like and what His purposes are.”

B. See God's Character

1. One of the things Ezekiel saw in this great vision was the rainbow surrounding the throne of the Almighty God. John the Apostle saw the same rainbow (Rev. 4:3).
THE RAINBOW IS, OF COURSE, SYMBOLIC OF GOD'S GREATEST CHARACTERISTIC . . . HIS FAITHFULNESS!
2. Ezekiel saw that God was being faithful to his promises even in the circumstances surrounding him. Faithfulness is the foundation of all goodness. Without faithfulness, words are false and not to be trusted — deeds are exploitative and unloving. Faithfulness is love in action.
3. This is what God kept telling his people century after century through the patriarchs and the prophets . . . **I WILL KEEP MY WORD . . . I AM FAITHFUL . . . I DO LOVE YOU . . . I AM REDEEMING YOU.**

C. See God's Son

1. People today clamor for what they think would turn them to God . . . a *vision* of God's glory like Ezekiel, or Isaiah, or Zechariah or John the apostle. **THEY WANT A MIRACLE TO HAPPEN OR THEY DO NOT THINK THEY CAN SEE THE GLORY OF GOD.**
2. Yet the N.T. tells us clearly that we may see the glory of God in Jesus, through the *word* of the apostles.

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Peter: "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

AND PETER CONTINUES TO INSIST IN THE WORDS FOLLOWING THESE THAT CHRISTIANS ARE TO SEE THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE INSPIRED WORDS OF THE SCRIPTURES (II Pet. 1:16-21).

John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, *so that you may have fellowship with us*; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ . . ." I John 1:1-4.

Paul: Talking about the New Covenant Word which he had planted in the hearts of the Corinthians said: And we all, with unveiled face, *beholding the glory of the Lord*, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" II Cor. 3:17-18.

SEEING THE GLORY OF GOD IN HIS SON, THROUGH THE WORD OF THE APOSTLES IS BETTER THAN SEEING IT IN A VISION. JESUS SAID TO THOMAS, "HAVE YOU BELIEVED BECAUSE YOU HAVE SEEN ME . . . BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND YET BELIEVE."

A WATCHMAN FOR GOD

THAT IS WHAT OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE EXISTS FOR . . . TO MAKE WATCHMEN . . . TO COMMUNICATE FROM THE WORD, THE GLORY OF GOD. THAT IS WHAT YOU ARE HERE FOR . . . TO SEE THAT GLORY! REMEMBER WHAT REUBEL SHELLY SAID NOT TOO LONG AGO IN THIS VERY CHAPEL ABOUT MORE STUDY OF THE GOSPELS . . . MORE PREACHING FROM THE GOSPELS!

The man who fanned into flame the great revival of the 18th century in America . . . called the Great Awakening . . . a contemporary of the American Revolution . . . Jonathan Edwards was suddenly converted, in the moment of reading a single verse of the N.T. He was at home in his father's house; some hindrances kept him from going to church one Sunday with the family. A couple of hours with nothing to do sent him listlessly into the library; the sight of a dull volume with no title on the leather back of it evoked curiosity as to what it could be; he opened it at random and found it to be a Bible; and then his eye caught this verse: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen!"

He tells us in his journal that the immediate effect of it was awakening and alarming to his soul: for it brought him a most novel and most extensive thought of the vastness and majesty of the true Sovereign of the universe. Out of this grew the pain of guilt for having resisted such a Monarch so long, and for having served Him so poorly.

GOD MUST HAVE WATCHMEN. BUT FIRST THEY MUST SEE HIS GLORY. HIS GLORY IS ALL AROUND MANKIND . . . IT IS IN THE STARS, IN THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE . . . BUT THE GLORY THAT MAKES MEN INTO WATCHMEN IS SEEN IN HIS SON, THROUGH THE WORD WHERE HE IS BEHELD WITH THE EYE OF FAITH, NOT OF FLESH!

II. SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD, Ezek. ch. 2 & 3

A. No Matter What It Says

1. Ezekiel was given a scroll to eat and told to eat what was offered AND THEN TO GO SPEAK TO THE HOUSE

OF ISRAEL! SPEAK GOD'S WORDS! The scroll represents all God has to say to his people. It is a symbol used often in the scriptures. John the apostle saw a scroll in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne of heaven, sealed with seven seals, and when each seal was opened, some frightful things issued forth from that scroll. Again, John is given a scroll to eat, in Revelation 10, it contained things both bitter and sweet. BUT JOHN WAS TOLD HE MUST PREACH WHAT WAS ON THAT SCROLL.

2. The watchman of God must tell the whole story. He cannot deal with the truth in an underhanded way . . . as a peddler of God's word (a "huckster"). He must not practice cunning or tamper with God's word (II Cor. 2 and 4). He must not "market" God's people by being false with the word (II Pet. 2:3 where the word for *emporium* is translated "exploit") and the Gr. word translated "false" is *plastois* (Eng. plastic).
3. Jeremiah nearly lost his life, a number of times, for telling it like God said. So did Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego. So did the Apostles.
THEY DID LOSE THEIR REPUTATION WITH THE WORLD, THEY LOST THEIR WORLDLY FRIENDS, MOST OF THEIR WORLDLY POSSESSIONS.
MANY CHRISTIANS HAD (Heb. 10:32-39) THEIR PROPERTY, JOYFULLY
4. Paul, often, suffered the loneliness of being alienated even from his christian brethren (read I and II Corinthians) because he dared declare the whole counsel of God, just as he did to those at Ephesus, house to house, with tears, night and day.

IF YOU WILL BE A WATCHMAN OF GOD YOU MUST PREACH THE WHOLE WORD OF GOD. AND OF COURSE TO PREACH IT YOU MUST KNOW IT, HEREMENEUTICALLY, HISTORICALLY, GRAMATICALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY . . . WITH THE HEART!

B. No Matter Whether They Hear or Not!

1. Ezekiel had quite a constituency to which to preach! Hard-headed, rebellious, stubborn, impudent, wicked, unlistening. A CONGREGATION OF TELEPHONE POLES WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER . . . AT LEAST THEY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IMPUDENT!

You can read about the attitudes of Ezekiel's congregation in Jeremiah's book, too!

2. But Ezekiel preached the Word of God to them. He told them they were Ichabods . . . "The Glory has Departed."

He told them they were whores unfaithful to God.

He told them their false prophets were liars, soul-hunters.

He told them they were a useless vine, only good for burning.

He told them they were deceiving *themselves* with their false parable," The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge!" IRRESPONSIBLE, GUTLESS NATION BLAMING THEIR ANCESTORS FOR THEIR OWN SINS.

of the nations "No hiding place there" he said.

He preached the glorious, great, demonstrable, worldwide victory of God over the worst the world could do to stop his redemptive plan . . . Gog and Magog (which I believe is fulfilled in Christ and the Church, now, not the millennium).

He preached the future glorious city, and sanctuary . . . his great temple, which if literally built would have engulfed the whole city of Jerusalem of Hezekiah. (which is also the Church of the christian dispensation.)

3. BUT THEY DIDN'T LISTEN. FOR THE MOST PART ONLY A FEW BELIEVED HIM!

God told Ezekiel his success was not to be measured in whether anyone listened or not . . . only in whether he spoke or not.

As God's watchman, if he warned, if he spoke all the

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counsel of God, he would be free of the blood of all men. Jesus told his apostles they would be sent to sow where others would reap, and reap where others had sown. The important matter is in the speaking . . . not the response.

WATCHMEN ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RESPONSE . . . ONLY FOR THE PROCLAMATION!

Paul did not care what people thought of his eloquence or how they compared his message with that of the Greek philosophers . . . he only cared that they hear from him the word of God, clearly, correctly, and faithfully.

Paul's instructions to his students and co-workers in the Lord, Timothy and Titus was, "Preach the word. . . ."

Listen to these words from one of the greatest preachers of the Word this country has ever know:

In his 71st year, reviewing some of the highlights of his long and active life in the ministry, R.A. Torrey said: "If I had my life to live all over again, I would spend less time in praying and more time feeding on the Word of God." This is the man who preached all over the world — had 70,000 responses to his preaching in Great Britain alone; was most responsible for Moody Bible Institute's greatness; began the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, BIOLA; wrote "The Fundamentals" and many works on Apologetics.

Moody himself said: "In prayer we talk to God, and in the study of the Bible God talks to us — and you had better let God do most of the talking!"

R.A. Torrey was famous for his sermons being logical, unemotional, to the point, hermeneutically correct, and full of Bible. For some of his campaigns he engaged as a songleader a man named Homer Hammontree. Hammontree was struck by the manner of the evangelist's invitations. There was little emotion or entreaty — almost a "take it or leave it." In some of his first services with Torrey no one came for-

ward. After several such nights he asked him, "Dr. Torrey doesn't it bother you when they don't come?"

"Bother me, Hammie? . . . Hammie, that's none of my business. It's my business to preach the Gospel . . . it's His business to bring results." In a later service "Hammie" saw over one hundred people stand up and come forward at the invitation. His favorite sermon was "10 Reasons Why I Believe the Bible is the Word of God" PREACH THE WORD. THE WORD HAS AUTOMATIC LIFE IN ITSELF (Mark 4:28 . . . the Greek word there is actually, *automate* from which we get automatic). "Produces of itself"

III. SERVE THE PEOPLE OF GOD, Ezekiel, ch. 2-12

A. In the difficult places

1. Ezekiel was not sent to a people who would be responsive. He was sent to his own people who had heard the message over and over and over and over.

God told him he was not sending him to a "people of foreign speech and a hard language . . . who would surely listen to him" . . . but he was sent to "the house of Israel who would not listen to him because they would not listen to God"

2. Sometimes the foreign mission field is considered an easy place to serve. Many a missionary has returned to the good old USA and said "I'm glad I don't serve here!" Some of our own kids who went behind the Iron Curtain a few years ago with TCM heard communist-controlled people say, "I'm glad I don't have to live in the US and try to be a Christian."
3. Actually, there aren't any easy places to *serve*. Service takes humility and work, wherever you are, and none of that is easy! Read II Corinthians some time when you get discouraged with your lot! Read Jeremiah, read I Peter. Read the Gospels. Read Church History.

B. Doing Things You Don't Like To Do

1. Ezekiel was called upon to do many things down in an unclean world that traumatized every fiber of his Jewish upbringing . . . just like Daniel.

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2. First there was his audience.
Second there were the inconveniences and seemingly silly things God asked him to do to communicate his message, like drawing pictures (on an overhead projector) clay tablet; like cooking his meals on unclean fuel; like lying bound hand and foot for long hours every day for months; like cutting his hair and shaving his beard and going through the streets throwing little portions of it around while he preached; like digging holes in the wall and carrying baggage back and forth through them.
3. I read one time of missionaries in New Guinea, in the jungles, among head-hunters. They were invited to a feast in the village of a tribe they desperately wanted to reach with the Gospel. The main course was monkey meat. Near the end of the meal, the old tribal chief took one of the roasted bones with a little meat left on it and began to scrape it off under his fingernail. Earlier he had been scratching his naked body all over and rubbing his fingers between his toes, scratching his matted hair. He began to roll this meat into a little ball . . . then he motioned for one of the white ladies to open her mouth . . . as she did he popped this ball of monkey meat into her mouth. She knew if she spat it out the chief would be deeply offended and they probably would never get to speak to the tribe of the gospel. So she swallowed it! Along with pride and revulsion and maybe even good sense . . . she swallowed it!

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO SWALLOW
FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL . . . HOW MUCH
CAN YOU TAKE FOR GOD IN ORDER TO BE A
WATCHMAN.

Are you willing to have no place to lay your head . . . willing to eat with sinners and publicans . . . willing to eat with and talk to hypocrites . . . willing to become all things to all men in order to win some?

C. Even when It Overwhelms You

1. Ezekiel went, "in the heat of his spirit, the hand of the Lord being strong upon him . . . and sat among his people *overwhelmed* among them seven days." 3:14

HE WASN'T BITTER TOWARD THE LORD . . . HE WAS SUFFERING THE BITTERNESS OF THE TASK BEFORE HIM! IT SEEMED OVERWHELMING. HE WAS LIKE MOSES . . . THE JOB SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE!

But when God makes you a watchman, he does not hold you responsible for results — remember — only for proclaiming and serving.

Saving the whole world will always seem to us to be overwhelming. BUT SAVING THE WORLD IS NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY . . . PREACHING IS!

2. In one of Paul Harvey's books, *Destiny* (from a series of Now You Know The Rest of The Story) comes the story entitled, Anatomy of a Hypochondriac:

37 years young — too young to be dying — and yet the symptoms of terminal heart disease were unmistakable. She told friends that her life now "hung by a thread, which might snap at any moment." And she went to bed. And waited to die. And did not. Instead she became an invalid, a fearful captive of the fatal symptoms that strangely refused to kill her. So many symptoms — with but one source: psychoneurosis. It was all in her mind. This, then is the anatomy of a hypochondriac.

The peculiar illnesses began when she was about 17. Her wealthy, socially ambitious parents had plans for her; she had her own plans, which included independence from her parents. While I do not mean to suggest that the young lady was playing sick, it must be noted that virtually all her illnesses followed family arguments — as though sickness had become her subliminal defense against parental manipulation. Age 33 she finally left home, got her own place to live, got happy. Her family frustrations gone, so fled her psychosomatic swooning. This bliss lasted for three years. For three years she was an achiever, a woman of responsibility and boundless energy whose only aches and pains were legitimate ones.

You, the investigator of her case history, must be alert at this point, must watch for that moment at which she lapsed into her former self. She was 36 when it happened. Palpitations, respiratory difficulty, sick at the sight of food. Within months she was bedridden, her pulse frighteningly rapid. There she stayed. On occasion her condition grew suddenly worse, and the occasions were almost always predictable. Unwelcome visitors routinely inspired headaches and chest pains and gasping for breath. By now, apparently her psychoneurosis had become a well-oiled problem solving machine. She may even have understood it at one level or another, although outwardly she believed herself to be constantly at the brink of death.

37 years old. Invalid. Anxiously awaiting the dread moment when her heart would drop out from under her. One day it did. She was 90!

Her illness really was psychosomatic, you see. For 53 years, more than half a century, she lived in bed — for nothing. True, her confinement accomplished certain things. It brought the people she wanted to her side, as her sudden attacks drove the unwanted away. Her bed even proved a comfortable vantage point from which she could observe and administer the work of others. Yet the psychoneurosis which held her prisoner for most of her life had deeper roots still.

Remember those 3 years during which she was not plagued by imaginary illnesses? Those years she had spent alleviating the suffering of others. Most of that time at the Crimean War front. For the *passion* her parents tried to suppress, a profession then regarded as unbecoming, *was nursing*. The young lady was happy only as an active nurse. Otherwise, she was a hopeless, helpless hypochondriac.

Yet so astonishing was her physical and emotional strength, her sheer endurance as a nurse during the Crimean War, that nursing became a respectable occupation through her example.

The world forgot, or chose to ignore, that she spent the rest of her life — more than half a century — in bed, in fear, in vain.

You know her as *Florence Nightingale*. Only now, you know **THE REST OF THE STORY!**

IF IT IS IN YOUR HEART TO BE GOD'S WATCHMAN, LET NO ONE DETER YOU! THE PERSON WITH A WATCHMAN'S HEART, MUST SERVE, MUST SPEAK, HE CANNOT BE HAPPY UNLESS HE IS . . . EVEN WHEN THE TASK SEEMS OVERWHELMING.

CONCLUSION

Twenty years ago, about this time of the year, Easter, I was holding a revival in Grenola, Kansas (the town made famous by the Wartick family). With me was a young OBC student and his girl friend. They were doing the special music, etc. And let me tell you that "etc." was fun to watch — they were love sick. It was at that revival they announced their engagement to be married. The future bride's mother was there for a night or two for the occasion.

Twenty years later, that former OBC student and his wife and family are watchmen for God. Hear what he writes:

"We have been praying for the upbuilding of the Chinese Church in No. Thailand. In the last 5 years great strides have been made in this area. It is getting difficult to find Chinese communities where the gospel has not been preached and there are christians. There are still a few. Within a year the church in Piang Luang has doubled and is growing in quality. . . . Just a few years ago there were no Christians among the Shan. . . . Twenty Shans have started Bible training in the last year in Burma . . . in order to preach among their own people. . . . This is an answer to prayer. And much more will be accomplished if you and I continue to pray. I should say, Start to pray. Let's stop praying, "Protect and bless the missionaries" but pray "clothe them with your whole armor and put them in the battle. Let your kingdom come to earth as it is in heaven whether by our life or death. May every Power in the heaven lies be brought under your subjection as the gospel is preached."

That's my dear brother, former student, and a little "Okie from Muskogee" Alan Bemo and his wife, the former Janet Dittimore. **YOU CAN BE A WATCHMAN FOR GOD . . . YOU ARE A WATCHMAN FROM GOD . . . THE TRUMPET OF GOD IS BEING PASSED INTO YOUR HAND THIS VERY HOUR, THIS VERY SEMESTER!**

Chapter Twelve

THE PROBLEM OF WEAKNESSES (12:1-21)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why does Paul hesitate to say he is the “man” who was caught up into Paradise?
2. What is “Paradise”? Where is it? Why couldn’t Paul tell about it?
3. Why, after all he had to suffer, was Paul given a “thorn in the flesh”?
4. Why did Paul refuse to “burden” the Corinthian church to support him?
5. Was there still impurity, immorality and licentiousness going on in the Corinthian church? What would Paul do about it?

SECTION 1

Weaknesses in the Body (12:1-10)

12 I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. ⁵On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. ⁶Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. ⁷And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. ⁸Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; ⁹but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is

made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

12:1-4 Ecstatic Experience: Paul "*must* boast" (Gr. *kauchasthai dei*, "to boast it behooves me"). If he is to rescue the Corinthians from the false teachers, he must engage in the "boasting game" although it is not *expedient* (Gr. *sumpheron*, gains nothing). As far as spirituality is concerned, comparing the credentials of one human being to another, little is gained except to prove who is a true teacher and who is a false one. That is a necessary "evil" that has to be settled at times (as it was here in Corinth). Paul must not only engage in the contest, he must *win* it! It came to that point in Corinth! So Paul cites credentials that *no* other human being could claim (except, perhaps, the apostle John). He cites *the* vision and *the* revelation no other had experienced — being caught up into the "third heaven" — into "Paradise." Paul undoubtedly had *many* visions and revelations. We know about four of them. The first was his conversion experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6; 22:6ff; 26:12ff). The second is simply referred to in Galatians 1:11. The third would be his call to Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10). And the fourth would be the one he cites here in II Corinthians 12. We would probably have heard nothing about any of them had not the defense of his gospel message necessitated their telling. We note that it had been fourteen years *after* the event that he finally decided he must tell of his being caught up into Paradise. And even here he is using this unique experience only as an introduction to the event in which he is *really* going to boast — the "thorn in the flesh."

Why does he speak of himself in the third person? The Greek verb *oida* is present tense, meaning, "I am knowing a man." It was not so mystical and ethereal that he could not remember it. But it may have been so *totally spiritual* (disencumbered of all that is material and physical) that he simply did not *know* whether he was there in his earthly body (or any kind of body) or not! Some think Paul uses the third person to down-play any possible implication of egotism on his part. Twice he says he does not know — but that God knows. Evident-

ly, the *mode* of his existence in Paradise was one of those things he was not supposed to know or utter.

"Fourteen years ago" would place the event about 43 A.D., about 10 years after his conversion near the time he was helping Barnabas at Antioch (Acts 13:1ff). The "third heaven" (Gr. *tritou ouranou*) is Paul's best way to express in inadequate human language a reality which is outside space and time and human experience. Paul was speaking in terms contemporary with his age. The "third heaven" was the way the Jews talked of God's dwelling place. They believed the "first" heaven was the atmosphere around the earth, the clouds and the air man breathes. The "second" heaven was beyond the clouds out where the stars and planets were. The "third" heaven was the invisible realm where God's throne was. Modern man may be amused at this, or scoff at it, but it is still difficult to improve much on this language in spite of the fact that "space" is at least 6 billion light years away at its *known* limits. Every time the Bible speaks of someone having come from or gone to "heaven" (God's immediate presence) it is simply talking about the realm of existence which is invisible to the human eye. It is *as real* as anything that is visible to the human eye. It does not mean that "heaven" is away "out there" beyond the 6 billion light years of space. It just means it is a sort of fourth dimension of life and reality that is not visible to the physical senses. (see Heb. 4:14).

Paul "is knowing" (Gr. *oida*, present tense) that "this man" was caught up into Paradise. He knew *where* he had gone, he knew he had *heard* things, and he knew he was *not permitted* to utter them. There was no fuzziness in his memory about the reality of the experience even after fourteen years! It was not a dream; it was not an imagination — it had actually happened.

Paradise in the Greek text is *paradeisos*. It is an oriental word, first used by the historian Xenophon, denoting the parks of Persian kings and nobles. It is an old Persian word *Pairidaeza* akin to the Greek compound, *peri*, "around," and *teichos*, "a wall." The *Septuagint* (the Greek language Old Testament, translated about 250 B.C.) has the Greek word *paradeisos* (Paradise) in Genesis 2:8 to describe Eden as God's "garden." The LXX (Septuagint) also uses the word in Num. 24:6; Isa. 1:30; Jer. 29:5; Ezek. 31:8-9. In Luke 23:43; Jesus promised the penitent thief that he would be *with Christ that very day*

in "Paradise." Jesus sent a letter to the church at Ephesus to tell all who "conquered" they would be *granted* to eat of the *tree of life* which is in the *Paradise* of God (Rev. 2:7). We assume "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:19-31) is the same as *Paradise*. There the "beggar was comforted" while the unbelieving "rich man was in torments" separated from Paradise by an impassable gulf. Paul was caught "into" (Gr. *eis*) the "third heaven." The Greek text does *not* say he was caught "up." He was "snatched away" (Gr. *harpagenta*) *through* the dimension of space and time or *outside* the physical realm immediately into the realm of the totally spiritual where the living Christ dwells. What do we know about "Paradise"? It is (1) a beautiful, perfect "garden" (like Eden) where man is surrounded by everlasting goodness, perfection, enjoyment, satisfaction, accomplishment, companionship, dominion and participation with God; (2) where the loving, powerful, compassionate, forgiving, tender, faithful Jesus is, having finished man's justification before God and where he takes all who trust in him; (3) the city of Almighty God, beyond this created universe, not subject to its futility and doom — where there is no hunger or thirst, no scorching heat, no tears (Rev. 7:15-17). It is a place of eternal joy, eternal life (no death there). There is no mourning, no sorrow, no pain, no ugliness, no cares and no darkness there. It is a realm of reality that will last forever in which, by the grace of God, forgiven sinners may express their gratitude to God, serve him, and bask in his grace and goodness.

While we are in his body of "dust" we see Paradise by faith. But is nonetheless real, for faith makes "sure" what we hope for by God's faithful promise, and faith is the "conviction" of things not seen by the physical eye (Heb. 11:1). We understand it is unseen (II Cor. 4:16-18), but we also understand it is as real as Jesus Christ's triumph over the tomb (Acts 17:30-31).

Paul's experience in Paradise was indescribable (Gr. *arreta hrematta*, "unspeakable words"). He also says it was "not permissible for a man to speak" of it (Gr. *ouk exon anthropo lalesai*). Perhaps he was so captivated by what he saw and heard he could not remember whether he was in the body or out of the body. He was undoubtedly *overwhelmed* or *awe-struck* with the majesty, perfection, holiness, power and beauty of God. He probably paid no attention to whether he had a body or not! That is how marvelous it will be in paradise.

Here, we pay so much attention to the body we cannot enjoy life — but there it will be just the opposite. He was like Isaiah (Isa. 6:1ff) (only a million times over). He was like Daniel or the apostle John who fell down as if dead when in the presence of heaven's occupants. Furthermore, he was not "permitted" to speak of the things he saw and heard. God assigned certain persons the job of speaking of Paradise and God assigned only certain aspects of it to be described. God has his reasons for keeping knowledge of Paradise limited to the Bible we now have. In the first place, it is "beyond all comparison" (II Cor. 4:16-18). We could not comprehend it had God given permission to describe it. There is nothing in human experience or language by which to make a comparison, thus, no adequate description. Second, we might not be "able to bear" what God could tell us about it (see John 16:12ff). Should God tell us more many might neglect the spiritual exercises and necessities of this life of preparation as those did in Thessalonica (see I Thess. 4, 5; II Thess. 3).

We rest secure in the absolute faithfulness of God's revelation through the apostles that it is the place where we shall be "at home" (secure, happy, fully ourselves, surrounded by love) with the Lord; that it is "very far better" than this vale of tears; and endures forever. It is better than we can think or imagine. It is beyond what human language can describe. The best that can be done is Genesis chapter one, and Revelation, chapters twenty-one and twenty-two. Beginning and ending, God's word talks about Paradise! And Paul saw it and heard it, and would *not* boast about having such an unparalleled experience!

12:5-6 Enigmatic Explanation: If you saw Paradise and were told you could not tell anyone else about it or brag about being the only person ever to have seen it, could you keep it a secret? How would you explain your dilemma? Paul's dilemma was that he needed to "boast" about his credentials as apostle, while at the same time he desperately desired that the Corinthians know him only as a simple christian believer who was no "super" saint, who had his weaknesses and sufferings just as they did.

That is the reason his explanation of this tremendous experience in Paradise in these two verses (12:5-6) are so enigmatic! He wanted the Corinthians to be his friends, his brethren, and his "flock" because of his personal integrity, his love for them, and the spiritual power of his

message rather than because of some "super" demonstration of apostolic authority.

He will "boast" on "behalf" of the "man" (Paul) who must demonstrate a "super" credential for his apostleship. He has to — because it is the truth. He really was in Paradise. If he tells them this truth about the "apostle" Paul, it will not be foolish. He could "boast" about the excursion in Paradise for hours upon end if he wished. He could make all kinds of comparisons between his singular, supernatural trip out of this world into the next, and those "other" teachers in Corinth who were bragging about their background. And it would all be true because he, alone, could lay claims to such an exalted honor. But he will *only* mention that the event happened. He will not go on and on "boasting" or "comparing."

What he *will* do is tell these brethren about the ordinary, everyday, servant of God, Paul, who lives depending upon the grace of God because of his "thorn in the flesh." On his own behalf he will "glory" in his weakness. He started out "preaching" (I Cor. 1:26-31) to the Corinthian brethren that God's power found its energizing in things which were weak. Now he will show that he "practices what he preaches." He is "content" with weakness because that is where the power is! Human weakness, admitted and accepted, makes available an instrument through which divine power may flow. Human weakness, admitted and accepted, turns to the "source" (I Cor. 1:30) of absolute power. Paul wished not to be judged by what he could tell about "super-duper experiences" but by what they have seen in his ordinary, workaday life as a servant of Christ and a preacher of the gospel.

Paul's refusal to "boast" and "testify" about his great "mountaintop" experience in Paradise should be a good guideline for the multitude of religious "stars" circulating Christendom today testifying of their "great spiritual experiences" or "visions" or "revelations." People are not converted to Christ by human "experiences," no matter how extraordinary. It is the *gospel* which is the power of God unto salvation and that is found exclusively in the scriptural record. No human "experience" atoned for sin; no human "experience" can absolutely verify the justifying grace of God; no human "experience" can impute Christ's righteousness to sinful man; no human "experience" can give birth to the Spirit of God in man's

nature. Salvation for the human race was earned by the perfect life of Jesus Christ accomplished by the historical, vicarious death of Jesus Christ, and sealed (or validated) by the historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Any existential experience any human being has of salvation or sanctification *follows and is totally dependent upon* his knowledge of, belief in, and obedience to the Person, Jesus Christ, as documented in the facts stated above (the gospel). When christians speak, let them speak the facts of the gospel and keep their "experiences" to themselves! People are converted and edified by the word of God — not by our "experiences." In fact, "experiences" are most often misleading. They give people the impression that Christianity is nothing more than "religion" which has its source in human imaginations or feelings or "experiences."

Paul did not boast about being caught into Paradise because he did not get there on his own power. He did not assault the gates of heaven and fight his way in; he did not climb a "bean-stalk" and find the goose with the golden eggs; he did not earn a trip there by being "a good little boy." He was an invited, transported, guest. He was "caught to third heaven" (Gr. *harpagenta heos tritou ouranou*). *Harpagenta* means, "to snatch or catch away" (see Acts 8:39; I Thess. 4:17; Rev. 12:5) and has the idea of force suddenly exercised. He would not "boast" because he probably saw the same thing going on there that John saw in his "vision" — great potentates casting down their crowns in deep humility before the throne of Christ and falling down on their faces before the throne (see Rev. 4:1-11; 5:1-14; 7:1-17; 20:11-15, etc.). It was a "trip" for Paul that made *all* boasting utterly foolish, absolutely disgusting, repugnant, stupid, blasphemous! Not even an apostle who miraculously spoke in foreign languages, healed terminally ill, raised people from the dead, was commissioned to write the living and abiding word of God, and was transported to Paradise would boast! *How dare we boast of anything!* (Rom. 3:27-28; I Cor. 1:26-31; Eph. 2:9).

12:7-10 Exasperating Extremity: Paul was given an "excess" (Gr. *hyperbole*, "cast over, or beyond") of revelations. He had more than any one in Corinth might claim, perhaps more than any other true apostle might claim! Wherefore, "lest" (Gr. *hina me huperairomai*, subjunctive mood, present tense) he be continually "exalted" or "raised up" there was given him a "thorn in the flesh." The Greek

word *skolopsi* is translated "thorn" but is often used to denote "a sharp, pointed stake or stick" as well as a "thorn." What Paul was "given" hurt him like a wooden stake being driven into his flesh. It was *te sarki*, "in the flesh" and not psychological. The "stake" continually *harassed* him (Gr. *kolaphize*, present tense verb, "to buffet, to strike with clenched fists over and over," see Matt. 26:67; Mark 14:65; I Cor. 4:11; I Pet. 2:20). Paul lived with this pounding, beating "stake" being driven into his flesh day after day. It is doubtful that Paul was using the words in a figurative sense so we must assume it was some form of physical handicap which was painful or some disease. We do not know precisely what it was. Some say it was some sort of ocular (eye) disease because of his need to "write with large letters" (Acts 9:1; Gal. 4:15; 6:11). Others think it may have been malaria "which haunted the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean." Still others think it was some debilitating, impairing, painful disfigurement (a withered limb or crippling arthritis) which made him ugly and hindered his work (see II Cor. 2:10). It definitely was "in" the flesh and not simply the opposition he suffered or some fleshly temptation he endured. William Barclay cites the view that it might have been *epilepsy* since in the ancient world when people saw an epileptic they spat to ward off the "evil demon" they suspected possessed him. In Galatians 4:14 Paul says that when the Galatians saw his infirmity they did not *reject* him and the Greek word literally means *you did not spit at me*.

What the "stake" was is irrelevant to us. Paul is not the only person in the Bible, or in history, who has had a "stake in the flesh." People have them, are born with them, endure them every day. The fact that God permitted *Satan* to deliver it is the problem! It is the every recurring theological or philosophical problem of reconciling the Biblical claim of the existence of a God of absolute power and righteousness, with the opposite claim that there is a supernatural (not absolute) being who exists with powers of evil and hurtfulness and is *allowed* to exercise those wicked powers contiguous to the all-powerful and all-good God. Satan was *permitted* to harass Job (see Job, chapters 1 and 2). He was *permitted* to tempt the perfect man, Jesus. Whatever he does, he does only by the *permission of God*. Evil is never out of control of an Absolutely Good God. That is what the scriptures teach and that we believe, whether it appears to be so to the

finite experiences and thinking of man or not! God has given sufficient evidence of his infinite and absolute power, and sufficient evidence that his propositional revelation (the Bible) is absolutely trustworthy. We may therefore believe his declarations of Satan's limited powers. God's revelation to Paul concerning the purpose of his "stake in the flesh" will go a long way in satisfying the christian's mind about the presence of evil and suffering in this world. Please see Special Studies on *The Problem of Evil*, *Questions About Whether the Devil Can Actually Perform Supernatural Deeds or Not*, and, *Is There Demon Possession Today As There Was During the Time of Christ's Incarnate Ministry?* at the end of this chapter. If the problem of pain and evil is a real threat to your christian stability, we suggest you make a thorough study of the Bible books of *Job* and *Psalms*, and, in addition, read *The Problem of Pain*, by C.S. Lewis, and, *What the Bible Says About Self-Esteem*, by Bruce Parmenter, pub. by College Press.

Paul's "stake" in the flesh was to keep him from elevating himself and losing the grace of God, to make him a vessel of God's power in the world. It was a continual reminder to him that he was not sufficient of himself. He absolutely needed God's grace! Without it he would be nothing! Without it he would be eternally lost. Whatever it took to keep in the grace of God he cherished, "boasted about" and was "well pleased" with.

C.S. Lewis writes, in, *The Problem of Pain*:

When Christianity says that God loves man, it really means that God *loves* man: not that he has some 'disinterested,' really indifferent, concern for our welfare, but that, in awful and surprising truth, we are the objects of his love. You asked for a loving God: you have one. The great Spirit you so lightly invoked, the 'Lord of terrible aspect,' is present: not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, not the cold philanthropy of a conscientious magistrate, nor the care of a host who feels responsible for the comfort of his guests, *but the consuming* fire himself, the love that made the worlds, persistent as the artist's love for his work and despotic as a man's love for a dog, provident and venerable as a father's love for a child, jealous, inexorable, exacting as love between the sexes. . . .

The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of God who loves, is only insoluble so long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word "love," and look on things as if man were the center of them. Man is not the center. God does not exist for the sake of man.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Man does not exist for his own sake. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." We were made not primarily that we may love God (though we were made for that too), but that God may love us, that we may become objects in which the divine love may rest "well pleased." To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God. . . .

What we would here and now call our 'happiness' is not the end God chiefly has in view: but when we are such as he can love without impediment, we shall in fact be happy.

We have quoted all that to help you appreciate that God's grace — even though it may include a "stake in the flesh" is sufficient to make us into a person God can *really* take pleasure in — a person humble, dependent on him, firm in conviction that he is our goodness, grateful, and able to serve others. The goodness and holiness of Jesus worked through people while he was here on earth by the power of persuasion. While here he worked on that which was matter and physical by sheer force — by miracles. But his *spiritual* power he worked only through those who allowed themselves to come under the persuasive, *disciplining power of his grace*. Grace (or, love) is the most *persuasive* power there is. If grace cannot mold a person into someone God can enjoy and use, nothing else can. Grace is *all* sufficient! Paul needed *nothing* else!

For God to say to an apostle, "My grace is sufficient for you" is to say everything there is to be said. It is the ultimate statement from God! It eliminates a long, long list of things man, in his finitude, thinks is necessary for sufficiency. The world believes itself to be insufficient if it has no money, fame, influence, comfort, political freedom, peer-esteem, happiness, independence and self-esteem (pride). All these things are unnecessary for a man's sufficiency in the judgment of God! God's grace is sufficient because the power of God is made *perfect* in weakness!

The Greek word *teleitai* (present tense verb) is translated "perfect." It means "to bring something to its fulfillment, its goal, its purpose, its aim." Paul is saying that continuing "stakes in the flesh" are God's *instruments* to continually bring the grace-gift of his power to its purpose in the believer's life. And what is the end God seeks by giving us his power? *It is to conform us to the image of his dear Son* (Rom. 8:29) — to make us into a Jesus-person.

Three times Paul prayed (Gr. *parekalesa*, "called upon, besought") the Lord that his "stake in the flesh" should *depart* (Gr. *aposte*, "fall away" we get the English word "apostasy" from it) from him. Three times, the answer from God came back, "No! — My grace is sufficient for you." God hears and answers all prayers made to him. According to his own infinite wisdom and love he answers either, "Yes" or "No." Let us be thankful that he often answers, to our eternal benefit, "No." Even an apostle found himself praying to his own spiritual and eternal detriment! The Greek word *arkei* is translated, "sufficient" and literally means, "sovereign, rule, enthroned" (see our comments on II Cor. 9:8). In other words God's answer to Paul's call that his stake in the flesh" be taken away was, "My *grace* must *rule* and be enthroned as sovereign in your life and this stake is necessary for that." Sinful, rebellious man will not allow God's grace to rule him without some "stake" continually thrust into his flesh! Yes, the goal God has for all your physical weaknesses and mine is to give us something in which we may "boast" and to make us *content* with his everlasting grace.

These next statements from Paul are almost incredible! It is never easy to endure physical weakness. But Paul says (12:9b-10) that he is "glad" and "content" with his "sharp stake in the flesh." The Greek word *hedista* is translated "more gladly" and is an adverb in the superlative degree literally meaning, "most sweetly" (see also II Cor. 11:19). The Greek word *eudoko* is translated "content" and means literally, "well-pleased." Paul was not "bitter" about his weaknesses — he was "sweet." He was not merely resigned to them, he was "well-pleased."

He gloried ("boasted"), and was pleased to do so, with *insults* (Gr. *hubresin*, English, *hubris*, meaning arrogances, haughtinesses, insolences toward him), with *hardships* (Gr. *anagkais*, being needy, hard-up, destitute), with *persecutions* (Gr. *digomois*, being pursued, chased, hounded), with *calamities* (Gr. *stenochoriais*, literally, "narrowness of place," or "between a rock and a hard-place," means, anguish and distress).

Question! Are you "well-pleased" when you are insulted, destitute, hounded, and between a rock and a hard-place? Are you "sweet" and "well-pleased" with your physical weaknesses and sharp, stabbing "stakes in the flesh"? We are not talking here about

stoic resignation — but about being pleased, *well-pleased*. Are these “weaknesses” with the divine assurance of infinite grace all you need? Can you get by on just that? Lord, deliver us from our *usual* reaction to weaknesses — shame, complaint, resentment, excusing failures, and self-indulgence for compensation. It is the way of the world to glorify human strength, beauty, fame, power, wealth and independence, or to indulge the flesh as a compensation for weaknesses and sufferings. But the way of God is diametrically opposite. The way of God is to be “sweet,” “well-pleased” and gratefully accepting the sovereign rule of God’s grace as the compensation for weaknesses and sufferings. The world cannot “sing that song” — the world does not know that song, it is the song sung in heaven (see Rev. 15:2-4; 19:1-10; 4:1-11; 5:9-14; 7:13-17).

The creature presumptuously assumes his Creator admires human power. The Creator declares he admires human weakness which depends on the Creator’s grace. No room for merit there. No room for demanding there. No room for bragging there (except in God’s grace). The history book of God’s dealing with mankind (the Bible) shows that God’s power *rested* (Gr. *episkenose*, “overshadowed”) upon people the world would call “weak.”

How Paul could carry on a world-wide ministry, day in and day out, suffering the beatings, shipwrecks, dangers and hardships (II Cor. 11:21-29) he enumerates is beyond comprehension. Add to those overpowering obstacles his “sharp stake in the flesh” and his accomplishments for Christ are nearly *incredible*! It is a wonder that he could get out of bed each morning and put one foot in front of the other. When he was “weak,” he was “strong” because he was ruled every day by the sovereign grace of God. Grace, “amazing grace” energized him, drove him, empowered him. He was *immersed* in the wonderful grace of Jesus. His faith in that grace provided the energy and motivation. God’s providential sustenance each day provided the necessary physical strength to fulfill his mission. What Paul wanted to do sometimes conflicted with what the Lord wanted him to do (see Acts 16:6-10), so the Lord had to redirect his plans. Perhaps the Lord did his hindering of Paul through this “sharp stake in the flesh.” But whatever Christ had for Paul to do, Christ supplied the physical necessities to accomplish it. What Paul had to supply was *faith*. Faith with God’s grace produces divine power and victory in what the world

calls weakness and defeat. With this powerful victory Paul is "well-pleased"!

SECTION 2

Weakness in Bearing (12:11-18)

11 I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these superlative apostles, even though I am nothing. ¹²The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. ¹³For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!

14 Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children. ¹⁵I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls, If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less? ¹⁶But granting that I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by guile. ¹⁷Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? ¹⁸I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?

12:11-13 Spiritual Signs: Paul's opponents (the Judaizers) had tried to convince the Corinthian Christians that Paul did not have the "bearing" of a "true apostle." His "appearance," his "attitude" was not commensurate with the popular idea of how a "true" apostle would display himself.

Paul's answer: "My opponent's idea of a 'true' apostle is foolishness!" They think only in terms of worldly "signs" and worldly "attitudes." They think a 'true' apostle would go about "boasting" of his miraculous powers and showing them off at every opportunity.

Everything Paul had "gloried in" was true! But the "foolishness"

of having to glory in things which were his only by the grace of God bothered him. So he says, "I have been a fool!" They had "forced" (Gr. *enagkasate*, "compelled," "constrained" see Matt. 14:22; Lk. 14:23; Gal. 2:3, 14) him into the "foolish" game of comparing and glorying. They should have "commended" (Gr. *sunistasthai*, literally, "stood beside him") him. They should have defended his apostleship and his personal integrity. Even if his "bearing" made him to appear to be "nothing" (Gr. *ouden*, unsophisticated, unschooled, and unpleasant to look at, he was in no way "inferior" (Gr. *husteresa*, behind, destitute, English prefix "hyster-" comes from this word and means, "loss of") to "these" pseudo-apostles who think they are "super-duper" (note his sarcasm). "Bearing" or "appearance" is outward and may be faked. The Pharisees were very religious in their "bearing" but it was all hypocritical. Modern "image-makers" have produced a number of men in the "religious market" who have the "bearing" of "minister of God." But what message do they preach? How does their personal life measure with the Bible? The Corinthians, of all people, should have defended Paul.

First, the "signs" (Gr. *semeia*, that which points to, signals, evidences) of a "true" (Gr. *men*, "indeed, actual, truly") apostle were "performed" (Gr. *kateirgasthe*, "worked") among these Corinthian Christians. Paul endured (Gr. *hupomone*, "remained under," "was patient") much immaturity and stubbornness by the Corinthians in order to win them to Christ and build them up in the faith. He confirmed the gospel message with "signs and wonders and mighty works" (Gr. *semeiois te kai terasin kai dunamesin*) to bring them to faith. And then he imparted to them wonderful miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (see I Cor. chapters 12-14) to build them up in their faith and to preserve the true apostolic gospel since there were probably no inspired documents containing the gospel readily available to the churches at that point in time. They "came behind no church" in possessing miraculous gifts by which to be edified. They "came behind no church" in receiving the services of a "true" apostle. Paul wrote them three or four letters and visited them at least three times. He sent his most prized co-laborers (Timothy, Apollos, Titus) often to work with the Corinthians (see Acts 18:1, 5; I Cor. 4:17; 16:10; Rom. 16:21; I Cor. 3:5; 4:6; 16:12; II Cor. 2:13; 7:5-16; 8:16-24; 12:18). They should have "commended" him. Instead, they defamed him, and were about

to repudiate his ministry among them.

Even though he had imparted to them miraculous powers no one but a true apostle could give, they were ready to reject his spiritual leadership. Their rationalization for rejecting him may be found in their attitude toward the spiritual gifts (see I Cor. chapters 12-14). While Paul directed them to desire the gift of *prophecy* (inspired teaching) which would edify everyone, they were so spiritually immature they clamored for the "showy" gift of speaking in a foreign language ("tongues") which edified no one but the person speaking. Paul showed the Corinthians "signs," but he emphasized the spiritual, the practical, the teaching signs. They wanted the spectacular, the worldly, the ostentatious. Paul's opponents, the pseudo-apostles, were probably telling the congregation that a "true" apostle would "bear" himself more spectacularly than a mere "teacher." They probably challenged Paul's claim that he was able to "speak in tongues more than you all" (I Cor. 14:18) and mocked his preference to "speak five words with the mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (I Cor. 14:19).

Paul had given the Corinthians all the spiritual advantage he could. The only "favor" he had not done for them was "burden" them. He means he had not taken financial support from them (see comments II Cor. 11:7-15). Does Paul mean to ask their forgiveness for an *actual* wrong (12:13)? Had he really "wronged" them (Gr. *adikian*, an injustice)? While it is altogether possible that a congregation may be "wronged" or even do itself an "injustice" by not having the opportunity to financially support the preaching of the gospel, we think Paul is using sarcasm here. Paul clearly believed he was benefiting the Corinthian church by taking no financial remuneration from them although he took it from others (Phil. 4:15-18). But someone had convinced the Corinthians that the "bearing" of a "true" apostle would require being a financial "burden" on the congregation. This issue must have been very significant for Paul to keep mentioning it!

12:14-18 Sacrificial Service: The signs of a true apostle are (1) having seen the risen Lord Jesus; (2) performance of miracles; (3) preaching a gospel of grace. But what Paul is dealing with here, in context, is another important *sign* of a true apostle — "sacrificial service." Humility, dependence on God's grace, working to edify chris-

tians and congregations — these are what a true apostle does. How much edifying had the pseudo-apostles done? None! They were tearing apart. What had the pseudo-apostles “given” to the Corinthians? Nothing! They were taking.

J.B. Phillips translates 12:14-15: “Now I am all ready to visit you for the third time, and I am still not going to be a burden to you. It is you I want — not your money. Children don’t have to put by their savings for their parents; parents do that for their children. Consequently, I will most gladly spend and be spent for your good, even though it means that the more I love you, the less you love me.” Paul is not contradicting the rest of the Bible saying that children have no responsibility to “honor” (support financially) their aged parents who may need it. Paul is the one who told children that supporting (“honoring”) their parents was “the first commandment with a promise” (Eph. 6:2). Paul is referring here to *young* children at home who are not mature enough to work and support their parents. Paul is not going to ask the Corinthian church (his “baby”) to support him. They still need to be matured, built up, strengthened. He will support them! Like a father, his heart’s desire is to give of himself so that his children may grow into adulthood.

Whatever it takes to accomplish that Paul is *glad* (Gr. *hedista*, “sweetly”) to give. His children are “sweet” to him. He loves them with all his being. He will “sweetly” *spend* (Gr. *dapaneso*, expend, consume, squander, see Luke 15:14) and *be spent* (Gr. *ekdapanethesomai*; first person, singular, future, indicative passive, “allow myself to be consumed, exhausted”) *for your souls* (Gr. *huper ton psuchon*, on behalf of your souls). He is willing to be completely used up, depleted of energy, strength and worldly possessions for their spiritual good (souls). A man who would be willing to be “anathema” from Christ for the sake of his Jewish brethren (Rom. 9:1-2) would be sincere in this promise as uncommon as it may be even among christians.

If Paul had shown more love for the Corinthians than he had for other churches, this would not be strange. Love must necessarily be more often shown to “problem” children than to others. This does not mean he loved the Corinthians more. He is trying to cajole them or chide them and call them back to their devotion to him. Abundant love to the “problem” child is often repaid by rebuff and rejection

(see the prophet Hosea).

“They” (opponents and the few Corinthians they had seduced) were saying Paul was being “crafty” by not taking financial support from the congregation. “They” were probably accusing Paul of some ulterior scheme, some nefarious plan to really defraud the congregation, “setting them up” by faking humility and sacrificial service. “They” were saying that if he had been a “true” apostle he would have taken their money and bossed them around and made a spectacular show of his miraculous powers. The Greek phrase *alla huparchon panourgos dolo humas elabon* is a participial phrase, and, literally translated is, “But being cunning with guile, you I took” and means, “being thoroughly unscrupulous.” “They” accused Paul of “snaring, trapping or baiting” the Corinthians like one who hunts animals.

His answer is four straightforward, rhetorical questions: (1) “Did I take advantage (Gr. *epleonektesa*, defraud, lead astray) of you through any of those whom I sent to you?” (2) “Did Titus take advantage of you?” (3) “Did we not act in the same spirit?” (4) “Did we not take the same steps?” Evidently “they” were saying Paul had taken no support from the Corinthians, but that the “offering” he took for Judea was going to go into his pocket. They knew Titus had not taken advantage of them. They knew Titus had not acted dishonestly. Timothy and Titus and Apollos had ministered among them for many months. They were Paul’s “children in the faith.” They had not defrauded the Corinthians. Now, Paul asks, “Was my behavior among you any different than theirs?” How can they believe a man who could produce such exemplary christian servants as these would be dishonest with them? How the great heart of this selfless servant of Christ must have ached! What stress it must have caused, what sadness, what temptation he must have had to “quit the ministry” to leave the Corinthians to their fate! But he didn’t. He exhausted himself for them.

SECTION 3

Weakness in Behavior (12:19-21)

19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been de-

fending ourselves before you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. ²⁰For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹I fear that when I come to mourn over many of those who sinned before and have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced.

12:19 Presumptuousness: All through this epistle Paul has been dealing with the presumptuousness of his opponents at Corinth who thought he was writing to defend himself. That presumes, of course, Paul was in the wrong. His opponents were convinced all their allegations against him were true. The Greek text in verse 19 is emphatic: *Palai dokeite hoti humin apologoumetha . . .* literally, "Already you judge that to you we are making a defense. . . ." The Greek word *apologoumetha* is the same word Peter uses (I Pet. 3:15) to urge all christians to be ready always to make a defense of the gospel — it is the word from which we get the English word, *apologetics*, a defense based on evidence and reasoning.

Paul puts it this way: "Are you thinking all this time that I have been trying to justify myself in your eyes? I have said and written everything to you as a man totally responsible to God and as one serving Christ." Paul has said nothing to the Corinthians that God and Christ would not have said. In fact, what the apostle said is what the divine Godhead has given (revealed to) him to say. Paul's message was inspired and inerrant. It was not some defense of his own egotism, it was from Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They assumed all along he was a weakling. He did not "come on" like they thought an "authority" would. So, whenever Paul spoke sharply or threatened corrective measures, his opposition assumed he was defending himself.

His exhortations, rebukes, warnings and severe words were actually the words of Christ for their "upbuilding" (Gr. *oikodomes*, edification, construction, upbuilding). The Judaizers were in Corinth (and perhaps other opponents of the gospel of grace) tearing down the faith of the christians, taking away their liberty in Christ, destroying their hope of the resurrection, and enticing them back into their licentious

Gentile ways. They were headed for spiritual ruin. All they had gained in Christ was about to be plundered. It called for severe, extreme, uncommon action. This humble apostle was even willing to make a "fool" of himself and engage in a game of "comparisons" ("boastings"). They assumed he was bent on defending his own bruised ego. Actually, he was very nearly compromising his own conscience (in the matter of "boasting") in order to rescue the Corinthians from the "messengers of Satan." All of his "boasting" about what he had suffered, what his Jewish heritage was, what he had accomplished was not to build up his reputation so he could "take advantage" of them financially or religiously. It was to mature them in their spiritual union with Christ. It was to help them benefit from and enjoy their spiritual heritage as christians. He would sacrifice his own conscience about "boasting" to keep them giving their attention and loyalty to God's word and keep them from being seduced by the pseudo-apostles. He did not want to constantly recite his credentials and proofs of his apostleship. But false teachers are so cunning, so deceitful. They do not have the constraints of truth and love that bind christians. They are at liberty to say anything, do anything, pretend anything. That makes it necessary for christian messengers to have to continually "prove" the authority of their message. This problem continues to this day. People still think christians are egotists when they repeatedly stand up for and defend the word of God. Many think christians are "pig-headed," loud-mouthed, bigots when all they are trying to do is keep the world from being seduced by Satan's messengers — pseudo-apostles.

12:20-21 Perversity: It is almost if some of the Corinthians were daring Paul to make some demonstration of "authority" or "power" by reverting to their former heathen ways. As an apostle, "an authority in the church" he has really *done* nothing about the sinfulness going on in the Corinthian church. He has *said* a lot — told *them* a number of things to do, but he has exercised no supernatural powers as he did with Elymas (Acts 13) or others. They think he is "weak."

Paul's fear about his forth-coming "third" visit to Corinth starts with his fear of what he may find when he gets there (v. 20). They may not be what he wishes when he gets there — and if that is so, he may not be what they wish he would be. He is going to exercise some chastening power, if they do not correct the sin themselves.

He fears (from reports he gets) that he may find them still “quarreling” (Gr. *eris*, “strife,” in their Pantheon the Greeks even had a “goddess of discord” named *Eris*). He also expected to find them “jealous” (Gr. *zelos*, zeal in the worst sense, envious), “angry” (Gr. *thumoi*), “selfish” (Gr. *eritheiai*, rivalrous, competing against one another), “slandering” (Gr. *katalalia*, speaking against one another), “gossiping” (Gr. *psithurismoi*, whispering, telling tales), “conceited” (Gr. *phusioseis*, puffed up), and “discorded” (Gr. *akatastasiai*, rioting, chaotic, separating). To this list he adds in verse 21, “impurity” (Gr. *akatharsia*, uncleanness, moral or spiritual dirtiness), “immorality” (Gr. *porneia*, fornication, porno-) and “licentiousness” (Gr. *aselgeia*, lewdness, perversity, wickedness). Most of these have to do with sexual sins and perversions so *common* in Corinth. It would be difficult to compare modern wickedness with that 2000 years ago, but hardly any perverseness today could be worse than that of Corinth in the first century.

Now what Paul feared was that he would find them continuing in such gross wickedness and that would be proof that his work among them had, after all, been in vain. That would be humbling to Paul. Not that Paul was afraid of humility. That was the essence of his character now as a christian. But Paul is using the word “humble” in the sense of being brought to “mourn” or brought to grief. He would be devastated, should he find them acting wickedly, like a father who had “spent” himself to lay up a magnificent heritage for his child only to have the child disregard and despise both the heritage and the father.

Paul is closing his letter to Corinth — his last one — and he wants them to know he has tried to be like the “father” in parable of the “Prodigal.” That is what “ministry” is all about. He is not “weak” — but merciful like a father. But if it is necessary to “restore” them to the grace of God, his “weakness” will be exchanged for the chastening “authority” and “power” of a “father” in the faith.

APPREHENSIONS:

1. Why was Paul so adamantly opposed to “boasting” (comparing ministries)?

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2. How many visions and revelations did Paul have?
3. Why does he speak of himself in the third person ("I know a man")?
4. What is the "third heaven"? What is the first heaven and the second heaven?
5. Just what does the Bible say about "Paradise"?
6. Why is Paul unable to speak about his trip to "Paradise"?
7. What is the meaning of the Greek word *skolopsi* translated, "thorn"?
8. Was Paul's "thorn in the flesh" really some physical problem? How do you know?
9. What is the theological problem about Paul's "thorn in the flesh"?
10. What does Paul say was the purpose of his "thorn in the flesh"?
11. How is God's power brought to its goal or aim in human weakness?
12. How did God answer Paul's prayer for the "thorn" to be taken away?
13. What did God teach Paul about the proper attitude toward "weaknesses"?
14. Why did those opposing Paul accuse him of being "weak"? What did they see in him which they considered weakness?
15. How did Paul refute their accusations of "weakness"?

APPLICATIONS:

1. Is it wrong for preachers to "glorify" God for what they have sacrificed in the cause of Christ? Always wrong? Sometimes right? When? Why?
2. Do you know religious leaders today who boast about the "revelations" and "visions" they have had? What does Paul's reluctance to do so say about their eagerness to do so?
3. If you had been caught up to Paradise and had seen it, could you keep from telling about it even if God told you to keep silent?
4. What do you know about Paradise? What does it do for your spiritual life? Are you anxious to go there?
5. Do you have a "thorn in the flesh"? Have you ever had one? Do

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- you expect to have one?
6. What have your "weaknesses" taught you?
 7. Is God's grace sufficient for you? If that was all you had in this world, right now, would you be "well-pleased"? Why?
 8. Do you find yourself having your spiritual powers increased when your physical powers are decreased? Which do you prefer?
 9. What does it take to make you "content"?
 10. Would you consider yourself "wronged" if you could not contribute financial support to the work of the gospel? Deeply wrong?
 11. Are you willing to "spend" and "be spent" (exhausted in resources and strength) for the church (christians)? Is it necessary? What would happen if you did?
 12. Can "speaking" build up the church? Speaking as Paul spoke?
 13. Is such speaking being done? If not, why not?
 14. Do you mourn over people's spiritual weaknesses as much as you mourn their physical weaknesses? Should you?
 15. Is there impurity, immorality and licentiousness in the modern church of Christ? What should be done about it? How do we bring that about?

Special Study

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Condensed from *Introduction to Philosophy — A Christian Perspective*, by Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, pub. by Baker book House.

Three basic ways of relating God and evil.

- A. One may affirm the reality of evil and deny God (atheism)
- B. One may affirm God and deny the reality of evil (pantheism)
- C. One may attempt to show the compatibility of God and evil

Atheism: Denying the reality of God

If God exists, He is not essentially good.

1. Either (A) morality is right because God willed it or else (B) he willed it because it is right.
2. But if (A), then God is arbitrary about what is right, and He is not essentially good.
3. And if (B), then God is not ultimate, since He is subject to some standard beyond Himself.
4. But in either case — if God is not essentially good or not ultimate — God is not what theists claim Him to be
5. Therefore, no theistic God exists.

Answers:

1. Good is based on God's will but God is sovereign and not arbitrary.
2. God's nature is the ultimate norm in accordance with which His will cooperates. God wills what is essentially good without there being some ultimate standard beyond Himself. The ultimate norm for all good flows from the will of God but only in accordance with the nature of God. God is neither arbitrary nor less than ultimate.

Atheism: God should destroy all evil.

1. If God is all-good, He will destroy evil.
2. If God is all-powerful, He can destroy evil.
3. But evil is not destroyed.
4. Therefore, there is no all-good, all-powerful God.

Answers:

1. Premise No. 3 implies a time limit on God. God may *yet* destroy evil.

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2. It is possible that there is no way to destroy evil without also destroying the good of permitting free creatures.
3. The syllogism may be turned around thus:
 - A. If God is all-good, He will one day defeat evil.
 - B. If God is all-powerful, He can one day defeat evil.
 - C. Evil is not *yet* defeated.
 - D. Therefore evil *will one day* be defeated.

Atheism: God and evil are logically incompatible.

1. God and evil are opposites.
2. Opposites cannot exist simultaneously.
3. But evil exists.
4. Hence, God cannot exist.

Answers:

1. The atheist fails to prove that God and evil are actually contradictory. They may be only contrary and not contradictory.
2. Let us restate the atheistic argument here:
 - A. God exists. (1)
 - B. Evil exists. (2)
 - C. (3) there is no good purpose for evil.
 - D. Therefore, both (1) and (2) cannot be true.
 - E. But we know (2) is true.
 - F. Therefore, God cannot exist. (1)

The difficulty with this atheistic argument is in proving premise (3) to be true. The only way one can be sure God could not possibly have any good purpose for evil is (1) either to already know God is not all good, which begs the question, or (2) to know the mind of God, which is presumptuous for any finite being.

If there is an all-good God, it follows automatically that He does have some good purpose for allowing evil, even if no human being knows what that good purpose is.

An important point for the theist to remember . . . since the point disputed here is logical or conceptual, all the theist needs to do is show some *possible* explanation for evil to defeat the non-theist's claim. Theists are not obligated to show *in fact* that this is the case.

THEISM'S ANSWER TO EVIL

God permits evil in order to produce a greater good.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

1. God freely created the world, not because He had to, but because He wanted to do so.
2. God created creatures like Himself who could freely love Him. But such creatures could also hate Him.
3. God desires all men to love Him, but will not force any against their will to love Him. Forced love is not love. It is rape.
4. God will persuade as many to love Him as He can (II Pet. 3:9). God will grant those who will not love Him their free choice — forever (hell).
5. God's love is magnified when we return His love (since He first loved us) as well as when we do not. It shows how great He is that He will love even those who hate Him.

Thus, in the end the greatest good will be achieved in several ways:

1. God will have shared His love with all men.
2. God will have saved as many as He could without violating their free choice (I Tim. 2:1; II Pet. 3:9). Those not saved will be given their own freely-chosen destiny; thus the good of their freedom will be respected.
3. Throughout all God will be glorified in that (a) His sovereign will has prevailed: (b) His love is magnified whether it is accepted or rejected (c) He has defeated evil by forgiving sin (through the cross) and by separating good from evil forever (through the final judgment). And (3) He has produced the best world achievable (where the most men possible are saved and secured from evil forever).

There are two very important aspects of this theodicy that should be stressed:

1. It is a "best-way" (versus a "best-world") theodicy. That is, this present evil world is not the best world possible, but it is the best way to achieve the best world. Permitting evil is a precondition of producing the best world (Rom. 5:20; Gen. 50:20).
2. This solution is not a soul-making but a soul-deciding theodicy. God is not conceived as a cosmic behavioral manipulator who is programming people into heaven against their will. God operates with men only with their "informed consent." God never goes beyond freedom and dignity to save men at any cost — not at the cost of their freedom or dignity. Whosoever will may come, but whoever won't will not be forced

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to come. In a truly free world, God cannot make souls act against their will. He can only lovingly persuade them and then respect their decision — whatever it may be.

Special Study

IS THERE DEMON POSSESSION TODAY AS THERE WAS DURING THE TIME OF CHRIST'S INCARNATE MINISTRY?

It is my opinion that there is no demon possession of human beings today in the precise manner such as manifested in the phenomenal way it was during Christ's incarnate ministry (and perhaps as it was during the remainder of the ascendancy of the Roman empire).

It is my opinion that the "binding of Satan" in Rev. 20:1-6 was initiated and resulted from the redemptive work of Christ in His Incarnation. It was completed when the "beast" of the 4th universal empire (as Daniel predicted), Rome, fell. At that time, it is my opinion, demon possession, as manifested in the Gospels and Acts apparently was to cease. All binding of Satan is relative. He has always been "bound" to some degree or other due to the fact that God is Almighty. God is the only being who is Almighty. It is my opinion a part of Satan's binding has to do with the restriction imposed by God so that Satan's demons are no longer able to "possess" human bodies as they were during the time of Christ's incarnation.

1. To have this opinion does not mean I deny the power of Satan to deceive the minds of people today who deliberately choose to believe falsehood perpetrated by "lying signs and wonders." If the definition of demon possession means simply that Satan has captured the minds of men by unbelief, I would agree.

"Satan entered into Judas . . ." (Luke 22:3 and John 13:27) but he was not what other scriptures describe as "demon possessed."

2. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever enter into animals? (See Matt. 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-36; Mark 5:1-16.)
3. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever testify to the identity and deity of Christ or the messengers of Christ and what their work is? (See Acts 16:17; 19:15; Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24 and above references.)
4. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever speak out as recognizable separate individuals — definitively separate from the human whose body they possess?
5. How many demons (alleged) today be exorcised? Is the exorcism always miraculous and always instantaneous? If not, is it simply a matter of conversion by the power of the gospel regenerating the

- mind through preaching and teaching? When there is an unsuccessful exorcism, or casting out, are those possessed by alleged demons doomed to suffer such possession until they die?
6. Only Jesus could give power to exorcise demons. That was a direct gift and a supernatural power. It apparently did not require being a "born again" believer to receive this power — Judas apparently was given this power — he was one of the twelve (cf. Matt. 10:1,8).
 7. On the other hand, many pseudo-faith-healers today, and "ministers" from all differing theological and doctrinal positions, claim they have cast out or exorcised demons. Whom are we to believe? Who has that power today among all who claim it? What are we to conclude from their claims? Who is to decide which are "real" demons and "real" exorcists? By what criteria?
 8. Demons in the scripture were not "ecto-plasm" — they were (and still are, in the abyss) real persons!
 9. The psychic powers of the human mind over matter have been well documented. What some think is demon possession could very well be such psycho-somatic phenomena. Voodooism may be classified under this heading.
 10. The most destructive power of the devil is not possession of a human body but a mind or soul (cf. Matt. 10:28). It appears that while demons possessed bodies of some humans during Christ's incarnation — the mind or soul of that person was not possessed. Demons merely "troubled" humans (Luke 6:18); they "drove" people to do, physically, what they did (Luke 8:29).
 11. Of all the miraculous gifts the Corinthian Christians were given, exorcism of the demon-possessed was not among them (I Cor. ch. 12-14).
 12. How do we know when someone is demon possessed? What is the criteria by which distinction is made between demon possession and epilepsy, mental illness, perverted maliciousness and crazed murderousness (e.g. Hitler, de Sade, etc.)?
 13. Is it not possible that all the mania for the occult and the practice of it is being used by the devil to get people to think he has powers which he does not really have (Rev. 13:13-15)?
 14. If demon possession could only come to those who were willing — was the "little daughter" of the Syro-Phoenician woman a "will-

IS THERE DEMON POSSESSION TODAY?

ing" victim? In other words, demon possession had nothing to do with the willingness of the possessed. Therefore, exorcism was not done by "conversion" but by the exercise of divine authority in a miraculous way.

15. It seems apparent that only Jesus and the apostles, or specially endowed disciples (Luke 10) could exorcise demons. This they did, not by "conversion" but by miracle. There is no evidence from the scriptures that this miraculous power could be given by any other than Christ Himself and that while He was in His incarnate ministry.
16. If miracles of healing, speaking in foreign languages, prophecy, including "discernment of spirits" (I Cor. 12:10), etc., ceased with the end of the New Testament era and the death of the apostles (or the ones to whom the apostles imparted these gifts), so that we can only be certain of the documented miracles of Scripture, then the same principle ought to be applied, for the same reason, to demon possession and exorcism. Otherwise, we are in a quandry to decide about modern claims of demon possession and exorcism among religious groups from one end of the doctrinal spectrum to the other. There are also pagan exorcists making claims.
17. There really is not any documentation of demon possession in the Old Testament such as occurred during the Incarnation (with an exception or two, e.g. King Saul).
18. It appears, then, that demon possession in the precise manner in which it occurred during Christ's incarnate ministry was uniquely for the purpose of affording historical evidence that Christ (and His apostles) possessed the Sovereign Spirit of God — that their message was one of victory and power over Satan and all of hell.
19. A recent case in point, excerpts from article in Joplin, Mo., *Globe*, 3-8-81:

Catholic priests were "attempting" to rid an 11 year old boy in Brookfield, Conn. of "demons." (The boy's name is unknown.)

A 19 year old friend was watching these sessions, challenged the demons "to take me on. Control me. Leave this boy alone," acc. to tape recordings of the sessions. (Arne Johnson) was the friend.

Johnson allegedly stabbed to death a co-worker (Alan Bono)

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after Bono had quarrelled at Bono's apartment.

Johnson is now pleading that "he is not responsible for his acts" because of "demonic possession."

Ed and Lorraine Warren, who worked on the Amityville Horror case were asked to help the boy who "appeared to be possessed" (the 11 year old boy). Warrens said they found "movement of objects and frightening manifestations" in the house. The Warrens said "the boy was indeed possessed," and he seemed to be possessed "off and on, 24 hours a day," said one family member. Tape recordings the Warrens made of some of the sessions have the boy making guttural and hissing sounds, cursing his mother, and threatening to stab and kill those present in the room.

Photographs of the sessions show family members attempting to restrain the boy, who the Warrens said seemed to have superhuman strength.

A priest named Virgulak was called to investigate the case; he has made several reports to the bishop of the diocese, but no public reports. He has "declined to discuss the reports but said no formal exorcism has ever been requested or performed on the boy."

There were "prayer sessions" called "a deliverance" which is supposed to be "a lesser form of exorcism that does not require approval of the bishop."

The Warrens say Johnson's attempts to help the boy were amateurish because "the only way to order demons out of a person is by using the name of Jesus Christ."

Mrs. Warren said, ". . . (Johnson) he challenged what was within the child to take him on — and none of us ever do that, not even priests."

Problems with this account:

- a. Based on a number of "begging the question" statements such as, "appeared to be . . .," "seemed to be . . .," "seemed to have . . .," "no public reports . . .," "supposed to be . . .," "approval of the bishop. . ."
- b. "In the name of Jesus" means in the Bible, "by the authority of Jesus." Does Roman Catholicism have the "authority of Jesus" to exorcise? The "name of Jesus" is to be used in ex-

orcism by only those authorized to use it (cf. Acts 19:13-16). Whom are we to believe now has that authorization? What credentials do they present for it? Do such exorcists agree doctrinally with the Word of the Holy Spirit in the Bible? If not, are we to believe they have the power of the Spirit?

20. There are two Old Testament prophecies, clearly Messianic, which predict the cessation of "sorceries and soothsayers" (Micah 5:12-13), and "unclean spirits" or demon-possession (Zech. 13:2). Homer Hailey, in his book, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, pub. Baker, sums up Zechariah 13:1-6 in these words, "A fountain for sin and uncleanness will be opened for all the people. At that time the falsehood of idols will cease, prophesying will be discontinued, and the unclean spirits will pass out of the land." Mr. Hailey contends that Zechariah 13:1-9 is entirely Messianic and says, "Once the foundation was laid and the new revelation was complete, the need for prophets would cease. Daniel indicates the same in a strong Messianic prophecy, when he said of the anointed one, the prince, that He would bring in everlasting righteousness, and seal up vision and prophecy. Likewise, unclean spirits, the antithesis of the prophets, would cease. In the conquest of Christ over Satan and his forces, unclean spirits have ceased to control men as they did in the time of the ministry of Christ and the apostles."

Of course, these prophecies from Micah and Zechariah do not preclude the *attempts* of human beings and Satan to try to *deceive* the world that demon possession and sorceries are still supernaturally viable. We believe the Bible clearly indicates what is alleged today to be supernatural demon possession is no longer a possibility. *Lying* wonders and *deceiving* signs remain very much a possibility so long as men and women refuse to believe and love the truth and prefer to believe what is false (see II Thess. 2:10-12; II Tim. 4:3-4, etc.).

21. The crucial and ultimate question about modern (alleged) demon possession is: *Whose testimony is reliable?* Whose testimony is inerrantly, infallibly reliable besides the testimony of the Scriptures? None! Any man today, without the inerrancy and infallibility of the Holy Spirit to verify his experience and accredit his testimony may be either deceived or a deceiver.

Special Study

QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER THE DEVIL CAN ACTUALLY PERFORM SUPERNATURAL DEEDS OR NOT

1. There is only one Creator. No one else ever creates anything.

God is said to have given the devil permission to take away Job's property. Job said, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away." The devil did not have that power of his own. He probably tried to get Job to think he did, but Job was not persuaded. Is Job right or wrong? Did God take away, or did the devil?

Can Satan give an order that "fire should come down out of heaven" or make an image breathe (Rev. 13:11-17). Who is in charge of ordering things in heaven (or on earth)? Satan or God? While men were convinced the "beast" was invincible (Rev. 13:18), God revealed through John that the beast was human (Rev. 13:18), not supernatural, not divine, not to be worshiped!

2. Only God is Almighty. How does one distinguish what or who is almighty from that which is not?

If the distinguishing criteria of almightiness appears in two persons or realms, can both be almighty? If only one can be real, what is the other? — partly real?

It is a law or logic that two contradictory propositions cannot both be true!

3. If one says we distinguish what we are to believe as actual or real by whether the attending message or doctrine is true and good or not, how does one substantiate which message is good? If we say the message of God does not lie, how do we determine it does not lie? If the devil has supernatural power how are we to determine that his message is not substantiated as "good" and those who claim to speak for the Lord as "bad"?

The ethical value of what God says is good cannot be substantiated on the basis of pragmatism (it works) because that makes every person able to say what works for you doesn't work for me. The *absolute* ethical value of God's statement of "good" depends on authority. Authority depends on demonstration of faithfulness and sovereignty in the absolute degree. How could that allow for *real* supernaturalism to be arrogated to someone else?

4. Did the devil have the real power to produce what he promised in the Garden of Eden? II Cor. 11:3 says he deceived Eve by his cunning.

ning to lead her thoughts astray.

II Thess. 2:9-12 says the devil, through the "lawless one," is to do *pretended* (Gr. *pseudo, false, fake*) signs and wonders, with all wicked deception (Gr. *apate, cheating, beguiling, false impressions, unscrupulous*) for those who refuse to love the truth. God will send to them a *working* (Gr. *energeian*) of error (Gr. *planes, astray, wandering, planet*) to believe the *lie* (Gr. *pseudei*) for those having not believed the truth, but are having pleasure in unrighteousness.

Does that sound like actual miracles are going to be given to lead people astray?

5. The supernatural things done by God (and his representatives) are said to be moral *facts* in themselves which in turn delineate in man's experience the existence and nature of God (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; Acts 14:15-18; Acts 17:22-31, et al). If there are other supernatural facts being done which are capable of competing on the same level, in the realm of the factual, what do they delineate — that there are two Gods? If these two supernatural facts are both facts, how are we to decide to which one we surrender? The one who seems to have the most workable doctrine?
6. Is Satan's power to deceive in the reality of a supernatural event actually done or is it in the interpretation he wishes us to make of the event which *appears* to be a supernatural event? If it really is a supernatural event accomplished by the devil (or a human being today), what interpretation are we to make?
7. Paul writes that we should not let the devil *defraud* us (Gr. *pleonektethomen*) by being agnostic about his *devices* (Gr. *noemata, mentatlity* — not miracles) II Cor. 2:11.

The mind is powerful, Ideas and thoughts have tremendous capabilities. Mental, psychological trauma has caused amazing effects over personalities and even over physical functions.

8. Jesus stated that it was a logical impossibility that Satan would cast out demons for Satan would be defeating himself. Therefore, when demons are really, actually cast out, only the Lord could be doing it. If alleged modern exorcisms are actual, then Jesus is working through Catholicism, through witch-doctors, etc. The Jews of Jesus time did not really cast out demons or they would have had the evidence to really accuse Jesus of blasphemy.

9. Two passages in Deuteronomy appear to conflict. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22.

Perhaps Deut. 13:1-5 means, If what a prophet gives as a sign or wonder *appears* to come to pass, and if he says, Let us go after other gods . . . do not follow him . . . his signs are really false.

One should not go after other gods because one knows what has appeared to come to pass, and if he says, Let us go after other gods . . . do not follow him . . . his signs are really false.

One should not go after other gods because one knows what has appeared to come to pass has only appeared to do so. Only true prophet's signs and predictions factually come to pass.

10. Those who did not repent of their sorceries, Rev. 9:21, repented not of *pharmakeion* — the Greek word for "sorceries" is the word from which we get English, pharmacy. Is it possible that the "sorcerers" worked their alleged signs and wonders by chemicals and pharmaceutical properties.

The word translated *magic* (RSV) in Acts 19:19 is Gr. *periergos* and means *curiosity, inquisitive*, or literally, "Things that are appearing to work — *superfluous*." Things not reality, but things in the realm of question or doubtful.

Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal is instructive. Elijah said, "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And during the contest the prophets of Baal could *not* call down fire from heaven! Even though they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out of them. Here is the time for the devil to do a miracle, if he can!

11. Let us consider again the text in Job.
- a. God said to Satan, "Behold all that he has is in your power. . . ." The Hebrew word is *yadeka* from *yod*, literally, "Hand." This word is used metonymically for "power" in Deut. 32:36; II Kings 19:26; Job 5:20; Psa. 22:20; 49:15; Isa. 37:27; 47:14; Dan. 6:27; Hosea 13:14; and Micah 2:1, but never of any supernatural power.
 - b. Job's first disaster was perpetrated by the Sabeans falling upon his servants and slaying animals and servants. The devil could have put it into the minds of *men* by the vehicle of

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falsehood (communicated in language) to do this.

Job's second disaster is said specifically to be the fire of *God* falling from heaven.

Job's third disaster was the Chaldeans raiding and slaying with the sword — nothing supernatural here.

Job's fourth disaster is the death of his children *while they were drinking wine*, during a windstorm. Perhaps they were deceived by Satan into getting drunk and could have escaped the windstorm had they not been drunk. This does not necessarily have to be a supernatural, occult, windstorm which the devil worked — it could be God's windstorm.

c. Job, chapter 2:

God says to the devil, “. . . you moved *me* against him” (2:3) “to destroy him. . . .” The devil moved *God* to destroy Job!

The devil says to God, “. . . put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face . . .” (2:5). The devil knows that only God has the supernatural power to touch Job's flesh.

In 2:7 the Hebrew text literally reads, “So went out Satan from the face of Jehovah. And *he struck Job with burning ulcers, bad, from the sole of his foot to the top of his head.*”

Who is the antecedent of “he” — God or Satan? The nearest is God.

d. If it is God really exercising *His* supernatural power in all this what does God give into the “hand” of Satan?

I think it is simply the permission for Satan to try to *deceive* Job (and the world) into *thinking* he (Satan) is exercising this power. Satan has permission from God to *pretend* this or these powers belong to him.

How does Satan pull off this pretense? By lying to men and letting men use all human craftiness at their disposal to make it appear what is being done is supernatural.

The devil, by lying, tempted Job (through his friends) to think what had befallen him was evil. It really was chastening. All that we think about physical discomfort or loss is that there is some supernatural evil doing evil to us. Actually it is all chastening. What is evil about it is the lie that it is not in

the sovereign control and will of God. It is the *power of fear* (of death) by which Satan enslaves men (Heb. 2:14-15). Satan has no power to supernaturally kill (or even naturally), or make alive. He has the “power” only to lie to people that he has such power.

12. Judas had power to do miracles (Matt. 10:1ff). He also allowed the devil to come into him. Who gave him power to do miracles?

Simon the Sorcerer wanted to buy Holy Spirit power to do miracles but Peter said, “You have neither part nor lot in this matter” (Acts 8:18-24).

It is possible, therefore, that those who would prophesy and exorcise demons in Matt. 7:21 did so through power given by God and then later became those “working lawlessness” (Gr. *ergazomenoi ten anomian*) (Matt. 7:23), just like Judas.

13. Or, do we propose that everything which *appears* to be miracle *is* — but that only *some* are from God and *some* are from the devil?

How do we decide which are which? Do we have to decide? We are told we should not permit ourselves to be deceived — if we do not decide which are from God, we are in danger of being deceived.

If it is to be decided on the basis of which doctrine or works are good or evil — how do we decide that? From the Bible? How do we decide the Bible is speaking the truth? And does the Bible really say the devil has authority and power to do a real miracle?

How was it decided at the very first (in the garden of Eden)? How did God expect Eve to be able to decide whether the devil could produce what he promised so she could make the decision of faith?

OR IS FAITH, A “LEAP IN THE DARK” AFTER ALL?

This is not an attempt to deny the Scriptures — it is an attempt to understand them.

Chapter Thirteen

THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTIAN MATURITY (13:1-14)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is the "charge" Paul says must be sustained by "evidence"?
2. Why bring up the subject of Christ's "weakness"?
3. What "test" must the christian not fail to meet?
4. What "improvement" does Paul want the Corinthians to make?
5. Do christians have to "agree with one another"?

SECTION 1

Maturation Through Submission (13:1-4)

13 This is the third time I am coming to you. Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—³since you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. ⁴For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God.

13:1 Witnesses: We have a written record of Paul's first visit to Corinth (Acts 18:1ff). In II Corinthians 2:1 he wrote that he did not want to make "another" "painful" visit — implying that he had already made one "painful" visit after the initial visit recorded in Acts. Now he indicates his plan for a "third" visit. He announces this "third" visit three times (12:14; 13:1, 10). The New Testament never claims to be a day-to-day, detailed, record of the movements and circumstances of each individual mentioned. In fact, the Lord Jesus said and did many things which are not recorded in the Gospel records (see John 20:30-31). The absence of documentary evidence that Paul visited Corinth the "third" time should not be a problem to the discerning student of literature.

We do not know the specific "charge." Actually, the Greek text reads, *pan hrema*, "every word." Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 19:15. "Every word" being spoken against him in Corinth will be called to account when he arrives on his "third visit."

Some think Paul's warning here goes all the way back to I Corinthians 6 where the Corinthians had lawsuits against one another. He is trying, they say, to tell them how God wants such things settled. Others think Paul intends to "set up an ecclesiastical court" when he arrives for the third visit, try those who are "sinning without repenting" and execute needed apostolic punishments.

In the context of these last four chapters, however, it seems better to assume he is referring to slanderous "words" ("charges") his opponents have brought against him. There are innuendoes and hints all the way through II Corinthians that such slander was going on. Charges were being made against him about the way he handled the money collected for the saints at Jerusalem, about his "preying" upon them, about his vacillations, about his weaknesses, etc. It appears he aims to bring these out in the open (see II Cor. 10:1-6) and demand that his opponents prove their "charges" with two or three witnesses, or repudiate them and vindicate his integrity.

If Paul's opponents are truly followers of Christ they will be glad to clear up any "charges" against him. And they will do so by this scripturally sanctioned procedure. Evidence, by eyewitnesses, must establish every "charge." This is the procedure Jesus ordered for his kingdom here on earth (see Matt. 18:15-20). This same procedure is to be followed in Christ's kingdom (the Church) to this very day! This is the way to deal with "charges" against a minister of the gospel or an elder or a Sunday School teacher, or any member of a congregation. Preachers are especially plagued with the problem of immature christians who pass on innuendoes, gossip, hearsay, and speculations from one person to another. Many preachers have been deeply hurt in their souls by this "plague." Christians need to *grow up!* Christians need to understand that every "word" implying a preacher is not ministering in the spirit of Christ must be established or "sustained" (Gr. *stathesetai*, from *histeme*, "stand up") at the "mouth" (Gr. *stomatos*) of two "witnesses" (Gr. *marturon*, Eng. *martyr*, one who testifies). This is the adult, mature, christian way to deal with charges about a man's character. It is certainly out-of-character for a christian

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to charge a preacher with misconduct on the basis of hearsay or gossip or innuendo.

13:2 Warning: Evidently, Paul had not previously demanded evidence and witnesses for the slanderous things said about him when he visited Corinth the "second" time. He had let the matter pass, believing the Corinthians would know better than to be seduced by the false teachers.

So what did they do? They accused him of "weakness" and "vacillation" because he tried to let the matter pass. He had hoped to spare the brethren and himself the pain of a "powerful" visit. But the seduction worsened! Many were about to be led astray! Paul must face the seduction down. The truth must be established. Innuendoes and gossip must be tried and exposed. The liars must be repudiated.

He had warned them during his "second visit" that if the matter of the false teachers was not settled, he would come a "third time" and would not spare them. It appears there were some in Corinth who had been persuaded that Paul had not proved Christ's authority in his ministry. They insinuated that he must demonstrate some proof — perhaps some "powerful" miracle or divine revelation.

Paul's replies, in essence, "You have asked for proof that I am what I claim — the true apostle of Christ. You shall have it but you will not like it. I will show you my power by not sparing those who need punishment." The Greek word used here, *pheisomai*, is almost always used in connection with "sparing" some punishment. Paul had demonstrated his power to punish false teachers ("servants of Satan") when he miraculously made Elymas blind (see Acts 13:4-12).

The mature christian does not need continual demonstration of apostolic "power." The mature christian will respond with repentance when confronted with verbal warning from an apostle. But these Corinthian christians were immature! (see I Cor. 3:1ff; 14:20ff). And so are many christians today!

Spiritual "children" insist on demonstrations of authority. And all Christians are spiritual "children" at their beginning walk with Jesus. The Biblical record of miracles done in the presence of eyewitnesses is there to supply the need for a demonstration of "power" and "authority." Once that record is established and believed, however, the christian "babe" needs go on to christian maturation and not require repeated demonstrations of apostolic

authority.

13:3-4 Weakness: It is probable that the false teachers at Corinth had led some of the church members to think Christ had been crucified because he was "weak." Remember, this was what the Jewish rulers thought — Jesus of Nazareth was a weakling. It was what the majority of the populace of Jerusalem thought. It was what Pilate thought. It was even what his own apostles and disciples thought until after his resurrection.

There were those in Corinth having difficulty with the resurrection of Christ (see I Cor. 15). This very significant problem to their faith would present the Judaizers a ready-made opportunity to persuade some that a "crucified Messiah" is a "weak" Messiah. Furthermore, Judaizers would try to convince believers that a Messiah not advocating the Mosaic Law and Judaistic system was a "weak" Messiah.

But Paul says, "The Messiah is not weak in what he is doing in you, is he? He is powerful! The very fact that you are Christians in comparison to what some of you were (I Cor. 6:9, 11) is a demonstration of Christ's power!" Furthermore, all the powerful spiritual gifts they had been exercising by Paul's mediation in the name of Christ was proof of Christ's power! It should have been clear that they did not get this regenerating power and their charismatic miracles from the Mosaic Law or the Jewish system.

Many philosophies and theologies today look upon the Christ of the Bible as a "weak" Christ. Unbelieving theologians look upon the miracles of the Gospel accounts as mythological embellishments by "ignorant ancients" to give an "aura" of power to the religion of pacifistic, weak Jesus. So, to restore the "historical Jesus" to the world and to give him and his "religion" more power, these theologians aim to "demythologize" the Gospels. That is, they set about stripping the Gospel accounts of all miraculous events or deeds or prophecies. They would eliminate all absolutes, all commandments, all Jesus' claims to deity, the virgin birth of Jesus, Christ's resurrection from the dead and all other miracles. Thus they would give us a strong, "historical Jesus."

Jesus was "weak" according to an unbelieving world's criterion of "weakness." He did go meekly to the cross with no physical resistance. He made no struggle to free himself. He appealed only to

the truth and to men's consciences to deter them from crucifying him because he was innocent of their accusations. But the literal, historical, actual, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead proved all his claims to divine power, proved all his claims to moral perfection, proved all his claims to supernatural revelation, and proved that he did not die in "weakness" but in the power of God. His resurrection proves the power of his death to vicariously atone for all the sins of those who believe and trust in his grace. He proved by his resurrection that he had overcome the ultimate enemies of the human race — sin and death. That is power! No other being has ever had that power!

Believers should have no problem acknowledging the power of Jesus. He has demonstrated his power objectively in history, over sin and death. And because of this historical act of power, his power for righteousness (through his grace) works in all human beings who surrender to him in faith. Any doubting of his power is a retrogression toward spiritual immaturity.

SECTION 2

Maturation Through Self-Examination (13:5-10)

5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! ⁶I hope you will find out that we have not failed. ⁷But we pray God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. ⁸For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. What we pray for is your improvement. ¹⁰I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

13:5 Checking Oneself: The whole purpose of preaching is to produce self-examination in the hearer. A major difficulty most preachers

face is this very concept. Too often some of those who sit and listen to their preacher's sermons believe the preacher is "examining" them. Resentment builds, and people are offended, and congregations are divided. And sometimes people, like some of the Corinthians, do not understand that preaching the apostolic word is intended to produce *self-examination*.

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." He also said, "Know thyself." There is only one way a person can really examine "self." That is by reading and believing the Bible. The prophet Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt: who can understand it? I search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, says the Lord" (Jer. 17:9). No human being can know his own heart, regardless of how often and how thoroughly he thinks he examines "himself." Man is prone to "self-deception." The apostle Paul verified the idea that human beings cannot accurately examine "self" when he wrote that he would not even judge himself because he would be an imperfect judge of himself. Paul contended that only the Lord could judge him (know him) perfectly (I Cor. 4:3-5).

Yet, here is the same apostle telling the Corinthians to "examine" (Gr. *peirazete* "test, try, prove") themselves to see if they are "in" (Gr. *en*, "in") the faith. He repeats, "Test yourselves" (Gr. *dokimazete*, "prove as the purity and worth of metals are proved in a crucible"). Both Greek verbs are present tense, imperative mood. Literally translated they are apostolic commandments for christians to go on or continually prove and test themselves to determine whether they are "in the faith" or not. The spiritual immaturity of these Corinthians which would make them vulnerable to false teachers made their standing "in the faith" tenuous, so Paul said they needed a "theological check." The Bible is the living word of God, operative (Gr. *energes*, "energized") and incisive (Gr. *diiknoumenos*, "penetrating") exposing the soul and spirit, discerning (Gr. *kritikos*, "critiquing") thoughts and intentions of the human heart (see Heb. 4:12-13).

It should appear altogether logical that if a person wants to "test" himself as to whether he is "in the Christian faith" or not he will *compare* his thinking and acting to the *objective standard* in which the Christian faith is delineated and documented — *the Bible* (especially,

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the New Testament). This is what Paul is telling the Corinthians to do here. They are to "examine themselves" according to the truth of God which he had preached and written to them. The apostolic documents are the divinely sanctioned, objective standard, of the Christian faith. Paul is saying to the Corinthians what he said to the Galatians (Gal. 1:8-9). Any "other gospel" or "other Jesus" than that of apostolic preaching and writing is false and based on a false teacher's *subjective* "imaginings" and "arrogances."

Both of the Greek words Paul uses (*peirazete* and *dokimazete*) are words used to indicate a procedure by which something is tried, tested, submitted to examination in order to prove genuineness, reality, truth and factuality. Both words indicate a procedure by which something is compared with an objective standard to prove its conformity to the standard. If it passes the comparison with the objective standard, it is proved to be real and true.

Spiritually mature christians take the Bible in hand, read it, believe it, and examine their thoughts and deeds according to what Christ and his apostles say in it. They do not lay the Bible aside, disregard it, and examine their thoughts according to what *they*, subjectively or wishfully, *want* the Lord to say. They are seeking the Lord's will on every matter and circumstance — not their own will. They are determined to understand what Christ and the apostles actually say and write, according to what words mean, contextually, historically, grammatically.

Pooled human knowledge, sociologically accumulated mores, technological advancement, human autonomy, has no right to say the words of Christ and his apostles mean something different today just because the words were spoken and written some two thousands years ago. The words of the Bible mean what they meant as used by the writers and they mean the same thing today! In practice they may have to be applied to fit technological advances, but spiritually, morally, psychologically, philosophically their principles and standards of conduct remain the same, because they *mean* the same! The moral principles and doctrinal tenets of God are absolute — they never change. They are never to be altered. God's word, the Bible, is a divine revelation in human language, a perfect, absolute, unalterable benchmark or touchstone (standard) by which any human being may examine himself to see if he is "in the Christian faith" or not.

But the huge majority of the world (including many religious people) want to “examine” the human heart by “subjective” standards. They want to rewrite the Bible to conform it to “subjectivism.” That is simply a “cop-out” (a “smoke-screen”) designed to usurp God’s sovereignty and enthrone man’s!

13:6-8 Comparing With Others: It is very important to notice the *order* of Paul’s statements in these next verses. First the Corinthians are to examine themselves (by the word Paul preached to them) to see if they have received God’s grace. Second, if they have become christians (by receiving the Gospel invitation through faith and obedience), *then Christ is in them*. That is the promise of the objective standard — the word of God. They need no subjective, emotional experience to assure them that Christ is in them if they “pass” the “examination.” Parenthetically, Paul hopes his ministry has not failed to bring them into Christ. Third, if they have received the Gospel, are in God’s grace and “in” Christ (which they can know by “examining” themselves according to the objective standard), Paul prays they will not do *wrong* (Gr. *kakon*, evil) but that they will do *right* (Gr. *kalon*, good). This is what Paul wants for the Corinthians, even if they have judged (subjectively is the only way they could have made such a judgment) Paul to be a failure. Paul is not saying a person has to be “right” or “good” to qualify for the grace of God or to become a christian. But he is saying that *after* a person has become a christian, by the grace of God, he should continually examine himself according to God’s objective standard of “good” and “right” and continue to strive for it by the power of Christ which is in him. We belong to God by grace. But that does not mean grace is to be “taken for granted”! The inexpressible unsearchable, infinite grace of God extended to sinners through faith in Jesus Christ should lead such sinners to constant self-examination and mental submission to God’s direction as to what is good. Surrender of the mind to God’s objective standard of “good” will result in the christian doing deeds which his word says are “good.”

Paul is trying to point out that even if the Corinthians considered him a “failure,” that would not justify the Corinthians from refusing to examine themselves by the Gospel of Christ which he preached (proved authentic by objective demonstration of miracles). Men *do* fail — even apostles (e.g. Peter in Gal. 2:11) — God *never* fails. His standards *never* vary! His grace *never* disappears! If a person has

received God's grace by faith in Christ, he must move steadily toward the "good" of God no matter what other men may do!

While it may appear to the Corinthians that Paul was a "failure" he avers that his every word and action toward them was motivated by his desire to do the truth. He testifies that he would never *knowingly* do *anything* against (Gr. *kata*, opposite, beyond) the truth. He morally and conscientiously, always wanted to be *for* the truth. If he failed, it was not because he was *against* the truth. Even when he was persecuting christians, he believed he was "doing God a service" and standing *for* the truth.

The person who is *for* the truth, even though ignorant of what the truth is, can become a follower of Jesus! But those who have no intention of doing what is true because it displeases them, even if they know what the truth is, can never become christians no matter how "orthodox" their behavior! There are such people. God knows that no human being can be perfect, but any one whose desire is to *know* the truth and *have* the truth and *do* the truth will come *under his grace* where there is *no condemnation* (see Rom. 7:21 — 8:8).

13:9-10 Correction the Objective: The goal of all the "visits," the letters, the sending of co-workers to Corinth was to get them to "mend their ways." It was spiritual maturation, or, as Paul puts it, "for building up and not for tearing down."

The Greek word *katartisin* (13:9) is translated "improvement," but it literally means, "set in order again" or "restore" or "repair." It is the same word which is translated "mend your ways" in 13:11. In other words, Paul urged the Corinthians to return to their "newly-wed" status with Christ. They needed to restore their "marriage" to Jesus and renounce any and all relationships to the false teachers who would enslave them to legalism. Paul used this same Greek word in I Corinthians 1:10 where it is translated "united." Our relationship to Christ needs constant "repair" or "restoration" or "rejoining." The apostle hoped this letter would "repair" their relationship to Christ. If it did not, he would have to use his apostolic authority, "severely" (Gr. *apotomos*, sharply, curtly, cuttingly, abruptly).

Does apostolic authority wielded "curtly" edify (build up)? It did in the first century! Check the book of Acts. After the experience with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things . . . and more than

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ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. Paul's "curtness" with the Corinthians, Galatians, and others was one of his apostolic methods to save vulnerable "babes in Christ" from the "wolves in sheep's clothing" (false teachers). Jesus spoke "curtly" with Pharisees to try to save their souls. Jesus wrote "curt" letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor (see Revelation ch. 2-3). The prophets of the Old Testament spoke "curtly" to an idolatrous nation of Israel and saved a remnant to bring the Messiah into the world. God's word, the church, Christians are dealing with eternal matters — with heaven and hell — forever. All the severity necessary to "restore" or "mend" a person's "marriage" to Christ will receive glad thanks as the eons roll by in heaven! It may not be appreciated here, where too often our perspective is limited by the desire for ease and comfort for the flesh, but no discipline is pleasurable for the moment — it yields its peaceable fruit unto righteousness over the "long-haul," (see Heb. 12:11). Paul was a man who cared for people's eternal blessedness. He was willing to sacrifice their momentary displeasure with his apostolic "curtness" for their salvation! Are we???

Maturing Christians should be able to handle "curtness" from the word of God. If life consisted only of pleasantries and flatteries and inanities there would be no spiritual growth. The life that leads to spiritual growth must be "salted" with the "fires" of warnings, chastenings, corrections, severities and even "curtness" if necessary.

SECTION 3

Solidarity (13:11-14)

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹²Greet one another with a holy kiss.

¹³All the saints greet you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

13:11 Agreeableness: Christian maturation (growth) is dependent upon Christian accord. At the same time, Christian accord produces

christian growth. They go together like "love and marriage." Once again Paul uses a series of Greek verbs in the present tense and imperative mood. They are like the staccato bursts of sub-machine-gun. The Greek text reads, *Loipon, adelphoi, chairete, katartizesthe, parakaleisthe, to auto phroneite, eireneuete. . .* There are five imperative verbs in that sentence! They all end in "ete" or "esthe" or "eite." Literally, the Greek phrase would read, "For the rest (of the time), brethren, you rejoice, you restore yourselves, you admonish yourselves, the same thing, you all think, you be at peace. . . ." These they are to do continually.

This is not exactly the most tactful way to end a letter. He is saying, "Straighten yourselves out!" The Greek words *to auto phroneite*, mean literally, "I order you to go on continually being of the same thinking. . . ." Remember, Paul started his "first" letter to the Corinthians with the same admonition (see I Cor. 1:10). Paul does not mean that every christian has to have the same opinion, where opinions are permissible. But he *does* mean every christian *must think the same way* where the Bible specifically clarifies itself and where its commandments and doctrines are clearly made. The Bible is *God's* word, not man's! And when God commands, every man must see the command the same way, think the same way about it, and do the same obedience. Where there are no specific commands, every christian *must think the same way* about *how* opinions are to be exercised, not *what* opinion may be held. The matter of "thinking the same" must be of utmost significance for Paul to begin and end his two epistles to Corinth with an imperative admonition about it. Apostolic doctrine, apostolic principles, apostolic authority is of supreme importance. What we *think* about the Gospel and apostolic doctrine determines our eternal destiny and the destiny of others!

13:12-13 Affection: Genuine affection is a sign of spiritual maturity. Mature christians will find ways of expressing brotherly love. Paul uses the imperative verb, *aspasasthe* ("greet, salute, welcome, pay respects") urging the Corinthians to "greet one another" with "a holy kiss" (Gr. *en hagio philemati*). The "kiss" of greeting was an ancient custom and generally upon the cheek, forehead or beard. The "holy kiss" (or cheek-to-cheek embrace, as in France today) was adopted as a formal greeting among christians of the first centuries (see Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26; I Pet. 5:14). The

“holy kiss” was given by men to men and by women to women. Peter exhorts christians to “love one another earnestly from the heart” (I Pet. 1:22). Peter uses the word *agape* (divine-kind-of-love) in his exhortation. Christian affection is not merely sentiment or feeling. It is that, but much more. It is caring and serving and dying to self for others when one does not even “feel” like doing so. That is *mature* christian affection. Affection that will not die-to-self for others is not mature — it is a sham, facade, and feigned (hypocritical).

13:14 Association: Ultimately, christian maturity depends upon the association a believer has with his Lord! Paul closes his “second” letter to the Corinthian christians with a benediction (prayer) that “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” be *with* (Gr. *meta*, “together with”) all of them.

If christians have the “grace of Christ” and the “love of God” and the “fellowship of the Holy Spirit” they need nothing more! This is Paul’s summation of all he wishes for the Corinthian christians. Sum up all he has said in this epistle and the “first” one, and this is what they needed.

Sum it all up, and *in every circumstance* we may find ourselves, starving to death, dying in a hospital, being killed by persecutors, this is all we need! For this body, which we so devotedly try to preserve (by eating, sheltering, dieting, exercising, protecting, doctoring) *must be shed* before we enter Paradise. All of that which we *think* we *desperately* need, in the end, is not needed at all.

If we are trusting in the grace of Christ, trusting in the love of God, and sharing with the Holy Spirit of God in his work in our lives and in the world, *nothing* can separate us from Paradise. As a matter of fact, we would probably be more apt to have the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit if we had *less* of what *this* world has to offer. Most certainly, if we have more of this world than we need, we had better be giving some of it away so it can make “friends” for us in the eternal abode because sooner or later it will all be left behind — even our physical bodies.

Let us learn to be content with weaknesses (transitoriness) because in that, with grace, love and the Holy Spirit, we can be eternally powerful. And with an association in the Divine Godhead of grace, love and fellowship, all our problems, whether saint or preacher, will

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become powers.

APPREHENSIONS:

1. How many visits did Paul make to Corinth?
2. What is Paul indicating he is going to clear up when he arrives in Corinth?
3. What does the Bible say about accusations, slander, gossip — how is it to be dealt with in the kingdom of God?
4. What did Paul mean when he said he would “not spare” them?
5. Was Jesus crucified because he was “weak”?
6. How did God prove Jesus’ death was not due to weakness?
7. Are christians to “examine” themselves, or not?
8. How is this “examination” to be conducted?
9. Was Paul’s ministry to Corinth a “failure”? How do we know?
10. What if it had been a failure?
11. Why did the Corinthians need “improving”?
12. Was being of the same mind significant at Corinth? Why? How do you know?

APPLICATIONS:

1. Is the Biblical instruction on dealing with accusations, offenses, disharmony relevant for today’s circumstances and situations in the church?
2. Are these instructions being followed by the 20th century church? Why?
3. Did Paul have any right to “warn” the Corinthians that he would not “spare” them on his next visit?
4. Should christians today consider the apostolic writings as “warnings” to them.
5. What should be done about apostolic “warnings”?
6. Do you have any “power” from Christ in your daily life? What? How?
7. Have you “examined” yourself lately to see whether you are “in the faith”?

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8. How did you conduct that examination?
9. Can any person (christian or non-christian) make the same examination?
10. What if another christian "fails" in his christian witness? Does that mean you do not have to do "right"? Why?
11. Does God expect us to always be "for the truth"? Are we? How much should we love the truth?
12. What "improvements" or "restoration" have you made in your christian life recently? Have you ever had to "mend" your ways?
13. If you had everything taken away from you like Job, and had left only the grace of Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, would it be enough for you?

Special Study

THE TASK OF THE CHURCH IS TO EQUIP MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

The end product: An evangelist:

1. Whose aim is love issuing from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith, I Tim. 1:5
2. Who will be committed to *waging* the *good* warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. 1:18
3. Who will urge supplications and prayers for political leaders in order that the gospel may be preached. 2:1ff
4. Who will know how brethren ought to behave in the church of God and be able to lead in selecting elders and deacons. 3:1ff
5. Who will be able to instruct the brethren about deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. 4:1-5
6. Who will have nothing to do with silly myths. 4:7
7. Who will train himself in godliness. 4:7
8. Who will so command and teach that no one will be offended at his youthfulness. 4:11-12
9. Who will set an example in speech, conduct, love, purity. 4:12
10. Who will *attend* to public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching. 4:13
11. Who will *practice* the above duties, who will *devote* himself to them, so that all may *see* his *progress*. 4:13
12. Who will be able to treat properly younger and older men and women, instructing them. 5:1ff
13. Who will know how to properly make public rebuke of persistent sinners. This he is charged to do in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels. 5:20 *Who will not be partial*. 5:21.
14. Who will not participate in wrong doing. 5:22
15. Who will take care of his physical condition. 4:8; 5:23
16. Who will teach and urge proper human relationships with the world. 6:1-2
17. Who will shun materialism. 6:3-10
18. Who will aim for righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness. 6:11ff

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19. Who will charge the rich in this world to do good deeds with their riches. 6:17ff
20. Who will avoid godless chatter and contradictions or what is falsely called knowledge. 6:20-21
21. Who will kindle a spirit of power and love and self-control in himself. II Tim. 1:7
22. Who will not be ashamed of testifying of Christ. 1:8
23. Who will take his share of suffering for Christ. 1:8
24. Who will follow the pattern of apostolic sound words. 1:13
25. Who will *guard* the *truth*. 1:14
26. Who will be *strong in grace*. 2:1
27. Who will commit the gospel to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. 2:2
28. Who will shun encumbrances not relative to service for Christ. 2:3ff
29. Who will be able to charge others not to dispute about words. 2:14ff
30. Who will be able to handle aright the word of truth. 2:15
31. Who will purify himself as a vessel for the Lord. 2:21
32. Who will shun youthful passions. 2:22
33. Who will not be quarrelsome, but kind to *everyone*. 2:24
34. Who will be an *apt* teacher. 2:24
35. Who will *comprehend* real opposers of the truth and *avoid* them. 3:1-9
36. Who will continue in what he has learned and know those from whom he has learned it. 3:14
37. Who will *preach* the *word* even when it is not seasonable, with *urgency* and long suffering. 4:1-4
38. Who will be always steady, and endure suffering. 4:5
39. Who will do the *work* of an evangelist, and *fulfill* his ministry. 4:5
40. Who will beware of the enemies of the gospel. 4:9ff
41. Who will assist and strengthen the hands of their "fathers in the faith" 4:9ff

The raw material: Young and old people from all circumstances:

Examples of all types may be found in the scriptures

TASK OF THE CHURCH

1. I Corinthians 1:26-29
 - a. not many wise
 - b. not many powerful
 - c. not many of noble birth
 - d. the foolish
 - e. the weak
 - f. the low and despised

2. I Corinthians 3:14
 - a. babes in Christ
 - b. jealous
 - c. divisive and factious

3. I Corinthians 6:9-11
 - a. formerly immoral
 - b. formerly idolaters
 - c. formerly adulterers
 - d. formerly homosexuals
 - e. formerly thieves
 - f. formerly greedy
 - g. formerly drunkards
 - h. formerly revilers
 - i. formerly robbers

4. I Thessalonians 4:11-12; II Thessalonians 3:6-14
 - a. nosy
 - b. busybodies
 - c. lazy
 - d. overly dependent on others
 - e. idle
 - f. unruly

5. Hebrews 5:11-14
 - a. incapable of distinguishing good from evil

6. I Corinthians 12:1ff
 - a. those of differing talents and capacities

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7. I Corinthians 14:37-40
 - a. those who misunderstand spirituality
8. Galatians and Romans
 - a. those with tendencies to legalism

Examples of all types may be found in the apostles

1. Peter - impetuous, big-mouthed, rough and ready to fight
2. Simon the Zealot - politically right-winger
3. Matthew - social outcast
4. Thomas - melancholy, dubious
5. James & John - ambitious, sectarian
6. Philip - inquisitive but dense
7. Judas Iscariot - complainer, criticizer, thief, traitor
8. Paul - pharisaic, intellectual, cultured, zealous
9. Nathanael - guileless, naive

All the apostles had some of the following characteristics provincialism, pride, ambition, materialism, sectarianism, spiritual dullness, impetuosity

Our task: demands as much of the nature of the Master Teacher we can assimilate:

1. The propositionally revealed Word of God, the Bible, must *always* take precedence in training evangelists. Content, methods, ministerial ethics must all conform to this Word
2. Instructional excellence
3. Understanding, humor, sincerity
4. Patience, longsuffering, love, forgiveness
5. Forthrightness, consistency, adaptability
6. Firmness, discipline
7. Courage to face and denounce that which is false
8. Sacrifice of self for the end product
9. Refusal to accept anything but the best from each individual

In short, our task is greater than imparting a few methods or ways to

TASK OF THE CHURCH

quick success. We are not even primarily interested in preparing persons for a life's vocation. We are not aiming just at changing the lifestyles of people. WE ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF CONVERTING PEOPLE. IF WE SUCCEED IN CONVERTING, WE SHALL SUCCEED IN EQUIPPING A MINISTRY. IF WE FAIL IN CONVERTING, WE SHALL FAIL IN EQUIPPING!

Special Study

VALUES ARE . . .

Introduction

C.C. Crawford, in *Common Sense Ethics*, defines the subject: "Morality is the relation of man's free deliberate acts to the standard to which they must conform in order to be suitable to man as such, to confer on him the perfection of which he is capable and to bring him to the ends for which he exists."

- I. THE MORALS AND VALUES OF MAN ARE AN INSEPARABLE PART OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE TOTALITY OF BEING.
 - A. "When Gentiles who have not the law (*revealed* standard of right and wrong) do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts . . ." Rom. 2:14-15.
 - B. Ultimate moral truth is *incorporated* in the *structure* of human nature and human natural relationships. This is sometimes called "natural moral law," or just "the moral law."
 - C. Cicero said: "The law is not in opinion but in nature." In other words, there is a common standard of right and wrong which may be understood by anyone with common sense, and it has nothing to do with individual feelings.
 - D. There is a universal moral law, as distinct from a moral code, which consists of certain statements of fact about the nature of man; and by behaving in conformity with this moral law, man enjoys his true freedom:
 1. The universal moral law is not a question of feeling, but of fact.
 2. When it has been ascertained, a moral code can be drawn up to direct human behavior and prevent men, as far as possible, from doing violence to their own nature.
 3. Defy this moral law and the race will perish in a few generations (See Rom. 1:18-32, esp. 1:28).
 - E. Man's external relationships, seen from this "natural moral

VALUES ARE . . .

order" are three:

1. Dependence — upon the laws of nature and nature's God.
2. Equality — with his fellow human beings.
3. Proprietorship over subhuman orders and creation.

These relationships inhere in the nature of things; they are the "givens" — man does not create them, nor can he change them in any way; he finds them here on his arrival in the world; and from them all his rights and obligations derive.

F. THE MORAL LAW IS THAT LAW WHICH IS THE PROMULGATION IN MAN OF THE ETERNAL LAW, THE WILL OF GOD, THE LAW BY WHICH THE HUMAN BEING IS CONSTITUTED A PERSON AND BY WHICH, THEREFORE, HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN NATURAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE ORDAINED TO BE PRECISELY WHAT THEY ARE.

1. The primary principles of the Moral Law are set forth in the TWO Great Commandments (Matt. 22:35-40, etc.).
2. The secondary principles of the Moral Law are incorporated in the broad general norms of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) Exod. 20:1-17.

G. The basic principles of the moral law are amenable to human apprehension (even to reason unaided by special revelation) by means of the principle of universalization.

1. The determination of the goodness or badness of an act on the ground of what the result would be if the act were universalized — that is, if everybody did it.
2. Murder, theft, adultery, lying, perjury, covenant breaking, disrespect for parents — universalized, would destroy social order!!!

II. VALUES, DEFINED, (GREEK WORD FOR VALUES IS *AXIOS*, "WORTH")

A. Value-judgments are the very core of our being. They are the essential fibers of life. "To live is to act, and to act is to choose, and to choose is to evaluate."

All human beings have a set of values or a value-system by which they make choices and act.

B. Values come from *meanings*. In other words, we evaluate

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everything — things, actions, people — according to our concept of the *meaning* of existence and life.

- C. Meanings come from what we *believe* about origins, purposes, goals, destinies.
- D. The bottom line is that our *values* depend upon what we *believe*! There are no people who believe nothing! Everyone has a “faith-system” because everyone has a belief about “meanings” and everyone evaluates and makes moral decisions on the basis of that belief!
- E. Values are what human beings live *for* and live *by*. Our thoughts motives, and actions are geared to our value-system. Every facet of human life is affected by our value-system. We choose our jobs, our mates, our education, our friends according to our values. We rear our children according to our values.

We try to make our life count according to what we value most.

- F. Value means “worth.” We “rate” things and people and life by our value-system. We rate things and ideas and actions and relationships on a worth-scale. And we invariably, inevitably live out our lives doing, thinking, relating, to what we have decided is WORTH the most!
- G. The crucial question, then, becomes, WHO OR WHAT DETERMINES FOR A PERSON WHAT IS “WORTH” THE MOST?
- H. *Principle* is another synonym for *value*. A “principle” is an ultimate, a primary basis of thought and action, a settled rule, a governing motive for action. A moral principle is a truth (principle) for resolving competing claims. There are exceptions to rules, but never to principles. A moral principle is not only a rule of action, but a reason for action.

III. VALUES WILL ALWAYS BE ADOPTED AND DECIDED ON THE BASIS OF SOME *AUTHORITY*

- A. The human mind finds meaning and reality from some authority. To find *ultimate* meaning and reality, there has to be an *ultimate* authority! Authority determines meaning — meaning determines values. Values are always chosen on the basis of what is *believed* to be ultimately *real*, ultimately *final*,

(absolutely real or final).

- B. *Authority* is not optional — without it there is chaos and anarchy. All of life necessarily revolves around authority; learning, the social structure of the home, civil society, vocation — all depend upon some authority for their very existence.
- C. Authority is inseparably connected with life. We cannot enjoy life or accomplish anything of worth without authority. Man is not the author of his own existence; he is creature — not Creator.
 Man is a contingent being (dependent). Every human being inevitably subjects himself to some authority outside himself whether he thinks so or not (even the Bible tells us this in Rom. 6:16; Prov. 5:22; John 8:34; Acts 8:32; Rom. 7:23; II Pet. 2:19).
- D. “If human equality has any worthwhile significance, it is obvious that no person has any inherent authority over another person. How, then, can nothing be added to nothing (some 250,000,000 times, or *ad infinitum*) and get something?” Sovereignty, therefore, cannot *de facto* be in the people. Hence, it is a fundamental of Biblical ethics that God alone is Sovereign of the universe; that, therefore, all human exercise of authority is by His sufferance. Cf. Rom. 13:1; Jer. 18:7-10; 27:1-15; Isa. 10:5-19, I Pet. 2:13-17, etc.).
- E. Values derived from human authority alone are inadequate!
1. Logic proves it. The mind of man must think functionally within the framework of reality (this present creation). The mind receives information from the data of reality — sifts that info through the innate logical categories — and produces concepts and ideas. The great apostle Paul tells us that our data (creation) forces the mind to acknowledge a power or authority *higher* than itself (a god) (Rom. 1:18ff). Now the human mind may “refuse” to acknowledge *Jehovah* as that higher authority — but it cannot dismiss the *logical demand* for a higher authority!
 2. History (both ancient and contemporary) proves it. Surely the history of man is long enough, broad enough, detailed enough to document the bankruptcy of human concepts

of a higher (divine) authority. The inhumanities and obscenities of ancient civilizations, compared with the moral stature and cultural refinement of the Israelites (when they *accepted* the authority of Jehovah) show the stark contrast! The ethical and cultural leavening of society by true, Biblical Christianity contrasted with godless ideological (fascist, communist) societies proves it.

3. Contemporary experience proves it. Evolutionism has proven irrelevant and powerless to fulfill the needs of contemporary man. Humanism (man as the ultimate authority, ultimate meaning, ultimate reality) has proven not only impotent, but illogical and self-contradictory. All humanistic systems of authority and value have experientially produced only *despair* — this can be documented from the writings of humanistic philosophers, theologians, and artists.

The "Nego" (*Life* magazine, May 25, 1962) . . . "This is a world of madness-absurd, stupid. Nothing's solid. There are no values to depend upon. . . I haven't any goals because I don't know what to aim for. . ."

THESE WERE STUDENTS FROM SOME OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS PREP-SCHOOLS IN AMERICA, 25 YEARS AGO, INTERVIEWED ABOUT THEIR VIEWS OF LIFE'S MEANING, VALUES, GOALS. AND DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY PUT THE BLAME FOR THEIR DESPAIR? ON DARWINISM, FREUDIANISM, HUMANISM!

4. Man is finite and all his knowledge is limited by his finiteness. Death is the ultimate authority on the human level — and that can produce no other perspective (view-point, meaning, reality) than DESPAIR!

All humanistic values, when death is the ultimate, become *worthless*!

"Life is never more *absurd* than at the grave" — Camus. Existential philosophy is teaching people today (young people in H.S. and college) that man is a meaningless passion thrust into an unwanted, meaningless, existence.

VALUES ARE . . .

If meaningless is man's ultimate authority — his value-system will tell him that there is no value in anything or anyone — not even in life itself!

VALUES CANNOT BE DETERMINED BY CONSEQUENCES (PRAGMATISM) BECAUSE MAN DOES NOT KNOW THE FUTURE. . . . NOR CAN HE PERCEIVE OR PREDICT "HIDDEN" CONSEQUENCES!

III. VALUES ARE NEEDS — NOT WANTS

A. Values must come from some objectivity outside the human ego itself. Values *cannot* be left to total subjectivity for their source.

1. Man is innately self-centered, egoistic, selfish. The "flesh" (humanness) focuses on self-preservation at all costs.
2. When human beings are honest with themselves they will admit this (Paul the apostle did — Rom. 7:15-25; Gal. 5:16-17).

Everyday experience teaches us this truth. We are always "wanting" and seldom saying, "I need" — especially when it may be physically or psychologically unpleasant.

3. Conscience proves this truth! Often we "want" things or evaluate things (or relationships) as "worthy" *against* our conscience which tells us we do not "need" what we "want."
4. The very fact that we feel "oughtness" tells us that our value-system must come from without — apart from our own selves.
5. All human beings do, as a matter of fact, come to their values from some source outside themselves.
Even those humanists and existentialists who strongly advocate that values must come solely from within the human being himself, ARE TELLING OTHERS (AND WHEN YOU TELL SOMEONE SOMETHING YOU BECOME AN "AUTHORITY") WHAT THE SOURCE OF THEIR VALUES SHOULD BE!!

B. Because values are primarily what we NEED instead of what

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we want we must have values revealed to us from an ABSOLUTE SOURCE . . . AN ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY.

We must find an absolutely Sovereign Person who knows and is able to reveal what is absolutely valuable for us.

1. Without an absolute, infallible source, revealing values to finite human beings, such beings are left with finite, relativistic values.
 2. Without an absolute, final, unimpeachable source for values outside of finite man himself, he will invariably decide what is valuable for him relative to THE FLESH, TO HIS HUMANNESS, AND SELFISHLY . . . EGOCENTRICALLY!
 3. Of course, the humanist is going to say, "What is wrong with ego-centricity?"
What is wrong with it is — MAN IS A SOCIAL BEING!
He is thrust into a social existence, whether he wants it or not. He does not, cannot, exist without others and relationships with them.
To practice a value-system based totally on egocentricity is impossible, and, were it possible, it would lead to social chaos and destruction.
 4. Total egocentricity in the determination of meaning, choice of values, and in actions is the EXISTENTIAL DOCTRINE (but not the existential practice).
- C. The Bible clearly teaches that what man often wants is not what he always NEEDS!
1. Paul wanted God to take away his "thorn in the flesh," but God said that His grace was sufficient (what Paul needed) for Paul II Cor. 12.
 2. What the rich young ruler wanted was to be a disciple of Jesus and keep his riches; Jesus said what he needed was to give all his riches to the poor and then be a follower, Matt. 19; Mark 10; Luke 18.
 3. What the seven churches of Asia Minor wanted and what Jesus said they needed (repentance) were very different.
 4. Even things which seem innocent and correct enough in themselves are not always valuable or needed (I Cor. 8-9-10; Rom. 14).

5. THE ONLY WAY MAN CAN BE SURE HIS VALUES ARE WHAT HE NEEDS AND NOT MERELY WHAT HE WANTS IS TO LET AN INFALLIBLE SOURCE REVEAL IT TO HIM!

V. VALUES ARE ULTIMATELY SPIRITUAL

- A. Human beings are not just matter — not just physical beings, they are also spiritual — essentially, spiritual.
 1. Man transcends physical limitations (by mind). He can transcend time and space mentally. He reasons; he communicates; he plans; remembers; ideates (conceptualizes); symbolizes; loves; hates; wishes; imagines.
 2. If man were *only* physical, he would function only by instinct without any conscience (he would neither regret nor approve); he would condemn no one else's behavior nor approve it. He would be completely amoral — have no feeling of responsibility.
 3. Man is an eternal spirit, made in the image of his Creator who is Eternal Spirit.
- B. Human beings are persons.
 1. Their problems are *personal* problems — not merely mechanical or physical problems. They often have problems totally unrelated to that which is material and physical. And even those problems that seem related only to the physical are ultimately related to the spiritual — philosophical — mental essence of man.
 2. We cannot be sure of what is valuable or worthy until we see it *proven* worthy or valuable in a *person*.
 3. The reality or non-reality of the world, of life, and of values (or morality) must be found preeminently in a person, and the ultimate point where reality meets our problems will be acceptable **ONLY IN AN ULTIMATE PERSON!**
- C. Truth and Love and Life and Immortality are more than abstractions — they are personal — they deal with the spirit and not the material.
 1. If the reality of the world and morality is to be affirmed or denied, it must be at the personal, philosophical,

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spiritual level not the physical.

2. If the meaning of existence is to be found, it must be at the personal, spiritual level. If the meaning of suffering is to be found, it must be at the personal, spiritual, philosophical level, not the physical (II Cor. 12, etc.)
- D. Spiritual beings must have a spiritual authority-source by which to establish their values.
1. Spiritual values cannot be established "scientifically" (empirically). They cannot be arrived at through biological, physiological experimentation.
 2. They must be arrived at mentally, philosophically, through a "faith-system" — a spiritual pilgrimage.
 3. This spiritual authority must be a spiritual Person.

VI. THE VERY STRUCTURAL FOUNDATION OF LIFE

A. Values are motivators.

1. People's actions are predicatable according to their values because people are motivated in the direction of their chosen values.
2. What people consider worthwhile, is what they do . . . determines why they act, what they act for, and what they expect to result from their actions.
3. People do not act according to biological conditioning, they act according to *philosophical conditioning* which has to do with meanings, values.

The reason so many people act like animals today is not because they are animals . . . but they have been taught to believe that gratification of animal (physical urges) is the ultimate meaning in life and the only thing valuable in life.

ANIMALS LIVE TOTALLY ON THE PHYSICAL PLANE BECAUSE OF INSTINCT . . . ANIMALS HAVE NO CHOICE . . . THEY HAVE NO OTHER VALUES TO CHOOSE . . . BUT MEN DO!

4. To change human behavior, we must change what a human values.
5. It is not necessary to change environment or stimuli to change human behavior — human beings can change

VALUES ARE . . .

their behavior in spite of their environment if their values are changed.

THIS IS WHERE IT'S AT TO USE POOR ENGLISH AND THE HIP VERNACULAR! THIS IS WHAT JESUS CAME TO DO WITH THE GOSPEL . . . TO CHANGE PEOPLE'S VALUES AND THUS TO CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR!

AND WE MUST GET THIS IN THE RIGHT ORDER . . . WE MUST BE HONEST, FACE REALITY, AND QUIT TRYING TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR WITHOUT *FIRST* CHANGING VALUES (CONVERTING PEOPLE)

PEOPLE CANNOT BE FORCED, MANIPULATED, CONDITIONED, OR MANAGED INTO RIGHT BEHAVIOR IF THEIR VALUES ARE WRONG!

- B. Values are character-builders.
 - 1. People become what they value. Hosea 9:10.
 - 2. If people have despicable values, false values, fleshly values, that is the kind of persons they become . . . that is their viewpoint, and that is their character.
 - 3. People can be trusted only so far as their values are trustworthy! What a person values is what he is! AND THAT IS WHAT HE WILL BE FOR ETERNITY!
- C. Values provide reasons for living . . . they determine *how* we will *use* our lives and *what* we will use life for. Values determine what a person expects to *get* from life—
- D. Values determine how we relate to other people — what our evaluation of another person's worth is; how we will treat another person (WHETHER WE WILL USE THEM AS A MEANS TO AN END . . . TO BE MANIPULATED FOR OUR OWN BENEFIT, OR WHETHER WE WILL SERVE THEM FOR THEIR BENEFIT.
- E. Values determine our concept of ourselves . . . worth, identity, meaning.

Special Study

VALUES ARE ESTABLISHED BY . . .

Introduction

DO YOUNG PEOPLE NEED A VALUE-SYSTEM TODAY?

“Pursue a discussion with any rebellious youth as to why he commits acts that the older generation regards as depraved, self-destructive or irresponsible, and again and again you will hear the reply, ‘Why not?’ Try to answer ‘Why not?’ If you are a transitional creature living in a half-way house, one who has given up faith while continuing (in order to hold your life together) to act as if you still had it, *you have no answer*. True, you still — by and large — live by certain moral principles, but you cannot say why. Therein lies the basis of the curious guilt so often felt by parents in the face of insufferable behavior by their young, and their consequent indulgence of children who reject them.

“The young rebel’s ‘Why not?’ has at least two meanings: not only ‘What’s to stop me?’ but simultaneously, ‘Give me a reason I can accept.’ *For the young person wants, needs, is in fact desperate, to believe in something*. He is in constant search of it — in ‘mind-bending’ drugs, in Zen Buddhism, in puppy-love, astrology, the Peace Corps, a new society, radicalism, hedonism, nihilism — anything but his parents’ ism, which he regards as dishonest and cowardly.

“The young rebel has not found his belief yet. The experience of learning that an entire civilization is founded on nothing solid morally; that it is shot through and through with what he regards as hypocrisy; that he finds nothing in it to give his life meaning — this has been so overwhelming a shock that it has left him largely mute, inarticulate, confused, unable to cope. *He can literally be sure of nothing*. And if there is one word that most aptly describes the emotional reaction of the young to finding society without a useable moral basis, it is disgust.”

Reader’s Digest, March, 1970 — IS THERE A SUBSTITUTE FOR GOD?” by David R. Klein

Dr. John J. Meng of Fordham University states: In the college classroom, "Subjects are almost always discussed in terms of problems, almost never in terms of absolutes. Now a student does need to be made aware of the problems of life — but if this is all he gets from his educational experience, the results can be tragic.

"The professors, he concludes, have no final answer to anything! Can he be blamed if he concludes that ethical and moral principles are as subject to change as are the theories of economics or the historical interpretations of the causes of the First World War?

". . . by saying nothing, we commit a grave sin of omission that leaves the young person at the mercy of his highly unreliable feelings and drives. We make it easy, too easy, for him to be immoral.

"I have found, from my experience, that often the students are more inclined to be strict than the faculty. *They know, and want, rules to give them some support as they struggle to make moral decisions.* They don't want to be confused by a multiplicity of unanswered problems and a paucity of positive replies to the great questions of life. Without a minimum agreement, at least, on a set of ethical and moral values, our colleges and universities will continue to teach only a part of the truth they are dedicated to pursuing."

JUST THIS WEEK, OUR JOPLIN SCHOOL BOARD APPOINTED A COMMITTEE TO INSTITUTE A PROGRAM FOR THE TEACHING OF VALUES AND MORAL STANDARDS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS!!!!

I. INDOCTRINATION — (TEACHING)

- A. Redemptive (Christian) values are *learned* — they are not innate or genetically inherited. (Certain general values, as we said in the first lecture, may be *revealed in the natural order of things . . . all man has innately are logical categories [categories by which to reason] and the moral imperative ["oughtness" or conscience]. But those values by which we are redeemed for the kingdom of heaven we must LEARN from Christ.*

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1. People value what they do because that is what they have been *taught* to value.
 2. The Television advertizers know that! The average American child watches an average of 7 hours of television per day! During that time he sees an average of 135 commercial ads! IS IT ANY WONDER THAT THE VALUES OF TV'S GENERATIONS ARE FOCUSED ON *MATERIALISM*??
 3. Paul wrote in Heb. 5:14 "But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil."
Paul wrote to the Ephesians in that marvelous 4th and 5th chapters, ". . . you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. . . . You did not so learn Christ. . . . Let no one deceive you with empty words . . . try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."
 4. Then, in the 6th chapter he commanded, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" 6:4.
- B. Redemptive values are learned from the *Bible* — and from no other source.
1. Joseph T. Bayly wrote nearly 20 years ago in *Eternity* magazine, ". . . you'd think that young people who have grown up in an evangelical milieu would be firmly grounded in the Bible's authority. They're not. In my experience, at least, I don't usually find the reflex, 'The Bible says it and so it must be true,' among young men and women. The reaction of a student in a Christian college, from an evangelical background, on being reminded that the Bible forbids premarital intercourse, is rather typical of the attitude I've found. 'Maybe the Bible says it, but if it does, that isn't what it means.'
"If my impressions are correct, we are in danger . . . since it is questionable whether morality and ethics — even faith (Rom. 10:17) can stand, apart from the support of accepted biblical authority."
 2. This is the really important thing to communicate to the young — complete submission to the Bible's

authority. . . .

- C. The Christian Gospel offers the only absolute, workable, *MOTIVE* for morality. *MOTIVE (RATIONALE, REASON WHY, POWER-TO-DO) IS PRIMARY, CRUCIAL!*
1. Sydney Cave said, "The Christian Gospel is Good News of God, not news of man, and has for its *first concern not what men must do but what God has done. . . .* In Christ's words and deeds, in his *cross and resurrection*, there is disclosed the nature of God's character and rule, and so the secret of this mysterious universe . . . Christian ethics is derivative; it asks, Since God has so acted, what ought we men to do?"
 2. ". . . the Christian message is not to be commended because it meets . . . patent needs of modern men. Were it merely useful, it would soon cease to be of use. It demands attention not because it may be helpful **BUT BECAUSE IT IS TRUE. . . .**'
 3. "The contribution of Christianity to the problems of personal character and corporate activity does not lie merely, or even chiefly, in the teaching of Jesus (*per se*). It lies in the significance of *God's action* for men in Jesus Christ . . . for the grace of God in Christ demanded and received the response of faith; and gratitude to God for what he had done in Christ became the inspiration and the norm for Christian character. To know what God would have us do, we need to remember what God himself has done."
 4. The absoluteness of the Gospel (or of God's revelation, the Bible) for a moral norm has its foundation in **GOD'S EXISTENCE AND IN GOD'S CHARACTER**. If the existence (his omnipotence, omniscience) and his character (justice, love, faithfulness) be demonstrated we have a sufficiently authoritative *motive* for moral behavior.
 - a. The Bible is a historical record documenting God's existence **HE HAS ACTED, IN HISTORY THROUGH DEEDS AND PERSONS, AND FINALLY CAME TO EARTH AS A PERSON HIMSELF IN JESUS CHRIST.**

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- b. The Bible is a historical record documenting God's character **HE IS FAITHFUL TO KEEP HIS WORD** — thousands of prophecies have come to pass showing **HIS WORDS ALWAYS COME TO PASS**
 - c. The Bible has demonstrated itself to be a divine book — historically, archaeologically, scientifically, philologically, pragmatically, prophetically, textually, and every other way.
5. If ever we are to bring young people in their “free deliberate acts to the standards to which they must conform in order to be suitable to man as such, to confer on them the perfection of which they are capable and bring them to the ends for which they exist . . .” **IT WILL HAVE TO BE THROUGH TEACHING THEM TO RESPOND TO THE GRACIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST WHICH DELINEATES THE CHARACTER OF GOD UPON A SOUL!**

FOR THE GRACE OF GOD IS THE ONLY SUFFICIENT *MOTIVE* TO PRODUCE A GODLY MORAL CHARACTER IN ANY HUMAN BEING'S HEART!

Alexander Campbell wrote in *The Christian System*: “Moral facts develop moral character . . . all the works and words of God are moral facts and truths . . . you find the works and words of God in the Bible . . . when these moral facts are brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. . . .”

Alexander remembers . . . “It was the rule that every family member should memorize, during each day, some portion of the Bible, to be recited at evening worship. . . .” “They (the Scriptures) have not only been written on the tablet of my memory, but incorporated with my modes of thinking and speaking.”

I AM NOT PERSUADED WE HAVE GIVEN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE A WONDERFUL ENOUGH MOTIVE FOR CHOOSING RIGHT VALUES!

WE HAVE NOT GIVEN THEM CREDIT FOR ABILITY TO BE MOTIVATED BY WHO GOD IS AND WHAT GOD HAS DONE. . . . WE HAVE THOUGHT TO MOTIVATE THEM BY PAMPERING, ENTERTAINING, ATTRACTING THEM — *RATHER THAN TEACHING THEM ABOUT GOD!*

D. We have not taught them!

1. In 20 years or more of giving the simple AABC Bible Content Test to incoming Bible college freshmen, the average scores continue to be in the 30% to 40% correct level. THESE YOUNG PEOPLE COMING, FOR THE MOST PART, FROM RESTORATION MOVEMENT, "PEOPLE OF THE BOOK" CHURCHES, CANNOT EVEN PASS A SIMPLE MULTIPLE CHOICE BIBLE CONTENT EXAM! CAN'T EVEN SCORE 50%!!!
2. The church has only one *mandate* — TEACH!!! Every thing the church of Jesus Christ does is to center in TEACHING. *Worship* in its purest form *teaches* us; *evangelism* cannot be done without *teaching*; *benevolence* *teaches* us about God's character. The work of ministry is teaching (see Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 1 & 2).
3. Of course, the church's work of teaching cannot be done only on Sunday and Wednesday! It has to be done in the home, every day of the week!

SOME WAY, OR ANOTHER, THE CORPORATE CONGREGATION (THE CHURCH) MUST SEE THAT IT'S YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TAUGHT *BIBLICAL CONTENT* SO THEY WILL LEARN *BIBLICAL VALUES!* YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER!

E. The Christian Gospel (the Bible) offers the only absolute, workable *CONTENT* for morality and values worthy of mankind.

1. All humanistic systems of ethics and values logically and inevitably reduce to *totalitarianism*, either of the individual or a class of individuals. Man is left to his own limited, finite, fallible resources to determine what is moral and to try to motivate himself and others to do what he feels is moral.

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Manifestly, there must be a law somewhere that has higher obligatory power than the law of the individual, tribe or state. There must be a law that is superior to the will of one man or that of a few men, or even that of a majority of men.

2. The Christian Gospel is that *highest* of all value-systems. The Christian Gospel (which includes all the New Testament writings) offers both absolute precepts and absolute principles.
 - a. There are certain, definite, clearly enunciated precepts which are absolute and imperative (commanded) — both “dos’ and “don’ts.”

THE N.T. FORBIDS, LYING, MURDERING, PRE-MARITAL AND EXTRA-MARITAL SEX, DRUNKENNESS, HOMOSEXUALITY, THIEVERY, ROBBERY, IDOLATRY, REVILING, GREED, HATRED, AND MANY OTHER SUCH SINS.
 - b. The N.T. clearly commands that it is right to feed the hungry, to tell the truth, to pay taxes for government services, to punish evil doers (even capital punishment), to forgive those who offend us, to work for a living, to mind our own affairs, etc.
3. But, Christianity, as the N.T. presents it, is not a value-system of legalism (and there is a difference between law and legalism). The Christian value-system does not provide us with a code of rules dealing with *every* case of conduct.

Instead, it speaks of the grace of God in Christ which evokes the response of a faith which leads inevitably to LOVE.
4. In the main, Christianity exhorts us to be God-like because of what God is like! (Eph. 5:1-2) . . . In other words what sort of men ought those be, who have experienced God’s grace in Christ — and then it tells us and shows us what we ought to be like by showing us what God is like as He revealed himself in Christ Jesus and through the Spirit in the N.T.

5. *Agape* love is the fundamental power offered to us for a value-system (II Cor. 5:14 — “The love of Christ constrains (controls) us . . . ;” and I John 4:19 — “We love because he first loved us”) So also is our hope of heaven a “controlling” factor (I John 3:1-3); “. . . the love you have for all the saints, *because* of the hope laid up for you in heaven . . .” Col. 1:5.
Even the fear of the Lord is to be used in developing our value-system . . . “Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . .” II Cor. 5:11.

DON'T EVER LET ANYONE TELL YOU THAT BEING GOOD THROUGH FEARING THE LORD ALMIGHTY IS AN UNACCEPTABLE MOTIVE . . . IT IS CONSISTENTLY TAUGHT IN THE N.T. BY JESUS AND THE APOSTLES! ALONG WITH LOVE.

Christian love is not some sentimental mush . . . it is not really based on feelings at all! It is a deliberate principle of the mind and a deliberate conquest and achievement of the will — **OFTEN IN SPITE OF FEELINGS.** It is the power to love the unloveable, to love people whom we do not like . . . to care for people when one does not care for their ways.

It involves three deliberate acts; recognition, consideration, care. It does not have its origin in passion or philanthropy.

It is not a matter of taste or inclination.

To love in the sense of recognizing, considering and caring is a matter that lies with the control of the will and therefore we can **RIGHTLY BE *COMMANDED* TO LOVE** in the Biblical sense.

If *agape* love for God and our fellow man is our directing principle of behavior, all actions, all persons, all thoughts will become relative **NOT** to feelings and selfish desires, **BUT TO GOD'S REVEALED ENDS FOR MAN'S REDEMPTION AND REGENERATION!**

WE HAVE GOT TO CONVINCe OUR YOUNG PEOPLE THAT

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CHRIST *COMMANDS* THEM TO LOVE (CARE). LOVING FOR THE CHRISTIAN IS NOT A MATTER OF CHOICE . . . IT IS A COMMAND!

CHRISTIAN LOVE IS TAUGHT . . . IT IS LEARNED . . . IT IS SOMETHING WE DO. WE ARE NOT BORN WITH IT, IT IS NOT INNATE . . . NOT INHERITED (EXCEPT BY EXAMPLE).

AND LOVE IS *NOT* SELF-DEFINING! CHRISTIAN LOVE IS NOT FELT . . . IT IS REVEALED. GOD TELLS US EXACTLY WHAT AND HOW TO LOVE IN HIS WORD. WE CANNOT DECIDE IT ON OUR OWN!

F. Aside from the clear, direct “dos” and “don’ts,” there are certain principles (absolute principles) mainly written out in Paul’s epistles.

1. Christian freedom in matters not spelled out in the N.T.
2. The Christian is to do everything so it will glorify (bring honor and “weight” — respect, authority) to God. Nothing in life is excluded from this principle (I Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17)

Christian liberty is bounded by the glory of God.

The christian is never free to do anything which would bring dishonor to God and Christ.

3. The Christian is to do nothing that would defile his own conscience.
4. The Christian must never do anything that would cause a weaker person to sin or violate his conscience.

G. Is the Bible *all-sufficient* as a basis for establishing a value-system, a morals-system in this life? IT CLAIMS TO BE.

1. It claims to be able to keep man from sin, Psa. 119:9-11; 37:31
2. It claims to sustain life everlasting, Deut. 8:3; John 6:63
3. It claims that it gives *all that is necessary to life and godliness*, II Pet. 1:3-5.
4. It claims to *equip* the man of God completely *for all good works*, II Tim. 3:16-17.
5. Romans 5 & 6; Col. 1-5 claims that sin (and the N.T. lists a number of attitudes and actions which are clearly sinful) needs to be “put to death” in our lives because we do not need sinful actions and things to enjoy life even in the

here and now.

On the other side, the N.T. tells us to bring alive in our lives certain specified righteous attitudes and actions because we DO need these things to enjoy life now.

Christian ethics are based on our faith (trust) in these pronouncements. In other words, we trust these pronouncements because we believe Christ's resurrection gives him the authority to call us to this kind of value-system.

As Paul says, "If Christ is not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die . . ." I Cor. 15:12-19; 15:32.

6. New Testament system of values is, of course, for the citizen of the kingdom of God — one who has willingly accepted the *rule* of Christ over his life. The Christian is constrained by the love of Christ. He sees everything and decides everything from a spiritual viewpoint. (See II Cor. 5:11-16; 8:21; Rom. 6:11; 8:5-8; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 2:5-13; Gal. 5:22-24). **CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT HAVE TO BE FORCED TO DO RIGHT.**

On the other hand, **LAW AND FORCE** restrain the carnal minded worldling. Those "outside" God's kingdom must be forced to do right. (See I Thess. 4:12; I Tim. 1:8-11; 2:1-4; Rom. 13:1-7; Acts 25:11; I Pet. 2:13-17, etc.). If Law is to restrain it must have a penalty and that penalty must be commensurate to the crime and **MUST BE ENFORCED.**

- H. Even a Christian value-system (ethical system) to be *practiced* in this present world where wickedness is on every side, must be *designed* for the world that now is, not for the world, that **OUGHT TO BE. AND THE BIBLE HAS THE ANSWER FOR THAT PROBLEM, TOO!**

1. There is, in the Bible, apparently a condescension on God's part to the fact that even Christians must practice (when dealing with wicked people) a *HIERARCHY OF PRINCIPLES*. It is apparently practiced in some cases in both O.T. and N.T. with God's approval (we will illustrate later).
2. The *HIERARCHY* operates on a scale beginning with the

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highest ideal and scales downward according to necessary circumstances.

- a. W-1 The glorification of God.
W-2 The attainment of God's redemptive purpose for as many people as possible.
W-3 The preservation of human life.
W-4 The maintenance and development of God's creation.
W-5 The avoidance of pain and discomfort of God's creatures, particularly human beings.
W-6 The representation of truth to others.
W-7 The maintenance of relationships of mutual trust among people.

3. The HIERARCHICAL approach:
 - a. Draws a distinction between "good" and "right."
 - b. Posits the "good" as an *ideal* which may or may not be fully realizable.
 - c. Posits it as "right," however, to do that which would most fully actualize the "good."
 - d. Contends that it would be wrong to do less than maximum "good," *if* one could do more.
 - e. This recognizes that there will be some cases in which the *best* that can be done falls far short of the *ideal*.
 - f. The best option available may be the *lesser of two evils* (for this approach does believe in intrinsically good and intrinsically evil).
 - g. Yet this action, although it cannot be unequivocally termed "good," is "right" in the sense that it is that which one ought to do.
 - h. The hierarchical approach attempts to recognize and acknowledge the brokenness (hardness of heart) of the world in which we *now* live . . . which is *not the ideal* or the kingdom of God in totality.
 - i. Whereas there is an *ideal* that god desires men to attain, the world as we *now* find it may be in such a state as to render that objective *unattainable in practice*.
 - j. Thus God's will in the *ultimate* sense (W-1) would be

the fully "good." Yet God's will (W-2 or W-3 or W-4, etc.) is that man should do what most nearly approximates that complete "good" — the *ideal*.

4. Example of HIERARCHICAL VALUE-SYSTEM
 - a. It may be God's will that no human life should *ever* have to be taken. This would be the *good* (absolute good).
 - b. Yet, given our world in which men are greedy, hateful, lustful, lawless, fearful, I may find myself called upon to take the life of another human to defend an *innocent* victim.
 - c. We may say in this case then (with Biblical precedent to back it up) that this was God's will (W-2 or 3 or 4, etc.) down the scale of hierarchical principles and it thus becomes the "right" while it is not the ultimate "good."
 - d. I cannot say that what was done was "good" (W-1), but I can say that what was done (defending the innocent) was "right." For doing "right" I should feel no guilt. But I should regret intensely that sin in man's heart makes such a choice necessary. It should make all men repent of the sin which causes such action (capital punishment) necessary.
 - e. The distinction between the *good* (the ideal) and the *right* (the expedient), is an important one. For a christian to discuss the morality of war, divorce, civil order, civil rights, civil protest, taxation, etc., **WITHOUT OBSERVING THIS DISTINCTION** invites confusion and frustration.
 - f. Christians must clearly face the reality that they live in a sinful, corrupted world. The Bible does! It is a world in which the **BEST** that can be done is far from the **IDEAL** that God wants.
 - g. *Ideally*, no enemies to God would exist; no marital unfaithfulness would exist; no thievery would occur, no hatred and murder would be perpetrated.
 - h. Under the **IDEAL**, complete, verbal truthfulness could be practiced. Vows and contracts would be

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- kept; property of others would be safe.
- i. Under the IDEAL there would be no need for secrecy, deception, spying, force, prisons, courts, wars, policemen, legal contracts, no need for lawyers.
 - j. An ethic, a value-system to be practiced *presently* in this world of the far-less-than-ideal, must be a system designed for the world THAT NOW IS, *not* for the world THAT OUGHT TO BE!

God's Ideals

1. No taking of human life at all
2. No divorce at all
3. No withholding truth at all
4. No enslavement or bondage at all

Man's Ethical Expedients

1. Wars of defense against aggressions, death penalty, self defense.
2. Divorce for unfaithfulness, remarriage, divorce for desertion.
3. Secrecy, deception, no right to know for those who would use truth to harm, etc.
4. Bondage to governments in conscription in war time; to employers; to creditors, etc.

5. Biblical examples of HIERARCHICAL ETHICS *practiced*

- a. Abraham and the kings of the East
- b. Jacob and Esau
- c. Hebrew mothers and mid-wives
- d. Jonathan and Saul
- e. Joshua (God) and Ai (Joshua ch. 8)
- f. Jesus and Herod
- g. Apostles and two swords

II. EXPERIENCE

A. Human beings do most of their learning by *doing*.

1. Heb. 5:11-14 “. . . For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's word. . . . You need milk, not

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solid food; for every one who lives on milk is *unskilled* in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. (WE ARE TO BECOME "SKILLED" IN RIGHTEOUSNESS) But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good and evil."

The word translated "practice" is the Greek word from which we get *gymnasium*. RIGHTEOUS LIVING IS SOMETHING YOU "PRACTICE" LIKE YOU WOULD SHOOTING BASKETS . . . OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN!

2. Repetition, habit, practice is a fundamental principle of learning — even in learning what is right vs. what is wrong.

Aristotle said: "Moral excellence is the result of habit or custom. By doing just acts we become just, and by doing acts of self-control and courage we become self-controlled and courageous . . . acts of any kind produce habits or characters of the same kind. . . ."

The Duke of Wellington said, "Habit is ten times nature."

3. The way we learn morality, ultimately, is by engaging in moral actions. All learning is a private, individual activity.
4. Adults, parents, teachers, youth leaders, must have the patience, concern, and wisdom to allow our young people to face the realities of life and the realities of God's absolute word about values and *guide these young people into habitual acts of righteousness* as God's word defines righteousness. THEY LEARN WHAT GOOD IS BY DOING GOOD!
5. Shepherds of youth must *allow young people to be hurt by the consequences of wrong moral choices*. THIS IS ANOTHER PART OF LEARNING BY EXPERIENCING!

We all, even adults, learn through reward and punishment. That is a Biblical way of learning values. The Bible teaches this principle both by precept and demonstration

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in history.

- B. There could be actual learning-by-doing events planned and carried out with young people participating in **DOING GOOD**, and thus learning to make right value judgments by doing.
1. Works of benevolence will go a long way in learning values by doing. They will learn the value of service, the value of help, the value of human life, the value of thankfulness, the value of being responsible, true, compassionate, etc.
 2. Placing youngsters in positions of trust — where they will have to choose honesty vs. dishonesty, responsibility vs. irresponsibility, truth vs. falsehood, is also a good way to learn values by doing.
 3. Discipline, correction, punishment — when necessary to reinforce that a wrong value was chosen, is a way of learning-by-doing.

DON'T NEGLECT IT, OR DOWNGRADE IT . . . PRACTICE IT, FAIRLY, FIRMLY, CONSISTENTLY AND FAITHFULLY.

III. LEADERSHIP

- A. Adults must supply *authority resources* for youngsters.
1. Parents, youth leaders **MUST BECOME A PRIMARY SOURCE OF AUTHORITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.**
 2. Adults not only have a Biblical mandate to **BE** (to a certain extent) the **AUTHORITY** in values for young people, they are ordered to **BE** by Jesus Christ in the Bible. (e.g. parents are ordered to do so in Eph. 6:4; I Tim. 3:1-7, esp. v. 5; I Tim. 5:1,17ff; Titus 2:1-10 . . . and of course the O.T. is profuse in such instruction).
 3. There is a great deal said about the younger, and spiritually immature obeying the older Christians **AS SOURCES OF AUTHORITY IN LEARNING AND DOING GOOD** (see scriptures listed above plus Heb. 13:7,17 etc.).
 4. The simple fact of life is, young people need, must have, their value systems authoritatively given to them by adults!

Al Capp, famous creator of the comic strip, "Li'l Abner" was being interviewed on a college campus"

"Student: Do you think the opinions of 18-year-olds are valuable?"

Capp: Certainly. But only on subjects they know something about, such as puberty and hubcaps.

Same Student: But only a few weeks ago, on that very platform, a politician told us he considered 18-year-old students just as smart as he is.

Capp: Any man over 40 who thinks 18-year-olds are just as smart as he is, is probably right."

- B. Young people want adults to BE authoritative so they may have a ground of wisdom and experience upon which to base their value choices.
1. They may say they don't want anyone telling them what is right and wrong, but that is only "surface" — it is a signal they are struggling with finding identity. Deep down, their insecurities, fears, confusions are crying out for leadership, *authority*, reality, truth to guide them in finding their identity. Jesus even told adults (Peter at Caesarea Philippi) that they would find *their* identity when they surrendered to *His authority!* Matt. 16.
 2. Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, director of the school for psychotic children at University of Chicago writes: "The political content of student revolt (back in the 60's) is most of all a desperate wish that the parents should have been strong in the convictions that motivate his actions . . ." from *The Permissive Society*, by Boris Sokiloff, p. 213.
 3. Peer pressure is extremely unsafe as an authoritative basis for teenagers (or even for adults) in finding a value system. Peer pressure is only "pooled" teenage insecurity and ignorance. It is what Al Capp said multiplied by as many teenagers as it takes to make a peer group.
 4. Teens have not lived enough years and faced enough realities of life as it is really lived to act on any basis but their *own immediate feelings!*

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They have not garnered enough experience concerning the *consequences* of moral choosing (either from their own personal experiences or that of their peers) to THINK clearly and logically, and thus to exercise any *convictions* about what is valuable and what is not.

5. The Bible clearly teaches that young people must respect their elders (and I don't mean necessarily church officers) — the older generation. According to the Bible, age is supposed to be equated with wisdom, leadership, authority.

That isn't always the case, of course. Some older people are more immature than the younger generation. Usually because they are afraid of growing older and try to think and behave like youngsters!

YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT REALLY WANT THEIR YOUTH LEADERS TO THINK AND ACT LIKE CHILDREN! WHAT KIND OF LEADERSHIP AND AUTHORITY DOES THAT PROVIDE FOR THEM?

- C. The time is now! **ADULTS MUST EXERCISE THE AUTHORITY GOD INTENDED THEM TO EXERCISE, IN THE COMPASSIONATE, FIRM, FAITHFUL WAY GOD INTENDED THEM TO EXERCISE IT.**

1. Authority, God-saturated and centered authority, is imperative to perpetuating a God-revealed value-system.
2. Christian value-systems have to be handed from one generation to the next. **CHRISTIAN VALUES DO NOT HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY!** They are not bred into people — they are taught! **AND THERE IS NO TEACHING WHATEVER WITHOUT THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY!**
3. **YOU, S.S. TEACHERS, PREACHERS, YOUTH LEADERS, ELDERS, DEACONS, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, PARENTS, MUST NOT ABDICATE AN AUTHORITATIVE APPROACH TO PASSING ON VALUE-SYSTEMS TO THE NEXT GENERATION.**

The hue and cry today from the President of the U.S. down to the school board member in Joplin, Missouri, is

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that the adult world (parents, churches, schools) *HAVE abdicated* the authoritative approach to perpetuating value-systems.

4. IT MUST NOT BE SO AMONG YOU.

You must *tell* them what God has *told* the world in his Word and you must speak and teach it with authority. Then, most significantly, you must live what you tell!

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