

LESSONS IN
2 CORINTHIANS

BY A. S. COPLEY

PREFACE

REFERENCES USED IN THIS PUBLICATION

- **American Standard Version** (ASV or AV) is a version of the Bible that was released in 1901. It soon came to have other names, such as the American Revised Version, the American Standard Revision, the American Standard Revised Bible, and the American Standard Edition. By the time its copyright was renewed in 1929, it had come to be known by its present name, the American Standard Version.
- **Diaglott** is a two-language polyglot translation, of the New Testament by Benjamin Wilson, first published in 1864. It is an interlinear translation with the original Greek text and a word-for-word English translation in the left column, and a full English translation in the right column.
- **King James Version** (KJV) references are used throughout this publication unless otherwise noted.
- **Revised Version** (RV) (or English Revised Version) of the Bible is a late 19th-century British revision of the King James Version of 1611. It was the first and remains the only officially authorized and recognized revision of the King James Bible.
- **Wuest:** Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1893–1962) was a noted New Testament Greek (Κοινή) scholar of the mid-20th century...produced his own English translation of the New Testament (the Wuest Expanded Translation – abbreviated WET) based on Nestle's critical text.

Note: *Definitions of references pulled from WikipediA, The Free Encyclopedia, January 2013.*

DISCLAIMER

This document has been formatted, proofed, and its verbiage modernized so as to save it into an easily read and/or printed electronic format.

INTRODUCTION

"I have written of the grace that is given to me of God that I should be a public servant of Jesus Christ at my own expense for the Gentiles, administering as a priest the glad tidings of God, that the oblation of the Gentiles may be well-pleasing, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit." [Rom.15:16].

As stated in the study book on 1 Corinthians, which set the Church in order as God's present day Tabernacle; so 2 Corinthians also exhibits the true servant of God filling his priestly functions in the Tabernacle. The verse quoted above from Romans is very beautiful and full of meaning in connection with our present study.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia." [2Co 1:1]

Contrast this salutation of "**Paul, an apostle**" with 1 Corinthians 1:1 where we read, "**Paul called to be an apostle.**" He speaks of himself as they view him. First he was called "to be an apostle," but after they knew him and appreciated him, they recognized him as indeed "an apostle." Reader, how do you view this vessel of election [Act.9:15]? Sosthenes was associated with Paul in writing the first letter to the Corinthians; but Timothy in writing this one. **Sosthenes** means "*savior*" and as such they first preached Christ to the Corinthians and could write little more than elementary teaching in the first letter. There are hidden depths which the spiritual babes and carnal Christians cannot receive; as Paul wrote, "**I have fed you with milk, and not with meat**" [1Co.3:2]. **Silvanus** ("*considering*") and **Timothy** ("*honored of God*") were with Paul on his 1st tour preaching to the Corinthians [2Co.1:19].

Observe that this letter is addressed, not to saints in Corinth only, but to "**all the saints which are in all Achaia**," or to all who are in affliction; therefore, it is for you, suffering one. How fitting the tender ascription of praise, "**Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort**" [2Co.1:3]. Divine "**all comfort**" is set over against all trouble at the very threshold of this letter. Accordingly, we read of the direst distress, but also of the most Divine Deliverance in the very first chapter.

OUTLINE OF 2 CORINTHIANS

Following the thought of the priesthood, 2 Corinthians falls beautifully into the accompanying framework:

1. The Anointed Priest Offering Himself Up	2 Corinthians 1
2. The Priest—A Sweet Savor Unto God	2 Corinthians 2

3. The Priest Ministering Within the Vail Unto God (Exceeding Glorious)	2 Corinthians 3
4. The Priest Ministering Unto Men (Exceedingly Powerful)	
a. A new, heavenly life, the risen life of Jesus.	2 Corinthians 4
b. A new, heavenly tabernacle; both based upon the fact of Christ having become a trespass and a sin offering for us.	2 Corinthians 5
5. Such A Priestly Ministry Effects:	
a. Separation From All Things	2 Corinthians 6
b. Separation Unto God, Inward and Deep	2 Corinthians 7
c. Fellowship In Distribution (Communication)	2 Corinthians 8-9
6. The Suffering And Glory of Such A Priest	2 Corinthians 10-12
7. The Priest's Source of Power	2 Corinthians 13

To derive the greatest benefit, we recommend a careful examination of the above outline, and then a thoughtful reading through, several times, of 2 Corinthians.

DIV. 1 , THE ANOINTED PRIEST OFFERING HIMSELF UP [2Co. 1]

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." [2Co.1:3]

The tribulations incident to a victorious Christian life call forth the writing of this tender epistle. Therefore, the word **comfort** (*"consolation"*) occurs 10 times in this first chapter. God who instituted The Church and set it in order as indicated in 1 Corinthians, here announces Himself to be "**the God of all comfort**" for all saints under all conditions. The basis for the hope of such unspeakable encouragement is this that our beloved brother Paul, God's authorized first assembly priest, offered himself up to God for us, not to make atonement for sin, but to "**fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church**" [Col.1:24]. His afflictions were of a particular character, because to him it was "**given to complete** (fulfill) **the Word of God**" [Col.1:24-25]. However, all who choose to share with him in this priestly ministry, like Timothy, Titus, etc., will also share in priestly tribulations. Doubtless this is especially the Bridal Company. If we suffer conjointly with Christ, we shall also reign conjointly with Him. As truly as our Lord Jesus had to suffer as a transgressor and "**bore our sins in His own body on the tree**" [1Pe.2:24],

so truly must some of His devotees suffer that others may be saved and be built up in the faith.

The unselfish, sacrificing spirit of the apostle is expressed in 2 Corinthians 1:12 & 24, and 2 Corinthians 2:4-13. **“Dying daily”** and being **“poured out”** for others is the normal manner of the life of a New Testament priest.

“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.” [2Co 1:8-9]

Not only did the Apostle Paul receive this sentence at the moment that he was **“pressed out of measure, above strength”** and **“despaired even of life”**; but he refers to Calvary where the death sentence was pronounced upon the whole old creation. Hence it is safe only and always sufficient to trust the God of resurrection. It is folly to rely upon our well bodies, or bright intellects, or victorious experiences. Nor do we need to despair when all flesh fails us, for He who raiseth the dead will always deliver us until our race is run. “There is no want to them that fear Him” [Psa.34:9]. There is no death to them that trust Him; death is only counted as sleep. Satan, sin, and sickness were conquered at Calvary. They cannot have dominion. **“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die (fall asleep), we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s [Rom.14:8]. “As thy days, so shall thy strength shall be” [Deu.33:25].**

“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” [2Co.1:21-22]

Here are 4 fundamental things which God does for His own. The first (established in Christ) is continuous; the other 3 were once and forever (anointed, sealed, given earnest of the Spirit). Hence, Paul never admitted defeat; neither do we if we believe that we are anointed with power. He never questioned the certainty of his destiny and reward; neither can we if we really believe that we were **“sealed unto the day of redemption” [Eph.4:30]**. He rejoiced in hope of having a body fashioned like unto the body of Christ’s glory...So do we (see also **2Co.5:5**). With him there is no going back, no letting down, no losing out, no growing cold. Neither is there with us; for we too are being established with grace.

“When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” [2Co.1:17-20]

As we stated before, he never dealt out negatives to the people. He wrote that our preaching to you was ***“not yea and nay; but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him (Christ) are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”*** God said what he meant and meant what He said. Paul believed it all without wavering, declared it all without toning it down, and practiced it all without flinching or compromising. God’s Word was all ***“yea”*** to him. So it is to us today who dare to be out-and-out for God’s will. Those who know and really believe the truth become like Paul, who was characterized with a modest boldness, an uncompromising gentleness, and invincible faith. They act and speak like God, because they are from God, and know it; being more and more established or confirmed in and by the truth.

DIV.2, THE PRIEST A SWEET SAVOR UNTO GOD [2Co.2]

“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.” [2Co.2:4]

A priestly service flowing from such a fountain is sure to become a sweet savor unto God [2Co.2:15]. Such a one always and only seeks the highest good of the saints by pointing them to Christ as the one-only Head, having before pointed Him out to the sinner as the one-only Savior. The man mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5, the symbol of every one who assumes unscriptural authority over the saints, seeking ***“dominion over your faith”*** [2Co.1:24], caused Paul grief. Today, the great grief is that men assume the place and authority which belongs to Jesus Christ only. They rob Him of His Headship and make divisions. There are as many divisions in Christ’s body as there are heads, whether self-appointed or appointed by others. The Apostle Paul and the assembly ***“put away ... that wicked person”*** [1Co.5:13] from their fellowship. That proved effectual; the man repented. Therefore, Paul adds...

“Sufficient to such a man is this punishment (rebuke), which was inflicted of many (the majority).” [2Co.2:6]

Paul beseeches them to forgive and encourage him lest he be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. He refuses to leave an opportunity for Satan to drive the offender to despair or to cause hardness toward him among those who were harmed. He also assures them that he stands with them in this attitude of full forgiveness.

Will our brethren, who are guilty of spiritual fornication, robbing Jesus of His honor and directorship, repent of their assumptions and pride? Very few will, until the majority of believers throw off this yoke by disfellowshipping such conditions. Saints are continually admitting the wrong and yet condoning and fellowshiping it. *“Particeps criminis”* is pronounced against us if we

encourage the very conditions that cause schisms in the body. If others “set bounds” and eliminate us, we are not to blame. The blame is with them. Let us be outspoken and out-standing; for the truth that holds Christ as Head, makes for the oneness of Christ, and keeps men free.

“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.”
[2Co.2:12-13]

Why? Paul was far more concerned for the welfare of those already saved than to precipitate another revival. To build up a meeting already founded is much wiser than to leave it to the wolves and start another meeting for wolves to destroy. How the Apostle Paul was lifted up and comforted on meeting Titus [2Co.7:6-7]. The importance of feeding and establishing the saints is shown by the fact that all the epistles by all the apostles are written to and for believers. Men make the conversion of sinners the vital thing; but God makes the “care of the churches” the vital thing.

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.”
[2Co.2:14-15]

What an exalted ministry is our priesthood in Christ! How sacred to God Himself! He protects it and makes it effective. The faith of God fills and emboldens the faithful priest because he is continually offering himself to God for service or sacrifice, and offering Christ to needy men.

“To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” [2Co.2:16-17]

Looking at himself, he exclaims: “For these things who is competent?” Immediately he looks and again exclaims, “Our competency is out from God.” He is conscious of not “making gain by corrupting the Word of God,” as the many do. He fearlessly declares: “***But as of sincerity, but as of God, before God, in Christ, we speak.***” This is a rare ministry—this unselfish priestly service—which is wholly from God and for God, which is consciously “***in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God***” [2Co.1:12], which is manifestly in Christ and all for His glory. Only a few are experimentally in this line.

Did you note that it is stated that “***the many corrupt the Word***” to make gain? They seek to gain numbers, applause, ease, and wealth, and that at the expense of Divine Truth and, of course, at the cost of the welfare of the Church of God. Oh, how great the need for Christ-like pastors and teachers who can instruct others, and who will do it wholly for the body of Christ and for His glory. As to

numbers, the true priestly line is a “**feeble folk**” but, thank God, they are builded on the rock [Pro.30:26].

DIV.3, THE PRIEST MINISTERING WITHIN THE VAIL UNTO GOD [2Co.3]

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?” [2Co.3:1]

In 2 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul is contrasting the ministration of the new with that of the old covenant. In the first 6 verses of 2 Corinthians 3, he announces himself and his associates to be the Divinely Called and Equipped ministers of this new covenant, and intimates what constitutes their credentials. In the question above, the phrase “**as some**” shows that some workers needed letters of recommendation to the church at Corinth, else they might not receive them, or letters from that church if they wished to be received elsewhere. So it is today. Ministers have a mania for credentials. For this there is a cause.

“Ye are our epistle written in your hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” [2Co.3:2-6]

But Paul and his co-workers needed no such credentials to Corinth for they knew them. They needed no such commendation from Corinth to other churches; for Paul could well say that they were their “**epistle of Christ**” written in their hearts and known and read of all men. The fruit of their labors was their recommendation. Those men preached the word of grace in the power of the Holy Spirit, the essential message of the new covenant. Their hearers everywhere were saved thereby, without any mixture of works whatsoever. The Pauline ministry was sharply defined so that it was clear under whose ministry their people were saved. The Corinthian assembly was “**manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered** (by no other, but) **by us**,” to which Paul adds, “**written not with ink** (no self-effort, wholly apart from works) **but with the Spirit of the living God**,” From the beginning, their converts were wholly supernatural and began spiritual; “**not in tables of stone**” (like the 10 Commandments) “**but in fleshy tables of the heart**,” invisible, inward, spiritual, indelible. Such saints were the sufficient letters of commendation in behalf of the apostles of the churches.

If others needed credentials, it was because their message and ministry were not wholly scriptural or because they “**corrupted the word of God**” for gain [2Co.2:17]. The same facts are true today. If preachers have Paul’s kind of

credentials they will need no other. If they are satisfied to announce the "**glad tidings**," "**our gospel**," not shunning to "**declare all the counsel of God**," they will have abundant epistles of commendation. They will be able to say further with Paul, and say it gladly, "**And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward**" [2Co.3:4]. The eye of faith sees and counts Him sufficient and needs no broken reed of man's recommendation. Those who are self-sufficient, issue letters of commendation for such as are neither self-sufficient, nor divinely sufficient. But Paul exclaims,

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." [2Co.3:5]

Not that we are competent from ourselves to reckon anything as from ourselves; but our competency is from God, who also hath made us competent ministers of the new covenant. Thank God, those who do not find their competency in themselves, or in any others, truly find it in the all-competent Jehovah. Then the fruit of such competency become the all-sufficient commendation. Under a deep sense of human weakness, the Apostle cries, "**Who is sufficient** (competent) **for these things**" [2Co.2:16]? But here he records the ample answer: It is "**of** (from) **God**." What business have men to try to preach if they have not found God enough? What cruelty for them to palm off on the people their uncertainties, their frailties, their excuses, and call that "serving God." What a crime for men, having self-imposed authority, to issue so-called credentials to men and women who cannot intelligently and scripturally instruct a sinner how to be saved. Any wonder that God has to inscribe "**Ichabod**" over some meetings [1Sa.4:21]?

If you want to see another clause in the apostolic credentials, consider the 28 invincible commendations pronounced in 2 Corinthians 6:4-10.

THE TWO MINISTRATIONS CONTRASTED.

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." [2Co.3:6]

Paul's ministry was distinctively "**not of the letter, but of the Spirit**." By "**the letter**" is meant The Law; "**the Spirit**," of course means the "**Spirit of the Lord**" [2Co.3:17], as indeed "**the Spirit of grace**" [Heb.10:29]. Observe these 6 points of contrast.

1. The Law is "**the ministration of condemnation**" [2Co.3:9]. It hunts down and arraigns the guilty sinner before the judgment seat of a holy God. This is why legalists never show any pity, but are stern, rigid, hard, and frigid. There is no glad tidings in their mouth except for the fellow that can do right, as they claim, in his own strength or possibly by Divine Help. But the ministry of the Spirit is "**the ministration of righteousness**" [2Co.3:9] not self-righteousness, which is of The Law. It is absolutely the righteousness of God imputed to the unrighteous one who believes on Jesus. Though The Law was glorious because it justified God, yet

the ministry of the Spirit exceeds in glory because it displays God's goodness and love. Remember that this is the only righteousness that God accepts.

2. The Law ministers dimness of vision, the meaning of Moses putting a vail over his face, which means that the very Law that they hoped would give them light only veiled their eyes from beholding God's grace. But the ministry of the Spirit brings ***"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God"*** [2Co.4:6]; we all, having been unveiled, behold the glory of the Lord. The people of grace are the only people who see as God sees. The eyes of grace are indeed Dove's eyes (the eyes of the Spirit). Only those whose eyes are enlightened by steadfastly looking into ***"the exceeding riches of His grace"*** [Eph.2:7] can understand the gross darkness and terrible bondage that legalists are in (compare 2Co.3:13-14, 18).
3. The Law is ***"the ministration of death"*** [2Co.3:7]. Of course, the ultimatum of condemnation is death, the result and penalty for sin. ***"The law was not made for a righteous man" that is, to keep him righteous, or perfect him, but for the lawless and disobedient*** [1Ti.1:9]. The Law could not make a man righteous nor give him life [Gal.2:21, Gal.3:21]. The righteous man does not need The Law; and The Law can do nothing with the unrighteous, but execute him. On the other hand, ***"the ministration of the Spirit"*** is transcendently glorious because it gives and sustains life. It begins with life; it feeds that life; it protects that life; it perfects the growth of that life, and crowns it with an eternal reward.
4. The vail of The Law was ***"done away in Christ"*** [2Co.3:11, 14]. The Law was never given to the Gentiles; and the most it could do for Jews was to be to them "a schoolmaster" UNTIL Christ, not to ***"bring us unto Christ"*** [Gal.3:24] as the translators wrongly make Paul speak. The Law sought to curb its pupils that their sin and the weakness of The Law to save might be made more manifest, so that ***"we might be justified by faith"*** [Gal.2:16]. ***"The law entered that the offense might abound"*** [Rom.5:20] but not to save the offender; only abounding grace can do that. Therefore, after that faith is come (through Christ), ***"we are no longer under a schoolmaster; for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"*** [Gal.3:24-26]. Hence, when saints who are still under The Law really see this truth, they throw off the galling yoke of the schoolmaster and shout their freedom in Christ. Hallelujah!

But the ministration of the Spirit ***"remaineth"*** [2Co.3:11], because Christ as the great High Priest ***"continueth ever"*** and ***"hath an unchangeable priesthood."*** ***"He ever liveth to make intercession"*** for His own [Heb.7:24-25]. There is no room for fear of failure or defeat. ***"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"*** [Phi.1:6]. Such a prospect provokes boldness of utterance—"Seeing then that we have such hope, we

use great plainness (boldness) of speech [2Co.3:12]. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* [Mat.12:34].

5. The Law ministers bondage. It knows no freedom. It stands with a stern face and with a lash in hand, setting limitations, making demands, giving cold orders, and promising nothing but fiery judgment for violations. But the ministration of the Spirit is one of liberty, even the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. 2 Corinthians 3:17 is a remarkable statement. It explains what Spirit is meant all through this chapter: ***“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”*** ***“Now the Lord is that Spirit,”*** that is, the Spirit referred to here. The following words confirm this fact, ***“and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”*** It cannot possibly be rendered “where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty,” for the word **Lord** is in the genitive (possessive) case. The same is true of 2 Corinthians 3:18. Back of this truth lays the sonship of Jesus Christ. He is Lord because He is God’s Son. We are free because we are sons, even in the line of sonship with the Lord Jesus, through whom we ***“receive the adoption of sons (sonship)”*** [Gal.4:4-7]. Hence, where the Spirit of the Lord is (not the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the 3rd person of the Trinity) but where Christ’s own Spirit rules apart from The Law, there is unbounded liberty to approach into God’s presence, within the veil, because we are sons.

We have the privileges of sons and obtain the authority of the faith of sons and ***“come boldly unto the throne of grace”*** [Heb.4:16]. This is not license to commit sin, but freedom to demand ample power against sin and Satan.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” [Tiu.2:11-12]

This is no excuse for sin; for with such provision we are left without excuse forever. Of course, this is through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, who executes the will of the Father and of the Son. We all, having been unveiled, ***“with open face beholding as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord”*** [2Co.3:18a].

6. And we are being transformed (changed) ***“into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”*** [2Co.3:18b]. There can be no such transformation to the law keeper. The veil covers his face, as it does Israel to this day. When Israel turns to Christ, the veil will be lifted [2Co.3:16]. By steadfastly beholding the face of our glorious Lord, through faith in His Word, which James calls ***“a mirror”*** [Jam.1:23], this transformation goes on from day to day until we shall ***“be like Him and see Him as He is”*** [1Jo.3:2], and with Him covered ***“with light as with a garment”*** [Psa.104:2].

Oh, what a priestly ministry is ours to sound out such glorious tidings that saints may be brought, in experience, into the liberty of the glory of sons and actually grow up into redolent, radiant, partakers of Christ's glory here and enjoy the riches of His glory with Him forever. In view of such an unspeakable consummation, Pauline credentials [2Co.6:4-10] are a pleasure; for "*if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him*" [2Ti.2:12].

DIV.4A, THE PRIEST MINISTERING UNTO MEN (NEW, HEAVENLY LIFE) [2Co.4]

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry as we have received mercy, we faint not. But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." [2Co.4:1-2]

By "**this ministry**" the Apostle Paul means the ministry of the new covenant described in 2 Corinthians 3, where we learned of the priest's liberty to come into the holiest place by faith, which is the necessary preparation for his ministry unto men (as outlined in 2 Corinthians 4 and 5). Having gone in and been warmed, refreshed, empowered through fellowship with the Father and the Son, we come forth to pour upon men all that we have drunk within the veil. Of course, "**we faint not.**"

We have renounced the "**hidden things of dishonesty** (shame)." The kinds, character, and amount of religious dishonesty are appalling. Men hide their purposes and motives by a cloak of make-believe piety and pretentious knowledge of the truth. They claim to get revelations, arbitrarily taught by the Holy Spirit, while, in it all, they are seeking revelations of their own and are motivated by money or place or fame. They falsify the Word of God; they corrupt the work of God for gain. All this Paul boldly shunned; "**but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**" He and his, declared the truth, all the truth, and put it into practice. They lived on the fare they offered in their market. This credentialed them to their hearers.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost (perishing): In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds (thoughts) of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." [2Co.4:3-4]

Who is the god of this age, elsewhere termed, "**this present evil age**" [Gal.1:4]? Not our God. He is here only on a visit "**to take out a people for His name**" [Act.15:14]. Ephesians 2:2 informs us that it is Satan. Oh, how little we should have to do with the things of this age (whether they are national, educational,

or religious) because this trinity of reformation combines to fix mankind up, independent of the redemption of Jesus Christ. These are the veils by which Satan covers men's eyes from the saving truth of the gospel. They are here; we cannot change them. We are in the world, but not of it. We can only shine as luminaries in the world; thus some are led to believe on Jesus and be saved out of these conditions.

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." [2Co.4:5-6]

Some men announce themselves to be lords (heads) and assume unscriptural authority. Not so with the real servant of Christ. God has not commanded us to be lords; but **"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness"** (when creating the world), **"hath shined in our hearts, to give the light (illumination) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"** [2Co.4:6]. First, we are to be light-receivers; then we are to be light-dispensers. Christ only is Head (Lord). Most men darken counsel, cloud the vision, and obscure the knowledge of God by putting a veil on the glory which beams forth from the face of Christ.

Therefore, it becomes us to announce Christ as the glad tidings; then men will behold His face, and in that face, they will behold the glory of God. What a glorious priestly ministry is ours! Nor does the gospel stop with initial salvation through faith in Jesus, in the beginning of the gospel of grace; but it culminates with "the gospel of the glory" (see **2Co.4:4, 6 RV**). This is one of the neglected themes. Not only is our gospel a glorious gospel, but it climaxes with the **"exceeding riches of glory"** [Eph.1:18] (also compare 1Ti.1:11 and **Tiu.2:13 RV**). Reader have you ever heard a message or lesson on the gospel of the glory?

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." [2Co 4:7]

The word **treasure** is the light, the life, the glory which we have from God. **"Earthen vessels"** ever remind us of the frailty of our human body (body of humiliation). Troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down are expressions of the weakness of the vessel. This is the **"dying daily"** [1Co.15:30-32], which people generally misinterpret as dying to sin because they do not understand that Paul died to sin once when he died with Christ on Christ's own cross. If saints do not see this wondrous truth and agree with God, reckoning themselves to be dead indeed to sin, they will continually attempt to commit suicide of the self-life and actually think they are crucifying self (dying out to sin) or **"dying daily."** 2 Corinthians 4:10-12 explain this more fully.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered

unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." [2Co.4:10-12]

This has no reference to Jesus' death on the cross but to his perilous life on earth. He was daily in jeopardy. His enemies were full of murderous intent and, several times, sought to kill him. Satan sought to drown him in the sea by a tempest. Such is the meaning of his dying in the body. We bear about that "**dying**" by being in daily danger and physical suffering (not sickness) from every side because we pour out our lives for the truth, even beyond strength.

As further stated, "**for always we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**" Only those who actually count the old man dead and take only Christ to be their life, know anything of such an experience. Self-crucifixionists are too busy trying to kill themselves or praying for more love, faith, power, and for gifts, to really engage in the Pauline priestly ministry for others. What a relief to know that we have absolutely nothing to do with the old man but to count him dead, and with sin, but to shout "Sin shall not have dominion" so that we are forever free to serve God in the beauty of holiness and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Such a life angers the enemy to the uttermost, because it is Christ living His life over again in us. Thus the life of Jesus is put on exhibit in our mortal flesh. We, the vessels, are not seen except as weak and dependent; but His life, the treasure, is seen because our flesh is still mortal (subject to death and decay). "**Death worketh in us;**" the true servant of God would die multiple times if Christ did not stand up in him and renew him. "**But life in you;**" our life of sacrifice brings life, health, comfort and victory into other lives. But there is never any praise to the vessels; but the excellency (superabundance) of the power is from God alone. No room for boasting that we prayed, we fasted, we had gifts of healing.

"Knowing that He, who raised the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also through Jesus and present us with you." [2Co.4:14]

This life of Christ thus manifested in us, is His resurrection life, the new creation life. What a safeguard against falsely so-called Unity and Christian Science, which simply attempt to imitate Christ, but deny His atonement. This life, exhibited in our mortal bodies, is the sure earnest and guarantee of a glorified body when our Savior returns to complete His salvation [Rom.8:11, 23-24; Phi.3:20-21].

Of course, Christ's resurrection is solid basis for present faith in the constant manifestation of His life. To know this truth is to have "**the same spirit of faith**" [2Co.4:13] that David and Paul had. Wonderful! All these things are for the sake of the saints and for the glory of God [2Co.4:15]. If Brother Paul had believed in present immortality, as some today foolishly claim to do, he could not have written of the outward man perishing [2Co.4:16].

2 Corinthians 4 climaxes in uttermost triumph. It begins with grace introducing light, unfolds into life, develops into unspeakable power, and

culminates in a climacteric weight of glory. These, insignificant when compared with what they produce, are working for us while we consider the invisible things above. We find 3 small items contrasted with 5 incomparable items to come. The worker for us is “**tribulation**,” which is termed light and momentary. Study Paul’s recital of stripes, imprisonments, deaths oft, perils by land and sea, for perhaps 30 years. But these were all working together for his good unto an indescribable reward.

Oh, how tame is language to express what the heart’s eye sees. He terms it “**glory**.” Nay, “a **weight** of glory.” Nay more, “an **eternal** weight;” ah, vastly more by a multiplied Greek hyperbole of KATH HYPERBOLEN into HYPERBOLEN, which the Spirit alone can interpret to our hopeful hearts. Our common text gives it as “**far more exceeding**,” the Diaglott renders it, “*excessively exceeding*,” or “*according to an exceeding on an exceeding*,” still another expresses it as, “*excessively surpassing*.” The Revised Version has it, “*more and more exceedingly*.” The verb, from which **hyperbole** is derived, is HYPERBALLO, which means “*a throwing beyond, an over-shooting, superiority, an excess in anything*.” BALLO is the strongest Greek word for “*throw, or hurl, or cast out*”. It is used 4 times in Revelation 12, where the dragon “**was cast out of heaven**” (also Rev.19:2 and Rev.20:3).

Now, consider that the Apostle Paul exclaims “*a throwing beyond into a throwing beyond*,” and your spirit may grasp something of his extreme hope. My own spirit gives it thus, “Our momentary light tribulations are working out for us an unsurpassingly unsurpassing, eternal weight of glory.” We may illustrate it by an inverted cone, the apex below representing the tribulations, and the broad open expanse above, the weight of glory. “***If we suffer with Him*** (Christ), ***we shall also reign with Him***” [2Ti.2:12]. What transcendent, radiant, effulgent, dazzling, exceedingly surpassing splendor will envelope the throne, and those who sit conjointly with Christ therein! The brighter our vision of the glory the lighter will be our sense of the afflictions. With such unspeakable and unbounded prospects ahead, will we shun to fulfill to the uttermost our priestly service? Will we shun to “***declare...all the counsel of God***” [Act.20:27]? Will we not gladly “***spend and be spent***” [2Co.12:15] that God may be glorified?

DIV.4B, THE PRIEST MINISTERING UNTO MEN (NEW, HEAVENLY TABERNACLE) [2Co.5]

“If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” [2Co.5:1-2]

This division covers future conditions. The first 8 verses of this 5th chapter properly belong with the preceding 4th chapter. We have here abundant positive proof against the wild heresy of present immortality, that is, for our body. The Greek word rendered **immortality** (as used in Rom.2:7, 1Ti.1:17, and 2Ti.1:10) is APHTHARSIAN, which means “*incorruptibility*” or “*that which*

cannot possibly be corrupted.” Romans 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:10 do not refer only to our human body, but to all that is incorruptible, such as the seed (Word of God), the crown, etc. 1 Timothy 1:17, refers only to God. Jesus Christ “**only hath immortality**” [1Ti.6:16]. “**This mortal must put on immortality**” [1Co.15:35-54]. There are only 2 places where the Greek word *ATHANASIAN* (“immortality”) occurs in the New Testament; this word refers to the body only, and in no sense to the soul or spirit. Therefore, the phrases “immortal soul” or “immortal spirit” has no scriptural foundation. Though it be the truth, let us give heed to sound words and never misapply a citation to prove our doctrine which is weakened by a bad support. A wrong pedestal is worse than no pedestal.

In this section, thoughtfully note the following very plain 9 points against the claim of present immortality:

1. Our body is called and “**earthly house,**” and an “**earthen vessel,**” which is subject to trouble, perplexity, pain, etc.
2. It may be “**dissolved.**” Christ’s body was never dissolved, nor could it be, because there was no sin in it. His body would never have seen death and the grave if He had not taken on Him our sins [Act.2:24-27].
3. In this one, “**we groan;**” a thing unthinkable in an immortal state; for pain, weakness, blindness and hunger will never be known then.
4. This temple is distinctly called “**our mortal flesh**” [2Co.4:11], and “mortal,” in which we groan to be “swallowed up of life” [2Co.5:4].
5. Here we “**walk by faith.**” Our physical condition is no basis for hope of salvation; we are saved and kept by faith alone in God’s Word. Even the greatest healing does not bring anyone immortality. The healed ones invariably die.
6. Yes, we have “**a building of God, a house not made with hands;**” but it is not here, it is still “**in the heavens.**”
7. Now we are absent from the Lord; but in our house from heaven, we will “**be present with the Lord**” [2Co.5:8], because His presence will bring it, and it cannot be an earth-dwelling tabernacle. Jesus’ post-resurrection body stayed here only 40 days, and it was continually hidden. Mortality (deathliness) and immortality can never dwell together in the same place or on the same plane. “Death will be swallowed up of life;” not swallowed down, but up to heaven.
8. “**Endeavoring to be accepted**” [2Co.3:9], will be forever past in our immortal state; for it is our physical infirmities that necessitate us to watch and pray and ask others to pray for us. Jesus never requested prayer for Himself; but Paul did.

9. Here ***“we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh”*** [2Co.4:11]. This was Paul’s own experience to the last. He died without immortality. How can you think that he possessed immortality, when he expressed on 2 occasions his ***“desire to depart and to be with Christ”***... ***“absent from the body”*** [2Co.3:6-8, Phi.1:20-23]? How could he have expected death in a glorified body? How can you expect immortality in a fragile, earthly tent? Paul knew, and so does every sane believer know, that we must wait the coming of Jesus to obtain our house in heaven ***“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”*** [Phi.3:21]. When the translation trumpet shall sound, we will all be changed, whether dead or living. This ***“corruptible (the body in the grave) must put on incorruption, and this mortal (our living body) must put on immortality”*** [1Co.15:52-53].

Some saints seem to be confused about immortality and eternal, or everlasting life; and confound the two. Immortality refers only and always to the body; it never refers to the soul or spirit (see paragraph 1 of section 4B). Life, eternal, everlasting life, refers to the heart, the spirit. This we obtain through faith in Jesus, who is the Life. When we believe, we are ***“born of God”*** ... ***“born of the Spirit”*** [Joh.1:12, Joh.3:5], ***“born of incorruptible seed”*** [1Pe.1:23], and hence possess a sinless life, which is eternal because it flows from the Eternal One. ***“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”*** [1Jo.3:9]. Of course he who is begotten of God has a non-sinching, sinless, and everlasting life, because it is the life of Him who begat him. Like begets like. ***“This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life”*** [1Jo.5:11-12]. But this is not immortality; it is the treasure deposited in our mortal flesh. Nevertheless, this treasure has the promise set before us in our present chapter of a house suitable for this eternal life, or heavenly treasure, even an immortal body. Praise ye the Lord! Read John 3:16. In Christ, we are “a new creation.” As to the heart, or spirit, we are ***“saved by faith”*** [Joh.5:24, Rom.10:10]; but as to the body, we are ***“saved by hope”*** [Rom.8:23-25].

“Wherefore also we are ambitious, whether being at home or absent from home, to be well pleasing to Him; for we all must be manifested before the judgment seat of the anointed One, that each may receive the things through the body, according to what he did, whether good or bad.” [2Co.5:9-10]

THE JUDGMENT SEAT For 2 things, the Apostle Paul was “ambitious”: ❶ to preach where Christ was not named [Rom.15:20] and ❷ to be well pleasing to God [2Co.5:9]. And he exhorts the saints to be ambitious to be quiet, to do their own business, etc. [1Th.4:11]. These are 3 vital matters in view of a just judgment.

The Scriptures speak of 7 judgment scenes upon mankind:

1. The expulsion of the first sinners from Eden.
2. The Noachian flood.
3. Israel's double captivity.
4. The judgment of all men in the death of Christ.
5. The subject for our present study (the judgment seat of Christ).
6. Judgment of this age [Rev.14-19].
7. The Great White Throne judgment [Rev.20].

"We all", does not include sinners; because only believers will appear in the 5th judgment scene (at the judgment seat of Christ). This is by no means a judgment of destinies but of rewards, and that only of believers. Every man's destiny is determined by his attitude to the one greatest judgment of all the seven, namely, Calvary. If he accepts the judgment that passed upon Christ for him on the cross, by believing on Jesus, he will be brought before this judgment seat for the examination of his works as a believer; but he will never come into condemnation (judgment) with the wicked as in Revelation 20:11-15. Rather, it will be his part to join with Jesus in judging the world and angels [1Co.6:3]. When legalists exclaim, "I will meet you at the judgment" they simply expose their ignorance. By that expression, they mean to say that we are wrong, that the judgment will prove us wrong, and hence, we will be damned. If our destiny depended upon our walk or works, then might that be true; but it depends upon Christ's finished effort for us on Calvary and our attitude thereto. Our reward alone is determined by our walk and work.

"The day shall declare it" [1Co.3:18]; that is, the Day of Judgment here mentioned. We shall be fully rewarded if our ways be in Christ and not after the flesh; if we build with gold, silver, and precious stone; and if we teach and preach scripturally, not corrupting the Word of God. For example, a man recently wrote that The Church is founded on the baptism in the Holy Ghost, which is not true. To the extent that saints read and believe that statement, the body of Christ is corrupted. Such a teacher as that will be brought to corruption, his works will be burned. But he who teaches (with Paul) that **"other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"** [1Co.3:11], and also teaches that Paul, not some modern apostle, laid that foundation shall receive a due reward.

At the judgment seat of Christ it will be shown that the one who teaches **"other foundation"** is bad; he will be saved as by fire because he accepted Christ as his Savior; but his toil will go up in smoke; he will suffer loss. The one who teaches Jesus Christ based on Paul's foundation will be saved, both he and his labor.

Do you say that I am severe, that I am judging? No! I am only declaring the truth. Men will see when it is too late the sad folly of pushing their own reasonings and imaginations and other men's unscriptural teachings on the public. God says that their works shall be burned. This is why Paul was "ambitious to be well pleasing to God." He was teaching, toiling, and suffering for a reward.

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
[2Co.5:11]

The terror here mentioned is the severe judgment of our works referred to above, and not to the wicked. The candlestick examiner of Revelation 1-3 is seen "***girt about the paps with a golden girdle,***" walking in the midst of the 7 churches with flaming eyes and burning feet and thundering voice, discovering even now the deservings of each believer. At the judgment these findings will be announced.

"For the love of the Anointed One constraineth us, having judged this, that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all that they who live, no longer to themselves should live, but to Him who died for them and was raised again."
[2Co.5:14-15]

This is why Paul was always real and never gloried in appearance. This is why he was sometimes beside himself so filled was he with the sense of God's goodness; hence, his hilarity was to God: and he so longed to make others know and understand the wonders of grace, that before men he was sober. We can only instruct others by speaking deliberately, collectedly, calmly, thoughtfully, and sensibly. Some people imagine that there is no power in such a ministry. There is edification in it at least. It builds up. There is no power (what some consider power) in a good, well-prepared, old fashioned farmer meal; not much noise in eating it; the eaters often take a nap afterwards: but the work done later proves that the slow, quiet eating and rest were not in vain. He that will not eat cannot work. Who accomplished the most for God, but he who ate well all the revealed will of God by continued diligent study of God's Word. "***I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not, I but the grace of God which was with me***" [1Co.15:10].

It is a criminal fact that most supposedly spiritual workers today do not know the Bible, and are content to be ignorant of it. They do not know, and of course cannot teach the fundamentals of present day truth, a vital part of which is given in these verses, namely, that all men died with Christ of Calvary. The love which constrained Christ to identify Himself with us and thus carry us up to the tree, constrains those who believe it to publish it far and near. What a rest it brings to believe that our old man was crucified with Christ, and hence, it is no longer I that live "***but Christ that liveth in me***" [Gal.2:20]. This is the beginning of victory, rest, happiness, usefulness, and hope. Deny it, who can? Such truly live unto God, for God lives in them. No marvel that verse 16 follows:

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." [2Co.5:16]

"Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh," that is, after the old creation or on a natural plane. **"Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh"** yet no longer do we know we Him after the flesh. We do not try to imitate Christ in His walk and work on earth; but we take His resurrection life to dwell in us, and we **"walk in newness of life"** [Rom.6:4], each distinct from all others, as led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We view all men and all things from the viewpoint of a new creation; sinners are not of the new creation until they are born of the Spirit. We see all believers as a part of this new creation, and seek to bring them into the full knowledge and enjoyment of it. We reckon and declare the following:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." [2Co.5:17-21]

These remaining verses of 2 Corinthians 5 announce the foundation for this new creation. **"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,"** not reckoning their trespasses unto them. It does not read: "God was Christ;" but **"God was in Christ"** (the anointed One) in the same sense as father Jones, living in Chicago, is in his son John, doing business in Detroit. They are together engaged in one enterprise. They are one in nature, in spirit, in purpose, in business; but distinct in personality and office. Father Jones is not the son; neither is John Jones the father. The 3 persons of the Godhead are here all seen cooperating in redemption. Christ, or literally the Anointed One, is Jesus anointed with the Holy Spirit; hence the frequent phrase of "Jesus Christ." In reality, Jesus was not "Jesus Christ" until after the Spirit came upon Him at Jordan [Luk.3:22]. Hence, Jesus is not the Holy Spirit; nor is the anointed One (Christ) the Holy Spirit; but Jesus anointed with the Spirit is Christ (the Anointed One). God was in that Divine Human Being called Jesus, anointed with the Holy Spirit, reconciling the world unto Himself. All the while, God was in heaven even as father Jones is in Chicago and Jesus (the Anointed one) was on earth even as John Jones is in Detroit. John, not his father, does the buying and selling in Detroit. So Jesus (the Anointed), not God the Father, died, was buried and arose from the dead. The Holy Spirit did not die; but the Holy Son Jesus in the power of the Spirit died.

Notice verse 21, **"he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin."** God was not made sin; neither was the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ was made sin for us. Nor did He make Himself sin; but God made (counted Him) sin for us. *"The Lord*

hath made the iniquity of us all to light on Him" [Isa.53:6 RV]. The insanity of jumbling the 3 persons of the Trinity into only 1 person grows more insane as we consider its senselessness and unscripturalness.

There are 8 things here that are affirmed about God. Not one thing is about Christ; however, God employs Him as His agent.

1. *"all things are of God."*
2. He *"hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ"*—used Him as the purchase price.
3. He *"hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation"*—His ministers are sub-agents. Be it remembered, that God has done the reconciling; we are only to announce it. God no longer reckons men's sins to them, because He once for all counted them over on His dying Son. He reproves men for only one sin, "that they believe not on Him" [Joh.16:9].
4. *"God was in Christ"*.
5. He *did not impute our trespasses unto us*.
6. He *has committed unto us the word of reconciliation*.
7. God *beseeches others through His ambassadors of reconciliation*.
8. He *"made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin."* He hides us in Him. His ambassadors tell the glad tidings that Jesus Christ was made sin for all (He was indeed the "sin-offering") and that if they believe they will be *"made the righteousness of God."*

This grace, wondrous grace! What texts for evangelists are these last 8 verses of 2 Corinthians 5! What a message we have! What a high priestly ministry is ours! Oh, friend, not one preacher in 500 grasps the meaning of his service and place: A holy ambassador from high heaven to men of low estate to lift them into freedom and victory and glory.

<p style="text-align: center;">DIV.5A, SUCH A PRIESTLY MINISTRY AFFECTS: SEPARATION FROM ALL THINGS [2Co.6]</p>
--

"We then as workers together beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." [2Co.6:1]

2 Corinthians 6 expresses the outward separation which the New Testament priestly ministry effects.

- It is illustrated by the 28 powerful planks in the apostolic credentials [2Co.6:4-10].
- It is distinctly taught by 5 piercing questions and 7 gracious promises [2Co.6:14-18]. Paul gives these items as leverage for the entreaty of 2 Corinthians 6:1.

PAULINE CREDENTIALS: Today men imagine that they cannot serve God if they do not have some certified document from some officially recognized and legalized body of religious men. All sorts of arguments are advanced to prove that this is necessary. How different were the apostolic credentials: **"Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed."** Their doctrine and methods and spirit were above criticism because Christ lived in them: **"but in all things commending ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distress..."** These were their letters of recommendation. Study and ponder these 7 verses [2Co.6:4-10]. If candidates for the gospel ministry would consider them, there would not be many floating, flaunting, incorrigible, heresy-publishing, lounging workers in the field. The Apostle uttered a stern rebuke, **"All seek their own, not the things that be Jesus Christ's"** [Phi.2:21].

TRUE SEPARATION: **"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."** This does not refer simply to secret fraternities, or to pleasure gatherings, or marriage relations, but to religious fellowships. Any 1 of the 5 words here given will determine whether we should fellowship certain people: **① Unrighteousness, ② darkness, ③ Belial** (worthlessness), **④ infidelity** (versus faith), or **⑤ idolatry**. Put every religious man and every religious crowd under the exposing lens of the Word of God; if you find any or all of these, turn away from them. Bear in mind that it is the devil's trick to trip people up and blind them by religion, even mixing much truth with it if necessary to accomplish his purpose. If Christ crucified, risen, and glorified, is not the center and circumference of a man's religion, it is dangerous, no matter what his claim may be. Oh, what sufficiency! What safety! What comfort in the 7-fold offer of 2 Corinthians 6:16-18:

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Though I did not know their depths, yet these were a great stay to me in my early Christian career. The last 3 verses are conditioned upon our 3-fold attitude to God: **"Come out," "be ye separate,"** and **"touch not."** No wonder saints are weak, have no victory, remain useless, cannot trust Jehovah, and cannot enjoy their sonship; they stay in the place of defilement; they have fellowship there; they handle the unclean. Brother, you cannot keep clean in a packing house or in a smoke-house. Even if you do not work but only visit the place

there, you carry away the foul odor in your clothes. And, you may become so used to that repulsive smell that you do not know it; but to others your perfume is unbearable. The same facts are more emphatically true of believers. You cannot attend all kinds of religious meetings and keep undefiled. Oh, why not be satisfied with the fellowship of God alone?

**DIV.5B, SUCH A PRIESTLY MINISTRY AFFECTS:
SEPARATION UNTO GOD, INWARD AND DEEP
[2Co.7]**

"Having these promises therefore, dearly beloved, we should cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
[2Co.7:1]

The Apostle alludes to the promise just mentioned before. Separation, as before exhorted, is the method of cleansing from fleshly defilement and then the reading of the Word in faith cleanses from defilement of spirit.

"For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season." [2Co.7:8]

This verse indicates that by his former epistle to the Corinthians they were pierced and pained (2Co.7:5 agrees with 2Co.2:13). Hence, here he beseeches them to receive him, assuring them that he has moved every step in the will of God and for their good. All his writings prove that this is true. No spiritual person can find any flaw in Paul's life or doctrine or labor. How he loved the saints! How he longed to hear of their welfare! Of course he rejoiced greatly on hearing of their earnest desire after him.

"The grief according to God works out repentance unto salvation, not to be regretted; but the grief of the world works out death." [2Co.7:10 RV]

This is not a text primarily for sinners; for a person must be saved before he can experience godly sorrow. Believers learn the meaning and depths of repentance long after they are saved. Yes, the sorrow of the world shortens life, often ending in despair. But to sorrow from Divine Chastisement, is to be eternally profited.

"For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."
[2Co.7:11]

The 7 items of the heart attitude wrought by Paul's letter here in this verse show the deep effect of Godly sorrow and indicates the reality of an inward

separation from all that contaminates. *“In every way ye proved yourselves to be pure in the matter”* [RV]; that is, as an assembly they heeded the counsel of 1 Corinthians 5:13, *“put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”* Again, he expresses his care, and that of Titus, for them in 2 Corinthians 7:12-15; and expresses his confidence in them.

DIV.5C, SUCH A PRIESTLY MINISTRY AFFECTS: FELLOWSHIP IN DISTRIBUTION [2Co.8-9]

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” [2Co.8:1]

This is the second benefit, or “**grace**” mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:15. It is the Pauline compendium on the use of our money. It will pay every saint eternal dividends to acquaint himself with this document.

Observe that it is termed “**THE grace**.” The word **grace** occurs 7 times in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 [2Co 8:1, 4 (translated “GIFT”) 6-7, 9, 19; 2Co 9:8, 14]. It is therefore not a natural gift, which might cause its possessor to use it unwisely, prompted by human sympathy, etc.; it is “**the grace of God bestowed.**” To encourage us, we read, *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you”* [2Co.9:8].

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” [2Co.8:9]

The grace of Christ is the supreme argument advanced for liberality: As the eternal Son of God, His wealth was incalculable. He was equal with God, was in the form of God, shared in the Father’s glory; all things were made by Him, for Him, and by Him all things hold together. But, He divested Himself of all this wealth of honor, wisdom, and might and took on a human form, becoming weak and poor. The depth of His poverty is expressed by His tasting death for every man. He died, not only without a reputation, but as counted sin and a transgressor. He endured reproach; even hanging between the 2 worst outlaws of that hour. Jesus Christ gave up absolutely everything, all for your sake and mine. Why? That through His poverty...think of it, beloved...not through His strength or learning or cunning, but that through His poverty we might be made rich. This amazing exchange is set before us to provoke us to giving. How can we withhold anything from such a Savior?

The liberality of the Macedonians is brought forward as an incentive to the Corinthian assembly to give; and thereby prove the sincerity of their love. The way they became liberal in practice is noteworthy. *“They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God”* [2Co.8:5]. If you really give yourself to Him, He will get your means too. One of the most precious promises was

made to the Macedonian believers because they gave so freely and abundantly of their substance to the Lord. Here it is. ***“My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”*** [Phi.4:19]. Giving to God is simply depositing in a never-failing savings bank, it will be there for future use. Some of them had promised portions which they had not yet fulfilled. To them he exclaims: ***“Now therefore perform the doing of it”*** [2Co.8:11].

Timothy and Erastus are probably the 2 brethren mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:18-22 (see **Act.19:22**). At that time, the importance of the grace of giving, and of making up that particular bounty for the needy is evident from the fact that 4 trusty men were engaged in looking after it. The fact that 2 whole chapters (of 39 verses) are devoted to the subject certainly stamps it as a vastly momentous subject. ***“Whether...our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches”*** [2Co.8:23]. The Greek word for **messengers** here is **apostles** (also in **Phi.2:25**). Therefore, we find 8 assembly apostles distinct from the 12 kingdom apostles [1Co.15:5]. The 8 assembly apostles are:

Paul and Barnabas [Act.14:14]

Apollos (1Co.4:6, 9]

Sylvanus and Timothy [1Th.1:1, 1Th.2:6]

Epaphroditus [Phi.2:25]

Titus and Erastus [2Co.8:23 with Act.19:22]

There may have been others; but it appears evident concerning these. (See our study books on 1 Corinthians and Ephesians for a full explanation of apostles).

Giving is not to be regarded as a duty, but rather as a privilege, hence, it is indeed a grace, a gift. Paul says: ***“I speak not by commandment”*** [2Co.8:8]. He would not have us give of necessity, or grudgingly, or as a burden, or as extortion, but freely, cheerfully, bountifully—***“every man according as he purposeth in his heart; for God loveth a cheerful giver”*** [2Co.9:7].

Now, here are powerful incentives:

1. ***“He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”*** [2Co.9:6].

This teaches that the way our money is used indicates the measure of love we have for the truth and for Christ. The sowing is not simply the giving; but there must first ***“be a willing mind”*** [2Co.8:12]. The widow who gave all she had (all her living) gave only two mites; but back of her small gift was a great heart, a heart swelling out with unselfish love, for the cause of Christ. Jesus declared that she gave more than they all who gave their abundance into the treasury; because the offering is ***“accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not”***

[2Co.8:12]. Therefore, he who has little and gives it all, or gives largely of his penury, in God's sight sows bountifully and of course will reap bountifully. The reward will be according to the bountiful heart rather than according to the amount given. The Macedonians were willing beyond their power [2Co.8:3]. They will be rewarded beyond their actual giving. Wonderful! Glorious!

2. The next incentive is, "***And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work.***" [2Co.9:8]

The last flimsy excuse is swept from beneath our feet. God challenges us to draw on Him. He does not chide us because we are naturally stingy or covetous. Instead, He offers us the privilege of co-operating with Him in the greatest financial enterprise extending worldwide and which will render everlasting dividends; and, He will furnish all the capital... "***make all grace abound.***" Are you not astonished at this verse, at the ALL's: "ALL grace," "ALways," "ALL sufficiency," "ALL things," "ALL good work?" How can anyone refrain from taking out stock in such a business? This is no speculation. There are no risks. There will never be a boom followed by a collapse. Nay but...

"(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:). Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." [2Co.9:9-11]

This prayer for the saints is based upon the unbounded provision expressed in the verse which says "***in everything, being enriched unto all bountifulness*** (simplicity or liberality), ***which works through*** (causes) ***us thanksgiving to God.***" This takes us back to the announcement of the unmeasured fullness provided for us **IN** His Son. The Apostle exclaims, "***I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God that was given you IN Christ Jesus, that IN everything ye were enriched IN Him, IN all utterance and IN all knowledge***" [1Co.1:4-5]. Here the same abounding provision pertains in the matter of the use of our carnal substance for eternal gain, both to us and to God. Again I say, how can anyone refrain from taking out stock in such an enterprise? Every provision is made: every impetus is set behind us; every enticement is set before us; and every encouragement continually envelopes us; for note the 3 final powerful promptings to unstinted giving:

- a. The praise to God for what it provokes: "***Because the service of this self-supporting high priestly ministration not only is completely filling up the deficiencies of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God***" [2Co.9:12 RV].

The recipients give God all the glory for remembering their needs and for so wonderfully supplying them. Their cries of distress are heard; and the faithfulness of God is established; and your subjection to the gospel is shown to the glory of God.

- b. Prayer by the recipients for the donors is provoked. They glorify God *“in their supplication for you, longing greatly for you, on account of the surpassing grace of God upon you.”* The giver has not only the joy of giving and the Father’s sure reward for his liberality; but the reward of answers to unknown prayers in his behalf. And this glorifies God. His Name be praised!
- c. All reverts back to the original Gift, who includes all other gifts, all gifts in One—*“Thanks be unto God for His indescribable free-gift”* [2 Co 9:15]. As we are *“Justified gratuitously* (that is, without any cause in us) *by His grace”* [Rom 3:24 RV], so our liberality is based upon and flows out from God’s gratuitous Gift, Jesus Christ, who was given without any cause, or merit in us; hence, all honor and praise for our greatest sacrifice in giving is forever due to the God of all grace. We never can; we never will lose sight of God’s indescribable Gift to men.

DIV.6, THE SUFFERING AND GLORY OF SUCH A PRIEST [2Co.10-12]

2 CORINTHIANS 10

“Now I Paul myself, who in bodily presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”
[2Co.10:1-2]

In 2 Corinthians 10 through 12, the Apostle is contrasting himself and his ministry with some saints in Corinth and with certain workers whom he styles *“false apostles, deceitful workers”* [2Co.11:13]. Evidently there was nothing in Paul’s outward appearance to commend him to the public, or to give him prestige as a public speaker. The people acknowledged that his letters were *“weighty and powerful;”* but they said *“His bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible”* [2Co.10:10]. He had a pitiful infirmity in his eyes [Gal.4:13-15]. Today, if people had the weakness of bodily appearance and utterance of which Paul speaks, they would never open their mouths in teaching or testimony. They would be ashamed of the very things in which he gloried (see 2Co.12:9-10). The natural man wants to appear well.

Some in Corinth *“think of us as if we walked according to the flesh”* [2Co.10:2]. It is always so; carnal believers cannot discern real spirituality. They misjudge the most deeply spiritual. But Paul’s answer is: *“Though we walk in the flesh* (we are still in a weak earthen vessel), *we do not war after the flesh;”* and adds that our

weapons “**are not fleshly, but spiritual**,” hence, powerful through God to overthrow strongholds (fortresses); namely, the fortresses of the devil, which are expressed in 2 Corinthians 10:5 as “**imaginings** (reasoning), “**every high thing**” and “**every thought**.” In 1 Corinthians 1:19 and 3:18-20, the Apostle boldly speaks against the “**wisdom of the wise**” and “**the wisdom of this age**,” intimating there how it is opposed to the gospel of Christ. Note that this trinity of fortresses is directly “**against the knowledge of God**.” 1 Timothy 3:6 shows us that Satan is the source of the wisdom of men.

Therefore, our great warfare is evident: Overthrowing reasonings, heights, and thoughts; hurling down every opposition of the mind against the knowledge of God; yea, and leading into captivity (making a bondsman of it) every thought or design to Jesus Christ [2Co.10:3-6]. Our spiritual weapons are named in Ephesians 6:13-18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8, chief among which is “**the shield of faith**.” We cannot fight thoughts and overthrow reasoning by gritting our teeth and setting our wills against them; but by believing what God says that we “**fight the good fight of faith**,” “**with the heart man believeth**,” “**by faith we understand**.” Saints fight effectually with the heart, not with the head; hence, our chief weapon is faith. Therefore, the Bible throughout arraigns men for their unbelief. “**Faith is the victory that overcomes the world**” [1Jo.5:4] and also the devil and his fiery darts of reasoning. Thus, by simply accepting God’s Word for its face value we level every high thought of Satan, and compel our very minds to obey Christ in their cogitations. We come to think as God thinks; of course then, we speak as He speaks.

“And having in a readiness to revenge (avenge or punish) all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.” [2Co 10:6]

Doubtless, the apostle refers to the disobedience of false apostles mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:12-23. He could not deal with their detrimental ministry in Corinth until the Corinthian church fully obeyed the Word of God as Paul preached it, and took a firm stand against the false teachers. He was fully obedient to the truth he declared; and he expected them also to obey. Then, as the steward of the Church, by faith he could bring the scathing word of judgment against their enemies. Obedience to Christ of our very thoughts and imaginings is therefore the theme of 2 Corinthians 10.

“For we dare not rank among or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves; but they measuring themselves and comparing themselves with themselves are not intelligent.” [2Co.10:12 RV]

Reader, do you know any who do that today? Do you thus compare and measure yourself? Oh, this is the bane of Christendom. Israel compared themselves with the nations; therefore, cried: “**No, but we WILL have a king**” [1Sa.8:19]. **Whereupon God “gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My WRATH”** [Hos.13:11]. Or rather do you choose with Paul? He declares that “we will not boast unto the things unmeasured; but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure divided to us to reach even to you.” The

unwise measure short because of a wrong standard; but brother Paul measures full, not too short nor too long, because the rule of the God of measure is his standard.

The perfect will of God was his supreme aim. He never swerved from that. He went to Corinth in God's will; no one could take the credit for it. Nor did he boast in the labors of others beyond measure. He gloried only in the Lord. And he hoped through them by the increase of their faith, to announce the glad tidings beyond them, all the while giving God the praise for it all. They would publish the message to others. Thus, our ministry of the word of grace does not end with those directly addressed; but it continues by them to others. Paul is enriched by our receiving his message; likewise, we are enriched by others receiving his message from us.

Finally...

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." [2Co.10:17-18]

Paul knew that he possessed overwhelming proofs of Divine Approval of every kind; for he knew that he lived and moved in the will of God and altogether for His highest honor. We too, by the same Holy Spirit, may live the same life and have the same Divine Approval.

2 CORINTHIANS 11

"Would to God you could bear with me in my folly; and indeed bear with me." [2Co.11:1]

This verse sounds like a contradiction of Paul's exhortation just before to glory only in the Lord; but it is not. Instead, there were some who termed his kind, or method of boasting, to be "**folly**" because it is so contrary to the natural man to boast in what Paul did. Hence, in these 3 closing chapters we find on the one hand the sharpest sarcasm and on the other hand the most tender and deepest solicitude.

"I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ." [2Co.11:2]

Here the Apostle's view of The Church as **ONE** and Christ her Head is again expressed, even as he did at the very gateway of his Church order [1Co.1:10]. As God purposed and provided for this, so Paul, the steward of The Church, sought to bring it to pass. He saw only **ONE** body; and he saw Christ not only as the **ONE** Savior, but he says further,

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in (toward) Christ." [2Co.11:3]

How did the serpent deceive Eve? He induced her to eat the forbidden fruit by promising her that she would be wise, “**be as gods, knowing good and evil**” [Gen.3:5]. In other words, she would not be dependent upon God. She broke the simplicity of the marriage tie by heeding the voice of another instead of turning to her Divinely Ordained Head, her husband. She usurped authority over him by so doing, therefore, she was deceived and became in the transgression [1Ti.2:11-14].

“**The simplicity which is in** (toward) **Christ**” insists on only **ONE** Head, even Christ, as the one all-sufficient Source, Support, and Director of the Church, with the love and tenderness of a true Husband; and the oneness of the Body (The Church—an undivided body, having but **ONE** life), even the life of the resurrected Christ. The importance of maintaining the oneness of Christ and His Church is continually emphasized in Paul’s writings.

Finally in Colossians we learn the horrible absurdity of any other view. **Colosse** means “*monstrosity*” and “*correction*”; the monstrosity necessitating the correction. A body without a head is a monstrosity; hence, to the extent that The Church does not give Christ His place as her Head, her only Head, in God’s sight she is a monstrosity. The epistle to the Colossians was written to warn against 4 errors which would result in such a monstrosity.

“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached; or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received; or another gospel, which ye have not accepted; ye might well bear with him.” [2Co.11:4]

A deviation from the doctrine of the oneness of Christ that is from holding Christ as the **ONE**, the only **ONE** Head of The Church as one Body, is turning from the simplicity of Christ and is the beginning of preaching “*another Jesus*.” From this deviation, all other essential errors flow. As we trust Jesus Christ and depend upon Him absolutely, we are kept from self-help, self-improvement, worldly wisdom, and from all occult religions, as Christian Science, etc., because we are wholly dependent upon only one other...even the Right One...who never can fail those who trust Him. Of course, to receive another Jesus is to receive another spirit, the spirit of the devil, and another gospel, which is not at all glad tidings. If there were no possibility of missing the Bridehood of Christ, if all The Church will constitute the Bride, no matter how her members live, or what they believe, why does Paul express a fear that they might miss it? If there were no danger of any kind, his warnings would be mockery.

The Apostle continues his glorying by saying: “**For I suppose I was not a whit behind the chiefest** (preeminent) **apostles**” [2Co.11:5]. Whereupon, he proceeds to give 7 powerful proofs of this statement in that he was not “*rude in knowledge*”. He abased himself by preaching the gospel without charge that the Corinthians might be exalted. If they were inferior in their privileges to other churches, it was only in this that other men charged for their service; but Paul did not [2Co.12:13]. Other churches supported him while he ministered to

Corinth, which he terms “**robbery**” [2Co.11:8-9], because they owed him their support [1Co.9:1-14].

Paul was of the same national lineage, being a Hebrew, an Israelite, etc. [2Co.11:22]. He cites 24 tremendous evidences that he was a minister of Christ, not only as others were; but “**more**” [2Co.11:23-28]. 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 lists his credentials.

Then, he emphasizes his “**care of all the churches**”. If the things the Apostle is here calling on the stand to witness for him were not true, he was the most gigantic imposter. If they were true, and they certainly were, then he commands our profoundest respect and his teaching demands our heartiest acceptance, even as the Word of God.

Finally, in spite of some accusing him of “**being crafty**,” and catching them with guile, he assures them that he did not make a gain of them; but wholly only sought their highest welfare [2Co.12:16-19]. On this point, you will find great profit in studying the above 7 citations, which I will list again:

1Co.9:1-14	2Co.11:22	2Co.12:16-19.
2Co.6:4-10	2Co.11:23-28	
2Co.11:8-9	2Co.12:13	

FALSE APOSTLES

“But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion, that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.” [2Co.11:12]

The next 8 verses record some unthinkable facts, which this verse introduces. He writes of “**false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.**” I say, that this is unthinkable that men dare to pose as Christ’s apostles, yet knowing that they are not. Of course, such have no fear of God. But our Apostle gives the explanation, saying:

“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” [2Co.11:14-15]

Bear in mind that these false, deceitful workers are not confined to Christian Science, Spiritism, Russellism, Seventh Day Adventism, etc.; they come nearer home. They are among the so-called orthodox churches, many of whose pastors are not born again. Yes, they are, I fear, among Pentecostal circles. There are those who, though saved and anointed with the Spirit, are false and deceitful in their teaching and toil. They yield to the self-life in themselves and others; they seek their own ease and glory. Thus far they become servants of Satan. They “**glory according to the flesh**” [2Co.11:18], that is,

in their own abilities, gifts, and successes. 2 Corinthians 11:20 provides earmarks of such workers:

- They bring others into bondage,
- they devour others,
- they rob other, and
- they exalt themselves.

Do Christians act thus? Yes, but that is not Christian; that is flesh; that is Satanic. Why? Because they refuse to listen to Paul. He and his associates bring liberty. They feed, but never devour; they add to, and never take from; they exalt Christ only and always. As it was then, so it is now. Some saints suffer these things because they “**suffer fools gladly**,” or they “**are wise**” in their own conceits [2Co.11:19], or because they are in ignorance and fear. I declare boldly that the number of such workers **IS LEGION**. The appalling evidences are waning power, distracted saints, disintegration of assemblies, the scattering of sheep. Already, we can see that “**their end shall be according to their works**” [2Co.11:15]. Every trip I make to other cities deepens my conviction of the confused conditions, and that the only remedy is Paul’s message wholeheartedly received and lived by. Even Paul’s message put forth halfheartedly and theoretically is far from being sufficient. Hence, he wrote: “**Be ye followers** (imitators) **of me as I am of Christ**” [1Co.11:1].

“If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.”
[2Co.11:30]

The weakest thing, the last thing that others would boast in was that “**through a window in a basket was I let down by a wall, and escaped his hands**” (the governor’s hands) [2Co.11:33]. He was so cast on God, so utterly without friends, so separated from this world that the most menial method had to be employed for his safety and escape. Apparently his God was either weak, or indifferent, or foolish (compare 1Co.2:23-25).

Now what was behind all of this with the Apostle? He suffered the loss of all things and counted them as dung that he might gain Christ and be found in Him [Phi.3:8]. The very path that others despised, was the one by which Paul reached the greatest results here and the highest honors and rewards hereafter. Shall we follow in his steps?

2 CORINTHIANS 12

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory; I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.” [2Co.12:1]

Apparently, he regrets what he had written in the 2 preceding chapters [2Co.10-11]; but if he had not been assured of writing in the Spirit, he certainly

would have destroyed those portions. Instead in this chapter he brings his glory to a climax, and all in the will of God.

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities." [2Co.12:2-5]

The Apostle Paul delayed 14 years before telling this vision. Be assured that today dreamers and visionaries do not wait that long because, for the most part, their dreams and visions are not of God. If their dreams and visions were of God, they would be in harmony with Scripture and their dreams and visions would come to pass.

Note the rare modesty of the Apostle; he relates it as if it were about another person not himself...**"I knew a man"**. He always sought to keep people's eyes upon the Lord, never on himself or his marvelous experiences. The essential fact in this vision was that he **"knew a man in Christ."** That is a choice fellow, **"a man in Christ."** There are multitudes of babes in Christ; but a man in Christ...find one. Paul declares that he **"knew him."** Although he was that man, yet he allows 14 years of trials and toils to pass by to prove it; and then he only infers it. Yet, men assume to know God and to be of great importance in Christendom, all the while they are not being conformed to Paul's gospel, either in doctrine or practice. Rather, they actually turn away from Paul's gospel and oppose it.

It was a man, not a babe, who was seen caught away to heaven...**"a man in Christ."** Any wonder that modern dreams are so cheap, seem so unreal, and have so little value? They are baby dreams. But here, a man had a vision about a man (Paul himself) in The Man of glory. Its value is expressed by the fact of its repetition. There were not 2 visions; but 1 vision recorded 2 times. His vision makes known to us 3 facts:

1. Paradise is in the 3rd heaven, which is where Jesus **"led a multitude of captives"** when He ascended on high [Eph.4:8].
2. The spirits of saints ascend on high when they fall asleep in Jesus, even as expressed also in Philippians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:8. Reasoning men labor to prove things which are not provable; for example, when endeavoring to establish that horrible error of soul-sleeping they say the Greek reads CAUGHT AWAY, and not CAUGHT UP. Granted, he was caught away, but to where? To heaven. Is heaven not up? Be assured, no one sleeps in heaven.
3. He **"heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."** Wonderful indeed! One man at least never told all he knew. God forbid him doing so; in fact it was impossible to do so. Other men **"in**

Christ doubtless have similar experiences; but like Paul, they keep them in their hearts.

“Of such an one will I glory.” Observe that he glories in the “man in Christ caught up” but not in the vision or the unutterable words heard. How few have such a theme of glorying. How the masses of believers boast in their dreams, visions, gifts, supposed revelations, successes, etc., etc., but who boasts of **“a man in Christ?”** Evidently the Spirit restrained Paul from relating any more visions; but now having related only one, he exclaims,

“but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.” [2Co.12:6b]

Although he must have had many, we do not read of another vision from the Apostle Paul; instead, he adds:

“And lest I should be over-exalted by the transcendancy of the revelations, a stake in the flesh was given to me, a messenger enemy, to buffet me that I might not be over-exalted” [2Co.12:7 RV]

Now, pray find another man that will boast in such a thing. Yet, this is the particular weakness in which the very chiefest Apostle boasted, even that God should use an enemy to hold him down, and refuse to hear his cry that the stake might be removed. God’s answer to his prayer is profoundly full of meaning.

*“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, **My grace** is sufficient for thee: for **my strength** is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* [2Co.12:8-9]

God is jealous for His grace and for His strength. The first half of this answer is frequently quoted and is apparently well-known; but, not one in a thousand really knows it practically. Therefore, none can say, *“Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may spread over me like a tent”* [2Co.12:9 RV]. People are always concerned to know what Paul’s **“thorn in the flesh”** was. Many articles have been written advancing various theories about it; but how very few have learned, or cared to learn, the meaning and purpose of the thorn. **“My grace”** and **“My strength,”** God’s interest should be our chief concern.

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” [2Co.12:10]

This is indeed strange language to the flesh which clamors to be strong, to be honored, to be self-sufficient and never know a need, to be commended, to be at ease and in comfort. To endure the above 5 unfortunate experiences is one thing; but to be well pleased with them, to welcome them, to boast in

them...that is victory; that is power. When I am weak; when I cannot get along without God anywhere; when I must bear the insults of men until God delivers me; when I dare not ask for help or use my brain and strength to supply my needs or those of my suffering family, and suffer want; when persecutions flame high, and straits press me above measure, so that I am as nothing; then, if I have learned the Source and Supply of unfailing strength, I am strong. In Paul's case there was no "if;" he had learned it: **"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might"** [Eph.6:10].

Any strength other than that is an abomination to the Lord, because it robs Christ of His place in us. Any dependence upon money, men, methods, manners, movements, managements, multitudes, or anything whatever is not an attitude of weakness; therefore, God's working and power are hindered, the Spirit is grieved, and Christ is circumscribed and veiled. People get anointed with the Holy Spirit because they feel weak; but as soon as they are filled, they start out in their own strength, guided by their own judgment, prompted by their own impulses, thinking to use the Spirit, or His power, to do what they think ought to be done. They do not go to the Word in study, and to God in worship, depending upon the new Instructor and Guide. What follows? Defeat, depression, discouragement, despair, and a wasted life.

"I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." [2Co.12:11]

Corinth should have published of him what he was writing of himself. It seemed foolish to do so; but it was necessary for the truth's sake. He continues his boast and says, **"for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing,"** and he announces verse 12 to prove it: **"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."**

The following verse is certainly prophetic.

"Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." [2Co.12:14]

Oh, that The Church today, for it is truly Corinthian in character, would read these tender, yet faithful entreaties and exhortations of Paul; for his message is coming to the front.

- Paul laid the foundation for the Church [1Co.3:10].
- He set the Church in order.
- By Paul's gospel saints are established [Rom.16:25].
- By his message of grace, saints are built up and obtain an inheritance [Act.20:32].
- According to his gospel, men will be judged [Rom.2:16].

Therefore, Paul's coming to Corinth the 3rd time was not limited to a visit by him in the flesh (body); but doubtless it means that his gospel of grace and glory must be heard by The Church today. All believers shall have the privilege of accepting the fullness of the word of grace, and thus be prepared for the highest enjoyments of the glory of God. If saints receive this gospel with all their heart, "***continue in faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel,***" they will be presented "***perfect*** (full-grown) ***in Christ Jesus***" at Jesus' coming [Col.1:23, 28]. On the other hand, the result of turning away from his message is expressed in 2 Peter 3:15b-16:

"...even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned (untaught) and unstable (not established) wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Instead of believing Paul's message unto their own construction, they wrest, as they do also the other scriptures to their own destruction

<p style="text-align: center;">DIV. 7, THE PRIEST'S SOURCE OF POWER [2Co. 13]</p>

"Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me ... try your own selves, whether ye be in the faith." [2Co.13:3-5]

The last half of verse 3 and verse 4 are a sort of parentheses, which we must observe to get the full force of the Apostle's argument. 2 Corinthians 12 really ends with Verse 2 of 2 Corinthians 13. Now, to assure his readers of the authority and importance of his sayings, he declares that Christ is speaking in him. Study the unfathomable statements in 2 Corinthians 12:3-4.

How few workers are wholly given up to the highest will of God and so abandoned to the dear Holy Spirit as to venture to say "***It is no longer I that speak; but it is Christ speaking in me.***" Why not, if it is no longer I that live; but Christ liveth in me? Beloved, let us learn who we truly are and what our rights truly are in Him. Then he adds: "***Christ speaking in me is not weak toward you,***" as ye would make it appear; "***but is powerful in you.***" He shows them why:

"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God."
[2Co.13:4]

That is, Christ used none of His strength to resist the foe or to deliver Himself, but was wholly left to the persecution and cruelties of the wicked, both by Himself and by His Father, "***Yet He liveth by the dynamite of God.***" Christ's weakness is expressed in Matthew 11:11, "***He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than***" John the Baptist. It is Jesus, the greatest by virtue of His holy nature, who became the least by taking the place of abject weakness and

dependence upon His Father. Paul announces the same thing of himself in Ephesians 3:8, *“to me, the less than the least of all saints, was this grace given.”*

Then follows the other extreme, *“Yet, He liveth by the dynamite of God.”* The chiefest channel for the mightiest dynamite of God; therefore, God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul [Act.19:11]. This is all very wonderful. Even today, Jesus as the Man in glory, the Great High Priest, does not live by His own power (although He is the only one who could do so); but emphatically, *“He liveth by the dynamite of God;”* for the Holy anointing Oil (the Holy Spirit) is still upon Him. The Apostle continues,

For indeed **“we are weak”** in Him; that is, Paul chose that place of utter helplessness and dependence upon God, persistently repudiating his own strength in every way (see again 2Co.12:9-10). This is why some of Paul’s own spiritual children did not appreciate him. They wanted a father, a teacher, in whom they could boast as being strong, able bodied, good looking, eloquent in utterances, learned in language, of high repute among men. These things always appeal to the carnal. Reader, you can easily discern whether you are carnal, or spiritual.

Finally, he adds: *“But we shall live with Him by the dynamite of God toward you.”* Paul learned to live, not by his own strength, but by the strength of Jehovah; therefore, he could exclaim, *“I can do all things (all of the Father’s will) through Christ my Strength.”* Jacob was disabled and went limping, knowing by experience his helplessness; but 7 years rolled around before he learned that God Almighty was there all that time to make him **“fruitful and multiply.”** Seven years after hearing that he was no longer called Jacob but Israel, he really believed it [Gen.32:28, Gen.35:10].

Reader, have you learned your own weakness? Are you glad or sad about it? Have you learned that Christ is your Strength so that you can rejoice in His sufficiency? If you’ve learned to rejoice in the sufficiency of Christ, you are beginning to be fruitful.

A FATHERLY CONCLUSION

“Finally, brethren, rejoice; be perfected; be of good comfort; mind the same thing; be at peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” [2Co.13:11]

How similar is this finale to the opening words of 1 Corinthians. The Apostle Paul never needed to utter any regrets; there was no change to be made in his doctrine, no apologies to make for his conduct and service. Christendom is shut up absolutely to accept his teaching and imitate his walk. The benediction is unique. This is the only place it occurs just this way.

*“The grace of the Lord **Jesus** Anointed and the love of **God** and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all. Amen.” [2Co.13:14]*

It is no small fact that these letters written to set The Church in order, to correct all manner of errors, and to give direction as to the spiritual priesthood and ministry of her people, should end by boldly and clearly declaring, as if for the last time, the 3 distinct personalities of the Godhead. How good and wonderful is our God!

-- ❖ --