

HELPERS OF YOUR JOY

“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. 23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. 24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.” KJV (2 Cor 1:21-24)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION to NEW SERIES

The Epistles were letters written to:

- 1—to the churches (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica)
- 2—clusters of brethren (“strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” First Peter and James; the scattered twelve tribes; the seven churches of Asia – Revelation)
- 3 – All who have obtained like precious faith (Second Peter)
- 4– all who are sanctified (Jude)
- 5–specific brethren in Christ Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the elect lady (Second John), Gaius (Third John).

These Epistles assist us in identifying the nature of spiritual life. In them we find matters that drive a wedge between men and God – issues that must be resolved. The proper focus of spiritual life is also declared. Exhortations and admonitions are given to stimulate the saints to avail themselves of the benefits of the New Covenant, and avoid the various ensnarements that lurk in the dark place of this present evil world.

The Epistles identify both areas of vulnerability and of advantage, of good and of evil. They commend what is good and condemn what is evil. They also provide a proper assessment of the various churches.

All of this might seem quite apparent – and, indeed, on a scholastic level, it is very evident. However, the power of spiritual life is not found on the scholastic or pedant level. If you are familiar with the general content of the Epistles – which are addressed to believers, or those who are in Christ – you know they are in sharp conflict with the thrust of most of Christendom. The things that are held in contemporary high regard by the “growing church” are not even mentioned in God’s word to the churches – what the Spirit is saying “to the churches” (Rev 2:7, 11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). Ponder what is NOT mentioned in the Epistles.

CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT

1. Reference to the size of any of the churches.
2. Reference to the “church staff.”
3. Any reference to the involvement of the churches in the community in which they were found.
4. Reference to the property held by the church.
5. Any reference to the specialized “ministries” of the church that are common in our day.
6. Reference to the church’s involvement governmental affairs.
7. Any reference to the facilities of any of the churches.
8. Reference to any special literature used by any of the churches.
9. The mention of any special programs for youth, seniors, etc.
10. Reference to any special outreach programs.

More could be added to this list. However, this will suffice for the point I wish to make. I am by no means suggesting that any of these things are unlawful or to be criticized. Rather, I want to point out that these are generally the sole means through which modern churches are evaluated, commended, or criticized. If you were to remove these things from your consideration of the average church, what would be left to say? Those of us who have been around for a while find this to be a most arresting consideration.

Chapter 2

Paul, and every other inspired writer this side of the cross, wrote to the churches, or to individual members of the church (Theophilus, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the elect lady, and Gaius). If this assessment is true, then “the mind of the Spirit” (Rom 8:27) is, in some critical sense, focused upon the people of God – those who are in Christ Jesus. While this is clearly not the focus of vast numbers of “Christian” leaders, it is the unquestionable focus of the Spirit, which puts such leaders at a variance with the Holy Spirit.

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT THE CHURCHES

Ponder what IS said of the churches in the Scripture.

CONSISTENT REFERENCES

1. WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST JESUS (the called of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:6), beloved of God (Rom 1:7), saints (Rom 8:27), heirs (Gal 3:19), joint heirs (Rom 8:17), sanctified in Christ (1 Cor 1:2), partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb 3:1), brethren (Eph 6:10), fellow citizens (Eph 2:19), etc.).
2. GENERAL KINGDOM RESPONSIBILITIES (put off the old man (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), put on the new man (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), run the race with patience (Heb 12:1-2), fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12,19), make your calling and election sure (2 Pet 1:10), be followers of God as dear children (Eph 5:1), quench not the spirit (1 Thess 5:19), grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18), etc.).
3. WHAT GOD HAS DONE (delivered us from the power of darkness (Col 1:13a), translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13b), called us to glory and virtue

(2 Pet 1:3), accepted us in Christ (Eph 1:6), made Christ to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), called us to peace (1 Cor 7:15), called us to holiness (1 Thess 4:7), etc.).

4. WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR US (redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13), made us free (John 8:36), given us an understanding (1 John 5:20), made peace (Col 1:20), washed us from our sins (Rev 1:5), is interceding for us (Heb 7:25), is mediating the New covenant (Heb 9:15; 12:24), is shepherding the sheep (Heb 13:20), etc.).

5. THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (the earnest of our inheritance (2 Cor 1:22), strengthens the inner man (Eph 3:16), leads us in the mortification of the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13-14), causes us to abound in hope (Rom 15:13), produces fruit within us (Gal 5:22-23), brings joy (Rom 14:17), intercedes for us (Rom 8:26-27), etc.).

6. PIVOTAL CONSIDERATIONS (the coming of the Lord (Col 3:4; 1 Thess 5:2; 1 Tim 6:14-16; Tit 2:13; James 5:8; 2 Pet 3:10-12), the passing of this world (1 Cor 7:31; 2 Pet 3:10-13; 1 John 2:17), the day of judgment (Rom 2:5; Heb 9:28; 2 Pet 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17; Jude 1:6), the inheritance reserved for us (Eph 1:11,14; 5:5; Col 1:12; 3:24, reaping what we sow (Gal 6:7), obtaining a reward (1 Cor 3:8,14; Col 3:24; Heb 10:35; Rev 22:12), the earnest of our inheritance (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14, etc.).

The point is that there is certain thrust in the words that are spoken to the churches – a motif around which every word is fixed.

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Chapter 3

AN OBVIOUS THRUST

There is certain thrust in the words that are spoken to the churches – a motif around which every word is fixed. Following are some implications of this perception.

1. It comes across that provision has been made for believers to ready themselves for the coming of the Lord, the obtaining of the inheritance, and the receiving of rewards.
2. In view of this, sin is totally unacceptable, and must be dealt with to the glory of God.
3. Salvation makes no provision for a lack of involvement on the part of the ones being saved.
4. Divine provisions are to be received and maintained.
5. Gifts have been given to the church that are designed to implement the purposes of God.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Whatever interferes with the development of these things is to be cast out of the church. Individuals are to wage war against such intrusions. Whatever assists in the maturation of these things is to be received and cultured.

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

Why is it necessary to say these things? They are very obvious to the intellect. However, you will be hard pressed to find a group of people having an emphasis that remotely resembles these thrusts. Churches that accentuate such things are not generally held out as noble examples of success.

The text before us will speak of things that are relatively unknown in the average church. It will address the following matters:

1. Spiritual establishment – “He which establisheth us with you in Christ.”
2. Anointing – “He . . . hath anointed us.”
3. Sealing – “Who also hath sealed us.”
4. The earnest of the Spirit – “Who hath . . . given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”
5. Helping our joy – “Not that we would have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.”
6. Standing by faith – “for by faith ye stand.”

All of these have relevancy within the context of Divine purpose. None of them have relevance in an institutional environment. Men cannot capitalize on any of them, nor can any of them accrue to the glory of man or the implementation of purely human objectives. Yet all of them are essential to being saved. The following questions appear to be in order.

1. Who can conceive of a salvation that does not provide for establishment in a temporal and erratic world?
2. Of what value is a salvation that does not include the favor of God that is evident in His anointing?
3. Who is there among us who would desire a salvation that did not include a down payment of the inheritance to which we have been called?
4. Is there a person who does not see the need for our joy being helped – since it is our “strength” (Neh 8:10)?
6. Is there an insightful person who does not see the need for standing firm, and not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel?

Yet, there are a significant number of assemblies who never hear so much as a syllable concerning these Kingdom realities! There are some who would charge you with being sectarian if you suggested there was an anointing to be had from God, or that the Holy Spirit is given to us as a pledge of the glory to come. This assessment is true, it calls for all of us to be alert and vigilant.

AN ESSENTIALITY

“Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.” (2 Cor 1:21)

I want to impress upon you that we are speaking of something that God is doing through Jesus Christ – establishing us! It is God who has “sealed” us, and “given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” It is God who enabled Paul to be a helper of the joy of His people. It is God who has determined that we will stand by faith.

It is essential that those who come in His name join with Him in this work. If we are, in fact, “laborers together with God” (1 Cor 3:9), we cannot afford to be at a variance with Him in His revealed agenda. Let it be clear in your mind, if what we are doing is not in strict harmony with what God is said to be doing, our labor is in vain. Not only that, we will be judged for daring to have adopted an agenda that He has neither revealed nor approved.

God has revealed what He is doing in Jesus Christ, and it is to be taken seriously. His objective is not simply to turn people from darkness, but to turn them to the light as well. It is not only to deliver them from the power of Satan, but to turn them to God. His purpose is not only for them to obtain the forgiveness of sins, but to also secure the inheritance that is reserved for those who are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18).

I say these things because of their absolute importance. There is not the slightest indication that God has ever given gifts to the church that specialize in a part of what he is doing, to the neglect of other parts. For example, there were no Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers, who turned people from darkness, but left it to others to turn them to the light. No spiritual endowment is calculated to turn people from the power of Satan, leaving it to someone else to turn them to God. No ordained office brings people to the point where they can receive remission of sins, but fails to enable them to obtain the inheritance.

While this may sound a bit radical, the very text with which we are dealing confirms this is the case. The same Apostle who turned them from darkness, exercised himself to turn them to the light.

1. This is why, after they had turned the Gentiles to the Lord, Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do” (Acts 15:36).
2. It is why Paul, after leaving Ephesus, “went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples” (Acts 18:23).
3. This is also a work in which Barnabas engaged: “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:21-22).
4. Judas and Silas did the same: “And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them” (Acts 15:32).
5. Paul and Silas also engaged in this work: “And Judas and Silas, being prophets also

themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them” (Acts 15:40-42).

This is what the Epistles are all about: strengthening, confirming, establishing, and edifying. This is what Jesus means when He said to Peter, “Feed My lambs . . . Feed My sheep . . . Feed My sheep” (John 21:15-17). It is why Jesus, after sending His disciples to “preach the Gospel to every creature,” said, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt 28:20).

When Jesus “gave gifts unto men” (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors/teachers), they were all given “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:16).

It simply is not acceptable that the modern church has not done well in this area. Stable and consistent believers are the exception, and rarely, if ever, the rule. The remarkable success of false teachers, erroneous emphases, and institutional gurus, confirm this to be the case. But God will have none of this miserable failure. He has said too much on the subject. Terms such as “sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3-4), “heirs” (Tit 3:7), “joint heirs” (Rom 8:17b), “heirs of God” (Rom 8:17a), “salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13), “light of the world” (Matt 5:14), and “laborers together with God” (1 Cor 3:9) indicate a condition that is not being accentuated in the modern church.

Furthermore, the purpose for which we are being cultured in Christ Jesus demands a change “from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of our God” (2 Cor 3:18). We have been delivered from the world in order that we might be “married” to Christ, and “bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom 7:4). The future of the saints involves reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12), and “the world to come” will be in their care (Heb 2:5-8). None of these conditions justify a weak, uncommitted, and uninformed people. In the vestibule of spiritual life there are certain characteristics that necessarily attend being “babes.” However, these traits are not to continue. Rather, we are to “grow up into Christ in all things” (Eph 4:15).

Where spiritual infancy is perpetual, and due growth is not realized, there is only one explanation for the condition. The Word has neither been desired nor ingested (1 Pet 2:2). The Holy Spirit has been both grieved and quenched (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). The fellowship of Christ, into which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9), has been spurned in favor of other things. The individual has been pulled away by “the cares of this world,” “the deceitfulness of riches,” or the “lusts of other things,” and thus the Word of God has been choked and has become “unfruitful” (Mark 4:19).

This is true because salvation is calculated to produce growth and spiritual maturation.

The Holy Spirit has been sent into the hearts of believers to assist in this process. The fellowship of Jesus lends itself to spiritual development. The Word of Christ, when dwelling richly within us (Col 3:16), moves us toward spiritual manhood, where we “put away childish things” (1 Cor 13:11).

I realize these words are strong. However, we are living in a time that requires strong words. There is a sort of spiritual stupor that has enveloped the professing church, so that there is hardly any awareness of God, Christ, or the Spirit. The purpose of God is virtually unknown, and the uninformed appear to constitute the majority of most congregations. Our text will confirm the seriousness of this condition. It is simply not an acceptable one, and is attended by great jeopardy.

Chapter 5

ESTABLISHED IN CHRIST

“ Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ . . .” (2 Cor 1:21)

Paul now engages in some sanctified reasoning. He will bring to mind Kingdom realities that bear directly upon the newness of life. He will affirm what IS. Only then will he come to grips with what SHOULD be.

HE

“Now HE which . . .” When establishing the verities of life in Christ Jesus, the emphasis is not what is done, but WHO has done it. It ought to be noted that NONE of these verities have been accomplished, or can be accomplished, by men. I will comment further on this later.

ESTABLISHMENT

“ . . . stablisheth us . . .” Other versions read, “stand firm” (NIV), “makes our faith strong” (BBE), “confirmeth us” (DOUAY), “gives us security” (NAB), “a sure place” (NJB), and “the ability to stand firm” (NLT).

The word “establish” comes from a unique Greek word which means to “make firm, establish, confirm, and make sure.” Combined with “in Christ,” the word means “causing us to be steadfast in our fellowship with Christ” (THAYER). The word used here is also translated “confirm” (Mk 16:21; Rom 15:8; 1 Cor 1:6,8; Heb 2:3). To “confirm” means to “make firm or firmer: strengthen” (MERRIAM-WEBSTER). Texts in which the word is translated “confirm” are as follows.

1. **THE WORD CONFIRMED.** “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and CONFIRMING the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:20). Here the word does not have to do with stability, but with ratifying the reality of God’s already stable word.
2. **THE PROMISES CONFIRMED.** “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to CONFIRM the promises made unto the fathers” (Rom 15:8). The promises were not made more stable, but were confirmed, or corroborated to the ones for whom they were intended.
3. **THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CONFIRMED.** “Even as the testimony of Christ was CONFIRMED in you” (1 Cor 1:6). Here the Gospel, or testimony of Christ, was confirmed to be true in the lives of those who embraced it. That is, its truth was made

known through their conduct – their manner of life. It was actually lived out.

4. **THE SAINTS CONFIRMED.** “Who shall also CONFIRM you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8). Here the point is not the establishment itself, but its duration – “unto the end,” or the coming of the Lord.

5. **THE WORD OF SALVATION CONFIRMED.** “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was CONFIRMED unto us by them that heard him” (Heb 2:3). This parallels the text in Mark that declares God confirmed the word spoken by the Apostles with appropriate “signs.”

The word is translated “establish” in some other texts.

1. “Rooted and built up in Him, and STABLISHED in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col 2:7). Here, the people themselves are the point. They are the ones who are made firm in Christ, established, or made strong.

2. “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be ESTABLISHED with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein” (Heb 13:9). Once again, the saved themselves are the point. It is their hearts that are made firm, dependable, and unmoveable.

THE NECESSITY OF ESTABLISHMENT

Here is a fact that is so little acknowledged that it is mind-boggling! The percentage of unstable Christians is at such a staggering level, none even dare to attempt its estimation. Of all the boasts that are being made within the Christian community, you will not hear many concerning stability, being constant, or being firm in the faith. However, this is a priority with the Living God, and where establishment is NOT found, “falling” is sitting on the front steps.

Chapter 6

ESTABLISHMENT, #2

THE PARABLE OF THE SEED

Jesus taught that those who are not rooted, and do not bear fruit, are ultimately rejected. The parable of the sower presents the four classes of people who are exposed to the Gospel.

1. **THOSE WHO HEAR BUT DO NOT UNDERSTAND.** “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (Matt 13:19). Luke writes, “Those by the way side are they who hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). Those on the wayside have no real time for the Word of God – no time to think upon it, meditate upon it, or seek an understanding of it. For this reason, the devil snatches it from them, so that they cannot ponder it, or dwell upon it. No matter how much seed is thrown on the wayside, it will never yield a crop. Why, then, did the sower cast seed there? The answer is, to confirm that this was a place where the seed would not grow – to reveal the hearts of men. Not all Gospel preaching is to save souls. Some of it is to reveal the hearts of men who are obstinate toward God, but do not appear to be so. The appropriateness of continuing to sow seed on such soil is questionable, to

say the least. God knows who they are.

2. **THOSE WHO HEAR, RECEIVE THE WORD WITH JOY, BUT OBTAIN NO ROOT, AND THUS FALL AWAY.** “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matt 13:21). Luke writes, “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). These are surface thinkers. They see some benefit in hearing the Word of God, and see their lives as beginning anew. But they are like little children playing with paper toys. They insist upon living on the surface of life, never thinking deeply, or seeking to comprehend with all saints the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the good things of God (Eph 3:16-18). In our day they can easily find “churches” that are shallow, and will permit them to maintain a spiritually juvenile view of things. But they will never be established or bear fruit, and will therefore ultimately be rejected. God knows who they are.

3. **THOSE WHO HEAR, YET ARE OVERCOME BY COMPETING INTERESTS.** “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt 13:22). Luke writes, “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). These “thorns” were not above the ground. They were seeds under the ground. However, because the fallow ground was not broken up (Jer 4:3; Hos 10:12), “the thorns sprang up WITH it [the seed], and choked it” (Luke 8:7). The Word did not choke out the cares, but the cares did choke out the Word! These were competing interests – the “cares, riches, and pleasures of this [worldly] life.” What servant of God has not witnessed this happen?

4. **THOSE WHO HEAR, UNDERSTAND, AND PRODUCE FRUIT.** “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (Matt 13:23). Luke writes, “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). These are the people who see the implications of the Gospel, and persevere (Eph 6:18); who remain “steadfast and unmoveable” (1 Cor 15:58), crucifying the flesh (Gal 5:24), and, through grace, rejecting ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit 2:11-13). For that reason, they bring forth fruit unto God.

What was the difference in these four categories. If you consider it from the conclusion of the matter, the first three were all in the same category – rejected. None of them brought forth fruit – which was the real reason for sowing the seed in the first place.

It was not enough to occupy the field, as anyone familiar with agriculture knows. People of God are not like flowers, grown to be seen. They are like branches on a vine, or branches grafted into as tree, **TO BRING FORTH FRUIT.** Thus it is written, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, **THAT WE SHOULD BRING FORTH FRUIT UNTO GOD**” (Rom 7:4). Anything short of this objective is

totally unacceptable.

If you look at this from the standpoint of the people themselves, the first three classes were NOT established, and the last one was. Three groups were not firm, and one was firm. Three of them did not bear fruit, and one did.

Chapter 7

ESTABLISHED, #4

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The necessity of establishment is not a vague point in Scripture. There can be no justification for the prevailing ignorance of this necessity within the professed church. The gravity of the subject is confirmed in the book of Hebrews, written to a spiritually retrogressing people who needed to have the position and superiority of the Lord Jesus declared once again with power.

After affirming the marvelous High Priesthood of Christ, the Spirit chides the people for their lethargic ways. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat” (Heb 5:12). Any insightful and honest believer knows that this condition exists all around us. Churches are filled with people who are in this condition – still needing to be taught the elemental principles of the Kingdom. Satan has even fabricated a distorted message that declares the church is really a place for sinners, not saints. Within this emphasis messages are tailored for the uninformed in such a way as to keep them in that state.

However, the Spirit addresses this matter in quite another way. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection” (Heb 6:1). He states the case in such a way as to provoke fear and trembling in those who insist on remaining near the shoreline, or in the entrance way to eternal life. “And this will we do, IF GOD PERMIT” (Heb 6:3). Other versions read, “if God allows it” (CEB), “God willing” (NLT). That is, if the people had not remained too long in an undeveloped state. There really is no guarantee of recovery held out to those who are content to remain babes.

The Spirit then provides the reason for such strong words. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Heb 6:6). The listed benefits are all experienced when we are “added to the church” (Acts 2:47), “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), and “baptized into Christ” (Gal 3:27). It is the way we begin “newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Those who were actually “added to the church” (Acts 2:47) – all of them – started with remarkable advantages.

1. They were “enlightened” – enabled to see their condition, their need of a Savior, and the very real salvation that was obtainable in Him.
2. They received “the heavenly gift,” which I take to refer to “the gift of righteousness,” conferred upon those who believe the record God has given of His Son (Rom 5:17; Phil

3:9).

3. They were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, as He was sent into their hearts because they were sons (Gal 4:6).
4. They have tasted of the Word of God itself (Lk 4:4), by which they were begotten, and by which men live (James 1:18).
5. Heavenly influences were brought to bear upon them, as they tasted of “the powers of the world to come.” From angelic hosts to “the spirits of just men made perfect,” advantages have been given to the believer that transcend all human thought.

Precisely what is there about these five realities that could possibly produce anything but spiritual stability? Every one of them not only was effectual in the beginning of spiritual life, but were designed to carry that life forward to maturity.

If, however, men choose not to “go on to perfection,” there is only one alternative – falling away. It is not that the person who is not moving on to maturity might fall away. The argument is that he will, in fact, do so. The only way to avoid that dreadful and cursed condition is to “go on to perfection” – or, in the words of our text, be “established.”

Now, I do not believe the average churchman has any idea of this requirement. It also appears, by judging from the drivel that drips from the pulpits of the land, that countless preachers are also ignorant of this need. But there is no excuse for any of this. God has not only said much on the subject, He has provided the means through which establishment can be realized.

Chapter 8

ESTABLISHMENT

“Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ.” (2 Cor 1:21)

Does anyone still doubt the need for establishment? Is anyone content to remain unestablished? Is solidity and spiritual dependability really nothing more than a goal, or wishful thinking? Is there any concern for vacillating and unstable Christians? Is it really acceptable for a professed Christian to continue through life stumbling, falling, and weaving to and fro like a drunken man? Let the Word of God speak to your heart.

1. “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, **TO THE END THAT YE MAY BE ESTABLISHED**” (Rom 1:11).
2. “And [I] sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlaborer in the gospel of Christ, **TO ESTABLISH YOU**, and to comfort you concerning your faith” (1 Thess 3:2).
3. “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that **THE HEART BE ESTABLISHED** with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein” (Heb 13:9).
4. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, **ROOTED AND GROUNDED** in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” (Eph 3:18).
5. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: **ROOTED**

AND BUILT UP in Him, and STABLISHED IN THE FAITH, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col 2:6-7).

6. “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith GROUNDED AND SETTLED, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard . . .” (Col 1:23).

7. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye STEADFAST, UNMOVEABLE, always abounding in the work of the Lord . . .” (1 Cor 15:28).

8. “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence STEADFAST UNTO THE END” (Heb 3:14).

It is sufficiently clear that establishment is not a mere option. It is a necessity. Removing all excuses for being spiritually unstable, we have also been given spiritual advantages to assist us in fulfilling this requirement – the grace of God (Tit 2:11-12), the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 5:5), all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3), all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph 1:3), access to God (Eph 3:12), a High Priest in heaven that makes intercession for us (Heb 7:25), the Holy Spirit who makes intercession from within us (Rom 8:26-27), a custom fitted escape from all temptation (1 Cor 10:13), etc.

It is wrong, even sinful, to be content to remain in an unestablished spiritual state. There is nothing about salvation that allows for a continuance in such a state.

Chapter 9

WITH YOU

“Now He which stablisheth us WITH YOU . . .” (2 Cor 1:121).

What Paul is writing about is not an Apostolic requirement, or one that is intended only for certain leaders within the body of Christ. Be clear about this in your mind. God is not establishing only Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers (Eph 4:11). To be sure, if anyone is established, it must be these laborers. Yet, in this matter, they are not a group unto themselves.

It is tragic, yet true, that many current “evangelists, and “pastor-teachers” are not “established in the faith. They are too easily moved by theological fads and trends, and a separation from the world is not evident in them. For the most part, it does not appear that the Bible Colleges and Seminaries have contributed much to the spiritual stability of their students. If this assessment is true, it is because only God can accomplish the establishment of reference. As it is written, “Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, IS GOD.” It so happens that the environment in which He accomplishes this establishment is life in Christ, not life in a human institution. Further, the fulness of Christ is expressly said to be invested in His church, not a school created by men. It is therefore said of God and Jesus, “And [God] hath put all things under His [Christ’s] feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:22-23). In view of this fact, Paul’s letter is written to a church, not a school. Further, the establishment of reference is intended to be found within Christ’s body, the church – throughout that body, and not

merely in a select few.

Establishment is a common need that all of the saints have, and thus is a common work fulfilled in them. Where this solidity is not being accomplished, the work of the Lord is not being done. Salvation does not leave those who receive it in an unstable and fluctuating state. It is designed to strengthen the saints and fully prepare them to make the transition to glory, to ever be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17). If this transition is not effectively made, all labor expended upon the people has been vain and pointless. Candidly, I do not believe there is a general awareness of this fact.

Recall that Peter spoke similarly when he wrote to those who had “obtained like precious faith” (2 Pet 1:1). That is, those to whom he wrote had obtained the same faith that he himself possessed. Other versions read, “a faith of the same kind as ours” (NASB), “a faith of equal standing with ours” (RSV), “with us have a part in the same holy faith” (BBE), “obtained equal faith with us” (DOUAY), “a faith of equal value” (NAB), and “who share the same precious faith we have” (NLT). I come from a theological background that leaves the people thinking that the apostles had a special kind of faith. But Peter, himself a leading apostle, dashes that kind of thinking to the ground.

When it comes to covenantal benefits, they are for all of the people of God. The Apostles had a different ministry, but they did not have a different salvation, a different faith, or a different Spirit. Maturity was required in them as well as it is in us. Paul confesses the establishment of which he speaks involves “US WITH YOU.”

Chapter 10

IN CHRIST

“ . . . in Christ . . . ”

The spiritual environment in which we are established is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. God has nothing to give that does not come to us through Him. No Divine requirement can be met outside of Him. It is ever true, as Jesus said, “for without Me, ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Apostolic doctrine apprises the people of God that they were baptized into Christ: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). Accenting their separation from the world and alienation from God, believers are reminded, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom 6:3). Confirming that this was, in fact, a work of God, it is written, “of God are ye in Christ Jesus,” or “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus” (NASB) – 1 Cor 1:30. That is how the saved of the Lord got started.

The thrust of our lives must be to REMAIN in Christ, and not be drawn back into the world from which we have been delivered (Gal 1:4). Therefore we are admonished, “And now, little children, ABIDE in Him” (1 John 2:28). Jesus Himself declared, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me” (John 15:4). Accenting the criticality of this abiding Jesus continued, “If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6).

Judging from the condition of the churches, it is clear that little attention has been paid to

this unwavering requirement. I would venture to say that few professing Christians have a cogent thought on the subject of abiding in Christ. Yet, our text says that is where the benefit of establishment take place.

CALLED INTO CHRIST'S FELLOWSHIP

The newness of life was accompanied by a call into fellowship with Jesus – a call that came from God Himself. It is written, “God is faithful, BY WHOM ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9). The nature of salvation requires this fellowship – a fellowship that is participation, partnership, and personal involvement with Jesus Christ.

This “fellowship” is not a mere formal identity – like being put on a sort of sectarian roster. This is a vital union in which we become “one spirit” with God’s Son. As it is written, “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor 6:17). That means we participate in His nature (2 Pet 1:4), His mind (1 Cor 2:16), His joy (John 15:11), and His peace (John 14:27). We share in His death (Rom 6:3), His burial (Rom 6:4), and His resurrection (Col 3:1). We participate in His sufferings (Phil 3:10a) and the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10b). We are “joint heirs” with Him (Rom 8:17), will “reign” with Him (2 Tim 2:12), and will be glorified together with Him (Rom 8:17).

It is not surprising, therefore, that we are established in Christ Jesus. He is the locus in which stability and maturity are realized. If this is the case – and there is no question that it is – then those who are not being established are not in fellowship with Christ Jesus. If this is denied, then it is necessary to prove that God does not, in fact, work in ALL who walk with Jesus and live in Him. A person who espouses such a thing is a fool – and that is a gross understatement!

It is not possible to believe on the Son of God, fellowship with Him, and walk in the light as He is in the light, without becoming established in the faith. There can be no doubt about this! The means of grace, when embraced, cannot possibly fail in their appointed ministry. They will accomplish what they have been given to do!

Chapter 11

ANOINTED

“ . . . and hath anointed us, is God.” (2 Cor 1:21b)

Not only are we established in Christ, we are also “anointed” in Him. This is something that accompanies being “in Christ.” It falls into the category of “things that accompany salvation” (Heb 6:9).

“ . . . and hath anointed us . . . ” Other versions read, “He anointed us” (NIV), “has commissioned us” (RSV), “and has given us of His grace” (BBE), and “did anoint us” (YLT).

The word “anoint” means “to consecrate, furnish with necessary power, endue Christians with the gifts of the Holy Spirit (STRONG’S). Other lexical meanings are, “to appoint,

assign, give a task” (FRIBERG). Most references say the word simply means “anoint.” (THAYER, UBS, LOUW-NIDA, LIDDELL-SCOTT)

The primary use of this word relates to sanctification, or being set apart to God. It was introduced and defined under the Law, where people and things employed by God were formally set apart to Him. Thus the High Priest was anointed (Ex 29:29; Lev 4:3), priests (Num 3:3), the sacred vessels of the tabernacle (Ex 30:26), the altar (Ex 29:36), the tabernacle (Ex 30:26), and the laver (Ex 40:11). Kings were anointed (1 Sam 15:1; 1 Kgs 1:34), together with prophets (1 Kgs 19:16).

To confirm the importance of anointing, the anointing oil of the tabernacle was a very special oil compound. It is outlined in Exodus 30:23-25, and was called “the holy anointing oil.” The components are provided in the following: Pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, Cassia, olive oil (Ex 30:3-5).

The importance of this oil can be seen from at least two perspectives. First, the centrality of serving the Lord was established. It was something attended with the greatest sobriety, and thus was initiated by a holy anointing, or consecration. Second, the anointing would serve as a type of the still greater anointing that would take place in Christ Jesus – the anointing to which our text refers.

This anointing is common to all believers: “Now He which stablisheth US with YOU in Christ, and hath anointed US.” This is not a special benefit for some of the children of God, but a grace given to all of them. It is not something that is obtained by special prayers, or the laying on of hands. If that was the case, which it emphatically is not, this line of reasoning would be wholly inappropriate. Paul is addressing all of the saints, reasoning with them as “the saints.” He has already told them that God’s comfort and consolation are for them all, just as surely as they share in Christ’s sufferings (1:7). Now He reminds them that God is establishing them, as well as Himself, and has anointed them for the purpose of establishment and employment. Let it be clear that this is part of being “saved” (Acts 11:14), “added to the church (Acts 2:47), “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), and “made accepted” in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:6).

Chapter 12

THE UNCTION

The Apostle John makes a special point of this anointing, affirming it to be the means by which we remain in Christ Jesus – which equates to being “established” in Him. “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John 2:20). Other versions read, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things” (1 John 2:20). This is not a special anointing, but a common one. It is not one that can occur, but that has already occurred for those who are in Christ. “But ye HAVE AN UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE!”

YE KNOW ALL THINGS

This does not suggest that believers are omniscient. Rather, the idea is that they have

access to all knowledge pertinent to our identity with the Lord. It is something like living with the Teacher. If any professing Christ lacks essential knowledge, it is not because it is not available. Either the person is a novice with the prospect of increasing in knowledge, or they have grieved or quenched the Spirit. It is also possible that they have been taught a fraudulent gospel that has not apprised them of what is really involved in the salvation of God. In that case, unless the situation is changed, they will fall into the ditch with their blinded leaders. Jesus Himself said, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt 15:14).

Through the Spirit, John elaborates on this anointing in verse twenty-seven of First John two: “But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him” (1 John 2:27). Notice the poignant statements in this remarkable verse.

1. The anointing has been received by those in the Son.
2. It has been received from the Architect of our salvation.
3. There is no need for any man to teach us – particularly of the implications of the truth. This teaching has to do with the “how-to” aspect of spiritual life – something with which many believers have great struggle. Much of this struggle is owing to the Christian academic community, who has exploited man’s propensity to attempt to live by routine and discipline.
4. The “anointing” is not a sensation, or a fleshly feeling. It involves being taught “of,” or “about all things.” NIV
5. The teaching brought to us by “the anointing” is “truth, and is no lie.” It will stand the test of life, repel the powers of darkness, and establish the heart.
6. The objective of the teaching accomplished by “the anointing” meets the objective of God and need of man:—i.e. “you will abide in Him.” (NKJV)

This “anointing” is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. His role is to facilitate the salvation of God within the believer. He sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Rom 5:5). He causes us to abound in hope (Rom 15:13). He produces the joy that is integral to the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17). He intercedes for us in needful matters concerning which we are ignorant (Rom 8:26-27). He leads us in the mortification of “the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13). There is also “the fruit of the Spirit,” the evidence that we do, indeed, “participate in the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:3, NIV).

In all of these things, the saints of God are being taught – “taught by God” (John 6:45). To put it simply, there is no knowledge essential to initiate or complete the salvation of God that is available outside the perimeter of the Holy Spirit’s influence. Further, all of the knowledge realized from the anointing is available to all of the people of God. It is growing up into Christ in all things that moves them closer to the center of Divine disclosure.

Chapter 13

IS GOD

“Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God” (2 Cor

1:21)

The establishing and the anointing are both the work of God. He is the One who establishes, and He is the One who has anointed us. He has done these things “in Christ,” who is the only acceptable environment for such marvelous workings.

The perception of the working of God is fundamental to the enjoyment and comprehension of His great salvation. The overall view is this: Salvation is the outworking of His “eternal purpose.” Before the foundation of the world, He chose us in Christ Jesus, “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph 1:4). Before the world was ever planned, the objective for the saved ones was established. It was that they would ultimately be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29). From the standpoint of personal involvement, these people would be “made the righteousness of God” in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:21). God’s own righteousness would be “imputed” to them upon the basis of their faith (Rom 4:22-25).

The Divinely appointed means for the accomplishment of His purpose was the person of Christ Jesus, also “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet 1:20). Therefore GOD set Christ forth, or “presented Him” (NIV), “to be a propitiation through faith in His blood” (Rom 3:25). It was GOD who chose “the foolishness of preaching” to save those who believe, delivering a Gospel that is called “the record” He gave “of His Son” (1 Cor 1:27; 1 John 5:10). It is GOD who has prepared marvelous things for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9), and it is GOD who has “revealed them unto us through His Spirit” (1 Cor 2:10). It is GOD who has “set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him” (1 Cor 12:18). Ultimately, it was GOD who “sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts” (Gal 4:6). In Christ we are, in fact, HIS workmanship, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which GOD hath ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). However men may choose to react to it, this word has come down from heaven to us: “GOD hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess 2:13).

When it comes to salvation, GOD is the ultimate consideration. HE sent Christ, delivered Him up, raised Him, and exalted Him (1 John 4:14; Rom 8:32; Eph 1:20; Phil 2:9). Through Christ we are “reconciled to GOD” (Rom 5:10), have “peace with GOD” (Rom 5:1), and are being brought “to GOD” (1 Pet 3:18). This is an overview of His great salvation.

It should not surprise us, therefore, when we read that GOD is establishing us in Christ Jesus – making us firm and unmoveable. This point is made over and over in Scripture, ensuring that it does not escape the attention of those living by every word of God.

1. “Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom 16:25).
2. “To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1 Thess 3:13).
3. “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (2 Thess 2:17).

4. “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (2 Thess 3:3).

5. “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5:10).

The announcement of our text is that this is what God is doing. He is establishing, and has anointed us. He is making us stable, and has equipped us for involvement in the work. This is what will happen to those who abide in Christ Jesus. This is what they are to expect – establishment. This is why they have been “anointed” – establishment. God is working to this end, and is doing so in the Son, by the Spirit, and through our faith. The point of vulnerability is certainly not God Himself, His will, or His power. It is not the Son of God, who is the One through whom all things are accomplished. There is no weakness in the Holy Spirit, who knows even “the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10), and faithfully executes His ministry. If there is a weak link, it is on the human side – the side where faith must be found, and the Spirit must not be quenched or grieved. There is no question about what God can do! There is no question about what the Son of God can do! There is no question about what the Holy Spirit can do! The questions are “Do you believe?” “Are you abiding in the Son?” If you are, the work is being done. If you are not, the work cannot be done. It is just that simple. It is our business to recognize this.

It is not possible to abide in Christ and establishment not happen. This is something that God has determined and that He does. The issue is not the work itself, but the means through which it is done. Jesus has provided a just reason for Him to do this work, and our faith has linked us with Him.

One of the difficulties of our time is that we are living in a day of shallow profession. People claim identity with the Son of God who show no evidence of such an affiliation. Because we are living in peaceful times, such empty professions can be made freely without any supporting evidence. For this reason, a clear statement needs to be made about the real nature of spiritual life. It is not possible to abide in Christ without becoming established in Him. It is not possible to fellowship with Christ without the promises of God being fulfilled in you. It is not possible to live by faith and yet come short of God’s appointed blessing.

HELPERS OF YOUR JOY

“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. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.” (2 Cor 1:21-24)

Chapter 14

SEALED

“ . . . God, Who hath also sealed us . . . ”

Other versions read, “set His seal of ownership upon us” (NIV), “putting His seal upon us” (NRSV), “It is He who has put His stamp upon us” (BBE), “marked us with His seal” (NJB), and “He has identified us as His own” (NLT).

THE MEANING OF THE WORD

The word “sealed” means “to confirm, authenticate, place beyond doubt” (THAYER); “confirm, attest, certify” (FRIBERG), and “affix to be true, acknowledge, prove” (UBS). It also carries the idea of making secure (LOUW-NIDA).

Various seals used in ancient times. They were like the official signature of dignitaries. They were absolutely unique, providing a guarantee of the approval of that individual. It could be on a document, some piece of furniture or other item. If official documents were sent, they were secured in a container, with hot wax in which the official’s seal was imprinted. Without that seal, the documents were not considered valid.

There are two modern-day parallels to the “seal” mentioned in Scripture.

A SIGNATURE. First, the simplest form of a “seal” is one’s signature, affixed to official documents. If that document is a critical one, whether of a financial nature, or of an official proclamation, the signatures affixed to it validate it. The Declaration of Independence is an example, as well as papers relating to financial loans or other such transactions. A Scriptural example of such a seal would be Paul’s signature and salutation on his Epistles (2 Thess 3:17).

AN IMPRESSION. Second, a unit that affixes a special mark on a document, thereby validating it. The most common today would be the notary seal, which serves to corroborate the validity of the document on which it is placed. There are also special seals for local, state, and federal governments. A Scriptural example of this kind of seal would be Ahab’s seal, which was affixed to official letters (1 Kgs 21:8). King Ahasuerus, associated with Esther, had a ring bearing his official “seal” (Esth 8:8).

SECURITY. Third, there was a “seal” that secured a physical area or container. This was used to prohibit unlawful entry, the removal, or the corruption of the contents of the container. A modern day example would be the sealing of space capsules, in which selected items from a special generation were placed. A Scriptural example would be the sealing of the tomb in which Jesus was placed (Matt 27:66).

We will find that the sealing of our text incorporates all of these ideas. The fact is that God has placed His personal signature upon us. He has placed His impression upon our real persons. He has also secured us in Christ Jesus for His own glory. The revealed proclamation of those in Christ being “sealed” ought to provoke godly inquiry into the matter.

Chapter 15

THE SEALING OF JESUS

The importance of sealing is seen in the person of Christ Jesus Himself. He said to His disciples, “Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for HIM HATH GOD THE FATHER SEALED” (John 6:27).

This was the seal of DIVINE APPROVAL, designating Jesus Christ as the One who

distributes the food that would keep the people from perishing. He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isa 40:11). He was the “Man” of whom Isaiah said, “And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa 32:2). All of the marvelous promises concerning the coming Messiah were fulfilled in Him. He is the One upon whose shoulders the government has been placed (Isa 9:6-7). He is “the Branch of righteousness” to whom all of God’s children have been joined (Jer 33:15; 1 Cor 6:17). He is the “Sun of righteousness” that has arisen with “healing in His wings” (Mal 4:2). He is the Messiah who would “finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24). He is the One upon whom “the iniquity of us all” was laid, who “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:4-5). The sealing of God confirmed this was the case.

God placed His signature, as it were, upon Him when He was baptized: “This is My Beloved Son” (Matt 3:17). He placed an impression upon Him when it pleased Him that in Jesus should “all fulness dwell” (Col 1:19). He was the One “approved of God” (Acts 2:22), anointed “with the Holy Spirit and Power” (Acts 10:38). He was the One Divinely sanctioned and commissioned to lay down His life, take it up again (John 10:17-018), make intercession for God’s people (Isa 53:12; Heb 7:25), and bring the sons home to glory (Heb 2:10).

The sealing of the Son of God involved Him being equipped for His mission, and supported by heaven in its fulfillment. Because of these factors, as Isaiah prophesied, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged” (Isa 42:4).

Chapter 16

SATAN CANNOT TOUCH THE ONE WHO IS BORN OF GOD

This is not mere conjecture, but is affirmed by the Word of the Lord – the word by which we live. “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18). Other versions read, “cannot harm him” (NIV), “he is not touched by the Evil One” (BBE), “cannot touch him” (NAB), “has no hold over him” (NJB), and “cannot get his hands on him” (NLT).

For some, this seems too wonderful, and thus their hearts tremble in fear that it is not really the case. They reason that the circumstances of life do not justify such a statement. However, after all of the reasoning has taken place, the affirmation still stands. Satan cannot touch the one who is born of God! Generally, that applies to you who are in Christ Jesus. Specifically, it applies to the “new man,” which is the part of you that is “born of God.” This is the result of being “sealed” by God. In Christ you have been designated as belonging to Him. You are among those in whom He has chosen to work (Heb 13:20-21).

Even Satan recognizes this seal, and cannot contend with it. Before Christ Jesus – even before Moses – Satan knew those whom God had approved and protected, and could not

touch them. The record of Job confirms this to be true (Job 1-2). Jesus told Peter that Satan had REQUESTED to have him, to sift him as wheat (Luke 22:31-32). Although in both cases Satan was given permission to touch God's saints, yet he was restricted in what he could do. At first he could only touch what Job had, but not his body. Then he was granted permission to touch Job's body, but not take his life. Although the devil did, indeed, sift Peter on that awful night when he denied Jesus, yet the Savior had prayed for him, that his faith "fail not" – and it did not!

The point is that our adversary is under the dominion of our Lord, and cannot operate according to his own will. He cannot put a single finger on any child of God without the approval of the One who keeps and strengthens them. That is involved in being "sealed" by God!

Chapter 17

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD

Again, this is a point concerning which there can be no question. The Lord has spoken! "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39). The love of reference is "in Christ Jesus our Lord." That is, it is directed toward those who are joined to the Lord (1 Cor 6:17), or in fellowship with the Son (1 Cor 1:9). – those who are abiding in Him (1 John 2:27-28), as they live by faith (Heb 10:38).

This is a focused love, and it is not independent of certain characteristics found in the ones who are loved. Jesus said of the love of God, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me SHALL BE LOVED OF MY FATHER, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). And again He said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). Those who imagine that God's love is "unconditional" must consider that Jesus clearly laid out some conditions in these words.

1. The person has the commandments of God—i.e., knows and embraces them.
2. The person keeps, or maintains a hold, upon these commandments.
3. The person loves Jesus Christ.

This is "the love of God" that is referenced in Romans 8:38-39, and from which nothing external to our persons can separate us. The things that cannot separate us from the love of God include:

1. DEATH, or the separation of the spirit from the body. When saints die, God continues to love them. This throws a big question mark on the doctrine of soul-sleeping, for I do not know that God is ever represented as loving someone incapable of responding to that love.
2. LIFE, or our existence in this world, with all of the various situations, complexities, and experiences involved. Sometimes the believer may feel like "a pelican in the wilderness," or "an owl in the desert" (Psa 102:6), but that has no interruptive influence

over God's love for them.

3. **ANGELS.** As powerful as evil angels are, they cannot drive a wedge between the saints of God and the love of God.
4. **PRINCIPALITIES.** The high order of wicked principalities, which have control of the darkness of this world (Eph 6:12), cannot impact upon the love God has for His people.
5. **POWERS** are ranked with the "principalities" aligned against us (Eph 6:12; Col 2:15). However, with all of their power, they cannot separate us from God's love.
6. **THINGS PRESENT** are contemporary opposing people and experiences. They may cast us down (2 Cor 4:9), but they cannot cause God to cease from loving us, or to love us less.
7. **THINGS TO COME** are future experiences and oppositions. The thought of them may even cause fear in us, but they cannot diminish or remove the love God has for us.
8. **HEIGHT.** There are exhilarating feelings and experiences that are abnormal, but they have no effect upon the love of God for His people.
9. **DEPTH.** There are depressing and discouraging feelings and experience that are extraordinary, but they do not impact upon the Love of God for the saints.
10. **ANY OTHER CREATURE.** This refers to "anything else in all of creation" (Amplified) – the domain in which we exist. Whatever you can imagine, whatever opponent you may consider, none of them can separate us from the love of God.

Do not think of separation in terms of human experience alone. That is included, to be sure. In fact the extremities of our experience are mentioned: "death" and "life." Neither can drive a wedge between God and those He has sealed. Ponder the scope of our protection! There are lofty and more powerful personalities with which we contend: "angels," "principalities," and "powers." They cannot "separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus!" And when it comes to experience, much more is involved than day-to-day normalities. There are "things present," and "things to come." Yet none of them, regardless of their complexity or seeming power, can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. There are also spheres of human experience that transcend the normal – domains in which unusual things occur that can have unusual effects upon our spirits: "height," and "depth." Yet as high as the heights may be, and as low as the depths may be, they cannot separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

That is all part of being "sealed" – and the sealing has already taken place for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 18

KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet 1:5)

The mighty God is devoted to those He has "sealed" and "anointed." They are in a hostile world (John 15:19), housed in a frail body (2 Cor 4:7), and stalked by a fierce adversary (1 Pet 5:7-8). They also have "another law" within – the law or principle of sin – which wars against the law of their renewed minds (Rom 7:23). There are forces aligned against

them, against which they wrestle, that are superior to them – “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). If the people of God rely upon their own strength and wisdom, they will quickly be overcome. They are in a position in which they need power that is outside of themselves – a power that is willingly given by One who is infinitely great than themselves. That is the condition of every person who is in Christ. Every individual outside of Christ is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), “alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18), and is a child of wrath (Eph 2:3).

However, even though all of these things are true, salvation has altered life’s arena. Here is how the situation is stated. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope BY the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved IN heaven for you, who are kept BY the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:3-5).

What a marvelous description of the saints of God. It is tragic beyond description that more is not being said about it.

1. Through His mercy God has begotten us again unto, or in order to, the possession of a living hope. We are not alive because WE did something, but because of what GOD did – “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The life we have is a new life – a life we did not have before. Further, the objective of that life is the possession of a living hope, or anticipation of our status after the world has passed away.
2. The hope we now possess assures us of an incorruptible inheritance that is undefiled, and that does not pass away. In other words, it is not of this world, which is passing away (1 Cor 7:31).
3. We are presently being kept by the power of God – kept from falling (Jude 1:24), and from the ravages of the devil (1 John 5:18). This keeping is facilitated through our faith, which is the hand of the soul that takes hold of the power.

The “power” that keeps us is not resident in our faith, but in the God in whom faith is placed. While faith is, indeed, “the victory that overcomes the world,” the enabling power is in God Himself. Faith lays hold of the power, but is not the power itself.

If you have ever wondered if you will be able to be “faithful unto death” (Rev 2:10), by faith take hold of this word regarding God’s keeping power. God is “able” to “keep you from falling” (Jude 24), and He will surely do it through your faith. You have His word on that.

Therefore, when we speak of God establishing and sealing us, we have opened an exceedingly large area for consideration. There is no question about the validity and actuality of being established and anointed by God. That is a matter that has been affirmed, and is beyond all controversy. Now, it is our business to take hold on that word, and go on our way rejoicing. We must live in the power of this reality.

Chapter 19

GIVEN THE EARNEST

“. . . and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” (1 Cor 1:22)

The fact of the anointing was mentioned previously. Now the substance of it is delineated.

GIVEN

“. . . and given . . .” Other versions read, “gave us” (NASB), “put” (NIV), “giving us” (NRSV), and “placing” (NLT).

The word from which “given” is translated is a very weighty one. The word means, “to give, to give something to someone, of one’s own accord to give one something to his advantage, to bestow a gift” (THAYER). Other lexical definitions are, “appoint, assign, entrust, grant, put” (FRIBERG), and “give; grant, allow, permit; place, put; appoint; establish; give out, pay; produce, yield, cause; entrust” (UBS).

The word, then, contains the following ideas.

1. A gift.
2. Something given because the giver desires to do so.
3. A gift that brings certain advantage.
4. Something that is conferred, or bestowed as an official gift.
5. An appointment.
6. Something entrusted to the person.

We are speaking of something God gives, bestowing it upon the individual. Because the Lord “is righteous in all of His ways” (Psa 145:17), and “in all His works” as well (Dan 9:14), this is a wholly appropriate gift. It has a just basis, or foundation, for its bestowment, and therefore brings glory to Him, and advantage to the receiver. This is not something that is purchased or earned by the one receiving it – it is a gift. All of the children of God receive this gift, and none are excluded. This is because it is conferred because of Christ, and therefore all who are in Him receive the gift. About this there can be no question.

THE EARNEST

“. . . the earnest of the Spirit . . .” Other versions read, “a guarantee” (NKJV), “as a pledge” (NASB), “a deposit” (NIV), “a first installment” (NRSV), and “the sign” (BBE).

The Holy Spirit is the “anointing” that has been conferred upon all of the children. Here, He is appropriately referred to as “the Earnest.” That is, He Himself is not the whole of the blessing, but is the introduction, as it were, to the fulness that is yet to come.

An “earnest” is defined as “a pledge, an earnest” (THAYER), “a down payment, first installment, pledge” (FRIBERG), “a guarantee of what is to come” (UBS), “the first or initial payment . . . as a guarantee for the completion of the transaction or pledge” (LOUW-NIDA).

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Here we gain a perspective of the Holy Spirit that is rarely heard these days. He is a pledge, or first installment, of the marvelous inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us (1 Pet 1:4). That inheritance is comprised of “the things which God hath prepared for

them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). In spiritually primitive times David exclaimed, “Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!” (Psa 31:19). Long before that, even before the Law, there was a man who had a similar view.

Chapter 20

ABRAHAM’S EXPERIENCE

Abraham also sensed the greatness of what God has to give. After he had arrived in the promised land, he sojourned there “as in a strange country,” living in temporary dwellings while “he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb 11:9-10). He sensed by faith something that relatively few professing Christians know: that what is upon the earth, regardless of its magnitude and seeming beauty, is an inadequate representation of the fulness of God’s blessing. He saw the land of promise from a mountains height (Gen 13:14-15). At the Lord’s word, he walked through the land, perusing its beautiful details (Gen 13:17). Yet, after all of that, because of what he knew about God Himself, he saw beyond the earthly land that was promised to him. Together with Isaac and Jacob, he “confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13).

The Spirit affirms “For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country” (Heb 11:14). Faith constrains those who possess it to reason that there is a better land, a better place that is not temporal, and is not defiled. That is the land for which Abraham longed – even though God did not utter a syllable to him about “the world to come,” or where he would be after he died. Yet, in his faith, he concluded that what he saw in this world, however grand it may be, could not be the ultimate possession of those God favors.

The land of Canaan was to Abraham what the gift of the Holy Spirit is to those in Christ Jesus – an earnest, or down payment of what is to come.

THE EARNEST

This is not the only place the Holy Spirit is referred to as an “earnest.”

1. “Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor 5:5).
2. “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:13-14).

Elsewhere “the earnest” of the Holy Spirit is referred to as “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23). The presence of the Spirit within is our confirmation that we are the Lord’s, and have a part in the “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Our perception of that inheritance will be directly proportionate to our perception of the Spirit and His indispensable ministry. If we are not sure about His presence, we cannot be sure about the inheritance of which He is the pledge, or earnest.

The “earnest,” “pledge,” or “firstfruits,” is God’s provision for us while we tabernacle in the body in this world. This is categorically said to be UNTIL “the redemption of the

purchased possession,” which is our body, or “mortal flesh” (2 Cor 4:11).

For the most part, the modern church is not noted for its anticipation of the world to come. It knows little about the “earnest” and an “eternal inheritance.” The people are being given a purported “gospel” that has left them in this miserable condition. That purported “gospel” is really no gospel at all. It is, in the words of the Spirit, “another gospel, which is not another” (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6). A “gospel” that is not “the power of God unto salvation” does not produce the results God intends. It is a spurious message, and God will condemn those who have had the audacity to present it.

For purpose of clarity, let me say it this way. A “gospel” that does not leave people who believe it looking for a “better country” and an eternal “city” is a spurious and fraudulent “gospel,” and those who deliver it are false prophets.

Chapter 21

DO NOT GRIEVE HIM!

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30). “Quench not the Spirit” (1 Thess 5:19).

It ought to be abundantly clear to us that grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit is a sin of the greatest magnitude. If the Holy Spirit is the “earnest,” down payment of the inheritance (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5), stifling His work equates to a loss of the inheritance. Thus it is written, “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath DONE DESPITE TO THE SPIRIT OF GRACE?” (Heb 10:28-29).

This sheds more light on the word spoken by Jesus, which has generated no small amount of confusion among professed believers. “And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven” (Luke 12:10). Matthew adds, “but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Matt 12:32). It is not wise to plow in the field of speculation when confronted with this saying. It should first be acknowledged that the Son of God was not given to uttering trivia. Those who are exposed to this saying (and the number of them is shrinking), should first of all take it seriously, and second, endeavor to say and do nothing that could possibly be interpreted as blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Where such an attitude is found, the Lord will show the people what they should know, so they will be able to not only know what is meant, but avoid the condition that is cursed.

In our day, all manner of erroneous emphases have been placed upon the Holy Spirit. Some relate the Spirit to strange and exhilarating sensations in the flesh. Some associate Him with supernatural expressions that cannot be understood. Still others limit His work to that of empowerment – making the individual adequate for the challenges of life, the oppositions of men, and the encroachments of the devil. Indeed, there is something to be said for all of those areas. However, sometimes, I am persuaded, the Holy Spirit gets credit for things He did not do, nor is inclined to do. Our texts, however, gets more to the root of the matter.

The truth of the matter is that the Holy Spirit is doing something within those who are in Christ Jesus. For example, He is changing them from one increasing stage of glory to another, conforming them to the image of Christ, as God intends (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). The person who is not advancing in this change has, in fact, quenched and grieved the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us in the mortification of the sinful “deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13-14). Those professing Christians, therefore, who remain enslaved to sinful expression have quenched the Spirit. It is “through the Spirit” that we “obey the truth” (1 Pet 1:22). Those professing Christians who do not obey the truth, therefore, have quenched the Holy Spirit. Apostolic doctrine informs us that we “abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13). Those, therefore, who do not abound in hope, and are unsure of their standing with God, have quenched the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will not fail to do what God has assigned Him to do – where He is not quenched or grieved. However, where people insist on maintaining priorities that are at variance with the Divine agenda for His people, or doing things that are contrary to the purpose of God, the Spirit will be quenched or grieved, and His work will come to a grinding halt. However, those who “sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:8).

Chapter 22

THE NATURE OF SALVATION

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Heb 2:3).

Salvation is essentially a call out of this world, involving a preparation for the world to come. Jesus told His disciples that He had chosen them “OUT of the world,” and that the world hated them because of it: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you OUT of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:19, NKJV). When praying to His Father, the Lord said He knew the Father had given the people to Him “OUT of the world” (John 17:6). Jesus affirmed, “I am NOT of this world” (John 8:23). He declared His kingdom “is NOT of this world” (John 18:36). Apostolic doctrine affirms that Jesus “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us FROM this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal 1:4). James said that “friendship WITH the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4), and John wrote, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

I hardly see how any point could be more firmly established. Anything that is essential to living in this world cannot be the thrust of our lives, to say nothing of the pleasures of this world and things that gratify the flesh. Such things must not dominate and control us. Our most intimate and extensive associations cannot be with people of this world, who are wed to the world and alienated from Christ. Whatever reasons may be put forward for the prominence of such associations, it contradicts what Jesus and the apostles have clearly said. If, as apostolic doctrine affirms, Jesus gave Himself to deliver us from this present evil world, how can any person of sound mind justify inordinate attachment to it?

I suppose that the novice must be told this does not mean we cannot work for a living, shop at stores, visit our relatives, etc. But it should not be necessary to lisp in such infant-talk to those who are pure in heart and are mature in the faith.

These things being true, the bulk of our salvation is on the other side of life in this world. That is precisely why we must devote our whole hearts to the Lord, and live solitarily to please Him. What we have in Christ now is appropriately called “firstfruits” (Rom 8:23;), and “the earnest,” or down payment (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14) While we await the day when the “salvation that is ready to be revealed” will be realized (1 Pet 1:5), we are given a foretaste of the coming glory. That foretaste is the Holy Spirit. Whatever your view of the Spirit, and however you are persuaded that He works in you now, the real blessing of His ministry is that He brings to you some sampling of the glory to come – like Israel ate some of the grapes from the land of promise (Num 13:23-24).

However, the bulk of salvation is yet to come, and is encapsulated in the term “inheritance” (Eph 1:14; Col 3:24; Heb 6:11; 9:15; 1 Pet 1:4; 3:9). As long as we are in this world, we must say with Paul, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14). The point is WHERE we are going, not where we are in this world. This world is going to pass away (1 Cor 7:31; 1 John 2:17), which fact glaringly conflicts with an “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15).

In this world, we are “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Pet 2:11), and the salvation of God is what enables us to pass through it without being contaminated by it. The grace of God effectively teaches us “that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12-13). It grieves me to have to say I am persuaded this is virtually unknown in the professed church of our day. That fact alone means that such a church is really no church at all.

If our eyes are turned toward the earth, it is not because of the ministry of Holy Spirit. He is the “Holy Spirit sent down from heaven,” and does not expend His effort to anchor us to a world that is passing away. This should be so apparent that nothing more needs to be said about it. To view the “bottom line,” so to speak, the Holy Spirit is presently leading you in ridding yourself of fleshly tendencies, while appropriating things that will transfer from this world to the next.

Chapter 23

IN OUR HEARTS

“Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” Every version reads the same: “in our hearts.” (2 Cor 1:22)

In corroboration of this, we are elsewhere provided the reason for this marvelous transaction – that is, the Lord giving us “the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” This has taken place because we are the sons of God. As it is written, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6).

Our “hearts” are the most inmost part of our persons, even as our bodies are the most external part. Even though our bodies are referred to as “the temple of the Holy Spirit,” the Spirit is not primarily associated with our bodies. The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit in the same way that the Temple was called “the temple of the Lord” (2 Kgs 11:10). Actually, the Lord is said to have dwelt “between the cherubims,” which were upon the

mercy seat in the Temple (2 Kgs 19:15). The heart is to man what the Most Holy place was to the Tabernacle and the Temple. That is where the Spirit dwells, or resides, thereby sanctifying the whole man.

Much is said about the Lord giving His people His Holy Spirit. Because of confusion on this subject, it will be good to consider just how God speaks about this.

1. “And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, GIVING them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us” (Acts 15:8).
2. “And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God HATH GIVEN to them that obey Him” (Acts 5:32).
3. “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which IS GIVEN unto us” (Rom 5:5).
4. “Now we HAVE RECEIVED, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Cor 2:12).
5. “Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also HATH GIVEN unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor 5:5).
6. “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who HATH ALSO GIVEN unto us his Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 4:8).
7. “And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He HATH GIVEN us” (1 John 3:24).
8. “Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He HATH GIVEN us of His Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

The Holy Spirit is the possession that identifies the children of God. In fact, it is affirmed, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom 8:9). Some might attempt to distinguish between the “Spirit of Christ” and “the Holy Spirit,” or “the Spirit of God.” The Spirit, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ are one and the same. The very verse just cited confirms this to be the case. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in THE SPIRIT, if so be that THE SPIRIT OF GOD dwell in you. Now if any man have not THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, he is none of His.”

I was raised in a theological heritage in which, the teaching of good my father excepted, very little was said on this subject. It finally became apparent to me, and it ought to be so with you, that this was not a proper way of teaching. In other words, teaching that omits or makes little of the gift of the Holy Spirit is NOT sound doctrine.

Chapter 24

A STRONG POINT

Remember, Paul is defending his Apostleship, which some of the Corinthians had questioned. Here his point is uncomplicated and straightforward. The Corinthians had received the Spirit, together with a number of gifts. None of the Corinthians doubted this. In fact, they appeared to be boasting because of that circumstance. Paul’s point is that they received the Spirit because they believed the Gospel that he preached.

There is no such thing as an Apostle with a powerless message, or a God-sent preacher

with an impotent word! Further, the effects of the message delivered confirm if the messenger was sent from God – as seen in Paul and Corinth. Conversely, a powerless message cannot yield powerful results.

For this reason, the message that is being delivered is of critical importance. Is it invested with Divine power or not? During the early days of the church, some believing Jews went out from Jerusalem teaching that all believers should be circumcised. That was their message: “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Having learned of this, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem sent out a general letter to the Gentile churches on this matter. They made clear that this was not an appropriate message: “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment” (Acts 15:24). Paul referred to those who preached such a message as “false brethren” (Gal 2:4). They had a wrong message.

It is imperative that we know what message God has appointed to be delivered.

1. There is message through which men may be saved – a message that is invested with Divine power: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).
2. It is a message that brings life and immortality to light: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light THROUGH THE GOSPEL” (2 Tim 1:9-10).
3. This is the message by which we become partakers of the promise of Christ. “That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ BY THE GOSPEL” (Eph 3:6).
4. This Gospel is “the Word of the Lord that is to be declared: “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which BY THE GOSPEL is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25).

Jesus Himself set the tone for preaching when He said, “And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47). The world will be judged by Him on the Day of judgment, to be sure. And there is no question about Him rendering judgments on individuals and nations prior to the end of the world. Further, there was a sense in which Jesus did come to judge, causing some to see, and some to be blinded: “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind” (John 9:39). But that was not His core message, nor can it be our emphasis, or the thrust of what His messengers have to say. Jesus was clear when He said to His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and PREACH THE GOSPEL to every creature” (Mark 16:15). They were not social reformers.

The Gospel was launched in the midst of one of the most decadent societies of all times.

The Roman world was noted for its immorality and ruthlessness, to say nothing of its idolatry. However, when John the Baptist came, followed, by the Lord Jesus, and the apostles, their message was not an assessment of the Roman citizenry. They delivered stunning rebukes to those who wore the name of God, commanded them to repent, and delivered the good news of forgiveness, reconciliation to God, and the hope of glory. That was their message, and it must be ours also.

Chapter 25

CALLING GOD TO RECORD

“Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul . . .” Other versions read, “I call God as witness against my soul” (NKJV), “I call God as witness to my soul” (NASB), and “I call God as my witness” (NIV).

Paul now explains more fully and precisely why he did not come to Corinth as he had purposed. To undergird what he says, he calls upon God to bear witness to the truth of his words. By saying “upon my soul,” or “against my soul,” he means that, should he be lying, God may strike him down for misrepresenting the case. However, if he is speaking the truth, which he is, the summons is for God to cast down the lies that have been spoken against His servant.

Paul used a similar expression in the eighteenth verse: “But as God is true.” He will appeal to God again in the eleventh chapter: “Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth” (11:11). He again states, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not” (2 Cor 11:31). He spoke in the same way to the Galatians, who also suffered from some delusions about Paul: “Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not” (Gal 1:20).

Let it be clear that this is not mere rhetoric – an expression used to merely impress the readers. The truth of the matter was that Paul lived his life wholly for the Lord, and completely before Him. He truthfully said that the consistent and compelling ambition of his life was “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil 3:10-11). It was in view of this incontrovertible fact that he confessed, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14). That is what qualified him to appeal to God for the attestation of the truth of what he was saying.

For some people living, and moving, and having our being before God Almighty (Acts 17:28) is a statement of what should be, and this is therefore considered to be a goal, or an objective. For Paul it was a present reality – something that he was consciously and intentionally doing.

No person who is NOT living out the kind of life Paul outlined as his own (Phil 3:13-14) should be preaching or teaching the Word of God. No such person should be in any form of leadership within the body of Christ. Jesus Himself particularized whom He would and would not receive as His disciple – to teach and lead. His words are the foundation for what Paul confessed, and they are unwavering qualifications for even being taught by Jesus. “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and

follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt 16:24-25). “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26). “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27). “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:33).

These are words Jesus spoke to the multitudes. It is most grievous that they are not being spoken to the multitudes today. However, they are still true. No one in all the world is following Jesus or being taught by Him that fails to meet these qualifications. And I call God for a record upon my soul that this is the truth.

Chapter 26

AN UNFORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCE

It is lamentable that Paul had to defend who he was, and the message he declared. One might suppose such a defense was not necessary – that the Gospel will more or less defend itself. However, such a view is too simplistic, and does not take enough into consideration. There are imaginations that need to be cast down (2 Cor 10:4-5), and mouths that need to be “stopped” (Tit 1:11).

When pretentious Diotrefes spoke against the beloved brother John, the Apostle boldly confronted the situation. Concerning the circumstance, he wrote to Gaius, “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3 John 1:10).

When some slandered Paul, they charged him with preaching a false gospel. Paul strongly defended what he had preached, making mention of these reports. “For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just” (Rom 3:47-8).

There are some lies that need to be refuted. While they do not personally harm the messenger of God, they make it more difficult for others to believe his word. When Paul, for example, was brought before a governor on charges of inciting a riot, he spoke in his defense, insisting that the charges were not true. “Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me” (Acts 24:12-13).

Now Paul has called God to witness to the truth of what he has said. It must be acknowledged that such action is strange in our society, and would not be considered to have much weight. However, in the Bible days, such an approach carried great weight indeed. There was more of a consciousness of God, and of His inclination to truth and withdrawal from those who lied. Besides this, when the Lord is publically called to witness to the truth of a thing, He at once becomes involved in the circumstance. Paul knew this, and thus made his appeal to the Lord openly, so that all the Corinthians could

read it and ponder what he said.

MY OWN EXPERIENCE

Through the years I have experienced the effects of slanderous reports. While they are not to be compared with such a notable soul as Paul, I do know the effects of false accusations. Often charged as being a controversial figure, many people who might have listened to what I have to say have turned the other way in fear of gaining a bad reputation. While this has been highly offensive, and like a thorn in my side, I have learned from experience the impact of false reports. Of course, I am not alone in this experience.

It is in order to confront those who raise false accusations, not running from them like a wounded fawn. God can work through such confrontations if they are not in the flesh, or attended by “the wrath of man,” which does not work the righteousness of God (James 1:20).

Chapter 27

TO SPARE YOU

“. . . that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.” (2 Cor 1:23)

Other versions read, “it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth” (NIV), “it was in pity for you that I did not come to Corinth at that time” (BBE), and “The reason I didn't return to Corinth was to spare you from a severe rebuke” (NLT).

Although the Corinthian brethren were deserving of a harsh rebuke, yet Paul, in tender consideration, held back from doing so. He knew that if he went there in person, the circumstance would require a sharp and cutting reprimand. Like the Lord Jesus did to the self acclaimed prophetess in Thyatira, Paul gave the Corinthians “space to repent” (Rev 2:21). He did not prefer to scold them, but sought rather to build them up in the most holy faith.

Let me again remind you of the conditions at Corinth. It will enable you to see the wisdom of Paul's stance.

1. They had tolerated a fornicator in their assembly: “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife” (1 Cor 5:1).
2. They were suing one another before the Law: “But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers” (1 Cor 6:6)
3. They were sinning against weaker brethren by offending their conscience: “1 Cor 8:12
But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ” (1 Cor 7:1-13)
4. They had questioned his apostleship. “Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord” (1 Cor 9:1-2).
5. There were divisions among them: “For first of all, when ye come together in the

church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it” (1 Cor 11:18).

6. What Paul had preached was opposed by some in Corinth. “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor 15:12).

7. They had no respect for his presence, even though they could not deny the power of his writings. “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor 10:10).

As Paul will later affirm, the Corinthians were their own largest handicap. “You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections” (2 Cor 6:12, NASB). As with the Hebrew believers he could say, “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing” (Heb 5:11). Or, as the NIV puts it, “We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.” Thus Paul sent the Corinthians powerful letters to turn them into the way of truth, also sending them Timothy to bring the truth to bear upon their consciences (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10). Silas was also sent to preach to them (2 Cor 1:19).

Paul did not ignore the situation at Corinth, but chose a more charitable way to deal with it. This would encourage them to turn from their ways without having to face Paul face to face – which would not have gone well with them.

Where can a preacher with understanding be found that has not experienced this very thing – a restrictive environment within the church itself. Men of God must lisp in infantile Kingdom talk if they are to obtain any degree of even casual interest. See, this is no new circumstance. Paul experienced it also. There were places like Corinth that he had to shun, giving them some time to come to their senses so they could profit from what he had to say.

I will tell you that, while this circumstance still exists, it is not owing to any deficiency in the Gospel. Nor, indeed, is it because the personal carnal difficulties of the people are not being addressed. Where there is no interest in the truth, unbelief is present. When holy men of God with a word from God are not preferred, it is because of hard hearts and stiff necks.

With these things in mind, the gentleness of Paul shines in this book. He sets a noble example for us all. Because love seeks not its own, it compels the servant of God to seek the most charitable way of addressing the errors of the people. If this way is successful, other measures will be taken.

Chapter 28

NOT HAVING DOMINION OVER YOUR FAITH

“Not for that we have dominion over your faith . . .” (2 Cor 1:24).

Other versions read, “Not for that we would lord it over your faith” (NASB/NIV), “I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith” (NRSV), “not that we have lordship over your faith” (ASV), “Not that we have authority over your faith” (BBE), “Not that we rule over your faith” (DARBY), “not because we exercise dominion over your faith” (DOUAY), and “But that does not mean we want to tell you exactly how to put your faith into practice” (NLT).

JESUS SPEAKS

During His earthly ministry, Jesus enunciated one of the principles of His kingdom. This principle touches on the meaning of this passage. “And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But YE SHALL NOT BE SO: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.” (Luke 22:25-27).

THOSE WHO HAVE THE RULE OVER YOU

The body of Christ does not contain a hierarchy of authority, where some brethren exercise lordship over other brethren. It is true that there are those who “have the rule over us” (Heb 13:7,17,24). However, they are not like the “kings of the Gentiles” who “lord it over” (NIV) the people. The following is said of these spiritual leaders, who “have the rule over you.”

1. They have “spoken unto you the Word of the Lord” (Heb 13:7a).
2. Their faith is to be “followed” (Heb 13:7b).
3. There is a lofty objective to their faith, so that their manner of life can be followed (Heb 13:7c).
4. They “watch for your souls” (Heb 13:17a).
5. They will “give an account” for the flock to Jesus (Heb 13:17b).

These do not “rule” by means of authority, as ordinarily perceived. Rather, they are leaders who are guiding the people in the ways of the Lord, where they themselves have gone. Their primary way of leadership is speaking the Word of God – bringing it to bear upon the hearts and consciences of men. A “leader,” in this case, is someone who knows the appointed goal and the way to get there. It is one who is advanced in this respect, and is on the road himself. He is not like the “kings of the Gentiles” – what we might call a “boss” or “manager.”

When addressing elders, in keeping with the words of Jesus, Peter was careful to make this very point. “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:2-3). Having come from a background where an undue emphasis was placed on the “eldership,” I can tell you that this word of Peter is regularly transgressed in many assemblies. It is time for all leaders to confess with Paul that they do not have “dominion” over the faith of others.

THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL

There is no need to speculate on this subject. We have Paul as an example of one with Kingdom authority. First, he was part of a special group within the body of Christ that was “first” in rank. As it is written, “And God hath set some in the church, FIRST apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that . . .” (1 Cor 12:28). Notice that the three ranking ministries have to do with communicating the Word of God! God has never placed any authoritative people in His church who did not minister His Word! Those who cannot handle the Word of God, yet consider themselves leaders in the body

of Christ, are imposters. They are not leaders at all. Those who can handle the Word of God ARE the appointed leaders – whether they are viewed in this way or not. By default, the person who can bring the Word of God to bear upon a situation is the one with the authority in that matter. They are the ones who have, as Scripture affirms, “spoken unto you the Word of the Lord.” Elsewhere elders are referred to as those whom the Holy Spirit has made “overseers.” Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The only way voting for elders could possibly be valid is when those who are voting have truly recognized the ones who have been made overseers over the church of God. In that case they are not putting the elders into their office, but confessing they have seen God has already put them there.

Even though Paul was among those ranked “first,” he now states that he did not have “dominion” over the faith of the Corinthians – or anyone else. If anyone could have assumed the role of “boss,” it could have been Paul. He had more visions and revelations of God than others (2 Cor 12:7). He labored “more abundantly” than even the others who were also classed as “first” (1 Cor 15:10). The Lord Jesus gave him mercy “to be faithful” in his ministry (1 Cor 7:25). Speaking as a man, if anyone could have lorded it over the people, it would have been Paul. If he did not do so, what must be said of those who, occupying a lesser position, and having smaller understanding, take it upon themselves to lord it over the saints of the most high God?

Paul’s authority was very real, yet was not one in which he dominated the people themselves. He categorically states that is “authority” was in order to edify, or build up, the people. “For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed” (2 Cor 10:8).

Our text is an example of this very thing. The Apostle affirms that he is not taking dominion over their faith. He will not dictate what they are to believe, then cast them out if they do not do so. He will not manage how their faith is to be applied. He will not prescribe all of the details of spiritual life, like outlining a routine for the people to follow. That is the role of the Holy Spirit – “the anointing” that teaches us “all things” (1 John 2:27).

The role of the godly teacher is to set the food on the table. The only interposition that can be made is when flagrant violations of the Word take place – like the fornicator with which Corinth had to deal (1 Cor 5:5), or the idle busybodies in Thessalonica (2 Thess 3:6). In those cases, however, the point was not mere procedure. Defilement spreads like cancer, and thus is to be eliminated from the church. But even then, the man of God does not have “dominion” over the faith of the people.

Faith cannot function under the yoke of men! By its very nature it is between the individual and God. Lest the flesh attempt to take advantage of this circumstance, no individual is free to be wrong, or to live in conflict with the revealed will of God. However, faith is under the yoke of Jesus and His Word. Such a circumstance cannot be controlled by men. That is, it is impossible for men to have dominion over the faith of others. That is something for which God has made no provision. If, therefore, such

attempted dominion is found, it constitutes a usurpation of the authority of God Himself.

Chapter 29

THE MYTH OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO MEN

Because of the prevalence of sin among those who profess the name of Christ, there is a current stress of professing believers being accountable to one another. One well known minister boasted that he had made himself accountable to three men – thereby assuring he would not fall into some sin while he was traveling alone. While there may be some microscopic tidbit of truth in this emphasis, it has been wholly blown out of proportion. If Corinth was not accountable to Paul – the premier Apostle, with unparalleled insight – who can possibly justify men being accountable to those of lesser stature? If Paul did not have dominion over the faith of the people converted under his preaching, how can the men of our generation possibly be accountable to their peers?

I allege that this condition is incontrovertible evidence that the grace of God has been neglected, and possibly even despised. It is affirmed of this marvelous grace: “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; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit 2:11-14).

Notice how the personal responsibility of the saints is fully addressed by the very salvation of God – salvation that is “by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8). The grace of God effectively teaches His people to reject “ungodliness and worldly lusts.” He effectively teaches them how to live “soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Is there something about this teaching that is inadequate? Does it suggest there is room for needed assistance from our peers in rejecting temptations to sin, or succeeding in living in a godly manner in this world? Such imagined help may sound holy, and even humble – for men to say they have made themselves accountable to other men so they will not blunder and stumble into sin. But what do such confessions say about the response of these people to the grace of God? Is it really pleasing to God for a person to neglect the guaranteed help He gives in order to receive supposed help from another person who also needs help? What kind of salvation have men received who are left unable to keep under their body, and bring it into subjection (1 Cor 9:27). Is Jesus a Savior from sin or not? Does every temptation have an escape of not (1 Cor 10:13). Is the grace of God effective or not (Tit 2:11-14).

The Divine manner of addressing sinful proclivities enhances the expectation of the coming of the Lord – which itself is a deterrent to sin. It also honors Jesus, who “gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity” – and that includes an effective response to being tempted to sin. If Jesus redeemed us from all iniquity to purify unto Himself a peculiar people who are zealous for good works, then it ought to be apparent that we are accountable to Him – not men! It is time for the professed people of God to get to the business of working out their “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). Making yourself accountable to your peers is a Satanic shortcut that belittles the grace of God, and dishonors the Captain of our salvation.

The principle is this: those who themselves require a Savior cannot dominate the faith of

others who need that same Savior. That should be clear enough to require no further explanation. Yet, I know very well that this cannot be received by many people.

Allow me to further expound this matter, for it is integral to the thought of one person not having dominion over the faith of another. God has provided One Savior for men – and only One. He is the Intercessor for them. Men are reconciled to God, and thus have access to Him through the Savior. Their faith is effective in this matter, enabling them to come to the Lord to “obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need” (Heb 4:16). At no point can this access be reduced to a mere routine. It cannot be “taught” to men, like teaching someone to swim, and to build a house. There is no external procedure or discipline of mind that can guarantee you will obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. This is all in the area of faith – and men cannot rule or direct your faith. Faith comes from God – it is “given” to men by Him (Phil 1:29). It is the grace of God that delivers faith to us, for His grace is “exceeding abundant with faith” (1 Tim 1:14). When faith grows, becoming more robust and capable, thanksgiving is given to God, not to men. As it is written, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly” (2 Thess 1:3). For this reason, it is not possible for men to have dominion over the faith of others. It simply cannot be done.

Chapter 30

HELPERS OF YOUR JOY

“ . . . but are helpers of your joy . . . ”

Paul now contrasts what he IS doing with what he is NOT doing. He is NOT having dominion over their faith, but he IS doing something – something that bears directly upon their spiritual life. One of the great traits of Kingdom life is revealed in this text – helping their joy.

HELPERS

“ . . . but are helpers of your joy . . . ” Other versions read, “fellow workers” (NKJV), “workers with you” (NASB), “we work with you” (NIV), and “work together with” (NLT).

The word “helpers” means “a companion in work, fellow worker” (STRONG’S). Lexically, it is defined as “one who labors with another in furthering the cause of Christ” (THAYER), “fellow-worker” (UBS), “one who works together with someone else” (LOUW-NIDA), and “working together, joining or helping in work . . . fellow-workman, helpmate, coadjutor, accomplice . . . helping to synergism it, helping towards, helping a person in a thing . . . of the same trade” (LIDDELL-SCOTT).

Rather than having dominion over the faith and/or persons of the Corinthians, Paul was actually working together with them. This postulates a common activity. Those who are “workers together with Christ” (2 Cor 6:1), are necessarily workers together with one another. Because we have been called into the fellowship of God’s dear Son, we have consequently been called into companionship with all others who fellowship with the Son.

THE WORK IS COMPLEMENTARY IN NATURE

The word used joins the concepts of “work” and “help” – i.e. co-worker, fellow-worker,

working together, or together causing it to happen. In the strictest sense of the word, where there is no work, there can be no real help. Conversely, where there is no true help, there had been no effective work.

However, more is involved than simply working together – like being in the same field, or working for the same employer, but having little to do with one another. In the Kingdom of Christ, work is complementary – that is, the work of one member enhances and stabilizes the work of the other members. The world calls this “synergy” – the total effect is greater the sum of any individual effects. Take an automobile as an example. When it is working properly, the engine works, the transmission works, the fuel system works, the electrical system works, the axle and tires work, and the steering mechanism works. When they work together, the automobile has utility. When they do not, it is useless for the purpose for which it was intended.

In the body of Christ, the Head, Jesus Christ, ministers nourishment to the members through the members: that is, through the various gifts and ministries that have been given to them. Thus it is written, “. . . the Head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God” (Col 2:19, NASB). Paul wrote similarly to the Ephesians: “. . . Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:16).

“Helping,” in effect, is the activity of the “joints and ligaments” – “every part.” At the point those who are working together with God touch the lives of kindred spirits, “help” is ministered. That “help” strengthens and builds up fellow pilgrims – something that is indispensable for a safe and rewarding journey from earth to glory.

The road to glory requires considerable effort on the part of the believer. The heart must “look” to Jesus (Heb 12:2). The soul must “reach forward” to the things that are ahead (Phil 3:13). Although the path leads through deserts, floods, and all manner of tests, we must “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). The devil is to be resisted through the steadfastness of our faith (1 Pet 5:8-9). We must not only fight, but fight the “GOOD fight of faith,” laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12). Faithfully, and through the Spirit, we are to “mortify our members that are upon the earth” (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5). Every insightful soul knows that we need help in these matters.

One of the great transgressions of the modern church is the simplicity with which it approaches, what is called, “the Christian life.” Its misdirected and shallow teaching has led people to minimize the value of fellow pilgrims. This has spilled over into a general neglect of the Scriptures, and a demeaning view of the assembly of the righteous. The net result of all of this is that serious believers are not receiving the “help” that is intended to come to them through the various members of the body of Christ.

Now Paul puts his finger on a particular area in which he is ministering “help” – aiding and assisting the people of God.

OF YOUR JOY

“ . . . helpers of your joy . . . ” Other versions read, “fellow workers for your joy” (NKJV), “for your joy” (NASB), and “so you will be full of joy” (NLT).

This is a most arresting consideration – arresting because it sharply conflicts with the general impressions Christians have been receiving in our part of the world. Rarely will you hear of “help” being applied to our “joy.” I would venture to say that most people would associate “help” with problem resolution and burden-bearing. And, indeed, there is certainly an element of truth in that.

The “joy” of which our text speaks is not mere happiness, as ordinarily perceived. This is a deep joy that is integral to spiritual life. It is not on the surface of life, but at its very heart. The Scriptures speak frequently of this joy. As we look briefly at these texts, it will become apparent that something of depth, duration, and strong support is intended.

1. “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa 35:10).
2. “Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (Isa 51:11).
3. “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer 15:16).
4. “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom 5:11).
5. “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).
6. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom 15:13).
7. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith” (Gal 5:22).
8. “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 1:6).
9. “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2).
10. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet 1:8).
11. “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:4; 2 John 1:12).

That is a “joy” that must be “helped” – helped by Divinely appointed means. It cannot rise up from nature, nor can it be sustained by the well of human wisdom. Further, as we will find, faith cannot be sustained without this joy. The joy of reference assists in stabilizing our faith. It is a joy that serves to clarify the realities for which we long, for “faith is the substance of things hoped for, and evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1).

This joy is not primarily emotional, but is rather fundamentally rational. That is, the joy is produced by what we know, not what we feel. Our feelings, which are noted for being most erratic, are impacted by the perception of God and Christ Themselves, together with a persuasion of the truth of God's "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet 1:4). This is a joy that can be "full," yielding Kingdom advantages that cannot otherwise be realized (John 15:11; 16:24; 1 John 1:4).

If the joy of the Lord was equated with "strength" in Nehemiah's day (Neh 8:10), what may be said of it in this "day of salvation" – when we are receiving of the "fulness" of the Son of God Himself (John 1:16)?

Chapter 32

BY FAITH YOU STAND

" . . . for by faith ye stand." (2 Cor 1:24). Other versions read, "for in your faith you are standing firm" (NASB), "because it is by faith you stand firm" (NIV), "because you stand firm in the faith" (NRSV), and "for it is faith which is your support" (BBE).

This is the reason why Paul was a helper of their joy – because they were, as well as we are, standing by faith! Therefore, the joy of reference has an impact upon faith, which is the means through which we are "grounded and settled" (Col 1:23).

What does it mean to "stand?" Does this simply entail not being knocked down – that you are somehow able to survive the trials and difficulties of life? That this is involved cannot be denied, but it is not the whole of the matter. Nor, indeed, is the life of faith revealed in never being knocked down at all, for it is written that we are "struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor 4:9, NKJV). "Standing" does not suggest that those with faith never, in some sense, fall. Again it is written, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again" (Prov 24:16). However, such falls are not the result of stumbling, which is the consequence of walking in the "night" (John 11:9-10). These are falls that occur in the ferocity of spiritual battle, when saints of God are "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that" they even "despair of life" (2 Cor 1:8). However, even in such difficult circumstances, such souls remain "standing" in the sense of our text. This is a standing that views the conclusion of the battle, and the ultimate frustration of the wicked one. This an "after-the-trial" point of view.

The word "stand" means "to cause or make to stand . . . to make firm, fix, establish" (THAYER). It has more to do with character than with circumstance. It is a consequence of spiritual stability. It is a condition in which the believer becomes resilient, and able to ride the high waves of trial without drowning in despair.

The word "stand" depicts a mighty oak tree, swaying under the force of contrary winds, yet remaining firmly rooted and unmoved. It provides the image of a mighty warrior that concludes the battle on his feet. This is the condition of a runner who completes the race, and a worker who finishes his project.

Standing has to do with not being deterred in the race that is set before us. It is not being turned aside to lesser things or becoming enamored with things that will pass away. It speaks of consistency, stability, firmness, and steadfastness. The person who stands is resolute, and continues pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, even amidst oppositions, hindrances, and discouragements.

Somehow, the people of God must be brought to the point where they “stand” – where the word of God is fulfilled in them, “having done all, to stand” (Eph 6:13). Vacillating Christians

bring no glory to God, and they dishonor the Son of God. Those who do not “stand” suggest that the Gospel is not true at all. They make it appear as though Jesus is neither sufficient nor effective in saving His people. Such people are a blotch on the canvas of life – a source of vexation to God Himself, a discouragement to His people, and a cause for criticism from His enemies. I do not say these things because of a disdain for people, but because of a love for Christ Jesus, of whom it is said, “He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt 1:21).

Here, “standing” is traced back to “faith,” which is helped along by spiritual joy – “BY faith ye stand.” Ponder what the Spirit says concerning “standing.”

1. “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we STAND . . .” (Rom 5:2)
2. “. . . thou STANDEST by faith . . .” (Rom 11:20)
3. “. . . God is able to make him STAND .” (Rom 14:4)
4. “. . . the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye STAND” (1 Cor 15:1)
5. “Watch ye, STAND fast in the faith . . .” (1 Cor 16:13)
6. “STAND fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free . . .” (Gal 5:1)
7. “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to STAND against the wiles of the devil.” (Eph 6:11)
8. “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to STAND .” (Eph 6:13)
9. “STAND therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.” (Eph 6:14)
10. “. . . so STAND fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” (Phil 4:1)
11. “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may STAND perfect and complete in all the will of God.” (Col 4:12).
12. “For now we live, if ye STAND fast in the Lord.” (1 Thess 3:8)
13. “Therefore, brethren, STAND fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” (2 Thess 2:15)
14. “. . . this is the true grace of God wherein ye STAND .” (1 Pet 5:12)

The necessity to “stand” presumes contradicting and aggressive influences. We are not being brought to glory in a vacuum. Rather, we are journeying through the territory of the enemy, confronting hostile forces within and without. This situation forbids a casual spiritual posture, or a diversion to lesser things. If we are going to “walk in the light” (1 John 1:7), it must be in a standing posture. If we are going to “walk in the steps of that

faith of our father Abraham” (Rom 4:12), stability is required. If we are going to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16), we must be on our spiritual feet.

Now, we are told, “for by faith ye STAND.” Faith is the secret to spiritual stability. It is the reality that keeps the soul from wavering, vacillating, and halting between two opinions (1 Kgs 18:21). Faith equips the soul to stand amidst the storm of trial, and the floods of ungodly men. If a person has faith, they can survive every trial, every test, and every battle. The earth has nothing that equates with faith, or can effectively compete against it. The enemies of our soul possess no power or influence that is greater than faith. That is precisely why it is written, “for by faith ye STAND!” But what does that mean?

Faith involves spiritual rationality, for it is “by faith” that we “understand” (Heb 11:3). It brings clarity to the understanding, so that all doubt about the Person, accomplishments, and ministry of Christ are removed.

Our ability to “stand” is directly proportionate to the lucidity of Christ Jesus and things relating to the redemption that is in Him. If our perception of Jesus Christ and His wonderful works is not clear to us, we at once become vulnerable to the devices of the devil – for by faith we stand. If confidence, assurance, and understanding – all aspects of faith – are not found in us, or are at low levels, stability is virtually impossible – for by faith we STAND. If it is difficult for the individual to trust in the Lord, leaning the weight of the soul upon Him, falls will come more easily – for by faith we STAND.

Faith is like the eye of the soul. It brings the ability to see things that are beyond the perimeter of flesh and blood. It enables us to become familiar with God and the things He has prepared for those who love Him. If that inner “eye” is weak, and cannot peer beyond present circumstances, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to survive the attacks of the wicked one – for by faith we stand.

Faith is like the hand of the soul, that grasps the things of God, seeing the sense and accessibility of them. That is what enables believers to hide the Word of God in their hearts, that they might not sin against the Lord. Faith renders the believer capable of confidently taking hold of the promises of God, and living in joyful expectation of their fulfillment. If that “hand” of the soul is infirm, and unable to take hold of the things of God, we will not be able to withstand the winds of trial and adversity – for my faith we STAND.

Chapter 33

THE ENVIRONMENT OF FAITH

There is a certain environment in which faith will flourish. It is a surrounding where an acute consciousness of the Living God can be found. It is a domain in which there is a keen awareness of the frailty of the flesh, and the poverty of nature. It is an environ in which Jesus Christ is seen as absolutely preeminent and essential.

Faith flourishes within a boundary where the Word of God is plenteous, and the exceeding great and precious promises of God are in the spotlight. Faith does not come, is not maintained, and does not function independently of Divinely appointed means. Faith comes from God (Eph 6:23), but is not like magic. It does not suddenly sprout up in the soil of flesh, nor can it be sustained in within the rocky soil of the cares and delusions

of this present evil world. Faith has to be fed, and men must fight to maintain it (1 Tim 6:12). It can only survive when it is close to God, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and coupled with a living hope.

Faith is not merely intellectual – a sort of spiritual warehouse in which a lot of facts are stored and remain dormant. There are such realities as “the spirit of faith” (2 Cor 4:13), “the hearing of faith” (Gal 3:2), “the shield of faith” (Eph 6:16), “the prayer of faith” (James 5:15), and “the work of faith” (2 Thess 1:11). These are all activities, requiring the personal involvement of the individual. They require a certain strength of faith – the kind that was found in our father Abraham. As it is written, “And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom 4:19-21).

Our text confirms the role of spiritual joy in this matter. Paul was helping the “joy” of the Corinthians with a keen awareness of the impact that would have upon their faith. When the heart is made glad in the Lord, faith becomes more robust. When we “rejoice in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:3), the sinews of our faith are strengthened. Too, when faith is strong, joy flourishes, and the heart is “glad in the Lord” (Psa 64:10).

Joy and faith are like siamese twins – joined together. They move about together. When one is weak it impacts upon the other. When one is made strong, it has a good effect upon the other.

Those laborers who are sent forth by Jesus have a marked interest in the faith of the people to whom they minister. They know that a weak faith gives the advantage to the devil, and that the victory that overcomes the world is our faith (1 John 5:4). Those who are working together with God refuse to have dominion over the faith of those they teach, for they know God has made absolutely no provision for such a dominion. Faith is between the individual and the God who gave it. The real Kingdom worker, labors to help the joy of the believer, thereby strengthening faith.

Chapter 34

CONCLUSION TO SERIES

The text with which we have dealt provides a sort of spiritual focus. Even though there were a great number of problems in the Corinthian church, the Apostle was able to pierce through the fog emitted by those problems, and get to the heart of things. This took spiritual expertise, a precise understanding of the purpose of God, a love for Jesus Christ, and a care for the churches. It also involved an acute awareness of the stewardship that he had been given to Paul by the exalted Christ Himself: “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me” (Acts 26:18).

To the very people among whom some questioned his Apostleship, denied the

resurrection of the dead, and treated brethren with contempt, he spoke of being established, anointed, and receiving the earnest of the Holy Spirit. This was affirming the total unacceptability of professing Christians living in the manner found among the Corinthian Christians. The things for which the Corinthians were noted proved that Paul's assessment was correct: "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" (2 Cor 11:4). The Amplified Bible reads, "For [you seem readily to endure it] if a man comes and preaches another Jesus than the One we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the [Spirit] you [once] received or a different gospel from the one you [then] received and welcomed; you tolerate [all that] well enough!" It is what they had believed that led them to live in such a way as required rebuke and correction.

Thus Paul again proclaimed the Gospel to them (1 Cor 15:-1-3). He reminded them that the "wisdom of the world" had been counted "foolishness" with God, and could bring no advantages to those who embraced it (1 Cor 1:20; 2:6; 3:19). He expounded the illuminating and liberating nature of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:1-14). He delineated the necessity of living for God (2 Cor 4:10-15), and the requirement of being reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-20). He announced the necessity of separation to God, the wrongness of unequal yokes, and the essentiality of being cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit (3 Cor 6:14-7:1). In all of this he was strengthening their faith and enhancing their joy – both of which hardly had a pulse in them.

This is a most marvelous thing! It reveals the proper manner in which labors for Jesus are to be accomplished. Every faithful minister must shine the light on what God has done in Christ Jesus. It is imperative that the saints hear about the reality of establishment and the glory of anointing. The role of faith must be underscored, and the ministers must be obviously engaged in strengthening the faith of God's people, and helping their joy.

Over the years I have noted with some sorrow the manner of those who have a penchant for Law, and who love to live by procedure, as opposed to living by faith. They are not noted for their joy. However, when the Gospel and its marvelous implications are proclaimed, and when the object of hope is set before the people, their joy will be helped.