

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

SECOND CORINTHIANS



An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Given O. Blakely

FINAL LESSON

Lesson #50

FINAL LESSON

COMMENTARY ON: 13:7-14

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

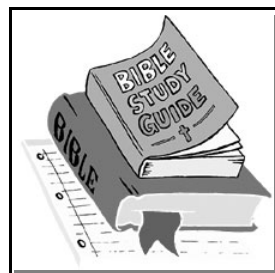
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

A FITTING CONCLUSION

Paul now comes to his closing words – words addressed to a wayward assembly who had given heed to "false apostles and deceitful workers." The fruit of their doings was heartbreaking, and yet the "wise masterbuilder" (1 Cor 3:10) remains focused in his objective to recover them from the snare of the devil. He has rebuked them, admonished and exhorted them, taught them, and pleaded with them. He will now confirm that his prayers are with them as well, and that he is expecting good things from them. We have been exposed to a faithful teacher, a sensitive shepherd, and an insightful leader. His approach to the Corinthians has confirmed the validity of his message, which has been the good Gospel of a great salvation. His personal conduct, teaching, godly demeanor and powerful writing have perfectly harmonized with his glorious message.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 50



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO BUILDING THE FAITH AND ENHANCING THE HOPE OF THOSE WHO ARE WORKING OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: **AMPLIFIED** or **AMP** = Amplified Bible, (1965), **ASV**=American Standard Version (1901), **BBE**=Bible in Basic English (1949), **DRA**=Douay-Rheims (1899), **ESV**=English Standard Version (2001), **IE** = International English, **ISV** = International Standard Version (1967), **JPS** = Jewish Publication Society (1917), **KJV**=King James Version (1611), **LIVING** = Living Bible (1971), **MONTGOMERY** = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), **MRD** = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), **NAB**=New American Bible (2002), **NASB**=New American Standard Bible (1977), **NAU**=New American Standard Bible (1995), **NIB**=New International Bible, **NIV**=New International Version (1984), **NJB**=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), **NKJV**=New King James Version (1979), **NLT**=New Living Translation (1996), **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version (1989), **PHILLIPS** = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), **PNT** = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), **RSV**=Revised Standard Version (1952), **TNK**=JPS Tanakh (1985), **Webster**=The Webster Bible (1833), **WEYMOUTH**=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), **WILLIAMS** = William's New Testament (1937), **TNK** = JPS Tanakh (1985), **TYNDALE**=Tyndale's Bible (1526), **WYCLIFFE**= Wycliffe New Testament (1382), **YLT**=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

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

AN EPISTLE WRITTEN TO A CHURCH THAT WAS MOVING AWAY FROM ITS CARNALITY, YET LACKED MUCH INSIGHT. HERE IS A STRONG APPEAL TO PERFECT HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

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

Final Lesson

A FITTING CONCLUSION

²Cor 13:7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. ⁸ For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. ⁹ For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection. ¹⁰ Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction. ¹¹ Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. ¹² Greet one another with an holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints salute you. ¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." (2 Corinthians 13:7-14)

INTRODUCTION

Paul now comes to his closing words – words addressed to a wayward assembly who had given heed to “false apostles and deceitful workers.” The fruit of their doings was heartbreaking, and yet the “wise masterbuilder” (1 Cor 3:10) remains focused in his objective to recover them from the snare of the devil. He has rebuked them, admonished and

exhorted them, taught them, and pleaded with them. He will now confirm that his prayers are with them as well, and that he is expecting good things from them. We have been exposed to a faithful teacher, a sensitive shepherd, and an insightful leader. His approach to the Corinthians has confirmed the validity of both his apostleship and his message,

which has been the good Gospel of a great salvation. His personal conduct, teaching, godly demeanor, and powerful writing have perfectly harmonized with his glorious message.

As we come to the conclusion of this book, it will be useful to briefly consider some principles of spiritual

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leadership that have been confirmed to us. This is needful because of the distorted views that are being promoted by the modern church. It has adopted the manners of the world, and therefore does not speak in consonance with the God of truth, or the truth itself.

It is essential that we learn to think properly and productively concerning matters of the body of Christ.

This is seen in the manner in which Paul dealt with the Corinthians, aiming at moving them away from sin and into righteousness. This was in full accord with the mission that Jesus had given him to *“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). **Sin closes men’s eyes, and puts them squarely into the domain in which Satan is invincible.** At precisely that point a question arises concerning whether or not the transgressor has faith (2 Cor 13:5).

A sampling of some of the principles Paul employed will serve to illustrate this point. This is representative of the manner in which sluggardly *“Christians”* are to be addressed – those who are **not** going on the perfection, and hence are in a backward spiritual stance.

- ☛ The association of Divine purpose with both the trials and victories of life (2 Cor 1:3-11).
- ☛ The savory effects of a Christ-centered life upon both the godly and the ungodly (2 Cor 2:14-16).
- ☛ The nature of the New Covenant is to be expounded (2 Cor 3:5-18).
- ☛ The objective of spiritual life is to be delineated (2 Cor 5:1-5).
- ☛ The parameters of Divine approval are to be defined (2 Cor 4:7; 6:4-10).
- ☛ The necessity of maintaining our gaze upon unseen things while we suffer (2 Cor 4:16-18).
- ☛ The inevitability of the day of judgment is to be declared (2 Cor 5:10).
- ☛ The purpose and effectiveness of Christ’s death (2 Cor 5:18-20).
- ☛ Strong exhortations are to be given (2 Cor 5:20; 6:13,14; 7:1; 13:11).
- ☛ The reason and necessity for holiness is to be proclaimed (2 Cor 6:14-7:1).

- ☛ Those who make legitimate progress in the faith are to be commended (2 Cor 7:9-11).
- ☛ Godly resolutions that have been abandoned are to be awakened (2 Cor 8:11).
- ☛ The association of giving with the salvation that is in Christ Jesus is to be affirmed (2 Cor 8:1-9).
- ☛ The association of giving with Divine aptitude and purpose (2 Cor 9:5-11).
- ☛ The nature and effectiveness of Divine weaponry – particularly when used against false teachers (2 Cor 10:1-6).
- ☛ False teachers must be opposed (2 Cor 11:4,13-15).
- ☛ Those who fail to make progress in the faith are to be rebuked (2 Cor 12:11; 20-21).
- ☛ A consistent and zealous concern must be exhibited for the people of God (2 Cor 12:14-15; 13:9).
- ☛ Those within the church who refuse to repent of their sin must be confronted (2 Cor 12:21; 13:2).

BEHOLD WHAT IS ABSENT

You will notice there has been a total lack of institutional emphasis in this book. Such treasured concepts as enlarging the numbers of the congregation, reaching out into the community, maintaining a highly efficient staff, supporting other religious institutions, and the likes, are not mentioned. There is no purpose being served but that of God Himself – a purpose that has been revealed. Apart from this unveiled objective, Scripture really has no relevance.

So far as the Corinthians were concerned, that purpose required their recovery and stabilization. Spiritual maturity, or *“perfection,”* is not an option. This is where real life leads. It is what genuine faith produces. It is the aim of Christ’s intercession, and the Holy Spirit’s strengthening and working within the believer. **God is in no way glorified by perpetual spiritual infancy,**

which is nothing more than carnality. As it is written, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto **carnal**, even as unto **babes** in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet **carnal**: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not **carnal**, and walk as men?" (1 Cor 3:1-3).

Under the leadership of teachers who declared "another Jesus," "another Spirit," and "another gospel," the Corinthians had stagnated spiritually. All manner of collective and personal sin broke out among them (1 Cor 3:4; 5:1-5; 6:1-5; 8:12; 9:1-5; 10:14-22; 11:18,20; 15:12,34). **Spiritual maturity, or growing up into Christ "in all things" (Eph 4:15), cannot be realized through false means – an erroneous Jesus, a fictitious Spirit, and a spurious gospel.** Nor, indeed, can the real Jesus, the true Spirit, and the authentic Gospel produce a continual state of spiritual infancy. **Where people are not being conformed to the image of God's Son, God is simply not at work for good, for that is His objective in redemption (Rom 8:29).** He sends the Spirit to lead His people in this grand work (Rom 8:13-14; Eph 3:16-19). He has placed various gifts within the church that are designed to bring people to a state of God-glorifying maturity (Eph 4:11-16). The Word of God itself is designed to enable the person of God to be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Add to that, that God has positioned us "in heavenly places" in Christ Jesus, where He has placed "all spiritual blessings" (Eph 1:3; 2:6). "All things" that "pertain to life and godliness" have been given to His children, and are fully accessible through their knowledge of Him (2 Pet 1:3).

Additionally, all saints are given the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11,14), the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6), and a vast host of ministering angels (Heb 1:13-14). They have "access" into the grace in which they are caused to "stand" (Rom 5:2), access to the Father (Eph 2:18; 3:12), and access to "the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16). The eyes of the Lord are upon all the righteous, and His "ears are open to their prayers" (1 Pet 3:12). There is no required advantage they do not have. There are no

Sin closes men's eyes, and puts them squarely into the domain in which Satan is invincible. At precisely that point a question arises concerning whether or not the transgressor has faith

necessary resources that are withheld from them. All who are "in Christ Jesus" are told that in Him are "hid **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**" (Col 2:3). The Lord Jesus Himself has come to give them "an understanding" (1 John 5:20), and they have all been given the spirit "of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim 1:7). They are even told, "For **all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us**" (2 Cor 1:20), and "**all things are yours**" (1 Cor 3:21).

Theoretically, it might appear as though a backward spiritual stance is not even possible, and that there is no danger of "falling away." In fact, there are some who actually do affirm that this is the case. **However, their suppositions are nothing more than imaginations to be cast down – strong holds of erroneous thought that are to be taken captive (2 Cor 10:4-5).** The condition of the Corinthians dashes such nonsense to the ground. The notion that Paul would labor so extensively to rescue those who could never fall is not only a delusion, but a stupid one at that.

There are two factors that we must not fail to grasp. The first is that **everything we have from God in Christ Jesus is held "by faith."** They are only as sure to us as our faith! If "unbelief" caused the disciples to fail in a work of critical importance (Matt 17:20), and if Peter began to sink in the waters on which he was walking when he doubted (Matt 14:31), **does anyone imagine that unbelief, or a lack of faith, will have no impact upon us?**

Secondly, we are surrounded by adversaries and liabilities, even though we are greatly handicapped by a "vile

body," which itself "cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:50). We have a fierce and cunning adversary in the devil, who is the "god of this world" and "the prince of the power of the air" (1 Pet 5:8; Eph 2:2). We also wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12). We are in a world of which it is said, "the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor 7:31). Whoever becomes a friend of that world, regardless of their profession, becomes "the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Add to that the fact that we have "another law in" our "members, warring against the law of" our "mind, and bringing" us "into captivity to the law of sin which is in" our "members" (Rom 7:23).

These conditions make sin and transgression a very real possibility. If we are in a weakened spiritual state, or remain in a juvenile condition, we cannot possibly avoid a lapse into iniquity. Such poor souls must be recovered from the pit. That is why Paul is laboring so strongly for the Corinthians.

It also ought to be noted that proper teaching, as confirmed in this epistle, is such as allows for the introduction of the Gospel at any point (1:20; 3:18; 4:3-6,10-11; 5:14-17,18-21; 8:9). When there is no place for the Gospel itself in what men are teaching, men have taken a distracting bypath that cannot possibly lead the people to God, or produce a life that will please Him. That is what happened at Corinth, and it will happen today if men do not conduct themselves properly in their preaching and teaching. **When the Gospel itself cannot be injected into our teaching, shedding light and clarity upon the subject, then men are**

dealing with the wrong subject. It is imperative that believers be intolerant of any teaching that makes the Gospel sound strange or irrelevant. There is no

such thing as truth that lacks Jesus at its center! **Further, it is not possible to deliver "sound doctrine" if the salvation of God has been thrust into the**

background.

Paul's closing remarks will confirm all of these things.

DO NO EVIL

*" 2 Cor 13:7a **Now I pray to God that ye do no evil . . .** "*

What kind of desire will Paul express? What will he declare to be his objective for the Corinthians, whose reconciliation to God has been declared to be critical (2 Cor 5:20)? Will he challenge them to win more souls? To reach out to the homeless? To reach the younger generation? To be more missionary-minded? To "act" more like Christians? I certainly do not mean to suggest that these things are unlawful, or that we are set to oppose those who make efforts in this direction. God forbid! What I am saying, and what this text strongly confirms, is **that such things are not the critical issue or the fundamental objective.** The Holy Spirit will move Paul to say what is necessary – and it will not be the things that I have just mentioned, even though they are often represented as the heart of core of Divine objective.

REVEALED DIVINE OBJECTIVES

God has revealed what He has purposed to do. Here is a brief sampling of the many statements of the Divine objective being realized in Christ.

- *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: **that where I am, there ye may be also**" (John 14:3).*
- *"As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that **He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him**" (John 17:2).*
- *"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to **take out of them a people for His name**" (Acts 15:14).*
- *"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).*

- *"For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to **be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified**" (Rom 8:29-30).*
- *"And that He died for all, that they which live should **not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again**" (2 Cor 5:15).*
- *"Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to his good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times **He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth: even in Him**" (Eph 1:9-10).*
- *"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: **that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus**" (Eph 2:6-7).*
- *"To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Eph 3:10-11).*
- *"For it became Him, for whom are all*

*things, and by whom are all things, in **bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings**" (Heb 2:10).*

- *"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, **that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life**" (1 John 5:20).*

Paul has taught the Corinthians within the conscious framework of such objectives. Now, he will express his prayer for them, which is to the same end. He is not targeting a mere change in behavior, but a **sureness of their destiny with the Lord in glory.**

I PRAY TO GOD

"Now I pray to God . . ." Other versions read, "Now our prayer to God is,"^{BBE} "But we pray to God,"^{DARBY} "It is our prayer to God,"^{NJB} "Truly I pray to God,"^{PNT} "I desire before God,"^{TNT} and "I am praying God."^{WILLIAMS}



Although it is rather rudimentary, the expression "pray to God" should be clear to us. When Peter

was in prison, the early church prayed **“unto God”**(Acts 12:5). Paul said that his prayer for Israel was **“to God”**(Rom 10:1). The Philippians were admonished to let their prayer and requests **“be made known unto God”**(Phil 4:6). Jesus taught men to pray, beginning, **“Our Father which is in heaven”**(Matt 6:9; Lk 11:2). He also said, **“pray to thy Father”**(Matt 6:6). Paul said he bowed his knees **“unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”**(Eph 3:14). When the early church prayed, they addressed their prayers **“to God,”** saying **“Lord, thou art God”**(Acts 4:24). Paul spoke of the Romans’ **“prayers to God”** for him (Rom 15:30).

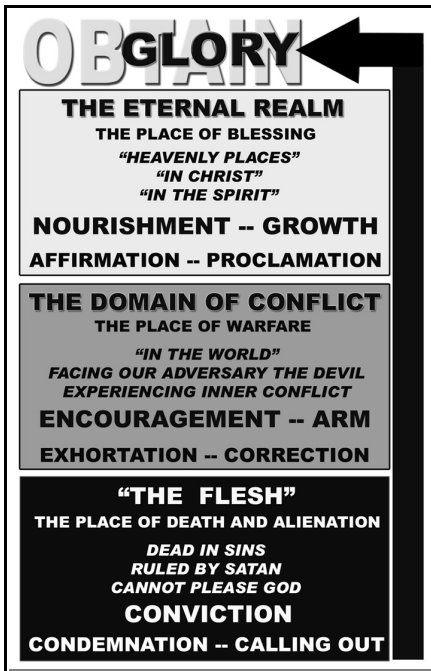
Speaking of the time following His exaltation, Jesus told His disciples, **“And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you”**(John 16:23).

All of this is in perfect comportment with the nature and effectiveness of salvation. We come **to the Father** through Jesus (John 14:6). He has reconciled us **unto God** so we can come **to Him** (Rom 5:10), He is bringing us **to God** (1 Pet 3:18), and through Him we have **“access” to God** (Eph 2:18). Now, working within the glorious circumference of the New Covenant, and in keeping with the mediatorial and intercessory ministry of Jesus, Paul prays for the Corinthians. **He seeks for something that God alone can give** – something that is essential to Divine acceptance.

A NECESSARY WORD

A word ought to be said about the manner of one’s ministry, and the kind of message that is delivered to the people. **The condition of the people determines the manner and substance of ministry.** For example, there were some people Jesus did not want to understand. Therefore, He spoke to them in parables and dark sayings. He said of them, **“but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them”**(Mark 4:11-12).

There were others who were so deeply ensconced in sin, that He spoke harshly to them. To some of these He



said, **“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”**(Mat 23:33).

There were still others Jesus preferred, desiring to be with them during spiritually sensitive situations. Of them He said, **“With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer”**(Luke 22:15). He referred to these people as His **“friends,”** telling them that everything God the Father had shown Him, He had divulged to them. **“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you”** (John 15:15).

Similarly, there are differing domains that are occupied by men – areas that determine how the people are addressed, and the kind of word delivered to them. I have provided a somewhat crude illustration of this in the graphic preceding this section.

First, the ultimate objective is for the people to obtain glory – to ever be with the Lord. **If that is not realized, nothing else really matters.** In accomplishing this objective, there are at least three domains, or realms, that can be occupied by men in the flesh. These

realms determine **the emphasis** of the message delivered to them.

From the lower to the higher, **THE FLESH** is the realm from which men must be delivered, else condemnation is sure. This is the realm into which sin has cast the race. It is the place of spiritual death and alienation from God. There, men are **“dead in trespasses and sins”**(Eph 2:1), ruled by Satan (1 John 5:19), and **“cannot please God”**(Rom 8:8). Here, the message must produce conviction, and the summons to **“come out”** must be clear. This realm can be occupied again by those who were once delivered from it (2 Pet 2:20).

The **DOMAIN OF CONFLICT** is the realm in which we **“work out”** our **“salvation with fear and trembling”**(Phil 2:12). It is the place of conflict, where we **“fight the good fight of faith”**(1 Tim 6:12). Here is where we experience warfare, facing the devil, enemies without, competing influences, and conflict within. In this place, encouragement is essential, and arming the occupants with the proper arsenal is necessary. Exhortation and correction are often required in order to the maintenance of a proper perspective.

The third realm is where God places us when we are born again – **“HEAVENLY PLACES.”** This is where **“all spiritual blessings”** have been deposited (Eph 1:3). It is where Jesus has been enthroned (Eph 1:20). It is where those in Christ have been raised and seated (Eph 2:6). **This is an eternal realm.** However, it is not the **heart** of the eternal realm, but something like the porch where we become oriented to the Divine domain. The Scriptures speak of this area in different ways. Some of them include **“in Christ”** and **“in the Spirit.”** **Here is where nourishment is ministered and spiritual growth occurs.** The primary message delivered to those who consciously occupy this realm consists of **affirmations and proclamations** – things that do not pass away and are forever settled in heaven.

Those who speak only of responsibility are delivering a message for those in conflict. This is a necessary message, to be sure. **However, spiritual growth and fruitfulness will occur only**

when the people are dwelling in the *"heavenly places."* That is where the resources are found. It is where growth and advancement in the faith occur.

The prayer of Paul, together with

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everything else he has written in this epistle, is designed to get the people into the realm where they can be nourished and grow. **What follows does not represent either the emphasis or essence of spirituality.** This is not at the heart and core of the faith, but has to do with getting to that heart and core – putting off all inhibiting manners and coming away from all hindering influences. Because this subject is so rarely developed, I feel compelled to provide a sampling of where God is headed in His great salvation.

- **RECEIVING OF HIS FULNESS.** *"And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace"* (John 1:16).
- **FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST.** *"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Cor 1:9).
- **ENLIGHTENMENT.** *"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe"* (Eph 1:18-19).
- **FILLED WITH HIS FULNESS.** *"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"* (Eph 3:19).

- **GROWING UP INTO CHRIST.** *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"* (Eph 4:15).

- **COMPREHENSION.** *"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"* (Eph 3:18-19).

- **FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING.** *"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"* (Col 1:9).

- **PARTAKING OF THE DIVINE NATURE.** *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"* (2 Pet 1:4).

- **KNOWING GOD.** *"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life"* (1 John 5:20).

Talk about eternal life and being saved is nothing more than chatter if these things are not being experienced. Those who stop with telling people what to do and not do have come short of their responsibility. What you ARE determines what you DO, and salvation is about

recreating YOU – making everything new, while old things are passing away.

Make no mistake about this, the prayer of Paul for the Corinthians was essential, but **it was designed to get them to the point where Divine intentions would be realized in them.** Like everyone else who is in Christ, they had started out by being placed in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6). But, alas, through the influence of *"false apostles and deceitful workers,"* they had lapsed back into the flesh. **Now, he must remind them of their duty, for in the flesh people forget what they are supposed to do.** However, only doing what was right would not put them where salvation places men. That would merely bring them back to the starting line – back to the place where they could grow, advance, mature, and walk in the light. If this seems difficult to receive, remember our Lord's words about duty. *"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do"* (Luke 17:10).

THAT YE DO NO EVIL

"... that ye do no evil..." Other versions read, *"that you do no wrong,"* ^{NASB} *"that you will not do anything wrong,"* ^{NIV} and *"I pray God that you may find the right answer to your test."* ^{PHILLIPS}

The word *"evil"* means "of a bad nature; not such as it ought to be; of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting, base, wrong, wicked," ^{THAYER} "characterized by godlessness, evil, bad; moral conduct and attitudes that are godless," ^{FRIEBERG} "foul, troublesome," ^{UBS} "pertaining to being bad, with the implication of harmful and damaging," ^{LOUW-NIDA} and "bad, evil, and wicked." ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Something that is *"evil"* is **inherently evil – that is its nature.** For example, plowing is not inherently evil. When Elisha was found plowing, he was not doing anything wrong (1 Kgs 19:19). When the *"wicked"* do it, however, it becomes sin (Prov 21:4). Unlike plowing, *"evil"* is not something that can be done acceptably. **The thing that is done is itself wicked.** For instance, there is no right way to steal, murder, lie, commit adultery, or worship an idol. Those who do such things, regardless of their motive, have done *"evil."* There is no right way to hate your brother, cause him

to stumble, or rail on him. Those are all things that are of themselves “evil,” and **those who do them become evil because they did them.**

It is possible for men to philosophize about these things, saying that the defilement of the individual is what made their deeds wrong. But this is not so, even though there are things that do become wrong because of the unacceptability of the person doing them – like doing “*many wonderful works*” in the name of Jesus (Matt 7:22). However, that is not the kind of thing of which this text speaks. **There are deeds that defile and soil the individual**, just as surely as, under the First Covenant, touching certain things ceremonially defiled people, making them unclean, (Lev 11:26; 15:10; Num 19:11 . . . etc).

An example of evil things that defile the individual (and not vice versa) are the “*works of the flesh.*” Several of them are itemized in the fifth chapter of Galatians. They include, “*Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*” (Gal 5:19-21a). Is it possible to do these things and still inherit the kingdom of God? Are the acceptability of such deeds determined by the one who does them? Or are these works rejected **because** they themselves are unacceptable, regardless of who does them? The latter is the case, as the Scriptures state: “*of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Gal 5:21). A similar statement is made in First Corinthians: “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,*

nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9-10)

Paul prays to God that the Corinthians will “*do no evil.*” That will require some advancement on their part. They **did** “*evil*” when they allowed divisions among themselves (1 Cor 11:28). They **did** “*evil*” when fornication was found among them (1 Cor 5:1-5). They **did** “*evil*” when they did not discern

gentleness, and a tolerant spirit toward the sinner. This, however, is not a proper posture at all. Sensitive souls earnestly desire the repentance and forgiveness of the transgressor, but they cannot pretend as though the sinner is innocent, or is nothing more than a victim. That is why Paul declares that his exhortations are supported by his prayers that they “*do not evil.*” John wrote to his readers that they “*sin not*” (1 John 2:1). Paul gave the same exhortation to the Corinthians in his first epistle (1 Cor 15:34), and wrote the same to the Ephesians: “*sin not*” (Eph

Those in Christ are to live by faith and walk in the Spirit so that they will be more sensitive to the possible eruption of sin, or the “superfluity of naughtiness.” This is a requirement for having fellowship with Christ, into which God has called us

the Lord’s body at His table (1 Cor 11:29-30). They **did** “*evil*” when some of them said, “*there is no resurrection of the dead*” (1 Cor 15:12).

Whether it is a foolish word or an unlawful deed, doing “evil” has a residual effect upon the individual. The conscience becomes defiled (1 Cor 8:7; Tit 1:15), and can even become “*seared,*” so that it can be completely ignored (1 Tim 4:2). A place is made for Satan to enter once again (Eph 4:27). The only solution is to be forgiven and cleansed (1 John 1:7,9), else a person has also lost his access to the throne of all grace as well.

The flesh requires that others overlook its expressions, and moves the transgressor to demand respect,

4:26). **The admonition is to be taken seriously, and not to be treated as though it was nothing more than a noble goal.**

Those in Christ are to live by faith and walk in the Spirit so that they will be more sensitive to the possible eruption of sin, or the “*superfluity of naughtiness*” (James 1:21). **This is a requirement for having fellowship with Christ, into which God has called us** (1 Cor 1:9). Sin not only contaminates, it **separates** from God (Isa 59:2, **crucifies** Jesus “*afresh*” (Heb 6:6), and **causes** one to become “*the enemy of God*” (James 4:4). When one who has been delivered from evil falls into it again, being overcome, **the last state is his worst state** (2 Pet 2:20). That must not be withheld from the people!

DOING WHAT IS HONEST

“*⁂ . . . not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.*”

When a people become “*carnal,*” it alters the way in which holy men must address them. Motives must be more thoroughly explained, **for the “carnal mind” cannot handle, or process, the**

truth. It forces a distorted view of everything upon those it dominates, putting self at the center of all things, and imagining that everyone else operates on that same principle. From

one point of view, when carnality rises to prominence in someone who has been “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified,” it removes their perception of the most elementary spiritual realities. If a person imagines that this cannot happen to a legitimate “Christian,” let them think again, for that very notion is the expression of a carnal thought. Peter spoke of those who had “clean escaped” the “pollutions of the world,” yet were “again entangled therein, and overcome.” He affirmed, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet 2:20). Paul admonished the Roman brethren, “be not overcome of evil” (Rom 12:21). Such a word would be foolish if it was not possible.

AMPLIFIED and “not because I have any need of your approval.” PHILLIPS

Paul has been under examination by some in Corinth (1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 13:3). He is not, however, writing to merely justify himself, or prove that he is who he said he was – “an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God” (1 Cor 1:1). When he admonishes them to “do no evil,” and to conduct themselves in keeping with the nature of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:9-12,18), he is not doing so in order that he himself might look good. He wants his children to walk in the light, but not merely for his own sake. He is not building a resume to be handed out to the other churches. His

life. “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). Paulo referred to this inner satisfaction as “the testimony of our conscience” (2 Cor 1:12). Paul also wrote to the Galatians of this experience. “But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another” (Gal 6:4).

Paul is urging the Corinthians to do what is right by doing no evil. He knows that when they do this, certain protective influences will be experienced within. Their hearts will be made glad when their conduct agrees with their profession, and that gladness will assist them to maintain a proper walk before the Lord.

Paul refers to this kind of life as “honest,” “honorable,” NKJV “right,” NASB “good,” DOUAY and “noble.” MONTGOMERY That is, it is not only necessary, it is “right.” It is not only required, it is “good.” It is not only essential, it is also “noble.” Holy conduct must be seen in this light, else it will appear to be nothing more than a burden. The carnal mind looks at the necessity of holiness as a bit and a bride (Psa 32:9) – something that keeps the individual from doing what is enjoyable and preferred. However, this is a total misrepresentation of the case. Actually, it is the doorway to genuine and lasting satisfaction (Psa 22:26), and “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet 1:8).

I do not believe enough has been made of this in the modern church. There is too much “ought to” preaching, and not enough appeal to the marvelously refreshing effects of walking in the light.

THOUGH WE BE REPROBATES

“... though we be reprobates.” Other versions read, “though we may seem to be disqualified,” NKJV “even though we should seem disapproved,” NASB “even though we may seem to have failed,” NIV “whatever we may seem,” BBE “even though we should appear unapproved,” NAS “even if we do not pass the test,” NJB “though we may seem disqualified,” RWB “and let us be counted as lewd persons,” TNT “even if we ourselves are despised,” LIVING “even though our

Paul is urging the Corinthians to do what is right by doing no evil. He knows that when they do this, certain protective influences will be experienced within. Their hearts will be made glad when their conduct agrees with their profession, and that gladness will assist them to maintain a proper walk before the Lord.

What I am saying is that the Corinthians were in a state where they were being “overcome” by evil. Some had already plummeted a great distance, so that they thought nothing of sinning in the face of the Lord, allowing “the flesh” to even express itself at the “table of the Lord.” Therefore, Paul has to use spiritual baby or toddler talk, explaining something that should be obvious to the least among us.

NOT US

“... not that we should appear approved...” Other versions read, “not that people will see that we have stood the test,” NIV “not that we may appear to have met the test,” NRSV “not that it may be put to our credit,” BBE “not to show that our ministry to you has been successful,” NLT “not that we should seem commendable,” TNT “We are not trying to look like winners,” IE “not in order that our sincerity may be demonstrated,” WEYMOUTH “not in order that we [our teaching] may appear to be approved,”

fundamental purpose is not to have a glowing testimonial to his own work in Corinth. That all has to do with how he appears before men. He has more noble motives than that.

THAT YOU DO WHAT IS HONEST

“But that ye should do that which is honest...” Other versions read, “but that you should do what is honorable,” NKJV “but that you should do what is right,” NASB “but that you may do that which is good,” DOUAY “but because you will be doing what is right,” NJB “but that you should continue doing right,” WILLIAMS “but that you may do what is noble,” MONTGOMERY and “but because I earnestly want you to find the right answer.” PHILLIPS

Paul knows that there is a certain satisfaction that comes to the individual that “does righteousness” (1 John 2:29; 3:7). Solomon said, “a good man shall be satisfied from himself” (Prov 14:14). Jesus elaborated on this experience, showing the effects of possessing eternal

The great heart of the apostle shows forth in the tender expressions of his desires for the Corinthians— by Given O. Blakely

sincerity may seem to be doubtful,^{WEYMOUTH} *“though I should be unable to abide the proof,”*^{MONTGOMERY} *“though] we may seem to have failed and be unapproved,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“even if that should make me no real Christian.”*^{PHILLIPS}

This is the expression of an attitude, not an ambition. Paul is not speaking of how he views himself, but how he is viewed by others. That is, he does not balk at being reproached or charged with being false if the people are advancing in the Lord. Of course, he knows that when they are growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15) they will not entertain erroneous thoughts about him. **When people are in a right relation with God, they do love His**

people (1 John 5:1).

However, Paul is not writing to people who are walking in the light as Jesus is in the light (1 John 1:7). He is writing to people who are stumbling and tripping in the darkness. Therefore, he has to tell them what really ought to be obvious, **that his ministry is not about maintaining his own appearance before men, but about reconciling men to God.**

There is also another refreshing perspective here. Paul is exhibiting toward the Corinthians the same mind-set he had toward his brethren, the Jews. That kind of thinking is made known in this challenging expression: *“For I could wish that myself were accursed from*

Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom 9:3). That is the same spirit displayed in the Lord Jesus Himself, who was *“made a curse for us”* (Gal 3:13). **Paul knows that no person can be brought forward in the faith by the cursing of another believer, or the rejection of someone who is cleaving to Christ.** The point he is making is that there is no legitimate sacrifice he is not willing to make for the Corinthians to be approved by God. Elsewhere he said it this way, *“And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved”* (2 Cor 12:15). There is an wonderful example of a mind that is *“controlled by the Spirit.”* It is a mind that does not balk at sacrifice.

BUT FOR THE TRUTH

“⁸ For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.”

There is a tendency in men to philosophize about matters of religion. They are quite willing to debate whether this or that is “possible,” without any real regard for the truth itself. **The text before us, if not seen correctly, will appear to be nothing more than a philosophical statement – something that is ideal, but not really possible.** Another form of this kind of thinking is seen in statements like, “If this is God’s will for my life, I know that it is going to happen, no matter what I do.” Or, “Whatever will be will be. I will just wait and see how it all turns out.” Of course, these are nothing more than philosophical or theoretical statements. **They are a way of unplugging from responsibility in hopes that life will all work out for our good, even though we ourselves are uninvolved in the process.** However, this is not at all the case. God Himself does, in fact, work *“all things together for good”* for His people. However, those people are described as *“them that love God”* and are *“the called according to His purpose”* (Rom 8:28). That is, they are consciously involved in His will.

It is dangerous beyond description to adopt a view of life that

has everything happening automatically, with man being nothing more than a sort of pawn on the chessboard of life. Although I do not feel thoroughly competent to address this issue, I know that this kind of thinking must be thrown down.

^{WEYMOUTH} *“For we can do nothing against the Truth [not serve any party or personal interest],”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“For, after all, we can make no progress against the truth.”*^{PHILLIPS}

Does Paul mean that men, particularly himself, cannot impact upon

Does Paul mean that men, particularly himself, cannot impact upon the way truth works? Is he saying men cannot oppose the truth or neutralize its effects? Are we to imagine that the truth rolls on no matter what men do? God has spoken to this issue, so there is no need for confusion on it.

WE CAN DO NOTHING AGAINST THE TRUTH

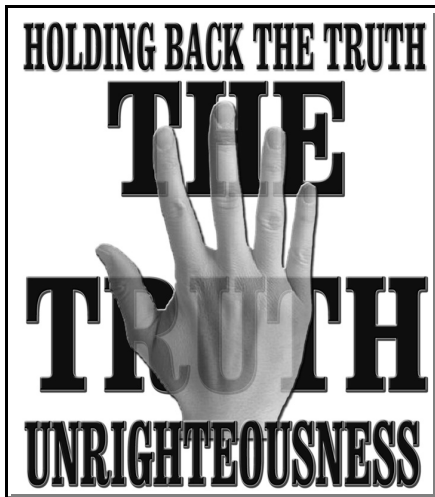
“For we can do nothing against the truth . . .” Other versions read, *“Because we are able to do nothing against what is true, but only for it,”*^{BBE} *“We have no power to resist the truth,”*^{NJB} *“Our responsibility is never to oppose the truth,”*^{NLT} *“Out responsibility is to encourage the right at all times,”*^{LIVING} *“We have no power against the truth,”*

the way truth works? Is he saying men cannot oppose the truth or neutralize its effects? **Are we to imagine that the truth rolls on no matter what men do?** God has spoken to this issue, so there is no need for confusion on it.

Isaiah spoke of a time when truth was impacted by those who claimed to have embraced it. *“And judgment is turned away backward, and justice*

standeth afar off: for **truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter**" (Isa 59:14). Again he said, "Yea, **truth faileth: and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment**" (Isa 59:15). It was not that truth itself became impotent, but that men did not take it into hearts, and thus it did not proceed from their mouths so it could do its work. Thus Isaiah said, "None calleth for justice, **nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity**" (Isa 59:4).

Paul also spoke of this hindering influence against the truth. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who **hold the truth in unrighteousness**" (Rom 1:18). The expression "hold the truth" is not speaking of grasping the truth while being personally unrighteous, **for such a posture is not even possible**. It rather speaks of **holding back** the truth by unrighteousness. Thus other versions read, "suppress the truth,"^{NKJV} "hinder the truth,"^{ASV} "keep down what is true,"^{BBE} "detain the truth,"^{DOUAY} "withhold the truth,"^{GENEVA} "hold back the truth."^{NJB} and "push the truth away from themselves."^{NLT}



The Pharisees held back the truth by their teaching. Jesus said to them, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye **shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that**

are entering to go in" (Matt 23:13). He said to the lawyers, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for **ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered**" (Luke 11:52). Paul spoke of certain teachers who, through their teaching "overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim 2:18). He said the Galatians had been "betwilted" into **not obeying the truth** (Gal 3:1). He wrote of other teachers who "subverted whole houses" (Tit 1:11). He said there were some teachers who "creep into houses and **lead captive silly [gullible] women laden with sins**" (2 Tim 3:6).

Therefore, not being able to do anything "against the truth" does not mean that men cannot neutralize the manner in which truth works among men. What, then, does this text mean? He means that when the truth is preached and people love and embrace it, he cannot drag people away from it. He also means that as he lives by faith, he has no desire to even make such attempts. **Under the influence of the Spirit of God, Paul could not oppose the truth, deliver a word that encouraged sin, or preach a message that caused people to become insensitive to truth or to iniquity**. If he is who he said he was, it was not possible that he should in any way have contradicted the truth.

Further, if the people had, in fact, embraced the truth instead of the spurious gospel that "false apostles and deceitful workers" had declared among them, **the truth would have done its work among them**. It is the nature of the Word of God to do this. It is described as "the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess 2:13). It is not possible for this to fail of fulfillment when the condition is met – "you that believe!" **Where this effective working is not found, the Gospel is not being preached, or is not been believed**.

There were false teachers in Corinth who had greatly hindered the work of the truth. They did so by delivering a spurious message – a message that caused retrogression in everyone who received it. Those who do anything "against the truth" do so because they have themselves departed from that truth.

BUT FOR THE TRUTH

"... but for the truth." Other versions read, "but only for the truth."^{NASB} "only to further the truth,"^{NJB} "but to stand for the truth at all times,"^{NLT} "but only for the furtherance of the truth,"^{WEYMOUTH} "but only in defense of the truth,"^{MONTGOMERY} "but only for the Truth [which is the Gospel],"^{AMPLIFIED} and "can only work for the truth."^{PHILLIPS}

The gifts and callings of God always are "for the truth," delivering it faithfully, and adorning it with proper conduct and manners. When Jesus "gave gifts" to the church (Eph 4:11), **every single one of them upheld, adorned, proclaimed, and expounded the truth**. It is not possible that for a "spiritual gift" to be prostituted for the advantage of the flesh. The gifts of God – all of them – are "good" and "perfect," coming "down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). The "gifts" of God – including that of an apostle – **consistently operate within the framework of Divine purpose**.

There is no such thing as a gift from Jesus (Eph 4:8-11) that can be employed to combat, distort, neglect, or deny the truth of God. As soon as such activities commence, the gift begins to die, or is altogether removed from the individual.

"For the Truth"

Paul is saying that as he exercises the authority, or power, that has been given to him, it will, in fact, promote the truth of God. **It will advance His purpose, honor His Son, and accomplish His intent**. The fact that the intruding teachers at Corinth had produced things against the truth, and contradictory to it, confirmed that they had **not** been empowered by God, received **no** gift from Him, and were **not** sent by Him. They were **not** serving the purpose that He "purposed in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:11) and "in Himself" (Eph 1:9), and were bringing **no** true advantage to the saints of God. By way of comparison, the power that had been given to Paul had brought him into synch with God's purpose, compelled him to deliver the message God had sent, and thereby bring eternal advantage to the saints. That is simply the unvarying manner of the kingdom.

WE ARE GLAD

“^{9a} For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong . . . ”

Here Paul elaborates on his previous statement *“though we be reprobates”* – that is, “even though (theoretically speaking) your spiritual welfare meant that we would be regarded as castaways.” The first reason is that Paul has a total commitment to the truth itself. His gifts and his will cannot be used against the truth, or for the ultimate disadvantage of the Corinthians. **He is deliberately united with Christ in the work of bringing many sons to glory, and will not turn from it.** Now, he adduces yet another reason for being willing to be considered a reprobate if, in fact, the Corinthians are truly advantaged by it.

It must be understood that this is heart language. Paul is not theorizing about whether or not the salvation of the Corinthians is worthy of he himself being cut off from God and lost. He IS saying that **if** that was God’s way, he would submit to it just as he would for the salvation of the Jews (Rom 9:3). In other words, he has the Spirit of Christ on this. Yet, he knows full well that the commission of laying down His life as a ransom for all pertained **only** to the Lord Jesus. That is the **ONLY** sacrifice God will accept for the salvation of men. **Yet, Paul was so closely in fellowship with Jesus, that he partook of the same spirit that drove Christ to the cross.**

It is a blessed thing to be freed from a theoretical approach to the salvation of God. As you can see, *“fellowship”* with Christ includes **having His mind** as well as walking with Him (1 Cor 2:16).

WE ARE GLAD

“For we are glad, . . . ” Other versions read, *“For we rejoice,”*^{NASB} *“and we are delighted,”*^{NJB} *“We are happy,”*^{LIVING} and *“it is a joy to us.”*^{WEYMOUTH}

The things that moved Paul into the domain of joy did not always pertain to having personal advantages. **In this text, the recovery and stability of the**

Corinthians would cause great joy. This is the spirit of the good shepherd who, when He found the lost sheep, *“calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost”* (Luke 15:6). It is the kind of joy that erupts in heaven: *“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance”* (Luke 15:7). Such joy is not brought on because of what has happened to the individual, but because of the blessing of the Lord coming upon others who are deeply loved.

WHEN WE ARE WEAK

“ . . . when we are weak, . . . ”

Other versions read, *“when we are feeble,”*^{BBE} *“when we may be infirm,”*^{YLT} *“when we are powerless,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“to be*

Here, “weak” means being viewed as weak, or **thought of** as being inferior – or thought less of. Paul has no fears about what men think of him, as long as it brings them spiritual advantages.

WHEN YOU ARE STRONG

“ . . . and ye are strong . . . ”

Other versions read, *“but you are strong,”*^{NIV} *“and ye may be powerful,”*^{DARBY} *“if you are really strong,”*^{NLT} and *“if it means you are strong.”*^{PHILLIPS}

If the Corinthians were really made strong at the expense of Paul’s reputation, Paul would gladly submit to the condition. Here, “strong” means spiritually strong, firm, mature, and able to withstand the assaults of the wicked one. It also infers being able to traverse in rugged spiritual realms, where *“hinds feet”* are required to navigate the high

Yet, he knows full well that the commission of laying down His life as a ransom for all pertained only to the Lord Jesus. That is the ONLY sacrifice God will accept for the salvation of men. Yet, Paul was so closely in fellowship with Jesus, that he partook of the same spirit that drove Christ to the cross.

consciously weak,”^{WILLIAMS} and *“when we are weak (unapproved),”*^{AMPLIFIED}

Here, the word “weak” does not refer to a real situation – as though the strengthening of the Corinthians required that Paul forfeit some of his strength in order for the Corinthians to be given advantages. **That is, indeed, what happened in the person of Christ,** who *“though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich”* (2 Cor 8:9). Spiritual enrichment like that cannot really come by anyone else being “poor,” or deprived of what rightly belongs to him. That is a Divine prerogative alone, belonging to the Savior Himself.

mountains of *“eternal purpose”* (2 Sam 22:34; Psa 18:33; Hab 3:19; Eph 3:11). **If this state requires that Paul be viewed as inferior, Paul is glad to submit to the condition.**

This may appear to contradict the whole manner of this epistle. Paul has spoken strongly in defense of his apostleship, and severely upbraided those who have spoken against him, impugning his motives, and contradicting his gospel. Why does he appear to speak so differently here?

The truth of the matter is that the Corinthians had **not** been improved by receiving demeaning words about Paul

There is no such thing as spiritual growth that is realized while a person entertains condescending views of the messengers of the Lord, or His sons and daughters. Those who imagine they have accomplished such a feat have only been deceived.

from the “false apostles and deceitful workers” among them. **Instead, they had lost ground – significant ground.** Instead of going “on unto perfection” (Heb 6:1), they had lapsed back into carnality (1 Cor 3:3-4). Instead of fleeing fornication (1 Cor 6:12-18), it sprang up among them (1 Cor 5:1-5). Instead of being blessed at the table of the Lord (1 Cor 10:16), they had been judged by God for their waywardness at that table (1 Cor 11:30). Their boasted spirituality and knowledge (1 Cor 8:2; 14:37; 2 Cor 10:7,11; 11:16; 12:19) was nothing more than talk. They were actually a miserable excuse for a “church,” having divisions among

themselves (1 Cor 3:3; 11:18), not meeting together to take the Lord’s supper (1 Cor 11:20), and meeting together “for the worse” (1 Cor 11:17). They had to be awakened to righteousness, and admonished not to sin (1 Cor 15:34). Their glorying was “not good” (1 Cor 5:6). Paul had to speak to them to their “shame” (1 Cor 6:5; 15:34).

These are the conditions that actually followed in the wake of their lowly view of Paul. This is the fruit of the teaching of those pretenders among them. With all of their boasted gifts, they had not discovered the overflowing

iniquity that was among them. The prophets had said nothing about it. There were no words of knowledge or wisdom that had discovered their sin. Paul had to write to them about it.

But none of this was owing to Paul himself. He tells them now that **IF** they could actually become strong at his expense of his own person, he would be glad to submit to such a condition. In a way, he is challenging them to make a valiant effort to make any kind of progress while belittling him. **They will find that they will not be able to do so – not so much as advance a single millimeter in the Spirit while rejecting the messenger the Head of the church sent to them.** There is no such thing as spiritual growth that is realized while a person entertains condescending views of the messengers of the Lord, or His sons and daughters. Those who imagine they have accomplished such a feat have only been deceived. Notwithstanding this reality, because carnality consistently robs men of a sound mind, Paul speaks in this manner.

WE DESIRE YOUR PERFECTION

^{9b} . . . and this also we wish, even your perfection.”

It is imperative that we keep firmly in our minds **who** is writing these words. This is “*THE* apostle of the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13). Jesus personally sent him “far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21; 26:17). He confessed that he strived to preach the Gospel where Christ was “not named,” lest he should “build upon another man’s foundation” (Rom 15:20).

As often stated in these lessons, Paul’s commission was expressed in different ways.

• “Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, **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 26:17-18).

• “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles . . . **that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel . . .**” (Eph 3:1-7).

• “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should **preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God**” (Eph 3:8-10).

• “Howbeit for this cause I obtained

mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, **for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting**” (1 Tim 1:16).

As ought to be apparent, Paul’s commission was not limited to those who had never heard the Gospel. In fact, the burden of the record we have about his words and teaching are addressed to those who were already in Christ Jesus, yet were deficient in their understanding of the purpose, nature, and benefits of redemption. **Paul knew that a salvation that leaves people in a state of ignorance is, in fact, no salvation at all.** In its very essence, salvation is “eternal life,” which is nothing less than **knowing** “the only true God, and Jesus Christ” whom He sent into the world (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). This, in fact, was the very point of deficiency in the church at Corinth. That is why Paul wrote, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not: **for some have**

The great heart of the apostle shows forth in the tender expressions of his desires for the Corinthians– by Given O. Blakely

not the knowledge of God: *I speak this to your shame*" (1 Cor 15:34). Paul's commission had to do with correcting this condition, **which is the cause of all sin and retrogression.**

It is staggering to consider how prevalent this trait is in the modern American church – **the lack of the knowledge of God.** His nature, purpose, and ways are hardly known at all. The same words can be said today that were said in spiritually primitive times – **before the Law, before the prophets, and before John the Baptist:** *"Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?"*(Job 26:14).

Does all of this have anything to do with our text? Indeed it does! **What is said here must be said to the church of our day.** Further, it must be declared by men who actually carry this burden. If there are not many men of this sort, then we must pray for them. **If the church is not mature and stable, the work of the Lord will not and cannot be accomplished through it.** If there are holy personalities being tutored by the church in the *"manifold wisdom of God"* (Eph 3:10), who dares to be content with a juvenile church who toddles about in the truth like a two-year old does on the side of a mountain?

THIS ALSO WE WISH

" . . . and this also we wish . . . " Other versions read, *"And this we also pray,"* NKJV *"this we also pray for,"* NASB *"our prayer is for,"* NIV *"This is what we pray for,"* NRSV *"What we pray for is,"* RSV *"What we ask in our prayers is,"* NJB *"Our greatest wish and prayer is that,"* LIVING *"This is my continual prayer,"* WILLIAMS and *"our ambition for you is."* PHILLIPS

The word *"wish"* comes from the Greek word *εύχόμεθα* (yoo-khom-ah-ee). This word has a lexical meaning of, *"to pray to God, to wish, to pray, to pray for,"* THAYER *"of petitionary prayer or appeal to God, pray, offer prayer, ask . . . of a strong desire for something, want, wish for,"* FRIBERG *"pray, wish, long,"* UBS and *"to speak of make requests to God, to pray, to speak to God, to ask God for, pray."* LOUW-NIDA

There is a certain harmony between *"wish"* and *"prayer"* that is not obvious to those whose thinking is

bounded by scholastics. To those in the flesh, a *"wish"* is nothing more than a personal desire. In fact, it may even be a desire that one would never express to God. **However, as used in Scripture, a "wish" is a desire expressed to God, and conceived with an acute awareness of both His purpose and purpose.** Thus Paul

adequate or sufficient for something – to make adequate, to furnish completely, to cause to be fully qualified, adequacy," LOUW-NIDA and *"restoration."* LIDDELL-SCOTT

What is Paul saying, and why is he saying it? Here is the situation: the teachers in Corinth, called *"false apostles*

It is staggering to consider how prevalent this trait is in the modern American church – the lack of the knowledge of God. His nature, purpose, and ways are hardly known at all.

"wished" for the salvation of his kinsmen, the Jews (Rom 9:3). John *"wished"* for welfare of *"the wellbeloved Gaius"* (3 John 1:2).

This, then, is a desire that is lived out and presented in the very presence of the Lord. It is a want that perfectly comports with Paul's apostleship, as well as with his own *"new man."*

EVEN YOUR PERFECTION

" . . . even your perfection." Other versions read, *"that you may be made complete,"* NKJV *"that you may become perfect,"* NRSV *"for your improvement,"* RSV *"even your perfecting,"* ASV *"your restoration,"* ESV *"your restoration to maturity,"* NLT *"that you will become mature Christians,"* LIVING *"the perfecting of your characters,"* WEYMOUTH *"for your perfect reformation,"* MONTGOMERY *"for your all-round strengthening and perfecting of soul,"* AMPLIFIED and *"your true Christian maturity."* PHILLIPS

The word *"perfection,"* or *"perfect"* is used frequently in the epistles (1 Cor 2:6; 2 Cor 13:9,11; Gal 3:13; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28; 4:12; 2 Tim 3:17; Heb 6:1; Heb 13:21; 1 Pet 5:10). It is used in a variety of ways, although it has the same general meaning. One broad meaning of the word is maturity, or spiritual adulthood. As used in this text, the word means *"adequacy, full qualification, maturity,"* FRIBERG *"strengthening, perfecting of the soul,"* THAYER *"being made complete,"* UBS *"make someone completely*

and deceitful workers," had actually robbed the people. **They had moved them into a backward stance where they were moving further and further from God.** They had lost access to the *"the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* that are hidden in Christ (Col 2:3), and were therefore conducting their lives and assemblies foolishly. They had stripped them of *"the whole armor of God,"* and therefore they were unable to *"stand in the evil day"* (Eph 6:13). They had snatched their Divine weaponry from them so they could no longer throw down strongholds of thought, or cast down imaginations and high thoughts (2 Cor 10:4-5).

God had put them together in the *"unity of the spirit,"* and these teachers had caused them to be divided. God had washed, sanctified, and justified them, but now they were defiled with ignoble ambitions, immorality, and a host of other things. God had delivered them from this present evil world, raised them up, and made them sit together with Christ in heavenly places, but now they were carnal. They had become worse than the recalcitrant Israelites of old, who had not been given the resources they had received. Yet it could be said of Corinth as it was said of those Israelites, *"But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward"* (Jer 7:24). Now Paul could not even speak

unto them as unto “spiritual” people, but had to lisp in infantile language to them, telling them things that even the most elementary believer knows.

Now Paul is strongly desiring and praying that they will get back to the point there they are “complete in” Christ – which is the **standard** of the kingdom (Col 2:10). He wants them to experience what the Scriptures are designed to do, “That the man of God may be **perfect**,

find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). The treasure house of wisdom and knowledge has been opened to us (Col 2:3). We have been given the Holy Spirit of God who leads us (Rom 8:13-14), strengthens us within (Eph 3:16), intercedes for us (Rom 8:26-27), and enables us to “abound in hope” (Rom 15:13). Additionally, Jesus is continually living “to make intercession for us” (Heb 7:25), and an enumerable company of holy angels have been dispatched to

that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3). The grace of God has been given to effectively teach them “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). How are the saints in any way deficient? What has God failed to give them? What resources has He withheld from them? **What is there about Jesus, the Spirit, or the Scriptures that is inadequate? What do we need that God has not supplied, and in abundance?**

What is there about Jesus, the Spirit, or the Scriptures that is inadequate? What do we need that God has not supplied, and in abundance?

Yet, in spite of all of these abundant provisions, we are faced with an anemic and faltering church. It requires all manner of special ministers, counselors, methods, techniques, work shops, and “how-to” literature. It must borrow from the world, to whom it now appeals for the definition of problems as well as their resolution. What has happened? Why are things this way? **The professed church has been moved off of the foundation of Christ, and has thus lost its access to the provisions He alone can give.** The answer to this dilemma is the same as that of our text. We must have men and women who have a strong desire for the perfection, maturity, and full equipping of the church – people who will not cease to pray for it.

thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:17).

Today’s Dilemma

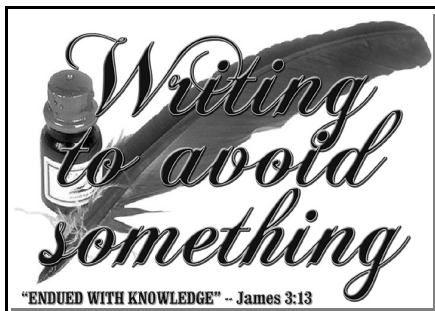
We are living in “the day of salvation,” the “accepted time” (2 Cor 6:2). This is the day when a “new and living way” to God has been “consecrated” for us (Heb 10:20). It is a time when we are urged to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and

minister to us (Heb 1:13-14). We have been given a “new heart and a new spirit” (Ezek 36:26), a “new man” (Col 3:9-10), and “access” to God (Eph 2:18; 3:12). We have “the whole armor of God” which, when put on, is thoroughly adequate to protect us against the wiles of the devil and the evils he instigates (Eph 6:10-18).

Those in Christ are in no sense lacking. They have been given “all things

AN EFFORT TO AVOID SHARPNESS

“ 10a *Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness . . .*”



Paul is writing in preparation for

his bodily presence among the Corinthians. He is a man “endued with knowledge,” and has holy ambitions. He has affirmed that He is earnestly praying for their “perfection,” and **his writing will be in perfect accord with that desire.** This is a marvelous trait of life from God: it brings harmony between desires and conduct. Under the Law, this did not always occur – in fact, it rarely occurred. People could have corrupt hearts, and yet go through God-ordained ceremony – a condition with which God was not at all pleased (Isa 1:13; 29:13; Ezek 20:39; Amos 5:23; Mal 1:10).

THEREFORE I WRITE

“*Therefore I write these things being absent . . .*” Other versions read, “*For this reason I am writing these things while absent.*”^{NASB} “*This is why I write these things when I am absent.*”^{NIV} “*So I write these things while I am away from you.*”^{NRSV} “*On this account I write these things being absent.*”^{DARBY} “*That is why I am writing this while still far away.*”^{NJB} “*I am writing this to you before I come.*”^{NLT} “*This is why I am writing this while far away from you.*”^{WILLIAMS} and “*Hence the tone of this letter.*”^{PHILLIPS}

Paul’s writings are a hallmark of his ministry (1 Cor 4:14,37; 2 Cor 1:13; 2:9; 9:1; 13:2,10; Gal 1:20; Phil 3:1; 1

The great heart of the apostle shows forth in the tender expressions of his desires for the Corinthians– by Given O. Blakely

Thess 4:9; 5:1; 2 Thess 3:17; 1 Tim 3:14). Yet, so far as the record is concerned, Jesus never commissioned Paul to write. God told Moses to “write . . . in a book” (Ex 17:14; 34:27). The “priest” was required to write the curses of the law in a book (Num 5:23). The children of Israel were commanded to **write** the word of God “upon the posts” of their houses, and on their gates (Deut 6:9). God instructed Moses to declare when a king was placed among the people a “copy of this law” was to be **written** “in a book,” especially for him (Deut 17:18). During the days of Nehemiah, the people made a “sure covenant” before the Lord, and **wrote** it down (Neh 9:38). God commanded Isaiah to “take a great roll (scroll), and **write** in it with a man’s pen” (Isa 8:1). Again He told Isaiah, “go, **write** it before them in a table” (tablet) (Isa 30:8). He commanded Jeremiah, “**Write** thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book” (Jer 30:2). Again He told Jeremiah, “Take thee the roll of a book, and **write** therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel” (Jer 36:2). After telling Ezekiel to tell Israel their sins, the Lord said, “**write** it in their sight” (Ezek 43:11). He told Habakkuk, “**Write** the vision, and make it plain upon tables” (Hab 2:2).

Yet, Jesus did not command Paul to write – at least such a word is not recorded. Why, then, did Paul write? **Because he was able to correlate his commission with any lawful means of communication.** If he could not go to a church, he would write to it. If he was imprisoned, and could not bring his insights to a body of people personally, he wrote to them. **All of this confirms the commitment of Paul, and the inability of the adversary to stop his mouth, or keep the message from getting to the people.**

Now, however, Paul expresses a most unique purpose for writing. He is making every effort to **avoid** having to conduct himself in an unsavory way when he confronts the Corinthians face to face. **This confirms that the power is in the truth itself, whether it is spoken in person, or written in a letter.** In this world, the kingdom of God and the work of God do not revolve around appearance.

LEST BEING PRESENT

“ . . . lest being present I should

use sharpness . . . ” Other versions read, “in order that when present I may not use severity,” ^{NASB} “that when I come I may not have to be harsh,” ^{NIV} “so that when I come, I may not have to be severe,” ^{NRSV} “That I may not when present deal sharply,” ^{ASV} “so that there may be need for me, when I am present, to make use of sharp measures,” ^{BBE} “that when I come I may not have to be harsh,” ^{NJB} “hoping that I won’t need to deal harshly with you when I do come,” ^{NLT} “in the hope I won’t need to scold and punish when I come,” ^{LIVING} and “so that when I do come I shall not be obliged to use that power of severity which God has given me.” ^{PHILLIPS}

Paul knows that when he comes to Corinth, not only will the people see him, but he will see them. At that time, if there is still sin among them, they will not be able to hide it. In such a circumstance, Paul would no longer come with gentleness among them. Instead, he would deal harshly with them, like a



surgeon that has to remove a cancerous growth, or a judge having to administer justice.

No man of God enjoys using “harsh measures.” **However, when professing believers insist on continuing in sin, such measures must be employed.** Such people necessarily turn the minister into a warrior who must use Divine weaponry against them. Those who fear confronting unchecked waywardness in this manner are not worthy to minister in the name of the Lord. Ponder the people who used “harsh measures.”

☛ **MOSES TO ISRAEL.** “Ye have been

rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you” (Deut 9:24).

☛ **JOHN THE BAPTIST TO THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES.** “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Mat 3:7-8).

☛ **JESUS TO THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.** “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Mat 23:33).

☛ **STEPHEN TO THE JEWISH COUNCIL.** “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51).

☛ **PAUL AND BARNABAS TO CERTAIN JEWS.** “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).

☛ **JAMES TO PROFESSING CHRISTIANS.** “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Who can forget the harsh manner in which Peter dealt with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).

Yet, Paul, as all men who walk with God, does not delight in being harsh, or having to use a rod on the people of God (1 Cor 4:21). He partook of the spirit of Jesus, who was “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29), and “harmless” as well as “undefiled and separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26). He therefore appeals to the people through wise and weighty words in this sterling word from his own heart. He does this knowing full well that he has an arsenal of spiritual weapons to use against his enemies if it becomes necessary to do so. However, that is not his preference.

POWER FOR EDIFICATION

“ 10b . . . according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.”

Under the Law, very little was said that was designed to build up the people. This is because the Law left the people unchanged. Law was designed to point out their need for change, therefore did little to build them up. For the most part, there really was little there to build up. The people needed circumcised hearts (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4), new hearts and new spirits (Ezek 18:31; 36:26).

In Christ Jesus a wholly different condition exists. Everyone in Christ is “a new creature” (2 Cor 5:17). They are the “workmanship” of God, “created unto good works” (Eph 2:10). They are **all “justified”** (Rom 5:1), “reconciled to God” (Col 1:21), and have been “made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places” (Eph 2:6). They have **all** been “delivered from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), been “made partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14), and are “begotten of God” (1 John 5:18). **This sets the stage for edification, or building up, for you cannot edify or build up a fundamentally flawed and unacceptable structure.** The godly are edified, not the ungodly.

POWER FOR EDIFICATION

“ . . . according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification . . . ” Other versions read, “according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification.” ^{NKJV} “in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up.” ^{NIV} “using the authority that the Lord has given me for building up,” ^{NRSV} “the Lord’s authority which He has given me . . . to make you strong.” ^{LIVING} and “the authority which the Lord has given me [to be employed, however] for building [you] up.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

How can a person “feed the flock of God” (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28), edify them (1 Cor 14:3; 2 Cor 12:19; Eph 4:12), or “feed” Christ’s sheep (John 20:15-17)? How is it possible for one member of the body of Christ to so minister as to make another member more mature, stronger in Christ, and encouraged in the faith? Is

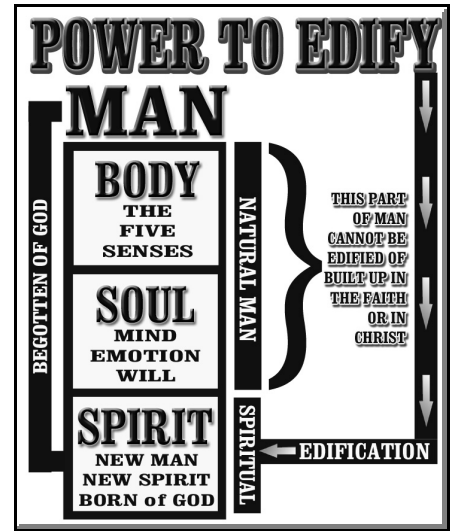
the secret in a procedure or a method? Can it be traced back to a certain kind of personality, or the presence of some natural gift or ability? Can people be “trained” to edify the saints of God? **Can the saints be eternally advantaged by a person who has not been sent or empowered by God?**

I acknowledge that it is possible to train people to be better speakers, use good elocution, and make logical presentations. There is certainly nothing inherently wrong with those things. However they are really nothing more than wrapping. When it comes to the things of God and the people of God, such noble traits cannot of themselves deliver anything of spiritual substance to believers. **If they are given nothing more than this, they will wither and die.**

Paul said he had been given “power,” or “authority” to edify. This word [“power”] does not come from the Greek word *δύναμις* (dunamis) – as in Romans 1:16. That is a word associated with strength – supernatural strength. Here, the word “power” comes from the Greek word *ἐξουσία* (ex-oo-see-an), which means, as the context indicates, “liberty of doing as one pleases; leave or permission . . . the power of authority (influence) and of right,” ^{THAYER} “authority, right, liberty, ability, capability . . . jurisdiction,” ^{UBS} and “license in a thing.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} This is a power or authority that comes from God alone. It cannot be conferred by men.

Here is the situation. The Lord Jesus is Himself “the Great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20). Unlike the hireling, He cares for and protects His sheep and nourishes them (John 10:13). **He will not allow access to their “new man” by those who are not aligned with Him.** This is something of what is involved in John’s word, “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).

Man is a tripartite, or three-part being: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23). From the standpoint of priority, man is (1) spirit, (2) soul, and (3) body. From the standpoint of inferiority, he is



(1) body, (2) soul and (3) spirit. **That is, his spirit is the strongest part, and his body is the weakest part.**

The spirit and the soul are the invisible parts of man, and cannot be in any way accessed by the human senses. In a way, they are nearly indistinguishable, because they are not subject to human analysis. However, the Word of God, which is living and powerful, is able to **distinguish “the division of soul and spirit”** (Heb 4:12). ^{NASB}

When it comes to “edification,” there is only one part of man that can, in fact, be edified – and even then, it is only when the person has been begotten, or born, of God. Neither the body nor the soul can be edified. They are both presently subject to the curse, and will not be “saved” until the resurrection of the dead (1 Pet 1:9; Rom 8:23).

In the matter of salvation, the “Head of the body,” Jesus Christ (Col 1:18), **will grant no adversarial personality access to the renewed spirit.** The head of all adversaries, and himself the chief of that number, is **not allowed** to touch the part of us that is “born of God” (1 John 5:18).

There are those, however, who can be entrusted with what is required to build up, strengthen, and mature the

people of God. Paul was such a person. Others who have been specified are prophets, teachers, evangelists pastor/teachers, and members of the body of Christ who are endued with various spiritual gifts (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:7,28).

Without this power, authority, or spiritual competency, no one is able to edify the saints of God. This accounts for the remarkable dominance of spiritual anemia and malnutrition within the professing church. Those who are attempting to “*feed the church of God*” have simply not received competency to do so. The only reason for that condition is God’s refusal of them to operate in that capacity. Thrust from your mind the notion that a person can be given the power to edify, and it remain with him although unused. That is not the manner of the kingdom. **When God gives something, and it remains unused, being ignored by the one receiving it, it eventually is taken away.**

In making this statement, Paul is underscoring the fact that Christ is committed to perfecting and strengthening His sheep. **He has called and empowered laborers for that purpose.** The only possible thing that can interfere with that process is the presence of matters that are themselves an abomination to the Lord. **He will not work for good in such an environment.** If, for example, people conduct themselves in an uncomely manner at His table, not discerning His body and thinking only of their own selves, the “*cup of blessing*” will abruptly cease to bless them, and they will instead be judged and chastened (1 Cor 11:31-32). You may recall that, for some, the judgment was so severe that they were not permitted to live (1 Cor 11:30).

Paul is, then, laboring to bring the Corinthians to the point where they can once again receive from the Lord. Then he will set out to do what he has been empowered to do – edify them.

NOT POWER FOR DESTRUCTION

“ . . . and not to destruction.”
Other versions read, “*and not for tearing down*.” NASB “*not for casting down*.” ASV “*and nor for overthrowing*.” DARBY “*and not for breaking down*.” NJB “*and not for pulling down*.” WEYMOUTH and “*not meant to*

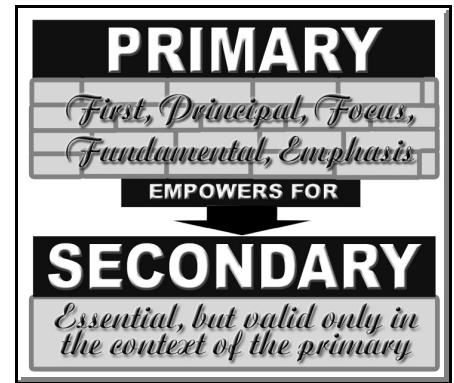
break you down.” PHILLIPS

Paul’s primary purpose was not to “*destroy*” or “*tear down*.” That did not mean he **never** engaged in destructive activities. Previously, he had affirmed that he was coming to them, armed with spiritual weapons that enabled him to pull down strongholds, cast down imaginations and high thoughts, and take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5). **That “destruction,” however, was not aimed at the individual, but at the competing influences that were dominating the people.**

This is the same spirit Jesus possessed, as revealed in His words, “*For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them*” (Luke 9:56). The economy of salvation is not primarily that of destroying men’s lives, or rooting out the unacceptable, or overthrowing adversarial influences. Although all of these are involved – such as casting the fornicator out of the church (1 Cor 5:1-6) – that is not the **primary** objective of God’s ministers. If the fornicator at Corinth is delivered unto Satan, it is “*for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (1 Cor 5:5). If the Lord judges and chastens us severely, even to such an extent as many becoming sick and even dying, it is that “*we be not condemned with the world*” (1 Cor 11:32). In fact, grievous and painful chastening is “*for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness*” (Heb 12:10).

It is not possible that a Savior, whose intent is primarily to save, not to destroy, would raise up a minister whose PRIMARY work was to destroy and cast down, and not to build up! The main, or primary, work of a man of God is **not** rebuking, correcting, and exposing the works of darkness – even though he must, and will, engage in all of those things. However, when he engages in them, he has a different reason for doing so. He is actually seeking to bring men to the condition of repentance in order that they might be saved. Or, in extreme cases, as when Paul struck Elymas the sorcerer blind, the destructive work was in order that evil influence might be removed **so that others might be saved** (Acts 13:8-12).

The combative aspect of spiritual life is secondary, not primary – but that does not mean it is unimportant or can be ignored. The “*second*” commandment – to love our neighbor as ourselves – at no point upstages the first commandment, which is to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matt 22:38-39). But that does not mean it can be ignored, or forgotten. It is not equal with the first commandment, but it is essential. **Just so, the argumentative, competing, resisting, and combative aspects of spiritual life are not its primary traits, but they are essential.**



Things that are “*primary*” are, by their very nature, “*first*.” They are principal, the focus, fundamental, and the emphasis. **If what is primary is not in place, nothing else counts, for it is the sanctifying element.** What is secondary (like loving your neighbor, throwing down competing influences, and rebuking) are valid **ONLY** when they are done within the context of the primary. If those who are ministering in the name of the Lord do not have the ultimate salvation of the people as their emphasis, nothing that they do will be honored by God – for that is His purpose. **Secondary activities, even though they are essential, and are integral to spiritual life, are of no value whatsoever if they are not done with the antepenultimate (endmost) purpose of God in mind.** That purpose is for the people finally to be united with God and Christ in glory, conformed to the image of the Son, and reigning with Him, world without end. Whatever the purported ministry that is not aiming at this objective is nothing more than a distraction to men, and a waste of time. It will **not** be blessed by God, and it will **not** really benefit the people. **It is a bypath that leads to destruction.**

Religious men must seek deliverance from overly-simplistic views of spiritual life. In such views, which are

actually childish views, the distinction between primary and secondary become blurred, and men indulge in unwise

conduct. It is imperative that men are able to see the relationship of the Word of God with the purpose of God.

FAREWELL

^{11a} **Finally, brethren, farewell.**

Paul now prepares to conclude his letter. Although it may appear to be impersonal, being written from a distance, and sent to them by a messenger, **it is really just as significant** as if the words were spoken to them face to face. These written words are accompanied with Divine power, and, in regard to the matters addressed, are able to make the Corinthians *“perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work”* (2 Tim 3:17).

FINALLY, BRETHREN

“Finally, brethren . . .” Other versions read, *“Finally brothers and sisters,”* ^{NRSV} *“Let this be my last word, brothers,”* ^{BBE} *“For the rest, brethren,”* ^{DARBY} *“To end, then, brothers,”* ^{NJB} *“Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with,”* ^{NLT} and *“Last of all then, my brothers.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

Paul closes his letter with his **priorities in mind**. His main objective is not simply to get the Corinthians to live acceptably in this world – although that is involved in this objective. He knows,

however, that if there is nothing after death, it really makes no difference how we live here and now. As he said elsewhere, *“If in this life only we have*



hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor 15:19).

Therefore, was his manner in writing the churches, even those who were in a deplorable condition, he sandwiches his rebukes and corrections between blessings, opening his letter with a proclamation of the faithfulness of God, and now closing it with an Apostolic blessing.

FAREWELL

“. . . farewell.” Other versions read, *“rejoice,”* ^{NASB} *“good-by,”* ^{NIV} *“Let this be my last word,”* ^{BBE} *“fare ye well,”*

^{GENEVA} *“To end then . . . we wish you joy,”* ^{NJB} *“I close my letters with these last words,”* ^{NLT} *“be joyful,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“farewell (rejoice)!”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

With this word comes the responsibility to meditate upon his words, taking them into the heart and mind, and deriving spiritual nourishment and direction from them. When the Word of God is delivered to the people, it is accompanied with a certain responsibility to probe that word, seeking a thorough understanding of it. Paul expressed it this way to Timothy: ***“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them: that thy profiting may appear to all”*** (1 Tim 4:15). Again he wrote, ***“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things”*** (2 Tim 2:7).

It is possible for someone who speaks in the name of the Lord to imagine that once they have delivered the Word, that is all there is to it. But this is a wholly erroneous view. The person who speaks for God is joining with the Lord in His purpose, and must have a heart for the people – a fervent desire for them to be what God intends.

BE PERFECT



Paul now comes to a series of four exhortations. Each of them are critical to the spiritual growth of the people. **Each of them is something to be attained, not something to be avoided.** There is a time to say *“sin not”* (1 Cor 15:34), *“flee fornication”* (1 Cor 6:18), *“be not unequally yoked”* (2 Cor 6:14), and *“let there be no divisions among you”* (1 Cor 1:10). **However, spiritual life is more than NOT doing this or that.** Be sure, those prohibitions are absolutely essential, and cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, if they are not accompanied

by the appropriation of needful qualities, they have no value of themselves.

^{11b} **. . . Be perfect . . .** Other versions read, *“Become complete,”* ^{NKJV} *“be made complete,”* ^{NASB} *“Aim for perfection,”* ^{NIV} *“Put things in order,”* ^{NRSV} *“Mend your ways,”* ^{RSV} *“Be perfected,”* ^{ASV} *“Aim for restoration,”* ^{ESV} *“try to grow perfect,”* ^{NJB} *“Change your ways,”* ^{NLT} *“be made perfect,”* ^{YLT} *“Grow in Christ,”* ^{LIVING} *“Try to be whole,”* ^{IE} *“secure perfection of character,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“Keep on growing to maturity,”* ^{ISV} *“Practice the perfecting of*

The great heart of the apostle shows forth in the tender expressions of his desires for the Corinthians– by Given O. Blakely

your character, ^{WILLIAMS} *“Be strengthened (perfected, completed, made what you ought to be),”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“Set your hearts on this maturity.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

What does Paul mean by this expression? Is he saying the Corinthians should “try harder?” Is he admonishing them to get back to the place where they were before? Is he suggesting that they ought to try and be better Christians? Some of the translations seem to suggest this is what he is saying.

The expression *“Be perfect”* comes from the Greek word *καταρτιζεθε* (kat-artid-zed-tha), which means: “complete, fit out, equip, put in order, perfect, make one what he ought to be,” ^{THAYER} “thoroughly prepare something to meet demands,” ^{FRIEBERG} “set right, make complete,” ^{UBS} “to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something; to cause to be fully qualified,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} and “to furnish completely.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

The word is translated *“restore”* in Galatians 6:1, *“mending”* in Matthew 4:21 and Mark 1:19. It is also translated *“perfected”* in Matthew 21:16, *“fitted”* in Romans 9:22, and *“prepared”* in Hebrews 10:5. Hebrews 11:3 translates it *“framed,”* Hebrews 13:20 translates it *“make you perfect,”* and First Peter 5:10 translates it the same. But what does the word mean in our text?

Paul’s word means more than the Corinthians getting back to the condition from which they had fallen. We know this because of the revealed manner of the kingdom. **There are levels of growth that are expected within the saints – places of understanding and involvement they are expected to achieve within certain time frames.** These times are not known to us, but they **are** known to God. Further, His great salvation is calculated to bring us to these places.

The Example of the Hebrews

Take, for example, the word of the Spirit to certain Jewish believers who were also in a backward stance. Here is how the Spirit reasoned with them. *“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). We have no idea of the duration of *“the time.”* However, the

Lord knew it, and it appears as though there was a kind of consciousness within the believer that testified to it as well.

Having lapsed back into the flesh, these brethren now required the kind of nourishment that was intended for infants – **even though they should have been teaching others at this point.** Do you imagine that being *“perfect”* was just getting to the point where they could again ingest *“milk?”* Indeed it was not. The condition that needed to be restored was where they **should have been** at that time, not where they were when they started. For them, for the time that they had been in Christ, being anything less than *“teachers”* was **not** acceptable. That is where they **should** have been. That is what Jesus **intended** for them to be. That is where the Spirit was **leading** them. That is what the Word of God **intended** for them.

So it was with the Corinthians. Being *“perfect”* involved recovering from their wayward state, and **becoming what they should have been at THAT time.**

When God spoke to Israel through Joel, He referred to a restoration of what had been taken from them. *“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the*

consumed by God’s *“great army.”*

Getting Where You Should Be

This text has to do with the Corinthians getting to where they should have been then – not where they were before they were led astray by *“false apostles and deceitful workers,”* – **where they should have been if they had remained faithful all along.**

During a renewal that involves this kind of recovery, people are given to make great spiritual strides, discovering truths long obscured to them. They are being *“perfected”* in the sense of making up for lost time, and getting to the place where grace would have brought them if they had all along set their affection on things above and not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2).

Should this kind of awakening ever occur in our generation, we would find people able to traffic in lofty truths within a short period of time – truths that were not made evident to some of us for many years.

Tell the People!

Somehow the requirement for growing up into Christ in all things is not being communicated to the people. **There is too much contentment with a lack of**

There are levels of growth that are expected within the saints – places of understanding and involvement they are expected to achieve within certain time frames. These times are not known to us, but they are known to God. Further, His great salvation is calculated to bring us to these places.

caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you” (Joel 2:25). What did He mean? **He would give them what they could have had during that time of consumption by the locust, caterpillar, and palmerworm.** They would not simply have a normal harvest, but one that would be abundant, so that the next harvest would make up for all of the years their harvest was

advancement in the Spirit. Hardly a soul can be found in most churches who is able to digest *“strong meat”* and handle the Word of God aright. **There appears to be a general perception that God continues to receives us in Christ whether we grow or not,** and that Christ abides in us even if we continue to toddle about in the courts of the Lord with no understanding, unable to stand against

the wiles of the devil.

But this is a total misapprehension. **Jesus has made no commitment to dwell in a person who wears His name, yet is not living by faith, walking in the Spirit, and growing in the grace and knowledge of Him.** If salvation is calculated to produce growth,

closeness to and fellowship with the Lord, and stability, how is it that the Lord remains with those who stifle such results? If those who are delivered from this present evil world return to it, does the Lord remain with them? The word delivered to Asa is still true, *“but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you”* (2 Chron 15:2).

This is true because God *“cannot deny Himself”* (2 Tim 2:13). He has made certain commitments concerning the ungodly and those who depart from Him, and He will not fail to honor them. He will bless those He promises to bless, and curse those He promises to curse. That is involved in not denying Himself, and you may be sure that is the truth.

BE OF GOOD COMFORT

“ 11c . . . **be of good comfort . . .** ”

Other versions read, *“be comforted,”*^{NASB} *“listen to my appeal,”*^{NIV} *“heed my appeal,”*^{RSV} *“be encouraged,”*^{DARBY} *“take exhortation,”*^{DOUAY} *“comfort one another,”*^{ESV} *“encourage one another,”*^{NAB} *“Pay attention to what I have said,”*^{LIVING} *“I beg you,”*^{IE} *“Keep listening to my appeals,”*^{ISV} *“be encouraged and consoled and comforted,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“consider my advice.”*^{PHILLIPS}

Once again, many of the translations throw dust in our eyes, obscuring the passage. Technically, and from the etymological view, the Greek word translated “comfort” can be used to mean exhortation, admonition, and instruction. However, that is **not** its only meaning. It also means *“to console, to encourage and strength by consolation, to comfort.”*^{THAYER} Lexical aids say that in this text it means, *“in the passive [voice] to receive consolation, be comforted,”*^{THAYER} *“speaking to relieve sorrow or distress, comfort, cheer (up),*

encourage.”^{FRIBERG}

As used here, the emphasis is not placed upon what Paul is doing in his writing, but on the effects of truth among the Corinthians. “Good comfort” has to do with embracing *“the promises of God”* (2 Cor 1:20) and the *“hope of the Gospel”* (Col 1:23).

Not all of Paul’s words were designed to *“comfort.”* Some were **convicting in nature, and were attended to awaken the people from their lethargy.** Words of this kind include, *“I praise you not,”* and you come together *“for the worse”* (1 Cor 11:17); *“I speak to your shame”* (1 Cor 6:5; 15:34); and *“Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels”* (2 Cor 6:12). The Corinthians were not to be passive about such words, but give heed to them.

Here, however, he is calling upon the people to minister among themselves

– to focus upon the good things of God, and speak of them to one another. This is similar to a word written to the Thessalonians. *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore **comfort one another with these words**”* (1 Th 4:17-18).

The saints must not forget the factor of comfort or encouragement. It is personally ministered by the Holy Spirit as men are absorbed with, and not neglecting, God’s *“great salvation”* (Acts 9:31; Heb 2:3). “Comfort” is not realized by thinking upon duty, or what we ought to do. **Rather, it comes from pondering what the Lord has done, and what redemption brings to us.** It is in the strength and joy of this *“good comfort”* that obedience is gladly rendered, the race is energetically run, and singleness of mind and heart are experienced. **“BE of good comfort!”** What a word!

BE OF ONE MIND

“ 11d . . . **be of one mind . . .** ”

Other versions read, *“be like-minded,”*^{NASB} *“agree with one another,”*^{NRSV} *“be of the same mind,”*^{ASV} *“have a common mind,”*^{NJB} *“live in harmony,”*^{NLT} *“continue agreeing with each other,”*^{ISV} *“continue thinking in harmony,”*^{WILLIAMS} and *“be of the same [agreeable] mind one with another.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul wrote to the Romans, *“That ye may with **one mind** and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord*

Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:6). He told the Philippians that he looked forward to hearing that they were standing *“fast in one spirit, with **one mind** striving together for the faith of the gospel”* (Phil 1:27). Elaborating on this blessed condition, Paul also wrote to the Philippians, *“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be **likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind**”* (Phil 2:2). Peter admonished scattered believers, *“Finally, be ye all of **one mind**”* (1 Pet 3:8). What does it mean to have “one

mind,” and why is such an admonition given?

First, the beneficent work of God is never accomplished in divided or confused environment. *“God is not the Author of confusion”* (1 Cor 14:33). *“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work”* (James 3:16).

Being of “one mind” is having the “same mind” – the same way of thinking

The great heart of the apostle shows forth in the tender expressions of his desires for the Corinthians– by Given O. Blakely

and looking at things. “Be of the **same mind** one toward another” (Rom 12:16). “. . . be perfectly joined together in the **same mind** and in the **same judgment**” (1 Cor 1:10). In the Philippian church, a special admonition was given to two women: “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the **same mind in the Lord**” (Phil 4:2). This kind of mind is required to confront life – especially when it is attended by persecution. “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves

likewise with **the same mind**: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin” (1 Pet 4:1).

Men may make provision for people to have differing mind-sets, but there is no place for it in Christ Jesus. Even if they have a differing view of certain secondary matters, they are to approach them with a single mind-set. “He that regardeth the day, regardeth it **unto the Lord**: and he that regardeth not the day, **to the Lord** he doth not regard it.

He that eateth, eateth **to the Lord**, for he giveth God thanks: and he that eateth not, **to the Lord** he eateth not, and giveth God thanks” (Rom 14:6).

The reason for the requirement of “one mind” is that the **Kingdom of Christ is Christ-centered**, not man-centered. Further, it is **His mind** that is to be embraced by us, for it alone truly unites us. Therefore it is written, “Let **this mind** be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5).

LIVE IN PEACE

“^{11e} . . . **live in peace** . . .” Other versions read, “**be at peace**,”^{BBE} “**have peace**,”^{DOUAY} and “**be at peace with one another**.”^{PHILLIPS}

Who does not know the evil effects of disruption and turmoil within the church? When the people of God are not at peace among themselves, an environment is created in which every evil work is cultured and will be found. Such a condition is the result of the devil’s own work. Thus James wrote, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, **there is confusion and every evil work**” (James 3:14-16).

Peace requires spiritual mindedness – i.e. a mind that is controlled by the Holy Spirit. “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit **is life and peace**”^{NIV} (Rom 8:6).

In a very practical word, the Spirit admonishes believers to make every effort to do what leads to peace.^{NIV} “Let us therefore follow after the things **which make for peace**” (Rom 14:19). Again, it is written that “God hath called us to peace” (1 Cor 7:15). The Scriptures contrast an assembly in which disruption is occurring with one where peace is being realized among the brethren. “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor 14:33). Further, the “unity of the

Spirit” can only be maintained “in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). Paul admonished the Thessalonians, “Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess 5:13).

This kind of peace is to spill over into all of life. It is something that is to be energetically pursued. “Follow **peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord**” (Heb 12:14). **No child of God is to learn to live with disruption**, but is rather to do everything within their power, and within the boundaries of righteousness to be peaceable. It is written, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, **live peaceably with all men**” (Rom 12:18). A needful word, indeed! Where men fail to extend such an effort, great misery and heartache will follow.

THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE BE WITH YOU

“^{11f} . . . **and the God of love and peace shall be with you.**” Other versions read, “Then the God of love and peace will be with you,”^{NLT} “**And may the God of love and peace be with you,**”^{LIVING} “and the loving peace-giving God will be with you,”^{WILLIAMS} “so shall the God of love and peace be with you,”^{MONTGOMERY} “**and [then] the God of love [Who is the Source of affection, goodwill, love, and benevolence toward men] and the Author and Promoter of peace will be with you,**”^{AMPLIFIED} and “So shall the God of love and peace be ever with you.”^{PHILLIPS}

Those who tell us that God’s love and Presence are unconditional (and they do go together) will have to deal with this word of the Lord. **This is an expression of what necessarily follows doing no evil, doing what is honest, being perfect (or whole), being comforted, being of one mind, and living in peace.** There is a strong incentive held out for those who, in the energy of faith, set out to do such things.

It is **THEN**^{NLT} that “the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

Further affirming the conditionality of Divine acceptance and fellowship, Paul previously said, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; **and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty**” (2 Cor 6:17-18). When “the Spirit of God came upon Azariah,” he went to king Asa and said, “The Lord is with you, **WHILE ye be with Him**” (2 Chron 15:2). That was **not** an application of truth made by a follower of God, but a

word from the unchanging God Himself. **This is not how God USED to be, for God cannot change.** He Himself declares, “*I am the Lord, I change not*” (Mal 3:6). Asa was told of the Divine nature – **how God really is.** Those who contradict the word of Azariah, who spoke when the Spirit of God came upon him, have simply lied. There is not the slightest chance that they are right.

What does this expression mean – “*and the God of love and peace will be with you*”? God is referred to as “*the God peace*” (Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1

Thess 5:23; 13:20). That is, He is the Author of peace – the One through whom peace comes. He is also the God who dwells in peaceful environs – especially when they are found among His people.

Concerning God being “the God of love,” we are told that “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8), and “*love is of God,*” or comes from Him (1 John 4:7).

By saying that the “*God of love and peace*” will be “*with*” them, Paul means that **the qualities of love and peace will be accented among them.** Love

and peace will be abundant in their gatherings, together with all of the graces that come with them: “*brotherly kindness*” (2 Pet 1:7), “*preferring one another*” (Rom 12:10), “*edifying one another*” (1 Thess 5:11), “*forbearing one another*” (Eph 4:2), receiving “*one another*” (Rom 15:7), and “*esteeming*” others better than self (Phil 2:3).

When these traits are found within the church, they confirm that “*God is in you of a truth*” (1 Cor 14:25). Where they are absent, vigorous self examination is required (2 Cor 13:5).

GREET ONE ANOTHER

“¹² **Greet one another with an holy kiss.**”

An institutional setting often causes people to get “lost in the crowd.” The members easily get caught up in the organization while the people become faceless and nameless. Convenient explanations for this condition cannot sanctify its existence. **It is not right for God to set us in the body where it has pleased Him** (1 Cor 12:18), **only to have us become oblivious of that body.**

GREET ONE ANOTHER

“*Greet one another . . .*” Other versions read, “*Salute one another,*”^{ASV} “*Give one another,*”^{BBE} and “*Greet each other.*”^{NLT}

This is more than a mere formality – like greeting people at the door. The greeting is to be given accompanied by an awareness of the real situation.

- These are “*the children of God*” – His “*sons and daughters*” (Rom 8:16; 2 Cor 6:18).
- These are members of “*the whole family in heaven and earth,*” which is named after Christ (Eph 3:15).
- These are people whose names are “*written in heaven*” (Heb 12:23), and are in “*the book of life of the Lamb*” (Phil 4:3; Rev 13:8).

• These are the ones whom Jesus has “*received . . . to the glory of God*” (Rom 15:7).

• As members of the body of Christ, we are “*members one of another*” with these people (Rom 12:5).

• These are our brethren, being “*born of God*” (1 John 5:1).

If God has washed, sanctified, and justified them (1 Cor 6:11), what possible reason can be adduced for failing to greet them? If Jesus has received them, ought not we to greet them? If the Holy Spirit dwells within them, what would hinder us from greeting them? Is anyone right in failing to honor them with a brotherly greeting? The world has rejected them, why would we do the same? They experience oppression from the world, ought they to receive recognition and honor from the saints? **Greet one another!**

A HOLY KISS

“*. . . with an holy kiss.*” Other versions read, “*in Christian love,*”^{NLT} “*warmly in the Lord,*”^{LIVING} “*a sacred kiss,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*a consecrated kiss,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*A handshake all around, please.*”^{PHILLIPS}

The “*holy kiss*” is mentioned four times in Scripture: “*Salute one another with a holy kiss*” (Rom 16:16), “*Greet ye one another with a holy kiss*” (1 Cor

16:20; 2 Cor 13:12), and “*Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss*” (1 Thess 5:26). A “*holy kiss*” is a kiss that is sacred and pure. It is untainted by the flesh, unmixed with the quest for personal advantage, and devoid of any taint of self-gratification. It is driven by a recognition of who the person is, and for the God to whom he or she belongs.

This word could certainly be abused in a hedonistic, or pleasure-seeking society. This is **not** a romantic “*kiss,*” or one which inflames fleshly desires. Nor, indeed, is this a mere ceremony, for nothing in the newness of life promotes empty ritual and mere traditional practices. Without any difficulty, we should be able to eliminate the possibility that Paul is speaking of anything remotely associated with fleshly expression and/or arousal, or lifeless ceremony or routine.

This manner of salutation or greeting is still practiced in the Eastern world. It is not a kiss upon the mouth, but generally upon the cheek. This particular text is not emphasizing the **act** of kissing, but the **manner.** He is not enjoining a physical action but a holy manner. Their culture and custom found all people, saved and unsaved, greeting one another with a kiss. Paul’s point is that the custom must now be sanctified to the Lord, becoming something holy rather than a mere social custom. This seems so obvious to me, I hesitate to say

any more on the subject.

A “kiss” in the East is similar to a handshake in the Western world – a manner of greeting friends. Thus Phillips

translates the text, “A handshake all around” – although he should have said “a HOLY handshake.”

For those who are interested in this from an academic viewpoint, I have included a few words from other resources.

THE “HOLY KISS”

“The customary salutation in the East as a mark of respect or affection (Genesis 27:26; Song 1:2; Luke 7:45); hence the token used by the hypocrite to pretend love (2 Samuel 15:5 Absalom; Matthew 26:48 Judas). The “kiss of charity” or love, “an holy kiss” (pure and chaste), was the pledge of Christian brotherhood (Apostol. Const. 2:57; 8:11) in the early church (Justin Martyr, Apology 1:65), especially at the Lord’s supper, when the kiss was passed through the congregation, the men kissing the men, the women the women (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; Acts 20:37; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). Tertullian calls it (de Orat. 14) “the kiss of peace.” Not a mere conventional salutation, “the mystic kiss” (Clemens Alex. Paedag. 3:11), i.e. symbolizing union in Christ. A kiss was the mark also of reverence and subjection. So Samuel after anointing Saul kissed him (1 Samuel 10:1). Also used in religious “adoration” (derived from the Latin, ad os “to the mouth,” namely, kissing the hand in homage), whether of idols (Job 31:27; 1 Kings 19:18; Hosea 13:2) or of Jehovah (Psalm 2:12).” FAUSSET’S BIBLE DICTIONARY

“Christian salutation is a wishing all temporal, spiritual, and eternal happiness, to one another; and which, as it should be mutual, should be also hearty and sincere, and this is meant by the “holy kiss”; the allusion is to a common custom in most nations, used by friends at meeting or parting, to kiss each other, in token of their hearty love, and sincere affection and friendship for each other; and is called “holy”, to distinguish it from an unchaste and lascivious one; and from an hypocritical and deceitful one, such an one as Joab gave to Amasa, when, inquiring of his health, he took him by the beard to kiss him, and stabbed him under the fifth rib, (2 Samuel 20:9,10); and as Judas, who cried, hail master, to Christ, and kissed him, and betrayed him into the hands of his enemies, (Matthew 26:49). I say, it is an allusion to this custom, for it is only an allusion; the apostle did not mean that any outward action should be made use of, only that their Christian salutations should not be mere complaisance, or expressed by bare words, and outward gestures and actions, either of the hand or mouth; but that they should spring from real love and true friendship, and be without dissimulation, hearty and sincere.” JOHN GILL

ALL THE SAINTS SALUTE YOU

“¹³ All the saints salute you.”

Here again we behold Paul’s way of always making believers aware of the fact the whole body of Christ. **He labors to turn people from the fleshly notion that the world and all of the works of God are focused upon them alone.** Selfishness is born into every person, and begins to evidence itself before a child can walk or talk. Unfortunately, this trait often finds its way into the church. In such a case, the individual, moved by the carnal mind, insists on the attention being focused upon himself, and objecting to what appears to be the neglect of his interests. It is essential that no congregation cater to any such desires among its members. Such conduct is tantamount, or equivalent, to feeding “the flesh” and nurturing “the old man.”

ALL THE SAINTS

“All the saints . . .” Other versions read, “All the holy ones,”^{NAB} “All God’s holy people,”^{NJB} “All the Christians here,”^{NLT} and “All the saints (the people

of God here),”^{AMPLIFIED}

I must admit I do not care for the miserable representation of the New Living Translation and The Living Bible:

This does **not** mean, “Everyone from the church here sends their greetings to every one in the church there.” It does **not** mean, “The holy ones here send greetings to every one in Corinth.” This is

If someone was to address the average church in America and say, “Every one that is holy, stand up!” I cannot imagine a significant percentage of the congregation rising.

“All the Christians.” One can only imagine what that would mean to the average church member in our country. There is no way that the Greek word ἅγιοι (hag-ee-oi) can be translated “Christians.”

Paul has said precisely what he meant: “the saints,” or “the holy ones,” which is the true meaning of the word.

the salutation of one group of holy, separated, and godly people to a similar group in an other place.

This may appear to be something of no consequence, but do not be tempted to think in that way. **Nothing in the Word of God suggests that God’s people are ever considered to be anything but separate from the world – i.e. “Holy.”**

None of them are to be thought of as anything but those who have been delivered from this world, received by Jesus, and reconciled to God – i.e., “saints.”

I acknowledge that this alters the manner in which we look at churches. If someone was to address the average church in America and say, “Every one that is holy, stand up!” I cannot imagine

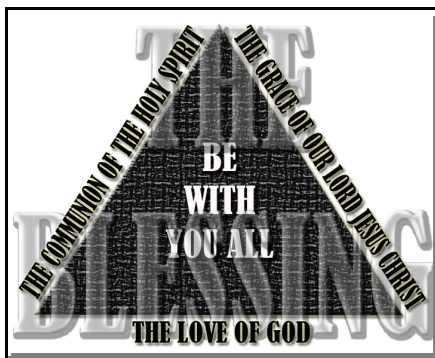
a significant percentage of the congregation rising. **But the truth of the matter is, that the “saints,” or “holy ones” comprise the totality of such a congregation.** Everyone one else is left out of the heavenly count.

SALUTE YOU

“... salute you.” Other versions read, “greet you,”^{NKJV} “send their greetings,”^{NIV} and “send greeting.”^{PHILLIPS}

That is, what you are doing among yourselves – greeting one another with a “holy kiss” – the saints are also doing toward you. They are sending their greetings, recognizing who you are, and receiving you in Christ Jesus. They are joyful about being able to do this, for the word “salute” carries the connotation of joyful acceptance and desiring good. They recognize them as brethren – holy brethren.

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST



Paul’s final benediction is similar to the Aaronic blessing. That was the blessing that God commanded him to confer upon the people. “*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace*” (Num 6:22-26). This was a statement of Divine intent – something that God desired to do. It expressed His heart for Israel, and He commanded Aaron to make the people aware of it.

Similarly, the words that follow are God’s intention for those who are in

Christ Jesus. These are very real experiences for which the saints are to look and fervently seek. Salvation requires the presence of these benefits.

THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

“^{14a} *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . be with you all.*” Other versions read, “*The spiritual blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*The grace (favor and spiritual blessing) of the Lord Jesus Christ,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*The grace that comes through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”^{PHILLIPS}

Ordinarily, we would associate grace with God Himself: “*the grace of God*” (Lk 2:40; Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 15:40; 20:24; Rom 5:15; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor 1:12; 6:1; 8:1; 9:14; Gal 2:21; Eph 3:2,7; Col 1:6; Tit 2:11; Heb 2:9; 12:15; 1 Pet 4:10; 5:12). Here, however, is said to be “*of the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

This same expression was used by Peter when addressing the Jerusalem conference concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles. “*But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they*” (Acts 15:11). John said that Jesus was “*full of grace,*” so we ought to expect Him to be giving it (John 1:17). Paul

frequently said that grace came “*from the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phile 1:3). John did the same (2 John 1:3).

Since Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father, there is no such thing as the experience of the grace of God independently of the Lord Jesus Christ. It all comes THROUGH the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, it comes through our association with Jesus – the fellowship with Him into which God has called us (1 Cor 1:9). As Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, He brings the grace, with which He is filled, with Him. As we “*abide*” in Him (John 15:4,7; 1 John 2:27,28), we gain access to this indispensable grace. **As soon as our link with Jesus weakens because of unbelief, or we begin to be unfruitful branches (John 15:2,6), our experience of grace begins to diminish.** Without that grace it is not possible to stand (Rom 5:2), be taught (Tit 2:11-13), or receive help in the time of need (Heb 4:16).

Let no one take lightly the desire that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ “*be with you.*” His grace speaks of His favor, His preference, and His delight in the individual.

THE LOVE OF GOD

“^{14b} . . . and the love of God . . . be with you all.” Other versions read,

“*and the charity of God,*”^{DOUAY} “*God’s love,*”^{LIVING} and “*the love that is of God*”

“*the Father.*”^{PHILLIPS}

The great heart of the apostle shows forth in the tender expressions of his desires for the Corinthians – by Given O. Blakely

If the love of God was automatically with the people, there would be no need for this intercession. The Corinthians had been conducting themselves a manner that was actually an abomination to God. That kind of comporment moved Him to make several of them sick, and even cause them to die (1 Cor 11:30). This situation grieved the great heart of the Apostle, and therefore he engaged in a great effort to bring them within the circumference of Divine love.

"The love of God," while very real, can be "passed over," or neglected. That is why Jesus said to the Pharisees, "you pass over judgment **and the love of God**" (Luke 11:42). It is not possible to live acceptably, or properly prepare for the day of judgment, without this love. It

must be "**WITH** you." In fact, it has to be "**IN** you." Jesus said to His critics, "**But I know you, that ye have not the love of God **in** you**" (John 5:42). It is not enough to theorize about the love of God – who He loves, when He loves, etc. That love must be "**with you**" and "**in you**" if you are going to survive the coming of the Lord.

This love is "**shed abroad**" in your heart by the Holy Spirit. That is, He brings you into the realization and glorious implications of that love. As it is written, "**And hope maketh not ashamed: because **the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us****" (Rom 5:5). What is more, that love can be perfected, or made complete, in the individual in whom it is found. Thus it is written, "**But whoso**

keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him" (1 John 2:5).

This "**love of God**" is so critical to spiritual life, that is it not possible to conduct our lives properly without it. That is why John wrote, "**But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, **how dwelleth the love of God in him?****" (1 John 3:17).

God has made man so that he desires to be loved. However, through deception, Satan has led all men to seek to obtain that love from someone other than God. In Christ Jesus God's love for man becomes one's fervent desire, answering his deep longing.

THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

^{14c} . . . **and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.**" Other versions read, "**fellowship of the Holy Spirit,**" ^{NASB} "**the harmony of the Holy Spirit,**" ^{BBE} "**the communication of the Holy Spirit,**" ^{DOUAY} "**the Holy Spirit's friendship,**" ^{LIVING} "**the common sharing of the Holy Spirit,**" ^{WILLIAMS} "**fellowship (the communion and sharing together, and participation) in the Holy Spirit,**" ^{AMPLIFIED} and "**the fellowship that is ours in the Holy Spirit.**" ^{PHILLIPS}

Just as surely as one cannot be

the Holy Spirit."

The entire Godhead was involved in the preparation for salvation. The Father planned it (Eph 3:11). The Word volunteered to become flesh and lay down His life (Heb 10:5-9). The Spirit moved the Prophets to prophesy of "**the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow**" (1 Pet 1:11).

The entire Godhead is involved in the accomplishment of the salvation. The Father sent the Son into the world, and

Son laid down His life and took it up again (John 10:17-18). Jesus was anointed with the Holy, who also empowered Him in His ministry (Luke 4:1,18; Matt 12:28).

All of the Godhead is involved in the initial experience of that salvation. The Father gives and the people to Jesus, drawing them to Him (John 6:44,65; 6:39; 17:7,9,11,24). Jesus seeks and saves the lost (Lk 19:10) and teaches the comer of the Father (Matt 11:27). The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11).

The Godhead is also involved in the process of conforming the saints to the image of Christ. The Father dwells within the believer, and His love is with them (1 John 4:16). The Son dwells within the believer, and through Him the grace of God teaches and sustains Him (Eph 3:17). The Holy Spirit also dwells in the believer, leading him in the mortification of the flesh (Rom 8:13), and fellowshiping with him.

THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now Paul especially commends them to the "**fellowship of the Spirit.**" This is more than the Spirit secretly

The Godhead is also involved in the process of conforming the saints to the image of Christ. The Father dwells within the believer, and His love is with them (1 John 4:16). The Son dwells within the believer, and through Him the grace of God teaches and sustains Him (Eph 3:17). The Holy Spirit also dwells in the believer, leading him in the mortification of the flesh (Rom 8:13), and fellowshiping with him.

saved without "**the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**" and "**the love of God,**" so it is impossible without the "**communion of**

upheld Him as He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (1 John 4:14; Isa 41:10). The

working upon on, or working in an unintelligent manner with us, as some are inclined to believe He does. This is a very real “*communion*,” or “*fellowship*” in which the Holy Spirit becomes a part of our lives. He witnesses to our spirit that

we are “*the children of God*” (Rom 8:16). He leads us in the subjugation of sinful tendencies (Rom 8:13). He sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Rom 5:5). He even causes us to “*abound in hope*” (Rom 15:13). He also makes intercession for us

when we do not know what we ought to pray for (Rom 8:26-27). All of this, and more, is involved in “*the communion of the Holy Spirit*.” This is not a luxury, but a necessity. The nature and demands of spiritual life require this “*communion*.”

AMEN

“^{14d} **Amen.**” Other versions read, “*Paul*,” ^{LIVING} and “*Amen (so be it)*,” ^{AMPLIFIED}

indeed, it is true,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} and “certainty.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

ultimate reality – the One who **is**: “*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*” (Rev 1:8).

The word “*Amen*” is pregnant with meaning. The word itself is a transliteration – changing the Greek letters to English letters, in place of translating the word itself. It comes from the Greek word ἀμήν (am-ane). Some of its meanings include the following: “faithful, surely, of a truth, most assuredly, so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled,” ^{THAYER} “this is indeed true,, that is the way it should be,” ^{FRIBERG} “truly, indeed,” ^{UBS} “strong affirmation of what is declared, truly,

When you consider that “*Amen*” is a term that Jesus applied to Himself, you come to realize something of its largeness and importance. “*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith THE AMEN, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God*” (Rev 3:14). Jesus, then, is the embodiment of all that this word means: faithful, true, surety, and certainty. He is the ultimate man – what man **should be**. He is the

What, then, has Paul said in this “*Amen!*” He has testified to the truth of everything He has said – his commendations, rebukes, testimonies, and promises. His heart really yearns for their perfection. He really will deal with those who have sinned and not repented. He really does desire their perfection and blessing. It is all the unvarnished truth!

CONCLUSION

We have completed our journey through the second epistle to the Corinthians. It has been painful to see what happens to a church when it is presented with “*another Jesus*,” “*another Spirit*,” and “*another gospel*.” However, it has been refreshing to see the lengths to which a man of faith will go to rescue drifting souls.

than they all” (1 Cor 15:10), and had received unparalleled insights into the mysteries of the Kingdom (2 Cor 12:1-7). This is a person whom Christ “*counted faithful, putting*” him “*into the ministry*” and entrusting him with insights that were directly vouchsafed to precious few people (1 Tim 1:12; Eph 3:2-7). Here was a servant of Christ who suffered unequalled persecution and hardship (2 Cor 6:4-10; 11:23-28). **How does a man**

fallen backward, come to malign him, and denied some of his pivotal teaching? Here are some things that we have seen.

- ☛ He is willing to spend and be spent for them (2 Cor 12:15a).
- ☛ He will love them more, even though they love him less (2 Cor 12:15b).
- ☛ He will forgo ministering to heathen nations in order to bring them to repentance and spiritual maturity (2 Cor 2:12-13).
- ☛ He will boldly confront their sin (2 Cor 7:8; 10:11-12).
- ☛ He will show where his critics have been wrong (2 Cor 11:13-18).
- ☛ He will refuse remuneration in order that his work be not hindered (2 Cor 11:9-10).
- ☛ He will clearly identify the source of

We have read of a man filled with

We have read of a man filled with the Spirit, who “labored more abundantly than they all.” . . . How does a man like this minister to a church that has fallen backward, come to malign him, and denied some of his pivotal teaching?

the Spirit, who “*labored more abundantly*

like this minister to a church that has

their trouble (2 Cor 11:4).

- He will threaten those who insist on remaining in their sin (2 Cor 13:2).
- He will tell them of the power of the weaponry he may have to use against them (2 Cor 10:4-5).
- He will express his joy over the progress they have made (2 Cor

7:11).

- He will tell them of his desire for them (2 Cor 11:2-3; 13:7-14).

We have witnessed how the Holy Spirit moves a person to deal with sin, advancement in Christ Jesus, spiritual retardation, neglect, and criticism. We have seen how he summons workers to assist in a sensitive project, carefully

guarding a sensitive project in godly wisdom, lest any reproach be brought upon good people and a good work (2 Cor 12:18).

I trust that your own heart has been stirred to seek faith, wisdom, and strength from God to conduct yourself properly when you face trials – all the while seeking to bring advantages to the church for which Jesus died.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 4/28/2006. In this session, we will begin a new series of lessons of THE BOOK OF ACTS. Our first text will be verses one through five of chapter one: **“INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS.”** This is one of two books written by Luke, the “beloved physician.” He was a frequent companion of Paul, and especially trustworthy. Additionally, he was endowed with a “perfect understanding” of the things regarding the Lord Jesus and the nature and outworking of spiritual life. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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