

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

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

SECOND CORINTHIANS

✠ II CORINTHIANS

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

Lesson # 1

COMMENTARY ON: 1:1-2

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."

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

In Christ Jesus we are summoned into an arena of fierce competition and warfare. We are in an alienated and hostile world that dominated by the wicked one. Because of this circumstance, a strong faith is essential. One of the fundamental purposes of the Epistles is the strengthening of both faith and hope, thereby enabling the saints to live soberly and righteously in this present world. This becomes very evident to us from the opening of this marvelous Epistle. In this lesson, considerable time will be spent acquainting us with Paul. Within the context of that introduction, the contents of the letter become quite clear. Paul faithfully executing his office of Apostle from the heart, and with effectiveness.

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 1



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, 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, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

“ 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: 2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” ^{KJV} (2 Corinthians 1:1-2)

INTRODUCTION

The book of Second Corinthians is a sequel to First Corinthians. It contains a response to the manner in which the Corinthians received his first Epistle, which response was, in some respects commendable. However, there were also some unfavorable responses to Paul himself, and in this Epistle he deals with them. Some continued to question his Apostleship and right to correct them. All of this is done in strict keeping with the purpose of Paul's call into the

Apostleship.

PAUL'S COMMISSION

In both of the Corinthian Epistles the care of Paul for the churches is very evident. He had been commissioned by Jesus to go to the Gentiles in order 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). As is evident throughout his Epistles, this ministry was not confined to the initial conversion of the Gentiles. His commission was also carried out in stabilizing those who believed the record God has given of His Son. This is especially made clear in his letter to the Colossians, whom Paul had not seen at the time of its writing. There he affirms that he was made a minister for them – even though they were, at the time, converted: “Whereof I am made a

CONTENTS

- THE CHURCH AT CORINTH
- THE TIME OF WRITING
- WHAT OCCASIONED THIS EPISTLE
- THE AUTHOR AND HIS COLABORER (1:1a)
- THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH IS AT CORINTH (1:1b)
- WITH ALL THE SAINTS WHICH ARE IN ALL ACHAIA (1c)
- GRACE BE TO YOU (2a)
- PEACE BE TO YOU (2b)
- FROM GOD OUR FATHER (2c)
- AND FROM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (2d)

minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to **me for you, to fulfil the word of God**" (Col 1:25). The NASb reads, "*Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God*" (Col 1:25). Paul's instruction of the Colossians, therefore, whom he did not convert, was involved in carrying his commission to go to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; 26:17).

Because of the criticality of this point, it is necessary to briefly elaborate its significance.

Opening the Eyes

The opening of the eyes is not fulfilled in the new birth alone. It is also fulfilled when "*the eyes of our understanding*" are enlightened so men may "*know the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe*" (Eph 1:18-19). The Epistles, therefore, fulfill part of Paul's commission, just as surely as "*teaching them*" fulfills part of the commission Jesus gave the twelve prior to ascending into glory: "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the*

Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Mat 28:19-20). Teaching was a necessary part of his ministry.

Much, if not the majority, of Paul's writings is devoted to clarifying matters that had become obscure to those whose eyes were once "*opened*." The use of such words as "*remember*" (Eph 2:11; 2 Thess 2:5; 2 Tim 2:8), and "*remembrance*" (1 Tim 4:6) show that truth can be forgotten. His employment of words like "*understand*" (1 Cor 12:3; Eph 3:4), "*comprehend*" (Eph 3:18) accent the role of edification in the Divine economy. Frequently Paul would write in order that the saints might "*know*" (1 Cor 2:12; Eph 1:18). Helping men to see the truth was part of his ministry.

Ponder the great truths Paul opened up to those who were in Christ Jesus. These expositions fulfilled the commission that was given to him, and were expressions of his apostleship.

- The sinfulness of man (Rom 1:19-3:18).
- The imputation of righteousness (Rom 4:1-25).
- The purpose and effectiveness of Christ's death (Rom 5:1-10).
- Baptism into Christ (Rom 6:1-17).
- Nature of inner warfare (Rom 7:15-25).
- The liabilities of the flesh (Rom 8:1-14).
- The purpose of God for the Jews (Rom 9-11).

- The nature of love (1 Cor 13).
- The distinction of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:1-18).
- The resurrection body (2 Cor 5:1-8).
- The nature of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21).
- The purpose of the Law (Gal 3-4).
- The nature of Christ's humiliation (Phil 2:5-9).
- The coming of the Lord (1 Thess 4:14-18); 2 Thess 1:7-10).

This brief sampling confirms that opening the eyes involves more than our initial conversion. I do not believe the modern church has done well in this aspect of ministry. There is an inordinate degree of spiritual ignorance extant in the professing church.

From the Power of Satan Unto God

When men are born again, they are delivered from the power of darkness, snatched from the power of Satan, and turned toward God. However, they are not delivered from all of Satan's wiles. They must now "*resist the devil*," standing in "*the evil day*" (1 Pet 5:8; Eph 6:13), and remaining "*steadfast in the faith*" (1 Pet 5:9). The "*doctrine of Christ*" is calculated to assist us in this endeavor.

The Epistles frequently dealt with people who had fallen into the snare of the devil AFTER they were baptized into Christ.

- Divisions in Corinth (1 Cor 1:10-11).
- The fornicator at Corinth (1 Cor 5:1-12).

When men are born again, they are delivered from the power of darkness, snatched from the power of Satan, and turned toward God. However, they are not delivered from all of Satan's wiles. They must now "resist the devil," standing in "the evil day"

- Flawed conduct at the Lord's table (1 Cor 11:20-22).
- The Galatians reversion to the Law (Gal 3:1-24).
- The Colossians subjection to regimented teachings that were more related to lifeless law than newness of life (Col 2:16-23).
- Disorderly brethren in Thessalonica (2 Thess 3:6-11).

These, and a host of other texts, confirm the need for the ongoing ministry of turning men from the power of Satan unto God. From the standpoint of

glorious inheritance (Col 1:12). His elaborations include expositions of reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12), being forever with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17), being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17).

Summation

These various expositions had to do with Paul being the "Apostle to the Gentiles." The tutoring of those translated in to the kingdom of God's dear Son was integral to his commission. If this is not seen, the weight of this Epistle will be missed.

I am persuaded that there is a general disinterest in the teaching

and the life. He has not targeted the youthful generation, political parties, and the likes. Rather, Jesus Himself has revealed the objective of Satan's efforts. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17). The dragon is the devil himself: "the great dragon . . . that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev 12:9). The specific people against whom, his initiative has been launched are those "who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."^{NASB}

Those who neglect the body of Christ, therefore, have, by that very act, given a certain advantage to the devil. Paul was NOT in that number. He sought to strengthen and build up the saints, knowing the designs of the wicked one.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE EPISTLES

In my judgment, believers should all become experts in handling the message of the Epistles. That, of course, does not suggest a neglect of any other part of the Word. However, the Epistles are especially tailored for those who are in Christ Jesus. With the exception of First and Second Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, none of them were written to individuals alone – and even those written to individuals were not intended to be confined to them. None of the letters were intended only for a segment of the body of Christ. Yet, you will be hard pressed to find a single body of believers who are not sorely lacking in an understanding of Apostolic doctrine.

All manner of theological bypaths have been introduced to occupy the minds of the saints. It is not unusual to find whole churches who have given themselves over to the study of a book that has been written by one of their peers. In fact, whole church programs have been formed around such studies. Whatever good may appear to come from such endeavors, there is little evidence that it has resulted in the kind of growth that God Himself has ordained and required. Most of these efforts have to do with the development of habits, and are more akin to the ceremonies of the Law than newness of life in Christ Jesus.

I am persuaded that there is a general disinterest in the teaching of Paul because of the climate that has been created by erroneous religious emphases.

potentiality, this occurs once. However, from the experiential viewpoint, it continues as long as we are in this world.

Receiving Forgiveness

Although the conscience is purged initially (Heb 9:14), it can again be defiled with the guilt of sin. Forgiveness is not only "for the sins that are past" (Rom 3:25). It is also held out to any child of God who confesses the sin into which they have fallen. This is assured in Paul's teaching about restoring a brother overtaken in a fault (Gal 6:1). It is also held forth to those who recover themselves from the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him, at his will (2 Tim 2:24-26).

An Inheritance

Here is a matter that is frequently expounded by the Apostle. He distinguishes the inheritance in Christ from one that is by Law (Gal 3:18). He also affirms that in Christ we have been predestinated to obtain an inheritance (Eph 1:11). He assures believers that God has qualified them to be a partaker of this

of Paul because of the climate that has been created by erroneous religious emphases.

When the thrust of the church is "evangelism," it at once falls into a snare. With that emphasis comes the notion that when a person is baptized into Christ, **most** of the change required has already taken place. But this is not the case. We are "being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit"^{NRSV} (2 Cor 3:18). **The burden of transformation takes place following the new birth, just as the majority of human growth takes place following the natural birth.** Apostolic doctrine has to do with the growing up into Christ in all things, or being conformed to the image of God's Son, which is His predetermined purpose (Rom 8:29).

SATAN'S INITIATIVE

It is ever be remembered that the target of Satan's current initiative is not the heathen of the world. It is not the world of drug addicts, drunkards, harlots,

The Epistles contain teachings that deal with various intrusions into the church – intrusions fostered by the devil himself. In dealing with those impositions, the Epistles also contain affirmations, promises, and various incentives that are essential to spiritual productivity and the maintenance of newness of life, as well as overcoming the wicked one. **Their purpose is not to establish a certain routine or procedure that is superior, and thus is guaranteed to make the doer acceptable to God.** It was the intrusive and flawed doctrines of false teachers that offered such an approach to God, and were thus soundly condemned by the Apostles.

SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

These observations have led me to several conclusions. They will bear directly upon the manner in which I approach this book.

1. The teaching of the Epistles, in particular the one with which we will be dealing, is not primarily to meet local needs. To be sure, local needs were being met by the letter sent to them. However, there was a greater context than their circumstances. Paul had not been made an Apostle to answer problems of local assemblies. Rather, it was to open men's eyes, turn them from darkness to light, turn them from the power of Satan unto God, enable them to receive the forgiveness of sins, and the inheritance enjoyed by those who are sanctified by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). His answers were primarily tailored to address these matters, and thus are relevant to all generations.

2. The teaching of the Epistles did not reflect the culture of local societies. There is a strain of teaching that suggests many Apostolic teachings were nothing more than an adaption to the culture of the certain times and places. However, this cannot be, for it does not relate to being turned from Satan to God, receiving forgiveness, or enjoying an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith. If Paul did approach matters from the standpoint of culture, he would have departed from his calling. Salvation is set within the context of culture. In fact, a point is made of the

fact that in Christ *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female"*(Gal 3:28) – all of which are aspects of culture.

3. All Satanic efforts are devoted to negating Divine objectives. It must be seen that Satan's designs are to keep men under his power, prohibit them from receiving forgiveness, and stop them from receiving the appointed inheritance. Every false

every place people are enamored of issues relating to this world, the blessings of redemption are invariably thrust into the background of consideration.

THE PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE

The Spirit informs us that the purpose of *"all Scripture"* is *"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim 3:17). This is accomplished by means of *"doctrine, reproof, correction, and*

The Epistles contain teachings that deal with various intrusions into the church – intrusions fostered by the devil himself. In dealing with those impositions, the Epistles also contain affirmations, promises, and various incentives that are essential to spiritual productivity and the maintenance of newness of life, as well as overcoming the wicked one.

doctrine is calculated to accomplish these objectives. Every disruption of the people of God is designed to rob them of these benefits. Satan transforms himself into an *"angel of light"* in order to achieve these aims (2 Cor 11:14). His cast and divers army of *"ministers"* transform themselves into *"ministers of righteousness"* to accomplish these ends (2 Cor 11:15).

Whether it is dividing the people of God, setting them against each other, or promoting immortality among them, it all is designed to separate the people from the benefits of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. Whether it is questioning the validity of Paul's Apostleship, or the reality of the resurrection of the dead, the purpose is to deny men the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel.

Issues in the body of Christ cannot be viewed as mere academic considerations. They are not the reflections of simple differences of opinion. The old serpent is behind them all. By means of these "issues" he is endeavoring to minimize being turned to God, receiving forgiveness, and participating in the inheritance God has prepared for those who love Him. You should note with care that any place and

instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). This, in turn, is described as being made *"wise unto salvation"* (2 Tim 3:15).

As we delve into the words of this Epistle, it is imperative that we keep these things in mind. The things of which the Apostle will speak relate to salvation. **They have to do with being turned from the power of Satan unto God. They are associated with receiving the forgiveness of sins, and the inheritance that is given to those who are sanctified by faith.**

When we are exposed to doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, it is in order that we ourselves may be made *"perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* **If, to some measurable degree, these objectives are realized, we will have profited from these studies.**

And now, may the Lord give you understanding as we launch the boat of learning into the waters of Second Corinthians. We will experience some depths that will yield great refreshment. May you find this a fruitful field indeed.

THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

THE CIRCUMSTANCES

Paul had been forced to leave Thessalonica, where the Jews had



gathered a company,” and set the whole city “on an uproar.” They caused the people and rulers of the city to be “troubled.” As a result, “the brethren sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea.” The people there received the Word of God “with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” However, when the Jews got word that the Word of God was preached also in Berea, “they came hither also, and stirred up the people.” As a result, “immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were by sea: but Silas and Timotheus” remained in Berea. From there, “they that conducted Paul brought him to Athens.” Paul then gave them a commandment for Silas and Timotheus “to come to him with all speed.” Receiving the commandment, they then departed (Acts 17:1-15).

While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timotheus, “his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” As a result, he “disputed [or reasoned] in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market place with them that met him.” In that whole process, “certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him.” Struck by what appeared to them to be a most novel teaching, they responded, “What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the

resurrection” (Acts 17:18). They then took Paul, and brought him to the Areopagus, the highest court in Athens. There, as though putting on trial what Paul was saying they asked, “And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean” (Acts 17:16-20). We are told that they did not do this out of a genuine interest in what Paul was preaching: “For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). It was then that Paul made his great defense of the God of heaven, the purpose for living, and man’s ultimate accountability to Christ (Acts 17:22-31). The result was that “when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter” (Acts 17:32). Paul then departed from among them.

We are told that “certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (Acts 17:34). However, this did not appear to be sufficient reason for Paul to remain in that area. Therefore, “he departed from Athens, and came to Corinth,” which was approximately forty to fifty miles away. It is understood that he went by boat on the Mediterranean Sea. At this point, Silas and Timothy had still not joined him.

PAUL ARRIVES IN CORINTH

Having arrived in Corinth, he immediately sought out some brethren. He “found a certain Jew named Aquila,” born in Pontus, with his wife Priscilla. Coincidentally, some of the Jews who were converted on the day of Pentecost were from “Pontus” (Acts 2:9). We are told the reason for Aquila and Priscilla’s presence in Corinth. It was because Claudius Caesar had “commanded all Jews to depart from Rome” (Acts 18:2). Little is known of this expulsion. It is briefly mentioned by a Roman historian, Suetonius: “he expelled the Jews from Rome, who were constantly exciting tumults under their leader,

Chrestus.” Life of Claudius, Chap 25

For the first time, we are apprised of how Paul was making his living. He was a “tentmaker.” We know very little about this aspect of Paul’s life. An indirect reference to it is made in the twentieth chapter of Acts, at which time he was leaving the brethren in Ephesus, where he had “ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears,” for a period of three years (Acts 20:35). In his first letter to the Corinthians he also said he had “no certain dwelling place,” and was noted for his labor, “working with our own hands” (1 Cor 4:11-12). He also reminded the Thessalonians that he had labored night and day that he would not be “chargeable,” or burdensome, to any of them (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8-9).

Upon arriving in Corinth, he found that Aquila and Priscilla were “of the same craft” as himself, and thus joined with them in “their occupation” (Acts 18:3).

ACTIVITY IN THE SYNAGOGUE

While in Corinth, Paul “reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath,” persuading “the Jews and the Greeks” (Acts 18:4). The truth of the Gospel had no charged his spirit that he could not, and would not, keep silence.

Before long, Silas and Timotheus came to him from Macedonia. Upon their arrival, we are told that Paul “was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:5). This stirred an antagonistic spirit in the Jews. It is said of them, “resisted and blasphemed” Paul. Their resistance was so pronounced that Paul responded, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6).

JUSTUS AND CRISPUS

Paul immediately departed from those people, and entered into the house of a man named Justus. We are told that this man “worshiped God,” and his house was next to the synagogue. His influence quickly spread, and “Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the

Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:7-8).

Although Paul had met with much resistance, and only a remnant had accepted his message, the conversion of Crispus and “many of the Corinthians” must have been a most refreshing thing to the Apostle.

THE LORD SPEAKS TO PAUL

Following this, the Lord spoke to Paul “in the night by a vision.” His words were refreshing and to the point. “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: **for I have much people in this city**” (Acts 18:9-10).

The result was that Paul “continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (Acts 18:11).

AN INSURRECTION

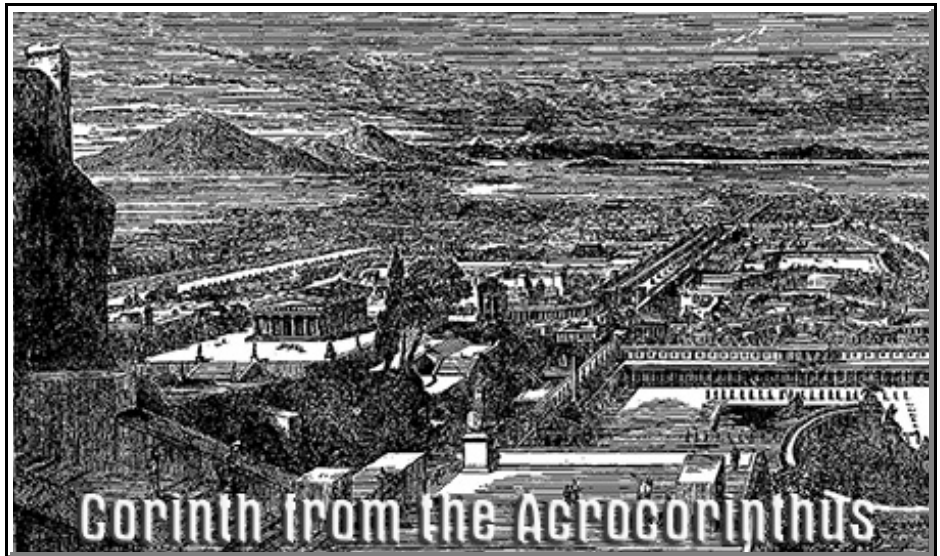
During the time that followed, the Jews continued to cause trouble. Finally they “made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat” of Gallio, who was the “deputy,” or proconsul “of Achaia.” They leveled a charge against Paul saying, “This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.”

When Paul was about to speak in his own defense, Gallio, detecting the fraudulent manner of the Jews, spoke to them. “If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.” He then drove them from the judgment seat (Acts 18:14-16).

The Greeks responded by taking Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beating him before the judgment seat. It is written that “Gallio cared for none of those things” (Acts 18:17). It was a shameful display of hardheartedness.

PAUL CONTINUES A GOOD WHILE

Following this uncomely event, Paul continued in the same area “yet a good while,” or “for a considerable time”^{NIV} Then, perceiving it was time to leave,



he “took his leave of the brethren, and sailed to Assyria,” taking Aquila and Priscilla with him (Acts 18:18).

This is what we know about the birth of the church in Corinth. It was founded in the midst of trouble and controversy, with Paul providing his own living as he worked together with Aquila and Priscilla. Not only were the Jew aligned against him, but many of the Greeks were as well. Yet, in that very place, the Lord testified to Paul that He has “much people.” Faithful to his calling, Paul remained their for over one and a half years, testifying of Christ, baptizing people into Christ, and grounding the people in the truth. During that time the Lord restrained any one from harming him, as he continued to powerfully testify that Jesus was the Christ. The Lord had provided a minister for the many people in that city that belonged to Him. This is something the Lord is faithful to do, even when circumstances do not appear favorable (1 Cor 3:5). I would call that a good beginning that should have been filled with many advantages.

A PROBLEMATIC CHURCH

The church at Corinth is distinguished from all other churches by its undue exaltation of spiritual gifts. They seem to have superceded the office of bishop or elder, which was most unusual. Although there is a segment of Christendom that hold up Corinth as the pattern for spiritual endowments, no such veneration can be found in Scripture. Far

from being the example of the ideal congregation, it is clearly set forth as a premier example of the flesh overriding nearly the whole of the church. While some have led us to suppose that the presence of spiritual gifts, such as those mentioned in Corinth, are the secret to a stable and godly church, Corinth is known for being carnal and walking as men (1 Cor 3:3). To say the least, this was a problematic church, as is most evident in Paul’s first Epistle. This was in spite of its noble beginnings. It is apparent to me that rather than impacting its surroundings, the decadent culture around it had actually penetrated the church itself.

After exposure to the preaching of Paul for more than one and a half years, such things as the credibility of the resurrection of the dead, and Paul’s own Apostleship were still held in question by some within this assembly. Therefore, First Corinthians was characterized by spiritual sternness. We will find some of that in Second Corinthians also. To say the least, we are not dealing with an ideal church – certainly not one that is intended to be a pattern for churches throughout the ages. Those who see this church as a pattern are misled, and betray a fundamental ignorance of the nature of the New Covenant. I will address this matter more fully under the heading, “What Occasioned this Epistle.”

THE CITY OF CORINTH

Corinth was a Grecian city,

situated on the isthmus which joined Peloponnesus to the continent of Greece, between the Ionian and Aegean seas. A majestic rock rose above it, on which was the Acrocorinthus, or citadel – a fortress that dominated Corinth. The city, because of its situation, storage center for shipments from Asia to Italy. It also was a center for land movement from the North to the South. From history, it appears to have been a peaceful environ, with the spirit of freedom being very prominent.

Prior to the time covered by this Epistle, the city had been rebuilt as a colony of Rome, and populated with freedmen from Rome. It quickly became a great and wealthy city, and was made the seat of government for Roman proconsuls in Southern Greece, and was the capital of Achaia. The temple of Venus was

prominent in the city, and was noted for its wealth. It was also known for supplying harlots to numerous merchants there under the guise of religion.

The immorality of Corinth was prominent, even in the pagan world. This was so much the case that the word “corinthianize” was a proverb for being wanton, or promiscuous. The worship of Venus was prominent in Corinth. Here temple was on the Acrocorinthus, and was attended by the maintenance of one thousand female slaves, for the serve of strangers journeying through the city. ^{FAUSSET} It has a large and mixed population – over 600,000 – of Romans, Greeks, and Jews.

The Epistles to the Corinthians provide a sort of index of the kind of liabilities churches face that are surrounded by a well known and decadent

society. There are places that are seats, or thrones, of Satan (Rev 2:13). Corinth appears to be one. Frequent references are made to local evils, which indicate the danger of their influence (1 Cor 5:11; 6:9-10; 8:5). There is also reference to the propensity to employ mere oratory in speaking of eternal things – something that was venerated among the Greeks (1 Cor 2:1,4; 4:19; 2 Cor 10:10; 11:6). There is also reference to the Grecians undue exaltation of wisdom (1 Cor 1:22).

As we are exposed to Paul’s writings, particularly in his letters to the Corinthians, we must be alert to perceive these dangers. Paul deals a blow to a certain way of thinking that had become prominent among the Corinthians. **It had moved them to reject his Apostleship, and allow carnal ways to enter among them.**

THE TIME OF ITS WRITING

EMINENT MEN LIVING AT THE TIME THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN

L. Annaeus Seneca, the Stoic philosopher and poet, son of M. Annaeus Seneca, the rhetorician; born about the commencement of the Christian era, and put to death about A. D. 65. – Annaeus Cornutus, the Stoic philosopher, and preceptor to Persius the satirist; flourished under Nero. – Lucan, nephew to Seneca the philosopher; born about A. D. 29, put to death about A. D. 65. – Andromachus of Crete, a poet, and Nero’s physician. – T. Petronius Arbiter, of Massilia, died A. D. 66. – Aulus Persius Flaccus, the Latin poet, of Volaterrae in Italy; died in the ninth year of the reign of Nero, aged 28. – Dioscorides, the physician; the age in which this physician lived is very uncertain. – Justus, of Tiberias, in Palestine. – Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian; born A. D. 37, died A. D. 93. – Silius Italicus, the poet who was several times consul; born about A. D. 23, died in the beginning of the reign of Trajan, aged 75. – Valerius Flaccus, the Latin poet; flourished under Vespasian. – C. Plinius Secundus, of Verona, born under Tiberius, flourished under Vespasian, and died under Titus, A. D. 79, aged 56. – Thraseus Paetus, the Stoic philosopher, famous for his independence and generous sentiments; slain by order of Nero, A. D. 66. – Quintius Curtius Rufus, the historian; the time when he flourished is uncertain, some placing him under Claudius, others under Vespasian, and other under Trajan. – Asconius Pedianus, the historian and annotator, died A. D. 76, aged 85. – Marcus Valerius Martialis, the epigrammatist; born about A. D. 29, died A. D. 104, aged 75. – Philo-Byblius, born about A. D. 53, died A. D. 133, aged 80. – Acusilaus, the rhetorician; flourished under Galba. – Afer, an orator and preceptor of Quintilian, died A. D. 59. – Afranius, the satirist, put to death by Nero, in the Pisonian conspiracy. – Marcus Aper, a Latin orator of Gaul, died A. D. 85. – Babilus, the astrologer, who caused the Emperor Nero to put all the leading men of Rome to death. – C. Balbillus, the historian of Egypt; flourished under Nero. – P. Clodius Quirinalis, the rhetorician, flourished under Nero. – Fabricus, the satirist; flourished under Nero. – Decius Junius Juvenalis, the satirist; born about A. D. 29, died A. D. 128, aged about 100 years. – Longinus, the lawyer, put to death by Nero. – Plutarch, the biographer and moralist; born about A. D. 50, died about A. D. 120, or A. D. 140, according to others. – Polemon, the rhetorician, and master of Persius the celebrated satirist, died in the reign of Nero. – Seleucus, the mathematician, intimate with the Emperor Vespasian. – Servilius Nonianus, the Latin historian; flourished under Nero. – Caius Cornelius Tacitus, the celebrated Roman historian; born in the reign of Nero, and died at an advanced age in the former part of the second century. ^{ADAM CLARKE}

This Epistle was apparently written from Macedonia, as indicated by the manner in which Paul spoke in 8:1-14 and 9:2-4. Other references to Macedonia include 1:16, 2:13, 7:5, and 11:9. It is also apparent that it was delivered to Corinth by Titus (8:16-18,23; 12:18). If these assumptions are correct, the letter was probably written about one year after the first Epistle – a period of time he refers to in 8:10 and 9:2. Paul had left Ephesus, the place from which the first Epistle was written (1 Cor 16:8), traveled to Troaz (Acts 16:8), and from there was called into

Macedonia (Acts 16:9). There Titus had joined Paul, and informed him of the response of the Corinthians to his first Epistle (2 Cor 7:13-14).

Two possible dates are suggested for the time of writing: 56 and 60. I will defer to the first date, roughly 56-57, which is generally acceptable to all. That makes it a little over two and one-half years from the founding of the church in Corinth, which was sufficient time for it to be grounded in the truth, seeing it was personally fed by Paul for the first one

and one-half years. This is also about thirty-six years after Christ’s ascension, and about twenty-nine years after Paul’s conversion. I give these dates to show how rapidly the truth spread following the day of Pentecost. Beginning with only a handful of people, it has filled Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. It had spread to Syria, Asia, and Greece – largely under the efforts of a single man. The Gospel had penetrated citadels of idolatry, immortality, philosophy, and governmental excellence. It had battered down walls raised by each of those

divisions, gathering together Jew and Gentile, bond and free, and male and female from all kinds of cultures – and it had all happened in less than forty years! This is undeniable confirmation of the power of the Gospel.

At the beginning of this section, I have provided a listing of world-eminent men that lived at the time this Epistle was written. Many of them exercised very much influence within the city of Corinth. They include categories of men that remain influential to this very day.

Among them were poets, philosophers, rhetoricians, physicians, historians, politicians, astrologers, satirists, lawyers, biographers, and moralists. These were not misfits in the society of the day, but were largely responsible for shaping the culture of that time. Yet, from within the very culture they dominated, there arose a diminutive Jewish man who lacked any of the credentials with whom they were associated. He came with a message they had never heard before, and that sharply conflicted with the entire thrust of their way of thinking and reasoning. His

message was so powerful it shook down bastions of thought that they had erected, and severed the very root that fed the branches of their thinking.

From the standpoint of culture and human wisdom, this letter was written *“out of season.”* From the standpoint of the Divine agenda, it was written *“in season.”* This was not the time, and Corinth was not the place for the questioning of Paul’s Apostleship. The establishment of souls in the faith hinged on people words being powerfully spoken.

WHAT OCCASIONED THIS EPISTLE?

SOME BACKGROUND

This second Epistle will deal with some matters addressed in first Epistle to the Corinthians. A brief understanding of this is necessary if we are to receive the optimum benefit from letter. **When doctrinal error and carnal manners are introduced into the body of Christ, a most dangerous situation ensues.** While Paul’s first letter dealt directly with these matters, they had not been altogether resolved.

As I review a few of these matters,

(1 Corinthians 1:10-14; 3:3-5; 11:18)

After Paul had left Corinth, word came to him from “the house of Chloe” that divisions were present in Corinth. Such a circumstance was wholly unacceptable. Therefore Paul besought them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that they all *“speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions”* among them (1 Cor 1:10). These divisions were more precisely described as *“contentions,”* or *“quarrels”*^{NKJV} among them (1 Cor 1:11). A spirit of competition was found among them, rather that the

themselves by his name (1 Cor 1:12b-13).

This division had caused them to be *“carnal,”* and *“walk as men.”* It had spawned all manner of envying, strife, and division among them (1 Cor 3:3). Their insistence on calling themselves by various names confirmed that they were *“carnal”* (1 Cor 3:4). Such a condition is forthrightly condemned by the Spirit, for *“to be carnally minded is death”* (Rom 8:6). The reason for this circumstance is that the carnal mind *“is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed can be”* (Rom 8:7). I hardly see how a condition could be any more serious than this.

The gravity of this division was confirmed in their conduct around the Lord’s table. Instead of that occasion being a focal point for uniting them, it proved to only accent their despicable division. *“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper”* (1 Cor 11:18-20).

Immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-11)

Within the framework of division, all manner of sin can break forth. That is because “the unity of the Spirit” is a sort of insulation against the intrusion of immorality. As we are *“members one of*

As I review a few of these matters, it will become evident to you that the modern church has actually learned to live with the conditions for which Corinth was rebuked.

it will become evident to you that the modern church has actually learned to live with the conditions for which Corinth was rebuked. In some cases, they have even been dignified, as though life in Christ Jesus allowed their presence among the people of God. However, these matters cannot be allowed to continue. They must be torn down by the spiritual weaponry the Lord as given to us (2 Cor 10:4-5).

Divisions

“unity of the Spirit” into which they had been called. At least four different groups had formed, choosing to call themselves after *“Paul,” “Apollos,” “Cephas,”* and *“Christ”* (1 Cor 1:12a).

Paul contends that Christ was not *“divided,”* and thus division was wholly unwarranted. Paul had not been crucified for them, and therefore it was not appropriate to call themselves after him. They had not been baptized in the name of Paul, and thus could not call

another” (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25), there is a ministration that passes from Jesus the Head through the members to one another (Eph 4:15-16). When this unity is not present, the door is opened for sin to enter.

At Corinth, a man was found who “had his father’s wife.” This was a sin so base, that was even despised by the Gentiles, who know not God (1 Cor 5:1). Instead of the church mourning the very presence of this condition, they were actually “puffed up,” or “arrogant.”^{NASB} They were proud of their gifted and flourishing church, even though there was grievous sin among them. Paul chides them, saying they should have mourned and lamented, and thrust the offender from their presence (1 Cor 5:2).

They were then solemnly instructed to come together with his own spirit, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and with the “power of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and “deliver” this man to “Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:3-4). They were not told to counsel the man, restore the man, or be patient with him. The reason was that he had a leavening effect upon the entire congregation, like Achan did upon Israel (Josh 8:25-26). They could not serve Christ while he was among them. The “old leaven” had to be cast out (1 Cor 5:7).

This incident is relevant to our study of this book, because Paul will make some extensive remarks about their response to this instruction.

His Apostleship (1 Corinthians 9:1-6)

Even though the Corinthians themselves were the product of Paul’s ministry, they actually questioned the validity of his Apostleship. Paul reasons with them, declaring they are his “work in the Lord” (1 Cor 9:1), and the “seal” of his “apostleship” (1 Cor 9:2).

This is relevant to the message of this Epistle. Paul will give an extensive defense of his own Apostleship in Second Corinthians. That defense was necessitated by the Corinthians questioning of its validity. I affirm that the divisions that were among them mothered this doubt of Paul’s

Apostleship. While they called themselves after Apollos and Cephas, they were forced to doubt the role of Paul in the Divine economy.

The divisions within the church of our day are far in excess of those found in Corinth. Those divisions have produced a similar questioning of Paul’s commission within the church. It is not at all unusual to hear people speak about Paul’s “opinions,” and even how he was “against women,” or made a mistake when he insisted on going to Jerusalem, even though Agabus the prophet told him bonds awaited him there (Acts 21:10-14).

It is not at all unusual to hear people speak about Paul’s “opinions,” and even how he was “against women,” or made a mistake when he insisted on going to Jerusalem, even though Agabus the prophet told him bonds awaited him there

The Resurrection of the Dead (1 Corinthians 15)

Once division begins, it is like the breaking of a dam: the flood waters of heresy begin rushing in. Among the Corinthians, there actually arose questions about the resurrection of the dead. Some among them were affirming, “there is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:12). Paul “protests” that they were “rejoicing,” even though they were abysmally ignorant of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:31).

Paul traces their propensity to sin to their ignorance of the resurrection: “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor 15:34). In a display of foolishness, some were asking, “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (1 Cor 15:35).

This, too, is relevant to this letter, for Paul provides an insightful view of the resurrection body in the fifth chapter, and of the strong incentive created by knowing about it. There certainly is no room for ignorance on this matter.

I cannot help but observe the general ignorance that exists among professing Christians concerning the resurrection of the dead. As with the Corinthians, this condition has been produced by the divisions found among God’s people. Some people believe both the spirit and the body are raised in the resurrection. Others believe there are two resurrections, separated by one thousand years. Still others believe the wicked will be raised with mortal bodies, which shall ultimately be destroyed. There is even a considerable amount of controversy about the nature of the resurrection body itself. All of this makes Second Corinthians a

very timely book.

The Proper Remembrance of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:24-29)

Another result of their division, was the manner in which they approached the Lord’s table. In their divisions, they were actually eating of “the table of devils,” yet imagined that they could also partake of “the Lord’s table” (1 Cor 10:16-17). Paul, however, informs them that there cherished assemblies were “not to eat the Lord’s supper” (1 Cor 11:20). Without giving due regard to the Lord Jesus Himself, they were actually eating and drinking “damnation” to themselves. The Lord’s table manners had caused the judgment of God to come upon them, so that some became weak and sickly among them, and some even died (1 Cor 11:30). He therefore called upon them to “examine” themselves, and “judge” themselves, so they would not be judged by the Lord on that solemn occasion (1 Cor 11:28,31).

This too is relevant to our study of Second Corinthians. Paul will declare the constraining power of “love of Christ” (2

Cor 5:14), and expound some of the deep involvements of His death (2 Cor 5:18-21).

When Titus returned from

Corinth to Paul, he reported the response of the brethren in Corinth to his first epistle (2 Cor 7:6-16). Paul writes this letter in response to that report. He will

do so with his characteristic wisdom and power, and unto edification. As we should expect, we will find his answers to be most appropriate for our own time and place.

A SUMMATION OF THE BOOK

There is a marvelous scope in this book – a wide expanse of truth that glows with the glory of Jesus, and emits the fragrance of hope. He makes some remarkable succinct and poignant statements concerning foundational realities. A brief review of some of them will serve to whet our appetites for what is to come.

SUFFERING

Sufferings and their role in the Divine economy (1:3-11). The life of faith is not intended to be one of ease and comfort in this world. We are being oriented for *“the world to come,”* where our inheritance awaits us.

The sufferings that result from living by faith are mentioned in 1:4-7, 7:4-6, 4:6-18; 11:23-29, and 12:7-10.

RESTORATION

Restoring the fallen (2:1-11). Paul

to confirm their love to the penitent (2:6-11).

DEFENSE #1

Defense of Paul’s Apostleship, #1 (3:1-6). The Apostle affirms that he really has no need to commend himself to the Corinthians, or to justify his Apostleship. They themselves are the proof of his ministry. They are his epistle, written in their hearts, and known and read of men. This marvelously confirmed that his sufficiency was of God.

COVENANT COMPARISON

A comparison of the Covenants (3:7-18). A failure to comprehend the nature of the New Covenant, and its distinction from the Old Covenant, is the root of a remarkable number of errors. Paul labors to show this distinction. He states that he is a *“minister of the new testament,”* not of *“the letter,”* which depicts the Law, but of the Spirit, which

refers to the new covenant as *“the ministration of the Spirit”* (3:8), *“the ministration of righteousness”* (3:9), the covenant with the *“glory that excelleteth”* (3:10), and *“that which remaineth”* (3:11).

DEFENSE #2

Defense of Paul’s Apostleship, #2 – His Sufferings (4:1-18). The confirmation of Paul’s Apostleship lay partly in sufferings that he incurred during his ministry. There is no possible way to account for these sufferings apart from his ministry. From the human point of view, they were the world’s reaction to his message. From the spiritual point of view, they were the result of an initiative against him from the powers of darkness.

The point to which Paul draws our attention is that he did not *“faint”* in all of these things (4:1). Rather than them weakening his determination to fulfill his ministry, they became the occasion for him renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, a refusal to walk craftily, and a refusal to handle the Word of God deceitfully (4:2).

He accounts for the suffering from another point of view: *“we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”* (4:7).

He also confirms the validity of his ministry by pointing out his sufferings did not overcome him: *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed”* (4:8-9)

RESURRECTION BODY

The Resurrection body (5:1-7). This is a most unique passage on the subject of the resurrection body. Referring to the resurrection body as *“a building of God, a house not made with hands,”* he

Paul revisits the matter of the case of immorality that he mentioned in the first Epistle. He shares the burden that he experienced in having to deal with this matter (2:1-5). Because the man repented, renouncing his iniquity, Paul extends himself to say enough punishment had been ministered.

revisits the matter of the case of immorality that he mentioned in the first Epistle. He shares the burden that he experienced in having to deal with this matter (2:1-5). Because the man repented, renouncing his iniquity, Paul extends himself to say enough punishment had been ministered. There was no need for any more. He admonishes the Corinthians

gives life (3:6).

In his telling comparison, Paul refers to the Old Covenant as *“the ministration of death”* (3:7), *“the ministration of condemnation”* (3:9), that which *“had no glory in this respect”* (3:10), and *“that which was done away”* (3:11). In a most glorious comparison, he

affirms that we already have it *“in heaven.”* It only awaits the time when we will inhabit it (5:1). Acutely aware of how newness of life has made us incompatible with our present bodies, Paul affirms that we presently *“groan, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven”* (5:2). This fierce conflict does not merely reflect a desire to exit this fleshly body. There is also a desire to be *“clothed”* with the proper body – our house from heaven. When this takes place, mortality will be swallowed up of life (5:3-4).

The Apostle then affirms that a purpose for regeneration is that we might be clothed with that immortal body. In other words, redemption is fitting us for it. That fitting is being accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who is the *“earnest”* of the fulness of the blessing (5:5).

Fully persuaded of the truth he has spoken, Paul says he is quite willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. In fact, that is his preference. It is in view of that blessed circumstance that he is presently laboring (5:6-8).

RECONCILIATION

The Love of Christ and Reconciliation 5:14-21). As soon as the heart is made tender, it is enabled to receive deeper and more profound expressions of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Having responded favorably to the admonition concerning the fornicator in their presence, Paul now speaks more freely concerning salvation.

He reminds them that *“the love of Christ constraineth us,”* moving us to reason correctly, and to conduct our lives in keeping with the truth (5:14). We now live for a different reason, not seeking our own ways, as men do in divisions, but rather living *“unto Him which died for them and rose again”* (5:15).

Being saved necessarily involves becoming a *“new creation”* – one in which *“old things are passed away; behold all things are become new”* (5:17).

In a most powerful affirmation, Paul then shows that reconciliation is wholly of the Lord. It is God who reconciled the world to Himself in the

person of Christ, *“not imputing their trespasses unto them.”* It is this message that is to be heralded among men – both the saved and the lost: *“be ye reconciled unto God”* (5:18-20).

The salvation of men involves a most significant exchange – one that could be made only by God Himself. Speaking of the Father’s activity in the Son, it is written, *“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Cor 5:21).

DEFENSE #3

Defense of Paul’s Apostleship, #3 – Approval in His Experiences (6:1-13). Paul’s third defense of his Apostleship centers in his approval amidst the circumstances of life. His was a response

many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor 6:9-10)

All of this was in strict accord with *“the day of salvation”* in which men are extricated from sin, and built up in the most holy faith.

SANCTIFICATION

The Necessity of Separation from the World (6:14-7:1). A succinct statement is made concerning the necessity of separation from the world. Nowhere does God pledge to walk with those whose lives are lived in contradiction of Him. The people of God must come out from among defiling influences, else God will not walk with them.

The unequal yoking of the saved and lost is to be avoided at all cost. Paul

The Apostle then affirms that a purpose for regeneration is that we might be clothed with that immortal body. In other words, redemption is fitting us for it. That fitting is being accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who is the “earnest” of the fulness of the blessing

that confirmed God had sent, equipped, and sustained him.

His approval was realized IN *“much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings”* (2 Cor 6:4-5). It was confirmed BY *“pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true”* (2 Cor 6:6-8).

It was gained in his experience of the differing reactions of heaven and earth: AS *“unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making*

shows that such a yoke is spiritually illogical, for there is no accord between good and evil: *“for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”* (2 Cor 6:14-16).

The only acceptable solution is to separate from the ungodly and *“touch not the unclean thing.”* Then God will receive us, be a Father unto us, and we will be His sons and daughters (6:17-18). That promise is sufficient incentive to cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear

of the Lord (7:1).

RECOVERY

Recovering from sorrow (7:2-16). The great heart of the Apostle was so tender, that it grieved him that he had to be so harsh with the Corinthians. He urges the Corinthians to receive him, for he had wronged no man, had corrupted no one, and had defrauded no one. In fact, he affirms that they were in his heart, to live and die with them (7:2-3).

While in Macedonia, Paul had trouble on every side; *“without were fightings, and within were fears”* (7:4). Notwithstanding, because of his great love for the Corinthians, when Titus brought word of their progress, he was much comforted, and took heart (7:5-7). Their sorrow and repentance had confirmed their acceptance in Christ, and Paul was

who became poor that we might become rich in His grace (8:9). (4). He affirms that no one will be the poorer for doing this (8:10-15). (5). He assures them that provision has been made for the funds to reach the needy brethren (8:16-24). (6). He urges them to have their *“bounty”* ready, that they not be subjected to any unnecessary shame (9:1-5). (7). He reminds them that they will reap in strict accord with how they have sown (9:6). (8). He affirms that the Lord loves a cheerful giver (9:7). (9). He declares that God can make all grace abound to them, so they will always have total sufficiency, yet be able to *“abound unto every good work”* (9:8-15).

DEFENSE #4

Defense of Paul’s Apostleship, #4 – Responding to Challenge (10:1-18). In Paul’s fourth defense of his Apostleship,

In his fifth defense, Paul points out his endurance under affliction. Although he had experienced extraordinary sufferings, none of them turned him from his mission. All of this was done in order that he might present the people “as a chaste virgin to Christ”

glad (7:8-13). The effect of their repentance upon Titus also brought joy to Paul.

MONEY AND COLLECTIONS

Perspectives About Money, and Collecting for the Poor Saints (8:1-9:15). Paul engaged in an aggressive effort to gather a collection from the Gentile churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Corinth had made a commitment to this good work, but had not yet fulfilled it. Paul reasons with them concerning this matter, urging them to compete their vow. He cites several remarkable reasons for them doing so.

(1). The churches in Macedonia had responded to this request, even though they lacked much (8:1-5). (2). He was sending Titus to finish this work, and urged the Corinthians to abound in this matter (8:6-7). (3). He reasons with them concerning the grace of the Lord Jesus,

he shows he has responded to challenge. He reminds them that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God (10:4-5). He also urges the Corinthians not to look upon him according to appearance. He has been given authority *“for edification,”* and that is precisely how he is addressing every challenge that has come from them (10:6-9). Even though they had viewed his appearance as *“base”* (10:1), and his speech *“contemptible”* (10:10), yet he is making every effort to be gentle, not seeking to destroy them. He is stretching himself *“beyond measure”* to profit them, not seek a name for himself (10:11-18).

DEFENSE #5

Defense of Paul’s Apostleship, #5 – Maintaining Under Stress (11:1-33). In his fifth defense, Paul points out his endurance under affliction. Although he had experienced extraordinary sufferings, none of them turned him from his

mission. All of this was done in order that he might present the people *“as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (11:2). His profound concern was that they might be deceived by the tempter, and thus their *“minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (11:3).

He then cites the unparalleled sufferings he had endured – with none of deterring him from his mission. He engaged in *“more labors,”* experienced *“stripes above measure,”* was in prison *“more frequent,”* and confronted death *“oft”* (11:23). The Jews had him beaten five times with forty stripes minus one (11:24). Three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, three times he experienced shipwreck, and he spent a day and a night alone in the deep (11:25).

He was involved in more journeyings, and experienced perils of water, robbers, his own countrymen, the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren. (11:26-27). His had been a life of weariness, painfulness, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, being without food, and being cold and naked (11:27). In addition to all of this, he daily bore the burden of all of the churches, desiring that they grow up into Christ, even though many of them exhibited little desire to do so (11:28).

In Damascus, the governor of the city was desirous to apprehend him. It was there that he was let down through a window and over a wall in a basket, thereby escaping the threat against him (11:32-33). Who but an Apostle is capable of enduring such things?

DEFENSE #6

Defense of Paul’s Apostleship, #6 – Responding to a Thorn (12:1-21). In his sixth defense, Paul reveals his response to a limitation placed upon him by God Himself. This came because of the *“abundance of the revelations”* that were given to him. Because of this circumstance, and in order to keep him from being *“exalted above due measure,”* there as given him a *“thorn in the flesh.”* Satan delivered it, buffeting him with it (12:1-7).

Because of the severity of this *“thorn,”* Paul earnestly besought the Lord three times *“that it might depart”* from

him (12:8). After those three supplications, the Lord declined to remove the “thorn,” saying His grace was “sufficient.” The principle upon which this was founded, Jesus said, was this: “for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). That is, the more incapable men are in the flesh, the more capable they become in the Spirit. At no point does the work of the Lord depend upon fleshly wisdom or might.

Perceiving this, Paul chose to glory in his “infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, and in distresses.” He heartily embraced the real circumstance: “when I am weak, then am I strong.” That response confirmed Paul was who he said he was.

DEFENSE #7

Defense of Paul’s Apostleship, #7 – Test the Results (13:1-14). The final defense of Paul is also one of great significance. Since the Corinthians were seeking “proof of Christ speaking” in him, he calls them to consider how powerful his Gospel was among them. He urges

In these various responses, as is characteristic of Paul, an abundance of teaching will and Kingdom orientation will be found. It will be seen in every rebuke, encouragement, and explanation. We will find this Epistle is like the “woods” in which Jonathan found himself – “woods” that dripped with honey.

them to examine themselves, to see if they are in the faith (13:5). If so, then they owe that circumstance to Paul. That will be the crowning proof that he is not a reprobate – for a reprobate cannot bring anyone to be “in the faith” (13:6a).

INTRODUCTORY CONCLUSION

In these various responses, as is characteristic of Paul, an abundance of teaching will and Kingdom orientation will be found. It will be seen in every rebuke, encouragement, and explanation.

We will find this Epistle is like the “woods” in which Jonathan found himself – “woods” that dripped with honey. When “he put forth the end of his rod in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth,” “his eyes were enlightened” (1 Sam 14:26).

I bid you to put the rod of thought into the “honey” of this Epistle, and see if your eyes are not also enlightened. See if the things of God do not become refreshingly clearer to you, and the will of the Lord more attractive.

THE AUTHOR AND HIS CO-LABORER

“1:1a Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother . . .”

PAUL

“Paul . . .” The name “Paul” is said to mean “small or little.” Some believe this referred to his physical stature. While this may certainly be true, I choose to see it as depicting his humility before the Lord. Here was a man noted for submitting his whole person to the Lord of glory. His entire life revolved around his heavenly calling. It was defined by his commission, and sharply focused upon doing the will of the Lord. It is profitable for us to be fully acquainted with his person, for he has obtained a certain spiritual dignity that few men have realized.

Formerly called Saul of Tarsus

Stephen’s Death

We first hear of this man approximately six years after the

ascension of Jesus and the day of Pentecost. He is brought to our attention in the record of the death of Stephen.

Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 6:5), also described as “full of faith and power,” who “did great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:8). His influence quickly spread as he confounded the religious intelligentsia of the day. Soon his enemies “secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God”^{NIV} (Acts 6:11). The outcome of it all was that they dragged Stephen outside of the city, and stoned him to death. The witnesses who lied against him “laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul” (Acts 6:58). The word translated “young man” comes from the Greek word νεανίω (nea-niou), which means “a man in the prime of life, between twenty and forty years old.”^{THAYER} We have no idea how old Saul was at the

time. However, judging from the his seeming ignorance of Jesus, we gather he was on the younger side.

Luke us careful to tell us that “Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen’s) death” (Acts 8:1). Many years later, after he was laboring for Christ, Paul said of this event, “And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him” (Acts 22:20). How he must have lamented that dreadful day!

Persecuting the Church

At the time of Stephen’s death, “there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1b). This resulted in a dispersion of the disciples, many of which had come to Jerusalem “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). It is written “and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the

apostles” (Acts 8:1c).

While devout men “carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him,” our attention is turned to young Saul of Tarsus. It is said that he “made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison”^{NKJV} (Acts 8:3). This did not deter the spread of the Gospel, for “they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

Saul’s persecution of the church

Agrippa, “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26:9-11).

He also wrote to the Corinthians,

Paul provides some additional information about his former life. In his defense before the Jewish council, he said that he was himself a Pharisee, and the “son of a Pharisee.” He told Agrippa “after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee”

apparently pickled up its pace. The ninth chapter of Acts begins by saying, “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2). This is thought to have occurred around A.D. 37, which would have been about two years after Stephen’s death. This aggression of Saul was generally known among the followers of Jesus, as Ananias indicated in Acts 9:13-14). Following his conversion, we learn that the disciples in Damascus also know of this (Acts 19:21).

Following his conversion, when speaking in his defense before his own countrymen, Paul said of this time of his life, “And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished” (Acts 22:4-5). He also said to

“I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor 15:9). He mentioned this to the Galatians also, “I persecuted the church of God and wasted it” (Gal 1:13). To the Philippians he wrote, “concerning zeal (I was) persecuting the church” (Phil 3:6). To Timothy he said of himself, “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious” (1 Tim 1:13).

This was, indeed, a dark and foreboding part of Paul’s life. He never did forget the depths to which he had sunk, blaspheming the name of Christ and doing harm to His people.

Some Additional Information

Paul provides some additional information about his former life. In his defense before the Jewish council, he said that he was himself a Pharisee, and the “son of a Pharisee” (Acts 23:6). He told Agrippa “after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee” (Gal 26:5). He wrote to the Philippians that he was a “Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Pharisee” (Phil 3:5). He revealed to the Galatians how he had excelled among his peers: “And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly

zealous of the traditions of my fathers” (Gal 1:14). While Paul was, indeed, a Jew, he was no ordinary one.

His Conversion

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus was as dramatic as his previous life. It is a classic example of the Lord interrupting the course of men, and calling them I contradiction of human logic.

Saul confronted the risen Christ while he was en route to persecute the saints. The record of that confrontation is familiar to all believers. “And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:3-6). We are told that the men who journeyed with him “stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man” (Acts 9:7). Elsewhere the Spirit clarifies that those with Saul, “saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me” (Acts 22:9) – that is, they did not comprehend what was said. To Agrippa Paul gave this account, “At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue” (Acts 26:13-14).

Paul’s account to Agrippa also provides some additional things about this occurrence. Not only did Jesus identify Himself, affirming He was the One whom Paul was persecuting, and directing him to go to Damascus for instructions, He also spelled out why He had appeared to Paul. “And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will

appear unto thee; 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 26:15-18).

This appearance was not an offer of salvation, but a call to the Apostleship. What was required to be saved would be told him by “a certain disciple” named Ananias. I can only imagine the impact that this call must have had upon Paul. He had been on a mission of his own

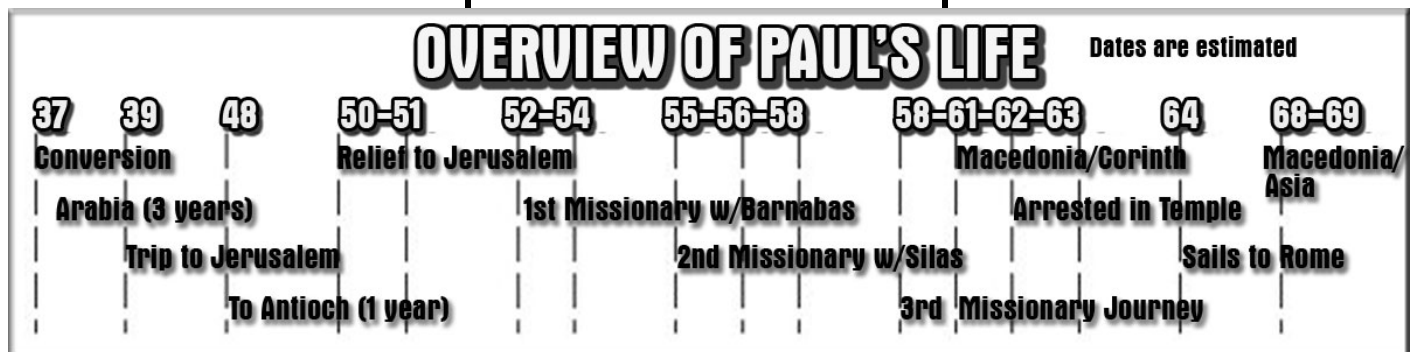
sanctified by faith in Christ.

- Ananias added the appearance was that Saul might know Christ’s will.
- Ananias also said the appearance was in order that Saul might “see the Just One.”
- Ananias also added the appearance was in order that Saul might “hear the voice of His mouth (Acts 22:12-16).

That mission defines the ministry of the Apostle Paul. You will see it in his stirring admonitions, his strong

baptized” (Acts 9:17-18).

Of this event Paul testified to his people, “*And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy*



choosing, but it was nothing to compare with the one to which he was being called.

- To be made a minister and a witness of the things he had seen.
- To be made a minister and a witness of the things in which Jesus would yet appear unto him.
- He would be delivered from the Jewish people.
- He would be sent to the Gentiles.
- He was to open the eyes of the Gentiles.
- He was to turn them from darkness to light.
- He was to turn them from the power of Satan unto God.
- He was to enable them to receive forgiveness of sins.
- He was to enable them to receive the inheritance among those who are

exhortations, and his insightful expositions.

Newness of Life

In preparation for confronting Saul, Jesus had readied a certain disciple named Ananias. At the first, Ananias balked at the word of the Lord, responding, “*Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name*” (Acts 9:13-14). Jesus then told him, “*Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake*” (Acts 9:15-16). When Saul came to Ananias, as Jesus had directed him, he put his hands on him and said, “*Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was*

sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:12-16).

Paul then received food for the first time in three days, and was strengthened. He then spent “*several days with the disciples at Damascus,*”^{NIV} whom he at the first had intended to bring bound to Jerusalem.

His Early Life in Christ

Following his baptism and the days he spent with the disciples in Damascus, Saul “*straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that He was the Son of God.*” Those who heard him were amazed saying, “*Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?*” (Acts 9:20-21). However, Saul “*increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ*”^{NKJV} (Acts 9:22). This is thought to have taken place around A.D. 35.

After many days of this, the Jews

grew weary of Saul's aggressive and persuasive preaching, and "took counsel to kill him." It was then that the disciples took him by night, "and let him down though the wall in a large basket" ^{NKJV} (Acts 9:25). In this very Epistle, Paul alludes to this incident: "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands" (2 Cor 11:33).

X Paul then journeyed back to Jerusalem, and attempted to join himself to the disciples. However, "they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." Then Barnabas, who during the first days of the church sold his land, laying the money at the Apostle's feet" (Acts 4:36-37), too Saul and "brought hm to the Apostles," declaring "how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." This is thought to occur about A.D. 43. Saul remained with the Apostles, "coming in and going out at Jerusalem." He "spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed with the Grecians." The reaction against Saul was so strong, that the Grecians also "went about to slay him." Again, the brethren came to his aid, brought him to Caesarea, and "sent him forth to Tarsus." It is written of the period following that, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

Saul then disappears from the narrative of Acts, until the eleventh chapter. At that point Barnabas, who had been ministering in Antioch comforting the saints and having much people added to the Lord, left "for Tarsus, for to seek Saul." When he found him, he brought Saul back to Antioch, and they assembled with the church "for a whole year," and "taught much people." Of that grand occasion it is written, "And the Christians were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:25-26).

During his stay at Antioch, a prophet named Agabus came down from Jerusalem. He prophesied by the Spirit

that there was going to be a "great famine over all the world," which famine did take place "in the days of Claudius." Conscious of the needs of their brethren that this famine produced, the disciples, "every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:29-30). This is thought to have taken place about A.D. 45.

provided some information that is not found in the book of Acts. Luke omitted this account because it did not deal with Paul's public life. It may appear from Acts that Paul went to Jerusalem immediately after his conversion. However, Paul relates he went into Arabia, returned to Damascus, and after three years went up to Jerusalem, spending 15 days with Peter (Gal 1:17). It was then fourteen years later, after delivering the collection to the poor saints in Jerusalem, that he returned

The outcome of it all was that the deputy, upon seeing what was done, "believed, being astonished at the doctrine of Paul" (Acts 13:4-12). One of the significant things about this event, is that from this point on, Saul was known as "Paul."

Upon fulfilling their mission, and returning from Jerusalem. Barnabas and Saul took John Mark, and returned to Antioch (Acts 12:25). I was there that the Holy Spirit said, "Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). They departed with John Mark as their minister, and traveled to Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, and th Isle of Paphos, preaching he Word of God in synagogues of the Jews. It was at Paphos that Saul confronted Elymas the sorcerer, who sought to neutralize the work of Saul. After the deputy of that region had asked for the word to be spoken to him, Elymas made every effort to turn the deputy (names Sergius Paulus), from the faith. Confronting him boldly, Saul rebuked him, calling him a "child of the devil," and "enemy of all righteousness." He also struck him blind. The outcome of it all was that the deputy, upon seeing what was done, "believed, being astonished at the doctrine of Paul" (Acts 13:4-12). **One of the significant things about this event, is that from this point on, Saul was known as "Paul."** Acts 13:9 reads, "Then Saul, (who is also called Paul)." From his point on, the only reference to "Saul" is when Paul gives an account of his calling (Acts 22:7,13; 2:14).

again to Jerusalem.

Paul's extraordinary ministry covered approximately 35 years. During that time he preached in Damascus, Jerusalem (Acts 9:20-28), Antioch (Acts 11:25-26), Seleucia, Salamis (Acts 13:1-4), Cyprus, Paphos (Acts 13:6-12), Perga (Acts 13:13), Pamphilia, Pisidia, Iconium (Acts 16:1-3), Lystra, Derbe (Acts 16:1-3), Attalia, Syria (Acts 15:41), Cilicia (Acts 15:41), Phrygia, Galatia (Acts 16:4-6), Mysia (Acts 16:7), Troas, Samothracia, Neapolis, Philippi (Acts 16:8-40), Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), Berea (Acts 17:10-13), Athens (Acts 17:14-34), Corinth (Acts 18:1-17), Cencrea (Acts 18:18), Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41), Macedonia (Acts 19:19-21; 20:6b-12), Assos (Acts 20:13-14), Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Trogyllium, Miletus (Acts 20:14-36), Cos, Rhodes, Patara (Acts 21:1-2), Tyre (Acts 21:3-6), Ptolemais (Acts 21:7), Antipatris (Acts 23:1), Sidon (Acts 27:2-3), Myra (Acts 27:4-6), Cnidus (Acts 27:7), Fair Havens (Acts 27:8-12), Crete, Clauda (Acts 27:13-30), Melita (Acts 27:39-28:11), Syrcuse (Acts 28:12), Rhegium (Acts 28:13a), Appii Forum, The Three Taverns, Rome (Acts 28:14-31).

Regions to which Paul journeyed included Judea, Arabia, Syria, Cyprus,

In the book of Galatians, Paul

Selicia, Galatia, Greece, Italy, Asia, Malta, and possible Spain.

Yet with all of his travels Paul did not assume the role of a celebrity, who stood aloof from the people. Instead, true to his calling, he carried a burden for the churches, faithfully declaring the benefits belonging to them in Christ, addressing their condition, and urging them to take hold of eternal life. Gave himself fully to the Lord Jesus, and, true to His promise, Jesus revealed Himself to Paul. *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21).

AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST

“... an apostle of Jesus Christ ...”

they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out” (Acts 14:14). Barnabas, however, was not an Apostle of Jesus Christ, but of the church, who sent them forth a special work according to the direction of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2-4). No such activity was ever associated with the twelve Apostles of Christ. At the time Barnabas was sent forth, Paul was also sent with him. That commission however, was not the apostleship to which Paul refers in our text.

Paul was a special “apostle,” sent by Jesus to the Gentiles. The leaders of the Jerusalem church recognized this, and fully sanctioned Paul’s unique ministry. It is written, *“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the*

Unto Edification

As an “apostle of Jesus Christ,” Paul was given power, or authority, to edify, or build up, the people of God. That is, he had a message that contributed to the spiritual stability and understanding of the saints. Referring to this, Paul wrote, *“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: . . . 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”* (2 Cor 13:8,10).

While there will be corrective teaching in this Epistle, and even some rebuke, the intention will always be to strengthen and fortify the people of God. That means that difficulties, whether moral, spiritual, or doctrinal, are not the fundamental issue. Rather, they are areas in which conformity to the image of God’s Son is being hindered or inhibited. They are, in fact, areas in which Satan has made an effective intrusion in his attempt to divert believers from obtaining the prize.

Problem-solving is not the focus of the Apostolic ministry, but edification – which is, in fact, the process by which we are being conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). Problems are like boulders blocking the path to glory. The aim is not merely to remove the boulders, but to make the way clear for the completion of our appointed course. If a runner removes blockages in the path, only to sit down and cease to run, the outcome is no different than if the occlusion had never been removed at all.

The Agenda of Jesus

The agenda of the Lord Jesus Christ has been clearly delineated in God’s word. He has not departed from that agenda, nor has it been even slightly modified. At this point, it might be well to point out the various inspired perspectives of that agenda.

☛ **BRING MANY SONS TO GLORY.**
“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

The agenda of the Lord Jesus Christ has been clearly delineated in God’s word. He has not departed from that agenda, nor has it been even slightly modified. At this point, it might be well to point out the various inspired perspectives of that agenda.

An “apostle” is a “delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders, and representative.” ^{STRONG’S} As used here, an “apostle” is one sent forth by Christ with a message, insight into that message, and authority to declare it.

The Twelve

Most of us are familiar with “the twelve Apostles” (Matt 10:2; Lk 22:14; Rev 21:14). These are also referred to as “the twelve disciples” (Matt 20:17), and “the twelve” (Matt 26:14,20,47; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5). We are told that Jesus “ordained twelve, **that they should be with Him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils**” (Mark 3:14-15).

Other Apostles

Barnabas is referred to as an “apostle” in Acts 14:14: *“Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of,*

apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles” (Gal 2:7-8).

In his Epistles, Paul consistently referred to his Apostleship (Rom 1:1; 11:13; 1 Cor 1:1; 9:1,2; 15:9; 2 Cor 1:1; 12:12; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:1,11; Tit 1:1). He referred to himself as “called to be an apostle” (Rom 1:1), “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13), “an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:1), “an apostle (neither of men, neither by men” (Gal 1:1), “a preacher and an apostle” (1 Tim 2:7) “a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher” (2 Tim 1:11), and “a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (it 1:1).

The point was that his message was not an opinion, or a private interpretation. Like all prophets, he spoke as moved by the Spirit (2 Pet 1:21).

salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10).

- **BRING US TO GOD.** *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit”* (1 Pet 3:18).
- **GIVE US ETERNAL LIFE.** *“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).
- **DELIVER US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD.** *“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father”* (Gal 1:4).
- **SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE THE CHURCH.** *“... Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”* (Eph 5:25-26).
- **PRESENT A GLORIOUS AND PURE CHURCH TO HIMSELF.** *“That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph 5:27).
- **PURIFY TO HIMSELF A SPECIAL PEOPLE, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.** *“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:14).
- **DESTROY HE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.** *“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil”* (1 John 3:8).

It should be evident from this sampling of text that the Divine agenda has to do with getting us safely out of this world, and into the word to come. If that

is not seen, a veil will drop over the Scriptures, so that no eternal benefit will be realized from them. **Neither God nor His Son will depart from this multifaceted agenda in order to serve purely human interests.**

Where the Agenda Is Not Being Fulfilled

Where this agenda is not being accomplished, some form of moral and spiritual resistance is present. Flesh has in some way inserted itself. This may take a variety of forms, ranging from ignorance to gross immorality, and everything in between. Whatever form this resistance takes, regardless of how minuscule it may appear it brings jeopardy with it.

Where this agenda is not being accomplished, some form of moral and spiritual resistance is present. Flesh has in some way inserted itself. This may take a variety of forms, ranging from ignorance to gross immorality, and everything in between.

Potentially, any obstacle in the path to glory can exclude one from the promise. The reason for this condition is that it limits the Divine working, just as Israel’s stubbornness hindered the working of the Lord in their behalf. As it is written, *“Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel”* (Psa 78:41). Someone might point out that *“limited”* really means *“provoked,”*^{NRSV} or *“pained,”*^{NASB} or *“provoked,”*^{NIV} and therefore does not produce dire consequences. However, this is a wholly erroneous conclusion. To vex the living God, or provoke Him, is, in fact, what limits the flow of blessing toward the individual. Thus it was said of Israel, *“Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions . . . Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance”* (Psa 106:29,40).

What Paul Is Doing

An *“apostle of Jesus Christ”* is laboring with Christ in the fulfillment of this stated agenda. He is not attempting to merely conform people to a so-called

“way of life. He is not primarily enforcing a moral code, or ensuring that proper procedures are set in place within the church. His objective is not to bring life in this world to a sort of optimum level, so that happiness is realized in a well ordered and non-problematic environment. All of those things are fine in their place, but have little to do with the *“eternal purpose”* of God and the ongoing work of the exalted Christ.

The teaching of this epistle will serve to clarify what life in Christ Jesus is all about. It will contribute to our preparation for glory by means of the fellowship of Christ, to which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9). That is involved in

being *“an Apostle of Jesus Christ.”*

BY THE WILL OF GOD

“ . . . by the will of God . . . ”

As I have already confirmed, Jesus called Paul to be an Apostle. In doing this, the savior was acting in strict conformity to *“the will of God,”* which drives all heavenly activity.

The will of God equates to His *“eternal purpose”* (Eph 3:11), and is stated from several different perspectives. Here three perspectives of this multifaceted purpose.

- **LOSE NOTHING.** *“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day”* (John 6:39).
- **CONFORM TO CHRIST’S IMAGE.** *“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” (Rom 8:29).

• **ALL THINGS GATHERED INTO ONE.** *“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 1:10).

The phrase *“the will of God”*

least, this is no ordinary man.

AND TIMOTHY

“ . . . and Timothy . . . ”

This young man (*“Timothy,”* or *“Timotheus”*) is mentioned twenty-four times in Scripture. His name means *“honor of God,”* or *“valued by God.”* There is no sin recorded against him, he is always associated with good reports, and is always identified with the work of the Lord. That alone highly commends him.

churches” (Acts 15:40-41). This was following the dispute between Paul and Barnabas concerning taking John Mark with them to visit the brethren in every city where they had preached, seeing how they were doing (15:36). It was then that Paul chose Silas, and embarked on this special mission of confirming the churches.

When they arrived in Derbe and Lystra, *“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus (the Greek form of Timothy), the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium”* (Acts 16:2). At once Paul was drawn to this young man, who had an excellent reputation among the brethren. He chose Timothy to go with them on their journey of edification.

Because of the Jews in that area, and because Timothy’s father was a Greek, Paul *“circumcised”* Timothy. This was not done because of the insistence of the Jews in that area, for Paul refused to succumb to such pressure. When Paul brought Titus, who was a Greek, to Jerusalem, he refused to circumcise him because of the demanding Jews, to whom Paul refused to be subject (Gal 2:3-5). The case of Timothy differed because his mother was a *“Jewess,”* and there were believing Jews in that area. Circumcision was proper under these circumstances because it eliminated any unnecessary offense, and did not encroach upon the freedom that is in Christ Jesus.

Raised in the Faith

Timothy was raised in the faith by his mother and possibly grandmother, obtaining a knowledge of the Scriptures from a youth. Of this Paul wrote, *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also . . . And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15).

The references to Timothy’s father, together with the statement of his mother and grandmother, suggest the

Such endearing terms indicate Timothy was anything but an “ordinary” and “common” Christian. He is an example of how a person can excel in the grace of God, and be noted for faithfulness and productivity.

blends with these declarations. It means infinitely more than Paul becoming an Apostle simply because God wanted him to be one. Rather, it indicates that Paul was called to be an Apostle in strict accord with the objective God had determined *“in Christ Jesus” “before the foundation of the world”* (Eph 3:11; 1:3; 2 Tim 1:9).

Paul was called in strict accord with that *“will,”* summoned to become a *“laborer together with God”* in the fulfillment of His eternal objective (1 Cor 3:9). In commenting upon this holy involvement, Paul wrote, *“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry”* (1 Tim 1:12). That is, the Lord knew Paul could be counted on to faithfully handle the Gospel, perceive the need and manner in which it was proclaimed, and thus prepare men for glory. Confirming the reliability of his teaching, Paul elsewhere affirmed he was *“one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful”,* of *“one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy”* ^{NKJV} (1 Cor 7:25).

When, therefore, the writer says *“Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ by the will of God,”* he has made us aware of the trustworthiness of his teaching. That ought to arouse our attention, and promote sobriety among us. To say the

The manner in which Timothy is referred to is noteworthy.

- *“My workfellow”* (fellow worker) – Rom 16:21.
- *“My beloved son and faithful in the Lord”* – 1 Cor 4:17.
- He *“worked the work of the Lord”* – 1 Cor 16:10.
- *“Our brother”* – 2 Cor 1:1
- *“Minister of God, and fellowlaborer in the Gospel of Christ”* – 1 Thess 3:2.
- *“My own son in the faith”* – 1 Tim 1:2.
- *“Me dearly beloved son”* – 2 Tim 1:2.

Such endearing terms indicate Timothy was anything but an *“ordinary”* and *“common”* Christian. He is an example of how a person can excel in the grace of God, and be noted for faithfulness and productivity.

What We Know About Timothy

Timothy first surfaces in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Acts, when Paul and Silas went throughout Syria and Cilicia *“confirming the*

home was divided. However, this did not deter his mother Lois from faithfully directing her son in the ways of the Lord. She was apparently one of the early disciples who saw that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. She is a noble example of the effectiveness of faith under less-than-ideal situations.

Unique in Trustworthiness

Paul indicated the extraordinary character of Timothy in his Epistle to the Philippians. *“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel”* (Phil 2:20-22). **Timothy stood out among others who labored with Paul.** In fact, at the time he wrote to the Philippians, Paul said there was no one else like Timothy, who would *“genuinely be concerned for their welfare.”* ^{NASB} Unlike others, he was not seeking his own interests. His heart had been impacted by the love of God.

A Brief Summation

- ☛ Timothy was already a believer when Paul selected him (Acts 16:1-2). We assume he was converted during Paul’s 1st missionary tour, approximately three years earlier.
- ☛ He was raised in the faith by his mother (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15).
- ☛ When Paul left Thessalonica because of fierce opposition, Timothy remained there with Silas (Acts 17:14).
- ☛ Paul instructed Timothy to come with Silas and join him in Athens (Acts 17:15).
- ☛ He was with Silas when they joined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5).
- ☛ From Asia, Paul sent Timothy and Erastus (who were ministering to him) into Macedonia (Acts 19:22).
- ☛ He accompanied Paul into Asia (Acts 20:4).
- ☛ He was with Paul when he wrote to the Romans (Rom 16:21).

- ☛ He was sent to Corinth to report on Paul’s activities (1 Cor 4:17).
- ☛ Corinth was admonished to not despise Timothy, or give him cause to fear, for he *“worked the work of the Lord”* (1 Cor 16:10). There is no higher commendation.
- ☛ He preached Jesus Christ with Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:19).
- ☛ He was sent to Philippi to learn of

- ☛ He was with Paul when he wrote to Philemon (Phile 1:1).
- ☛ He spent some time in prison (Heb 13:23).
- ☛ He came from a divided home (Acts 16:1-3).
- ☛ He suffered under frequent illnesses (1 Tim 5:23).

Paul indicated the extraordinary character of Timothy in his Epistle to the Philippians. “For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel”

their state, knowing he would perceive it correctly (Phil 2:19).

- ☛ He was with Paul when he wrote to the Colossians (Col 1:1).
- ☛ He was with Paul when he wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:1).
- ☛ He was sent to the Thessalonians to establish them and comfort them in the faith (1 Thess 3:2).
- ☛ He gave a faithful report of the Thessalonians to Paul (1 Thess 3:6).
- ☛ Paul instructed him to charge some in Ephesus *“that they teach no other doctrine,”* or give heed to *“fables and endless genealogies which minister questions”* (1 Tim 1:2).
- ☛ He received a gift *“by the laying on hands of the presbytery”* (1 Tim 4:14), and by the laying on of Paul’s hands (2 Tim 1:6).
- ☛ Timothy was set aside for the work of the Lord by special prophecies made concerning him (1 Tim 1:18).
- ☛ He shed tears for the work of the Lord (2 Tim 1:2).

- ☛ Paul summoned him to come to Rome while imprisoned there (2 Tim 4:9), and to bring his cloak, his books (scrolls), especially the parchments (2 Tim 4:13).
- ☛ He was a young man, as indicated by 1 Timothy 4:12 and 2 Timothy 2:22.

Church History

Church history records that Timothy was the bishop of Ephesus for many years ^{(Eusebis. Hist. Eccles. 3, 4, 2; Const. Apost. 7:46; see Lange, De Timothy Episcopo Ephes. (Lips. 1755))}, and died a martyr’s death under Domitian or Nerva ^{(Niceph. Hist. Eccles. 3,11; Photius, Cod. 254).}

The death of Timothy is said to have occurred during the great feast of Artemis (the Greek form of the Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians). History records that idolatrous feast provoked a protest from Timothy. It *“led him to protest against the license and frenzy which accompanied it. The mob were roused to fury, and put him to death with clubs.”* ^{(comp. Polycrates and Simeon Metaphr. in Henschen’s Acta Sanctorum, Jan. 24).}

An extraordinary young man, indeed! He is a noble example of one obeying the word that was personally addressed to him by Paul: *“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word (speech), in conversation (conduct or life), in charity,*

in spirit (mind or disposition), *in faith* (trust, belief, dependability), *in purity* (chastity)"(1 Tim 4:12).

Here is a young man who is the standard of godly and devoted youth. When compared to the youth icons of our day, he towers above them all. This is the kind of young man is really used by God – in the work of God, and for the glory of God. I am persuaded those of such caliber are even more rare in our day than they were in the time when Second Corinthians was written. I cannot

conceive of Paul garnering laborers for the Kingdom from the conventional churches and Bible Colleges of our day.

OUR BROTHER

“ . . . our brother . . . ”

Although Paul frequently referred to Timothy as his “son” (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2,18; 2 Tim 1:2), yet he is here referred to as “our brother.” He was Paul’s “son” because he was begotten by him through the preaching of the Gospel. He was Paul’s “brother” in two senses. First, because He was a brother to Jesus

(Heb 2:11), he was a “brother” to all those so related to the Son of God. Second, he was particularly a brother in labor – a “fellowlaborer in the Gospel of Christ” (1 Thess 3:2). **The sentiments of this letter are coming from Timothy as well as Paul. He has the same concerns and objectives as the Apostle, having his heart in the work of the Lord.** Therefore, Paul is not hesitant to acknowledge Timothy as his coworker and fellow-laborer. He had put his hand to the plow, and did not look back.

THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH IS AT CORINTH

“ ^{1b} . . . unto the church of God which is at Corinth . . . ”

Paul is precise in addressing this Epistle. This is not a general letter written to the citizens of Corinth. It is not

Sectarianism will not be honored. **It will become apparent that those who hear this Epistle must themselves make a determination concerning their relationship to God.** To put it in other words, they will have to “examine”

assembly that has been called out of the world, and separated unto God through Christ Jesus the Lord.

The word “church” has been subjected to all manner of abuse. Some think of it as a physical structure. Others think of it as a particular denomination, and thus ask “What church do you belong to?” How is the Holy Spirit using this word?

He does not write this Epistle exclusively to the young, the aged, the leaders, or the new converts. That kind of mind-set is very prevalent in our culture, but it does not reflect the mind of the Spirit. The truth is communicated in strict comportment with the character of God and the nature of salvation.

The word “church” comes from the Greek word ἐκκλησία (ekk-la-sea). It is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament writings. Jesus said He would build His “church” (Matt 18:17). The book of Acts says the Lord “added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). In referring to Israel when they received the Law, Stephen referred to them “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). Particular gatherings of believers, like those in Antioch, were called “the church” (Acts 11:26). In Ephesus, when the whole city was in an uproar because of the disruption caused by Paul’s preaching, the riotous gathering was called an ἐκκλησία, translated “assembly” (Acts 19:32). The town clerk of Ephesus spoke during that time, saying that matters out to be settled in a “lawful” ἐκκλησία, or “assembly” (Acts 19:39). The entire body of believers are called the “general assembly and church of the Firstborn” (Heb 12:23).

particularly addressed to all **professing** “Christians” in Corinth, although a case may be presented for this being the case. However, this is not the manner of the Spirit – i.e., to speak in mere religious generalities. Paul does not speak to a particular cluster of believers – like those who called themselves after himself, or Apollos, or Cephas (1 Cor 1:12). He does not write this Epistle exclusively to the young, the aged, the leaders, or the new converts. **That kind of mind-set is very prevalent in our culture, but it does not reflect the mind of the Spirit.** The truth is communicated in strict comportment with the character of God and the nature of salvation.

themselves to see if they are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5).

Through Paul, the Holy Spirit will address those who are in Christ Jesus. He will, in fact, speak to the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). There will be no assumption that those who hear these words are, in fact, “new.”

UNTO THE CHURCH OF GOD

“ . . . unto the church of God . . . ”

Other versions read, “the assembly of God,”^{DARBY, YLT} and “God’s church,”^{NLT}

The Church

“The church” is a society within a society – a people within a people. **It is an**

The word ἐκκλησία is rich with meaning. **Etymologically**, it is “a gathering

of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly.” THAYER “A gathering of citizens, assembly, meeting.” FRIBERG “A congregation of Christians, implying interacting membership; a gathering based upon citizenship.” LOUW-NIDA “An assembly of the citizens regularly summoned.” LIDDELL-SCOTT

Doctrinally, the word obtains a special meaning. The Spirit precisely defines the broader definition of “church” for us.

1. “And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to **the church, WHICH IS His body**, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” (Eph 1:22-23).
2. *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, WHICH IS the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15).

From these texts the meaning of “church” is placed within some rather narrow boundaries.

- This is the body of people to whom Jesus has been particularly given: “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things **to the church**” NASB (Eph 1:22).
- The church is “*the body of Christ,*” through whom He works, and with whom He maintains communication: “**which is His body**” (Eph 1:23; 4:15-16; Col 2:19)
- The church is the exclusive repository of everything Jesus has to give: “*Which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*” (Eph 1:23).
- The church is “*the house,*” or residence of God. It is where He abides: “*the house of God, which is the church of the living God*” (1 Tim 3:15).
- The church is the exclusive custodian of the truth, and is responsible for its defense and dissemination: “*the church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15).

The church is appropriately described as “*the whole family in heaven and earth*” that “*is named*” after “*our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph 3:14-15). It is also seen as “*them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*” (1 Cor 1:2). **These are the people who have been called out of this world (Acts 15:14), delivered from the power of darkness, and translated**

place through us being “***builed together***” (Eph 2:22). This circumstance requires being together.

The church is effectually “*joined together*” and held together “*by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love*” (Eph 4:16). Their purpose is to “*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together*

If the church has been called out of this world and joined to the Lord, they are also joined to one another. If Jesus does, in fact, minister to His people through the various members of that body (Eph 4:15-16; Col 2:19), then there can be no justification for choosing a life of relative isolation from the saved.

into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13). **Their citizenship is in heaven** (Phil 3:20), **and they are “strangers and pilgrims” in this world** (1 Pet 2:11).

Because of their common origin, destiny, faith, and love, the people of God assembly together. From the very beginning they “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42). They met together in the Temple and from house to house, eating their food “*with gladness and singleness of heart*” (Acts 2:46).

Many of the benefits enjoyed by “the church” are predicated upon meeting together. It is possible to be “*gathered together . . . with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor 5:4). There is a joint participation in coming together than cannot be realized any other way (1 Cor 14:26). If we have been raised up “***together***” with Christ to sit in “*heavenly places*” (Eph 2:5-6), does it not make sense to meet together now? The purpose of God is for the church to become “*the habitation of God through the Spirit*” – something we are told takes

for the faith of the gospel” (Phil 1:27). When saints come together encouragement and strength are realized. As it is written, “*Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do*” (1 Thess 5:11).

The ultimate purpose of God has to do with bringing everyone and everything together. “*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). **That such a purpose could be facilitated through a people who did not meet together is too absurd to be dignified by either thinking or speaking.**

If the church has been called out of this world and joined to the Lord, they are also joined to one another. If Jesus does, in fact, minister to His people through the various members of that body (Eph 4:15-16; Col 2:19), then there can be no justification for choosing a life of relative isolation from the saved.

I say these things because the modern American church is weak on assembling together. When gatherings are held, they have degenerated into times of entertainment and promotion

"The church of God" and "churches of God" are the most common identities ascribed to God's people, being employed eleven times (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:16,22; 15:9; 2

(Rom 5:5). It is "the grace of God" that brings us salvation and teaches us (Tit 2:11).

"Church of God" also accents the objective of our salvation. Jesus has reconciled us "to God" (Rom 5:10), and is bringing us "to God" (1 Pet 3:18). We "give thanks to God and the Father" by Jesus Christ (Col 3:17), who has "made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12).

How appropriate that the saved are called "the church of God." May we never be numbered among those who make little of the Father Himself, to whom Jesus is bringing us.

WHICH IS AT CORINTH

"... which is at Corinth ..."

This Epistle is addressed to those in Corinth who have been reconciled to God, and are living unto Him. It is not addressed to an institution, or to those who merely hold membership in a religious organization. The "church of God" are those called by God, set apart by God, and in whom He dwells. **They have been created for a habitation of God through the Spirit - His unique dwelling place. They are His children, depend upon Him, and hear His Word.**

A true local "church" is a part of the larger assembly comprised of those in both heaven and earth. It is a body of people who have been called out of the world to God, and are preparing themselves for the time when God will finally and publically gather all of His own into one grand assembly.

rather than times of edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor 14:3).

A true local "church" is a part of the larger assembly comprised of those in both heaven and earth (Eph 3:15). It is a body of people who have been called out of the world to God, and are preparing themselves for the time when God will finally and publically gather all of His own into one grand assembly.

Of God

Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:4; 1 Tim 3:15).

The phrase "church of God" emphasizes the origin of the church. It has been "sanctified BY GOD" (Jude 1:1), and its members are the "children" or "sons" of God (Rom 8:16; 1 John 3:1-2). They have been "begotten of God" (1 John 5:18), and have been "called" by God "unto the fellowship of His Son" (1 Cor 1:9). It is "the love of God" that is "shed abroad" in their hearts by the Holy Spirit

WITH ALL THE SAINTS WHICH ARE IN ALL ACHAIA

^{1c} "... with all the saints which are in all Achaia."

This letter is not confined to the believers in Corinth. It does not contain a special message for those in a special culture, or for those in unique circumstances. **God's word is adapted for God's people - all of them.**

WITH ALL THE SAINTS

"... with all the saints ..."
Other versions read "holy ones,"^{NAB} "holy people,"^{NJB} and "all the Christians."^{NLT}

In the Epistles, the term "saints" is applied to those who are in Christ Jesus forty-two times (Rom 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25,26,31; 16:2,15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1,2;

14:33; 16:1,15; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1,12; 13:13; Eph 1:1,15,18; 2:19; 3:8,18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 1:1; 4:22; Col 1:2,4,12,26; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:10; 1 Tim 5:10; Phile 1:5,7; Heb 6:10; 13:24; Jude 1:3).

"Saints" are ALSO mentioned thirteen times in Revelation (5:8; 8:3,4; 11:18; 13:7,10; 14:12; 15:3; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:8; 20:9).

At its root, the word "saints" comes from the Greek word ἅγιος (ag-ios), when applied to men, means "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His."^{THAYER} In a moral sense, it means "pure, sinless, upright, and holy."^{THAYER} Other lexical definitions are "things set apart for God's purpose, dedicated, holy, sacred; holy pure, consecrated to God."^{FRIBERG} "Set

apart to or by God, consecrated; holy, morally pure, upright."^{UBS} "Pertaining to being holy in the sense of superior moral qualities and possessing certain essentially Divine qualities in contrast with what is human - holy, pure."^{LOUW-NIDA} "Devoted to God, sacred, holy."^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

There is, then a twofold view of "saints." **First, this is descriptive of those who have been separated to God, by God, and for God. Second, it describes a people of moral purity and uprightness - a holy people.** These are the people who fulfill the word, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:15-16). This is a purity that commenced with being

washed from sin (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11), and is maintained by keeping oneself “pure” (1 Tim 5:22).

Men may grow accustomed to impurity and moral defilement, but God does not. In order to receive men, they have to be made clean (Eph 5:26), then kept clean (2 Cor 7:1; James 4:8; 1 John 1:9). Holiness is something to be aggressively pursued, for without it, “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

Further, the “holiness” of reference is the holiness of God Himself. As it is written, “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, **that we might be partakers of His holiness**” (Heb 12:10). This is not a “holiness” lacking an impact upon human character and actions. It is not as mere formal designation. When character is sullied by transgression, the hand of the Lord is turned against the individual, bringing chastening in order that there can be a partaking of God’s holiness. **It is evident, therefore, that where practical holiness is not found, there can be no claim to having been made a partaker of God’s holiness.** In other words, where sin continues to express itself, forgiveness has not been experienced in reality.

I am personally chagrined by the notion of an unholy church. It is one of the greatest contradictions of all time, and is an affront to the God of all grace, a reproach to the Lord Jesus, and an insult to the HOLY Spirit.

This letter is written to “saints.” It becomes incumbent upon us, therefore, to engage in an effort that will find us falling into that category.

WHICH ARE IN ALL ACHAIA

“ . . . which are in all Achaia.” Other versions read, “throughout Achaia,”^{NASB} “in the whole of Achaia,”^{RSV} and “throughout Greece.”^{NLT}

Originally, Achaia was a region in Greece, and not Greece itself, as the New Living Translation suggests. In the most restricted sense, it occupied the north-western portion of Peloponnesus, including Corinth and its isthmus. Under the Romans Greece was divided into two provinces: Macedonia and Achaia. Macedonia included Macedonia proper, with Illyricum, Epirus, and Thessaly. Achaia is all of the territory south of that division. This is the Achaia that is mentioned in the New Testament writings, and appears to be a significant area (Acts 18:12,27; 19:21; Rom 15:26; 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 1:1; 9:2; 11:10; 1 Thess 1:7,8).

Gallio, who drove the accusing Jews from the judgment seat when they



brought false accusations against Paul, was the “deputy of Achaia” (Acts 18:12). Shortly after that, Apollos, having been more perfectly instructed in the Lord by Aquila and Priscilla, passed through Achaia and “helped them much which had believed through grace” (Acts 18:27).

The brethren in Achaia were pleased to “make a certain contribution for the poor saints which were at Jerusalem” (Rom 16:26). The significance of the inroads made by the Gospel in “the regions of Achaia” (2 Cor 11:10) is seen in the special mentioning of the “firstfruits of Achaia.” They included Epaeetus (Rom 16:5), and “the house of Stephanus” (1 Cor 16:15). These brethren had also been helped along by the brethren in Thessalonica, who had proved to be excellent examples to them (1 Thess 1:7-8). They appear to have been unusually appreciative of the brethren.

GRACE BE TO YOU

“² Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The salutations of Paul reflect the very nature of the New Covenant. He seeks for them to experience the benefits that Christ’s vicarious death, triumphant resurrection, and effective intercession procures for them. He never salutes an individual of a church with a desire for their health or wealth – never. He never greets them with a desire for the improvement of their status in the community, or for domestic superiority.

Such things are not to be despised, but they are not the staple matters of the Kingdom of God. **Stability in eternal things is the real focus of valid ministry, not success in the temporal realm.** For some, this is too difficult to receive. However, once the superiority of eternal things is seen, the sense of this will be recognized.

What is now said cannot be exploited for fleshly advantage. While it is a common salutation, it must not become common to our hearts. These things are essential to life and godliness.

GRACE

“Grace . . .” Grace is a big word. **It is too large for academic definitions.** There is Divine favor, will, and love in it. A desire to give abundantly is inherent in the term, together with the ability to do so. Divine enablement is in grace. There is dominating power in grace that can make the weak strong.

A religion that makes little or no room for grace is false to the core, and ought to be discarded with haste. Where grace is not needed, God will not be present. Where grace is

despised, God will **not** work for good. Where grace is neglected, truth has **not** been perceived, and Christ has not been comprehended. Under those circumstances, there can be no growth.

- ☛ “Grace” is the thing that helps “*in the time of need*” (Heb 4:16).
- ☛ Grace is what saves us (Eph 2:5,8).
- ☛ Grace is the domain in which we “*stand*” (Rom 5:2; 1 Pet 5:12).
- ☛ Whatever sin did, and however it abounded, grace did “*much more abound*” (Rom 5:20).
- ☛ Grace is dominating: it is said to “*reign through righteousness unto eternal life*” (Rom 5:21).
- ☛ The reason sin does not have dominion over us is because we are “*not under the law, but under grace*”

“*we through His poverty might be made rich*” (2 Cor 8:9).

- ☛ Grace can cause you to “*always have all sufficiency in all things,*” and yet “*abound to every good work*” (2 Cor 9:8).
- ☛ Grace enabled Paul to bear up under a grievous thorn, being unusually productive, even though experiencing much weakness (2 Cor 12:9).
- ☛ God’s grace has made us accepted in His beloved Son (Eph 1:6).
- ☛ Grace can cause the saints to teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16).
- ☛ Everlasting consolation and good hope are ministered to us “*through grace*” (2 Thess 2:16).
- ☛ The grace of God is the vehicle

- ☛ Grace equips us to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Heb 12:28).
- ☛ The heart is established by grace (Heb 13:9).

Let no person think of grace as something weak and frail, or consider it primarily a Divine emotion or attitude. **The grace of God is strong, and is consistently associated with staggering accomplishments, both for us and within us.** Grace is always associated with something that is accomplished – something that could not be achieved in any other way.

BE TO YOU

“ . . . *be to you . . .* ” When, therefore, “*grace*” is said to be “*to you,*” **an all-sufficiency is desired for the people.** This is not a mere formal salutation, but an expression that reflects keen insight and understanding. If the people are going to stand firm, they will need grace. If they are to withstand the assaults of the wicked one, they will need grace. If they are to make any progress in the faith, or grow up into Christ in all things, they will need grace. **Where there is no grace, there is no growth, no victory, and no conformity to the image of Christ.**

PEACE

“ . . . *and peace . . .* ” Peace is a state of inner tranquility. It is the absence of rage and havoc. Peace speaks of harmony and accord with both God and man. Security and safety are inherent in the word “*peace.*”

“*Peace*” is the environment in which “*the fruit of righteousness*” is sown (James 3:18). Before God could confer His righteousness upon us, Jesus had to “*make peace*” through the “*blood of His cross*” (Col 1:20), for hostility existed between man and God. It is in being justified, that this peace is realized (Rom 5:1), and the grand work of sanctification and preparedness for glory begins. Peace is inextricably linked with spiritual mindedness (Rom 8:6), and is integral to the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17). It is also realized in an environment of believing. As it is written, “*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the*

Let no person think of grace as something weak and frail, or consider it primarily a Divine emotion or attitude. The grace of God is strong, and is consistently associated with staggering accomplishments, both for us and within us. Grace is always associated with something that is accomplished – something that could not be achieved in any other way.

(Rom 6:14).

- ☛ Grace is versatile, providing various gifts and abilities to the body of Christ (Rom 12:6).
- ☛ Grace made Paul a “*wise masterbuilder,*” enabling him to lay a good foundation, providing an arena in which God could work (1 Cor 3:10).
- ☛ Grace enabled Paul to “*labor more abundantly than they all*” (1 Cor 15:10).
- ☛ The “*grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*” is described as Him, even though rich, becoming “*poor*” for our sakes, that

through which faith and love come to us (1 Tim 1:14).

- ☛ A person can “*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim 2:1).
- ☛ The grace of God brings salvation, then teaches us how to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Tit 2:11-12).
- ☛ The grace of God makes us “*heirs according to the hope of eternal life*” (Tit 3:7).
- ☛ The throne upon which Jesus is presently administering the Kingdom is the “*throne of grace*” (Heb 4:16).

power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13).

The peace of God is also a ruling agent, and can actually control the heart, keeping it from being moved about. It is written, “*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*” (Phil 4:7). And again, “*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful*” (Col 3:15).

When, therefore, the Apostle prays for peace to be given to the saints, he is seeking their strength, stability, enablement, and refreshment.

GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

“ . . . from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Grace and peace are not the products of human activity. They are not the result of hard work, obedience, or even diligence. **As needful as those things may be, they contain no seeds that can sprout grace and peace within.** Grace and peace must come from

There is a glorious harmony in the working of both the Father and the Son in our salvation. Working in perfect concert, and within the framework of an “eternal purpose” they cause eternal benefits to flow from heaven to us.

outside of ourselves. They are gifts, not the results of our own ingenuity.

Here they are said to come “*from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*” This affirmation concerning the source of both grace and peace is made no less than fourteen times: “*from God the Father, and 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 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phile 1:3; 2 John 1:3).

There is a glorious harmony in the working of both the Father and the Son in our salvation. Working in perfect concert, and within the framework of an “*eternal*

purpose” they cause eternal benefits to flow from heaven to us.

Those who deny the distinct personalities of the Father and Son would do well to ponder how consistent this blessing is in Scripture. John even speaks of “*both the Father and the Son*” (2 John 1:9). It is glorious to consider that They are both committed to our salvation, and working to that end. **Those who perceive this will throw themselves into the good fight of faith, willingly joining in the work of the Lord.** Only when this becomes obscure, or is forgotten, will slothfulness and spiritual retardation begin to dominate the heart.

CONCLUSION

Thus the way has been prepared for our consideration of the book of Second Corinthians. It has everything to do with the great salvation of God, for that was the matter so marvelously revealed to

Paul. It has everything to do with Paul’s Apostleship, which involved his commission to open men eyes, turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might

receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). We may therefore expect great profit and benefit to come to us through this Epistle.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/28/2004. In this session, we will begin a new series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The second lesson will cover verses three and seven of the first chapter: “SUFFERINGS AND CONSOLATION.**” Because faith brings us into an arena of conflict and suffering, comfort is one of the necessities faith appropriates. 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.**

Remember to plan to attend the Refreshing Waters Renewal, August 3-5, Diamond Grove Christian Church

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, Jonathan, and Eva
406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

**Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)
Jason Hutchcraft (hcchurch@interlink-cafe.com)**

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

REFRESHING WATERS RENEWAL: <http://wotruth.com/renewal.htm>