

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 #4

COMMENTARY ON: 1:11-13

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

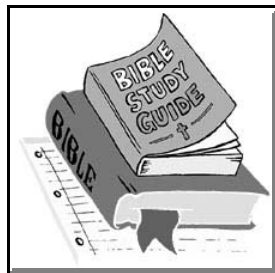
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

HELP AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The experience of the salvation of God begins with our extrication from sin and deliverance from the power of darkness. That is in order that we might obtain a heart upon which the laws of God can be written, and be placed in the body of Christ according to the Father's good pleasure. We then become participants in the work of God, with Jesus, the Head of the body, working through us to minister to His brethren. This is a great and marvelous work in which we participate in the Divine nature, laboring together with God and fliving in fellowship with the Lord Jesus. In Christ there are no mere spectators, placidly beholding others as they go about in the King's service. Everyone is given a work to do.

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 4



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Stand 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), Webster=The Webster Bible 1833, YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).
LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG=Friberg Lexicon, UBS=UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA=Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT=Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER=Thayer's Greek Lexicon

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

HELP AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

“ 1:11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf. 12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. 13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; 14 As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.” ^{KJV} (2 Corinthians 1:11-14)

INTRODUCTION

There is an interdependency and co-partnery woven throughout the entirety of salvation. This mutuality is reflected in the expressions “*the church, which is His body,*” and “*the body of Christ*” (Eph 1:23; 1 Cor 12:27). While there is certainly a sense in which Jesus is bringing individuals to glory, **He is doing so within the context of His body, the church**, which is “*the fulness of Him who fills all in all.*” ^{NKJV} The text with

which we will deal in this lesson is an excellent example of this manner of the Kingdom.

The supreme example of a work involving unity is found within the Godhead Itself. Much of this was greatly obscured before and during the Old Covenant. However, in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, this Divine cooperation is expounded with great

power. A brief rehearsal of this aspect of salvation will assist us in deriving the greatest benefit from our text. The fellowship that is found within the body of Christ reflects the higher order of unity that exists within Deity Itself.

SEEN IN THE REFERENCES TO DEITY

The **manner** in which references are made to Deity emphasizes the

CONTENTS

- **HELPING TOGETHER BY PRAYER (1:11a)**
- **THE GIFT BESTOWED BY MANY (1:11b)**
- **THANKSGIVING BY MANY (1:11c)**
- **OUR REJOICING (1:12)**
- **SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY (1:12b)**
- **BY THE GRACE OF GOD (1:12c)**
- **OUR CONVERSATION IN THE WORLD (1:12d)**
- **MORE ABUNDANTLY TO YOU-WARD (1:12e)**
- **WE WRITE (1:13)**
- **ACKNOWLEDGMENT IN PART (1:14)**

cooperation that exists in the matter of our salvation.

God

- ☛ *“The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Cor 11:31; Eph 1:3).
 - ☛ *“The God of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Eph 1:17).
 - ☛ *“The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Eph 3:14).
- ### Jesus Christ
- ☛ *“Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”* (Matt 1:23).
 - ☛ *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matt 16:16).
 - ☛ *“The Christ of God”* (Luke 9:20).
 - ☛ *“The Son of the Father”* (2 John 1:3).

The Holy Spirit

- ☛ *“The Spirit of God”* (Matt 3:16).
- ☛ *“The Spirit of Christ”* (Rom 8:9).
- ☛ *“The Spirit of the Lord”* (Acts 8:39).

☛ *“The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead”* (Rom 8:11).

☛ *“The Spirit of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:19).

The Holy Angels

- ☛ *“Angels of God”* (Matt 22:30).
- ☛ *“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Mat 24:30-31).

THE LANGUAGE OF COOPERATION

The particular ministries of the Godhead also emphasize this unique cooperation. **The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with accompanying angels, are working together for our salvation.** Notice how this is emphasized in holy phraseologies.

- ☛ The **Father** sent the **Son** to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14).
- ☛ The **Son** declares the **Father** (John 1:18).
- ☛ The **Father** loves the **Son**, and has given all things into His hand (John 3:35).
- ☛ The **Father** gave His only begotten **Son** (John 3:16).
- ☛ The **Son** only did what He saw the **Father** doing (John 5:19).
- ☛ The **Father** loves the **Son** and has shown Him all things that He is doing (John 5:20).

- ☛ The **Father** has committed all judgment to the **Son** (John 5:22).
- ☛ The **Father** honors the **Son**, and the **Son** honors the **Father** (John 5:23).
- ☛ The **Father** has given the **Son** to have life in Himself (John 5:26).
- ☛ The **Father** has sealed the **Son** (John 6:27).
- ☛ The **Father** taught the **Son** what He was to say (John 8:28).
- ☛ The **Father** sanctified the **Son** (John 10:36).
- ☛ **God** glorified His **Son** (Acts 3:13).
- ☛ We were reconciled to **God** by the death of His **Son** (Rom 5:10).
- ☛ **God** condemned sin in the flesh of the **Son** (Rom 8:3).
- ☛ **God** send the **Spirit** of His **Son** into our hearts (Gal 4:6).
- ☛ **Jesus** is bringing us to **God** (1 Pet 3:18).
- ☛ Our sacrifices are acceptable to **God** through **Christ** (1 Pet 2:5).
- ☛ We have been redeemed to **God** by the blood of **Christ** (Rev 5:9).
- ☛ The **Holy Spirit** testifies of **Christ** (John 15:26).
- ☛ The **Holy Spirit** intercedes for us to **God** (Rom 8:26-27).
- ☛ **Jesus** intercedes to **God** for us (Heb 7:25).
- ☛ **Jesus** sends the **angels** to minister to the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:13-14).

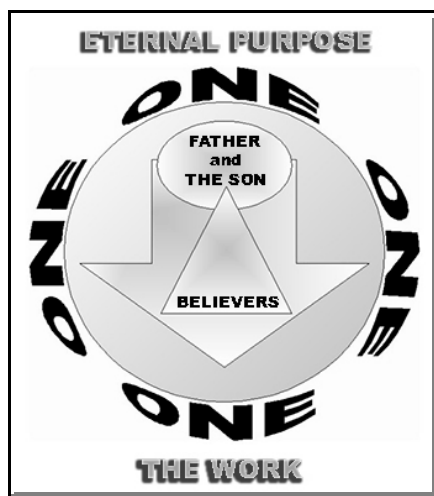
The particular ministries of the Godhead also emphasize this unique cooperation. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with accompanying angels, are working together for our salvation.

- Jesus will come in His own glory, and the glory of the **Father**, with the holy **angels** (Matt 16:27; Lk 9:26).
- At Christ's baptism, the **Father**, **Son**, and **Holy Spirit** were present (Matt 3:16-17).
- We are justified in the name of **Jesus**, and by the **Spirit** of our **God** (1 Cor 6:11).
- We are saved according to **God's** foreknowledge, the sanctification of the **Spirit**, and the sprinkling of the blood of **Jesus** (1 Pet 1:2).

This is only introductory of a vast array of texts that underscore the cooperation of the Godhead in our salvation. One of the great blessings of Scripture reflects this same reality. *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen"* (2 Cor 13:14).

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT?

The entirety of salvation focuses upon Deity. We are to be *"followers of God"* (Eph 5:1), *"walk in the Spirit"* (Gal 5:16,25), and are *"married"* to Him *"who is raised from the dead"* (Rom 7:4). We are being *"conformed"* to the image of God's Son (Rom 8:29), have put on the *"new man,"* which is *"renewed after the image of Him that created him"* (Col 3:10), and have a mind that is *"controlled by the Spirit"*^{NIV} (Rom 8:6).



All of this is developed within the framework of fellowship – fellowship

between the redeemed and the Redeemer, the saved and the Savior, the created and the Creator. God Himself has called us into *"the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Cor 1:9). Elsewhere the Spirit reminds us that we are being summoned into fellowship *"with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3).

Those who are in Christ Jesus have, in fact, been called into the work of the Lord. Thus they are called *"laborers together with God"* (1 Cor 3:9), *"workers together with Him"* (2 Cor 6:1), and *"fellow workers for the truth"*^{NKJV} (3 John 1:8). Therefore, Paul says, *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"* (2 Cor 5:20).

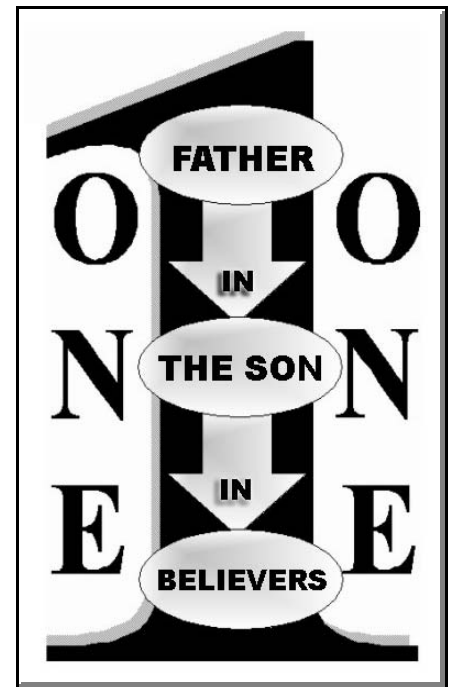
So far as the edification of the body of Christ is concerned, it is accomplished by Jesus ministering *"nourishment"* through *"the joints and ligaments"* of the body, thereby causing growth^{NKJV} (Col 2:19). Or, as is succinctly stated in the book of Ephesians, *"Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"* (Eph 4:15-16). In view of this ordained circumstance, no member of Christ's body can say of another member, *"I have no need of you"* (1 Cor 12:21).

The Prayer of Jesus

This arrangement – being workers together with Christ in His grand purpose – was a matter for which Jesus prayed on the eve of His betrayal. He prayed fervently and with unmistakable focus, *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me. And the glory which thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me"* (John 17:20-23).

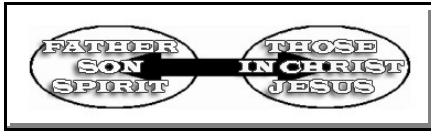
This passage has remained in relative obscurity because of the fractured state of the church. Because of this division, Christ's words have been seen as a prayer for all believers to be united with one another – and even that seems almost too challenging for men to ponder. **However, Jesus was not praying for the unity of believers among themselves**, although that would be the sure result of His request. He was praying for believers to be *"one"* with Himself the Father. Of course, that is precisely what He said: *"that they may be one IN US."* The unity was tri-fold in nature: The Father in Christ, Christ in the Father, and believers in Them – *"as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us"* (John 17:21). And again, *"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one"* (John 17:23).

This is the wonderful unity that is referenced in First Corinthians: *"But he*



that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor 6:17). This is what is involved in being *"in Christ"* (Rom 8:1), being *"baptized into Christ"* (Gal 3:27), and being baptized *"in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt 28:19). This is reflected in the Apostolic doctrine that says of the believer, *"God dwelleth in him, and he in*

God" (1 John 4:15). Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17), and we "abide in Him" (John 14:4,7). The Holy Spirit has been sent into our hearts (Gal 4:6), and we "in the Spirit" (Rom 8:9).



This revealed unity is not a mere technicality to be debated and argued among men. As is true with every facet of Kingdom life, this has to do with practicality – practicality from heaven’s point of view. **Those in Christ are made “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4) in order to participate in the execution of God’s eternal purpose.** After all, it has already been determined that “the world to come” will be placed into their care (Heb 2:5-9). The redeemed are “joint heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17), and, to the degree that they “suffer with Him,” they will also reign with Him (2 Tim 2:12).

Now, in “the day of salvation,” we are actually being oriented for “the ages to come.” By setting our affection “on things above, and not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2), **we are gaining familiarity with the realities to which we are being brought.** We are learning to think *properly by obtaining “the mind of Christ”* (1 Cor 2:16). The “eyes of our understanding” are being opened that we might perceive the marvelous environment in which God’s purpose is being worked out. We are not simply learning how to live in this world, for it is passing away, but “*he that doeth the will of God abideth forever*” (1 John 2:17). **God has not called us to be experts in this passing world, but to learn to handle eternal things that**

have to do with an eternal purpose, and relate immediately to eternal life.

While the saints deal with temporal things, they are not their focus. This present evil world is the locus in which good and evil must be discerned. It is a transitory realm in which we tabernacle for a while, and in which we are being readied for eternity.

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

It is necessary to say these things because of the times in which we live. The professed church has been wedded to the world, and the world is its wedded name. It finds it exceedingly difficult to think

involvement in the gatherings. What little involvement they had before has now been reduced even further as entertainment has taken over the agenda of the assemblies.

Such an environment bears little, if any, resemblance to the revealed agenda for the body of Christ. The intent of the “gifts” Christ has given to the church is that saints might be perfected “for the work of the ministry” – for involvement in the good work of the Lord. That revealed agenda has been pushed into the background in favor of other things. It just does not contribute to an institutional agenda. That, of course, makes known the absolute corruptness of

When men must abandon the will of God in order to do what pleases them, they have entered the broad road that leads to destruction

beyond the domestic realm, the correction of a nation, and the enjoyment of life in this world. It has been diverted by the wicked one, and is stumbling down the path of life with little or no sense of eternal things. It has made too much room for worldly experts, and too little for those who can “*handle aright the word of truth*” (2 Tim 2:15), having “*their senses exercised both discern good and evil*” (Heb 5:14).

The result of this misdirection is that churches are filled with spectators instead of the participators, which the salvation of God produces. With the current popularity of “praise and worship,” the people now have only a minimal

an institutional agenda. **When men must abandon the will of God in order to do what pleases them, they have entered the broad road that leads to destruction** (Matt 7:13).

The relevance of these observations will become apparent as we enter into this text. **Paul, the premier Apostle, who “labored more abundantly than they all” (1 Cor 15:10) will affirm the Corinthians “helped” him in his labors.** He will tell them **how they “helped,”** together with the effects of that help. I want to emphasize that he is speaking of the manner of the Kingdom. This is not a sort of kingdom luxury, but is the standard of operation.

HELPING TOGETHER BY PRAYER

“1:11a Ye also helping together by prayer for us . . .”

The significance of this verse is seen in the context in which it occurs.

Paul has related his unparalleled deliverance in Asia, where he was “*pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life*” (1:8). He was delivered “*from so great a*

death,” bringing great glory to God and frustration to the enemy. **Now the Apostle affirms this was not an isolated and private event.** It was rather indicative of future deliverance

The most noble Kingdom work can be “helped” by those who are in Christ Jesus– by Given O. Blakely

that he knew he would experience. Those deliverances would involve the labors of the Corinthians. Confirming the nature of life in Christ Jesus, the Corinthians themselves had been involved in his past experiences, and would doubtless be involved in his future. That involvement was not immediate, but it was effective. The Head of the body had brought deliverance to Paul through its members.

HELPING TOGETHER

“Ye also helping together . . .”

Other versions read, *“joining in helping,”* NASB *“you help us,”* NIV *“You also must help,”* RSV *“laboring together,”* DARBY *“He will rescue us because you are helping,”* NLT and *“working together also for us.”* YLT

The expression *“helping together”*

the day approaching” (Heb 10:25).

What is the purpose of this togetherness? Is being *“together”* and *“knit together”* an end of itself? Are we to imagine that being united together, or meeting together, is an end of itself. **Has the Divine objective for His collective people been met by them simply coming together and agreeing with each other?** To hear some people talk, one might think this is true. Getting the people together at one time and in one place is a very lofty objective in some circles. However, once we have come together, does our gathering sort of fulfill our duty to the Lord, leaving us free to indulge in all manner of extraneous activity? Is there anything in Scripture that remotely

the ultimate objective? **Will it be sufficient to be with one another in the world to come?** Or to be together with Christ Himself? Is there no purpose to be served by the ultimate gathering together of all things? When we are *“glorified together”* (Rom 8:17), will the *“eternal purpose”* of God be completed?

It is written, *“we shall also reign with Him”* (2 Tim 2:12) – not individually, but collectively. Throughout *“the ages to come”* the people of God will be active in the execution of the will of God. They will *“follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth”* (Rev 14:4), **not merely to be with Him, but to work with Him.** They will begin by judging the world and angels (1 Cor 6:2-3).

The Corinthians were helping, aiding, and assisting in the work of the Kingdom. They had put their hand on the *“plow”* of Divine purpose, and were active in the affairs of the Kingdom – affairs that were being governed in heaven.

BY PRAYER

“. . . by prayer for us . . .” Other versions read, *“in pray for us,”* NKJV *“through your prayers,”* NASB *“by your supplication,”* ASV *“help us with prayer,”* NAB and *“Your prayers for us will contribute to this.”* NJB

These were not individual prayers, like the common “prayer chain.” Rather, these were prayers *“together.”* Prior to the day of Pentecost, the disciples *“continued in one accord in prayer and supplication”* – and they were together (Acts 1:14-15). When the early church was facing persecution, together *“they lifted up their voice with one accord”* in prayer to God (Acts 4:24). When Peter was delivered from prison, he came to the place where the saints *“were gathered together praying”* (Acts 12:12). **There is a spiritual synergy realized when believers join their hearts and minds in prayer.** The magnitude of the possibilities of such gatherings are reflected in the words of Jesus. *“That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt 18:19).

Something to Consider

There is a spiritual synergy realized when believers join their hearts and minds in prayer. The magnitude of the possibilities of such gatherings are reflected in the words of Jesus.

is translated from a single word: *συνσυμπουργούντων* (soon-ooop-oorg-oon-tōn). The word means, “join in helping, cooperate with by means of something,” FRIBERG “join in and help.” UBS

This reflects the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This life is, in a very real sense, a *“together”* life. Saints have been *“raised up together, and made to sit together”* in heavenly places (Eph 2:6). As a great building, we are *“framed together”* and *“built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph 2:21-22). The ongoing work of the Lord among us is designed to *“fitly join us together”* (Eph 4:16) in order that we might be *“knit together in love”* (Col 2:2). One of the primary aims of our association with one another is to *“comfort”* ourselves *“together, and edify one another”* (1 Thess 5:11). Solemnly we are admonished, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see*

suggests such a thing? Has Jesus or His Apostles ever spoken in such a way as to lead people to ask, “When is it our obligation to come together?”

We have already seen that the unity of the Godhead is not only a reality, but is for a purpose. They are working together for the fulfillment of God’s *“eternal purpose.”* Now, in Christ Jesus, **believers are called into the work.** In Him they are to be *“perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment”* (1 Cor 1:10) IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT BE *“workers together”* (2 Cor 6:1). That is why they are to edify one another – **so they can work together.** It is why they meet together – so they can work together.

The ultimate Divine aim is to gather everything *“together”* into one in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:10). However, does any one imagine that mere togetherness is

It is apparent from this passage that the Corinthians did not have particular knowledge of Paul's circumstances. That is why he is informing them of the trouble he experienced in Asia (verse 8). **Yet, the Apostle lets them know he is banking on their prayers for him.** Although they may not have known the specifics of his circumstance, they were apparently aware that his labors had subjected him to dangers.

Paul is not counting on casual prayers – a sort of religious formality. He expressed his mind even more clearly to the brethren in Rome. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me”* (Rom 15:30). Other versions read, *“join my in my struggle by praying to God for me,”*^{NIV} *“join me in earnest prayer to God in my behalf,”*^{NRSV} and *“in your prayers to God for me you exert yourselves to help me.”*^{NJB}

There are several things to be seen in this verse.

- First, Paul's ministry required a great deal of strength, stamina, and survival in conflict.
- Second, he calls upon the Corinthians to join him in this struggle by means of prayer.
- Third, this was something they would do *“together”* – *“together”* with him, and *“together”* with one another.

I would venture to say that very few congregations in our part of the world have ever engaged in such an activity. Prayers that are associated with the assembly are commonly of a very surface nature, and generally have little or nothing to do with the work of the Lord. Some prayers never get beyond the local congregation, its families and immediate associations. There is a higher level on which prayers should be made.

Intercession

Jesus has washed us from our sins and made us *“kings and priests unto God”* (Rev 1:6). **Our priestly ministry involves “intercessions” in the**

assembly (1 Tim 2:1). These are not heartless formalities, but are an appointed means of joining in the kingdom labors of key brethren.

In these intercessions we sometimes do battle against principalities and powers who are seeking to thwart the work of the Lord. There are also spiritual fortresses or strongholds that must be pulled down, and lofty speculations and imaginations that are to be cast down (2 Cor 10:4-5). Some of the spiritual weaponry can only be employed in prayer – prayer that involves the joint efforts of the saints of God. Paul is telling the Corinthian brethren that he is counting

Their primary associations upon earth are with one another, and they have been appointed and strategically placed to work with each other for the glory of God and the fulfillment of His purpose.

on such activity among them.

The Society of the Elect

There is a spiritually elite society in this earth. It is not one that is identified by a certain religious name or finely tuned theological system. This is the society of God's elect – *“the elect of God”* (Col 3:12). These are precious souls whose hearts have been touched by the grace of God. They have a vested interest in the work of the Lord, and have been called into participation by partaking of the Divine nature. These are the people who are putting off the old man and putting on the new man. **They are strangers in this world, knowing they are primarily citizens of heaven. They are seeking a city who Builder and Maker is God, are waiting for the hope of righteousness, and pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

These are the *“saints of the Most High God,”* and they have been appointed

to receive the Kingdom of God in all of its greatness and power (Dan 7:18,22,27). **Their primary associations upon earth are with one another, and they have been appointed and strategically placed to work with each other for the glory of God and the fulfillment of His purpose.**

This society takes Jesus seriously. He said to His disciples, *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it”* (John 14:13-14). And again, *“And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say*

unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you” (John 16:23).

Lest any one think such promises were limited to the Apostle, John speaks to us AFTER all of the other Apostles had died, and he alone was left. *“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight”* (1 John 3:22). And again, *“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him”* (1 John 5:14-15).

Paul was so confident of the effectiveness of the prayers of the godly that he wrote to the Philippians, *“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”* (Phil 1:19). What great possibilities are before us! Let us be willing to accept the challenge.

THE GIFT BESTOWED BY MANY

“^{11b} . . . that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons . . .”

THE GIFT BESTOWED

“ . . . that for the gift bestowed upon us . . .” Other versions read, “for the gift granted to us,”^{NKJV} “for the favor bestowed upon us,”^{NASB} “for the gracious favor granted us,”^{NIV} “for the blessing granted us,”^{NRSV} “what has been given to us,”^{BBE} “this gift obtained by us,”^{DOUAY} and “for God’s favor shown to us.”^{NJB}

The word “gift” comes from a word meaning “a gift of grace; a favor which one

stop the individual who receives it from repenting. It is the same with deliverance. When the Lord gives it, it is always effective. Of old time the Lord delivered the people “out of the hand of the Philistines” (2 Sam 19:9), and “out of their distresses” (Psa 107:6). In Paul’s case, he was “delivered from so great a death” – a circumstance in which he was “pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life” (2 Cor 1:8). The whole affair was suddenly terminated. However it may have appeared on the surface, the deliverance could **only** be attributed to the God of heaven. It was His gift to the Apostle.

is our own desire and faith.

When the bottom is falling out, hope in God – the God who raises the dead. He is not disadvantaged by your circumstances. He can give you deliverance, causing all of the power of the enemy and oppressor to wither and die. He can “scatter” the enemy (Psa 89:10), leaving you free to fly away and be at rest.

Giving deliverance is another way of saying God has caused His face to shine upon you (Psa 31:16; 67:1; 80:3,7).

BY MEANS OF MANY

“ . . . by the means of many persons . . .” Other versions read, “by many persons,”^{NKJV} “through the prayers of many,”^{NASB} “in answer to the prayers of many,”^{NIV} “in answer to many prayers,”^{RSV} “through a number of persons,”^{BBE} and “so many people’s prayers for our safety have been answered.”^{NLT}

With spiritual insight, Paul traces the gift of deliverance to the prayers “of many persons.” Not many individual persons, but many persons “together.” When Peter was in prison, “many” gathered **together** and prayed for him “without ceasing.” Consequently, he was delivered (Acts 12:5-9).

Here, in our text, is an instance where the prayers of many saints resulted in the deliverance of Paul. **Among other things, this confirms to us the vast Divine resources that are available to those who are of one heart and mind.** I cannot help but observe the impact of contemporary religion upon the people who have embraced it. What we have in our part of the world is a religion that actually makes people self-centered. Their lives are not concentrated on the Lord and His work, but on their own personal and family interests. The result is that there has been a sort of spiritual robbery of needed resources. If Paul was delivered by the cooperative prayers “of many persons,” should we not be encouraged to pray together for noble causes and holy people?

Those who haggle about the use of the word “miracle” are not our friends. When we are suddenly and effectively delivered from otherwise hopeless situations, we do not want some pygmy theologian trying to convince us it all came from the natural order.

receives without any merit of his own,”^{THAYER} “A favor bestowed, a benefit.”^{FRIBERG} **The reference is to the deliverance that Paul has related.** God, he said, “delivered us from so great a death” (v 10). **This marvelous deliverance was a gift of God’s grace.** The great God of heaven gave it to him, and none upon earth, or under the earth, could interfere with its effectiveness. It is written in the Psalms that God gives great deliverances to his king (Psa 18:50). It is also written that He commands deliverances (Psa 44:4). **Deliverance is, beyond all controversy, a gift from God – and Paul knew it.**

Not only are God’s gifts “without repentance” (Rom 11:19), they can in no way be controverted or neutralized. If, for example, God “gives repentance” (Acts 5:31; 11:18), there is no power that can

A Word to the Oppressed

The saints of God are often under the bludgeon of oppression. Their circumstances exceed their ability, and drain their strength. However, things can take a sudden and miraculous turn for the better. Those who haggle about the use of the word “miracle” are not our friends. When we are suddenly and effectively delivered from otherwise hopeless situations, we do not want some pygmy theologian trying to convince us it all came from the natural order.

A “gift” from heaven bursts through the natural order, cravening the ordinary, and causing us to laugh at impossibilities. Let no one rob you of the persuasion that such things are “possible with God.” Our only limitation

THANKS GIVEN BY MANY

“^{11c} . . . thanks may be given by many on our behalf.”

Paul sees his deliverance “from so great a death” as an occasion that will bring much glory and satisfaction to the Lord Himself. This will come through the thanksgiving of many insightful souls.

THANKS GIVEN BY MANY

“ . . . thanks may be given by many . . . ” Other versions read, “thanks may be given by many persons,”^{NKJV} “many will give thanks,”^{NIV} “praise may go up to God for us from all of them,”^{BBE} “may be the subject of the thanksgiving of many for us,”^{DARBY} “so that thanks may be given by many persons,”^{NAU} and “thanks too may be given by many on our behalf.”^{NJB}

There are several things that can be seen in this expression.

- Many prayed together in anticipation of giving thanks.
- The Lord answered the prayer in order that many people could give thanks.
- Specific deliverances bring an occasion for specific thanksgivings.
- The working of the Lord produced the prayers, the deliverance, AND thanksgiving.

It is to be understood that the perception of the gracious working of the Lord is to produce an abundance of thanksgiving. It is further clear that **God works in such a way as to make Himself apparent**. If men do not perceive it, it is because they are blind and self-centered. This was the indictment against the Gentile world. Even though they were in God’s world, which bore undeniable testimony to His Person, yet it is said of them, “*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*” (Rom 1:21). **Where**

proper thanksgiving is not rendered to God, He is not glorified. As a consequence, thinking becomes futile, and hearts are darkened.

One of the marks of spiritual degeneracy is being “unthankful” (2 Tim 3:2). Thus believers are urged, “*be ye thankful*” (Col 3:15), and to be “*giving thanks always for all things*” (Eph 5:20). Thanksgiving is something that to be a constant accompaniment in our lives. As it is written, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him*” (Col 3:17). And again, “*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*” (1 Thess 5:18).

If it is true that God works, among other things, in order that thanks may be given to Him “*by many,*” **then we ought not to expect many of His wondrous works among those who are not prone to give thanks.** On the other hand, where men are quick to give thanks, God will obviously work more

the versions read, “*on our behalf.*” Some versions read, “*for what has been given unto us,*”^{BBE} “*the gift towards us,*”^{DARBY} “*for this gift obtained by us,*”^{DOUAY} “*for God’s favor shown to us,*”^{NJB} “*for our safety,*”^{NLT} and “*for the gift through many persons to us.*”^{YLT}

Once again, the selfless nature of spiritual life is seen. This is witnessed in Paul’s rejoicing that many people are giving thanks to God for his deliverance. **It is also seen in many people giving thanks for gifts that were given to someone else.** That is one of the great tests of true spirituality – when one can rejoice and give thanks for the blessings experienced by another person. If it is true that Jesus died for us that “*that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again,*” (2 Cor 5:15), then it makes perfect sense for such people to give thanks for the blessing given to other members of the body of Christ.

A COMMON FOCUS

There is a common focus among

If it is true that God works, among other things, in order that thanks may be given to Him “by many,” then we ought not to expect many of His wondrous works among those who are not prone to give thanks.

abundantly.

Thanksgiving involves recognition and perception, both of which presume alertness and willingness. Men will not thank God for what they cannot see. Thus, the more men are in the darkness, the less they give thanks. The amount of thanksgiving is directly proportionate to the awareness that God alone could have done the work.

ON OUR BEHALF

“ . . . on our behalf.” Most all of

those who are living by faith and walking in the Spirit. They can pray about the same thing, in the same manner, and at the same time. They can also all give thanks for the same thing. **The reason for this is that they have been joined to the Lord.** His agenda has become theirs. His work has been embraced by them. His purpose is now owned by them, and His glory is sought by them. **Where this commonality is not found, faith is deficient, for nothing about salvation allows for any other spirit to prevail among the saints.**

OUR REJOICING

“^{12a} *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience . . .*”

Here Paul expands his thought, beginning to address the charge that had arisen in Corinth regarding the validity of his claim of Apostleship (1 Cor 9:1-5; 15:3-10; 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11-12).

The words that follow will assist in

newly been delivered from power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

OUR REJOICING IN THIS

“For our rejoicing is this . . .”

Other versions read, *“For our boasting is,”* ^{NKJV} *“our proud confidence is this,”* ^{NASB} *“this is our boast,”* ^{NIV} *“our glorifying is this,”* ^{ASV} *“our glory is in this,”* ^{BBE} *“this*

hold on to hope with firm confidence when everything that is experienced in the body appears to contradict such a spirit. Paul will cite a reality that buoyed up his spirit, enabling him to endure a *“great fight of afflictions.”*

THE TESTIMONY OF OUR CONSCIENCE

“ . . . the testimony of our conscience . . . ” All standard versions read, *“the testimony of our conscience.”* Others read, *“the knowledge which we have,”* ^{BBE} *“our conscience testifies,”* ^{NIB} *“our conscientious conviction,”* ^{NJB} and *“a clear conscience.”* ^{NLT}

The word *“conscience”* refers the most inward part of our persons. It can motivate a person when no words or reason can do so. When Jesus challenged the accusers of an adulterous woman, saying, *“He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone,”* it was their conscience that condemned them, moving them to drop their stones and go on their way (John 8:9). Even in the Gentile world, without the Law or any focused revelation, their conscience bore witness to them of their own conduct (Rom 2:15).

The objective of godly instruction is to produce *“a good conscience”* (1 Tim 1:5) – one that testifies to the truth **without** condemning the individual. In fact, when a *“good conscience”* is not duly heeded, the individual will *“make shipwreck of the faith”* (1 Tim 1:19). Further, the profound *“mystery of the faith”* can only be maintained in a *“pure conscience”* (1 Tim 3:9). That is, the perception of the truth of the Gospel cannot be maintained unless it is heartily embraced and the life adjusted accordingly. This is involved in our Lord’s word, *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side”* (Mat 13:19).

The conscience can be taught and cultured in the Spirit, or *“seared”* and deadened by walking in the darkness (1

This is a rejoicing in which several spiritual virtues are mingled. They include joy, confidence, peace, praise, and boldness. This is a condition of heart that outweighs all earthly circumstances, enabling one to hold on to hope with firm confidence when everything that is experienced in the body appears to contradict such a spirit.

a proper interpretation of his deliverance in Asia. **The fact that he had been subjected to such threats confirmed his Apostleship.** The fact that God delivered him under such dire circumstances did the same. In God honoring the prayers of many by delivering Paul, He had validated Paul’s claim as well.

Now Paul will point to his own reaction to life. He will not vaunt himself because he has been delivered, or because prayers raised to God were answered in his behalf. He will make no claim to human excellence. When he was brought face to face with death in a most cruel and dominating form, his mind did not question whether he had done the right thing in going into Asia. He did not question the Lord, as some of our peers are wont to do. Nor, indeed, did he make shipwreck of the faith, as some weak souls have done. Rather, he will declare a possession that no enemy can take from the believer. It is a possession that belongs to every member of the body of Christ, from the Apostle who labored more abundantly, to the novice, who has

is one thing we are proud of,” ^{NJB} and *“we can say this with confidence.”* ^{NLT}

The word *“rejoicing”* is a noun, not a verb. It is something that is possessed, not merely done. This is an exceedingly large word that provides a sort of index to spiritual life. *“Rejoicing”* is the translation of the Greek noun *καύχησις* (kow-khay-sis). Lexically, its root meaning is, *“the act of glorying,”* ^{THAYER} *“boasting, glorying, and pride, in a good sense,”* ^{FRIEBERG} *“to express an unusually high degree of confidence in something being especially noteworthy,”* ^{LOUW-NIDA} and *“reason to boast.”* ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} This word is translated in various ways throughout the New Covenant writings. *“Glory”* ^{KJV} (Rom 15:17), *“glorying”* ^{KJV} *“boasting”* ^{NASB} (2 Cor 7:4), *“boasting,”* ^{NKJV} (2 Cor 7:14), *“boasting”* ^{KJV} (2 Cor 11:10), *“rejoicing”* ^{KJV} *“exultation”* ^{NASB} *“glory”* ^{NIV} *“boasting”* ^{NRSV} (1 Thess 2:19).

This is a rejoicing in which several spiritual virtues are mingled. They include joy, confidence, peace, praise, and boldness. This is a condition of heart that outweighs all earthly circumstances, enabling one to

Tim 4:2). When people are *“defiled and unbelieving,”* they pay the consequence of having a defiled conscience also (Tit 1:15). Such a conscience will not allow the individual to come into the presence of the Lord, nor will it sustain him in the hour of severe testing. This is a most tragic price to pay for quenching the Spirit.

One of the premier benefits of walking in the light, living by faith, and walking in the Spirit, is that the blood of Christ purges our conscience *“from dead works to serve the living God”* (Heb 9:14). This is the kind of conscience to which Paul is alluding – one that can sustain the person who is subjected to *“so great a death,”* is *“pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.”*

Paul frequently testified of his conscience. He saw it as a most valued possession.

- ☛ *“I have lived in good conscience before God until this day”* (Acts 23:1).
- ☛ *“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”* (Acts 24:16).
- ☛ *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit”* (Rom 9:1).

This is the condition of which Paul wrote to the Galatians, urging its appropriation. *“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another”* (Gal 6:4). It is the condition to which Hezekiah testified, long before the

advantages of the New Covenant. *“And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore”* (Isa 38:3).

An approving conscience is to be coveted and appropriated. John bore witness to its inestimable value when he wrote, *“And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God”* (1 John

I am compelled to say a word about the curse of living on the surface of life. Much of the religion of our day is like a spider walking on water – it has no depth or stability to it. We are living in the profound spread of frothy religion that accents pleasure and lacks real substance. It has provided a framework in which mere entertainers tend to dominate the stage of public church life. All manner of jokesters, actors, motivators, self-help gurus, and worldly-wise people have rushed up on the stage. They tantalize the people with their shallow words, but bring nothing of lasting value to the soul. They do not leave the people with a *“pure”* or *“good”* conscience. They leave their listeners thinking about who entertained

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3:19-21).

What a marvelous word is this! **Paul announces that he possesses a conscience that sustains him.** It does not condemn him, but verifies his standing with the Lord and the validity of his ministry. That verification is in the very midst of trials that cause the weak and vacillating to conclude they have been abandoned, and that it is therefore vain to serve the Lord.

them rather than their own inward condition. This circumstance constitutes a most perilous condition. It moves people to put God on the periphery of thought, and outside of their awareness.

Now we will hear the testimony of Paul’s conscience. It is a testimony that can be appropriated by all who avail themselves of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY

“^{12b} . . . that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom . . .”

There is a manner in which spiritual life is lived – a way in which *“newness of life”* expresses itself. Although this manner is extraordinary in the world, it is the norm in the *“heavenly*

places” into which we have been *“raised”* and *“made to sit”* (Eph 2:6). **This is the kind of life that cannot be taught by men.** It is the result of being *“joined to the Lord”* (1 Cor 6:17) and being *“led by the Spirit”* (Rom 8:14).

SIMPLICITY

“ . . . that in simplicity . . . ” Other

versions read, *“holiness,”* ^{NASB} *“frankness,”* ^{NRSV} *“simplicity of heart,”* ^{DOUAY} *“unalloyed,”* ^{NJB} and *“honest.”* ^{NLT}

The word *“simplicity”* comes from a word that means *“singleness, simplicity, sincerity, mental honesty,”* ^{THAYER} *“a moral trait, purity of motive, sincerity, integrity,”* ^{FRIEBERG} *“singlehearted devotion,”* ^{UBS} *“the quality of sincerity as an expression*

The most noble Kingdom work can be “helped” by those who are in Christ Jesus– by Given O. Blakely

of singleness of purpose or motivation," LOUW-NIDA and "singleness, simplicity, frankness." LIDDELL-SCOTT

This speaks of being free from pretense and hypocrisy and not being self-seeking. It describes a state of being openhearted – a condition that manifests itself by generosity. STRONG'S The Greek word from which "*simplicity*" is translated (ἀπλότης) is also rendered "*singleness*" (Eph 6:5), "*liberality*" (2 Cor 9:13), and "*bountifulness*" (2 Cor 9:11). Some of the concepts included in the word "*simplicity*" are as follows.

- ☛ Singleness of focus and objective.
- ☛ Unvarnished sincerity.
- ☛ Godly honesty.
- ☛ Pureness of motive.
- ☛ Unquestionable commitment to God.
- ☛ Godly motivation.
- ☛ Frankness, or forthrightness.
- ☛ Without guile or hypocrisy.

What Paul was given to see he freely declared. He did not copyright his work or withhold certain secrets of success from his hearers. He did not sell what he had received, but declared it with fervor, enjoyment, and expectation.

- ☛ Liberality coming from faith and love.

As used in this text, "*simplicity*" provokes liberality. As Jesus said, "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (Matt 10:8). **What Paul was given to see he freely declared. He did not copyright his work or withhold certain secrets of success from his hearers. He did not sell what he had received, but declared it with fervor, enjoyment, and expectation.** He was not driven by an institutional agenda. He did not speak down to the people as though they were not capable of grasping what he said. Tyndale rendered this word "without doubleness." That is, Paul did not have a mixed agenda or subtle purposes and plans that were not obvious. He was not pernicious and crafty, but honest, open,

and without guile. This is not something he merely said as a sort of promotional statement. **This was the testimony of his conscience as he stood before the God who called him and the Christ who commissioned him.**

A Proper Approach

The person who labors for the Lord must make a decision concerning his motivations. He can, putting his ear to the ground of religious trends, join in speaking of the fads and foibles of the day. He can allow the world and its vogues to set his agenda, and thus be viewed by the worldly-minded as relevant and pertinent. **However, such an approach will not be blessed by God, who has already established the only acceptable agendum.**

There is only one acceptable approach for those who speak for the Lord. They are to speak what they themselves have "*seen and heard*" of the Lord (Acts 4:20). Like a "*scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven,*" they are to bring out of their "*own*" treasure "*things new and old*" (Matt 13:52). Just as the word "*simplicity*" implies, this is to be done in abundance, and not in sparse or meager portions. **If preachers do not see much, or the treasure of their heart has little within it, they ought to seek some other occupation.**

Allow me to emphasize that a proper treasury does not consist of a large library and extensive exposure to the words and writings of men. It is not that such things are sinful, if, indeed, they have come from godly and insightful men. **The truly qualified teacher or preacher is one who has been "taught by" Jesus.** While he may, indeed, be well read, his insight and understanding have come "*from above.*" That is precisely why such a person is forward to pour out in abundance. This is involved in the words of our Lord concerning those to whom, the Holy Spirit would be given. "*He that believeth on me,*

as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

While it is not comely to dwell on this subject, I cannot help but note the lack of spiritual substance that is found in the majority of ministers with whom I am acquainted. They simply do not traffic in the heavenly realms, and rarely have some precious insight to share that has been gleaned in the presence of the Lord. There simply is no way to dignify such a condition. Such a person can be adorned with all manner of academic degrees and extraneous learning. However, if he has not received "*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,*" and if the "*eyes of his understanding*" have not been "*enlightened*" (Eph 1:17-18), he ought to be excluded from the pulpit, and forced to occupy the seat of the unlearned.

No person without "spiritual understanding" is to be afforded any position of leadership among the "elect of God." For such a circumstance to be allowed contradicts every aspect of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. **I say this with a full understanding that, if this were put into practice, it would throw the professed church into a state of utter confusion.** If the American church were to unwaveringly adopt the Divine agenda today, the impact upon the religious world would be like a moral and spiritual earthquake. Many churches and "Christian colleges" would be forced to close. The job market would be flooded with religious professionals, including speakers and singers, who were out of work. Religious book stores would have to revamp their entire layout, and discard all manner of media presently being sold.

Do not for one moment doubt that this is a proper presentation of the case. We are regularly being confronted with a religious structure that is utterly lacking of the "*simplicity*" that is declared in this passage. **That absence, if my assessment is proper, confirms that God and Jesus are not in much of what is called "Christian."** If, on the other hand, it is affirmed that this is not the case, and that God and Jesus are very much present in the religious structure of our land, then we have a most

disconcerting situation on our hand. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are, in such a case, conducting Themselves in stark contradiction of what has been revealed of them. Without any hesitation, I affirm that such a condition simply cannot exist.

GODLY SINCERITY

“ . . . and godly sincerity . . . ”

Other versions read, “sincerity of God,”^{ASV} “true in the eyes of God,”^{BBE} “sincerity before God,”^{DARBY} “godly pureness,”^{GENEVA} and “unalloyed holiness.”^{NJB}

The word “sincerity” means more than is ordinarily comprehended. Often you will hear people speak of being “sincere, but wrong,” or “sincerely wrong.” However, this is not the meaning of the word in this text, or anywhere else in Scripture.

“Sincerity” always speaks of a comely quality. It literally means “found pure when unfolded and examined in the light . . . pure, unsullied, sincere”^{THAYER} “unmixed, without alloy,”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} “strictly tested by the sunlight . . . morally spotless, pure”^{FRIBERG} “pure, sincere, honest,”^{UBS} “pertaining to being sincere in the sense of motivation – sincere, without hidden motives.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

“Sincerity” does not refer to a self-assessment, but to the result of Divine examination and approval. It is the result of a quest similar to that of David, the man after God’s own heart. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts” (Psa 139:23). The heart of the great Apostle, when exposed to the blazing light of God Almighty, was found to be with integrity, honesty, and without guile – and Paul himself knew it.

This condition is impossible to explain to those who live for self, and are thus unacquainted with the Lord of glory. In fact, such people do not believe this condition is even possible. **However, for those who live by faith, and unto God, this is very familiar and refreshing language.** For Paul, this confirmed his Apostleship, for God has not called anyone who is guided by his own private agenda.

NOT WITH FLESHLY WISDOM

“ . . . not with fleshly wisdom . . . ”

Other versions read, “not in fleshly wisdom,”^{NASB} “not according to worldly wisdom,”^{NIV} “not by earthly wisdom,”^{NRSV}

“not in the wisdom of the flesh,”^{BBE} “not in carnal wisdom,”^{DOUAY} “not by human wisdom,”^{NAB} “relying not on human reasoning,”^{NJB} and “not on our own earthly wisdom.”^{NLT}

Paul did not conduct his life by following routines and methodologies that had their genesis with man. He did not rely on the supposed discoveries of men – men that need a Savior. Here, “fleshly

seeking for the development of faith in the people. Therefore he confessed, “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:4-5).

Paul’s entire manner of life was free from the world’s contamination. He

Paul did not conduct his life by following routines and methodologies that had their genesis with man. He did not rely on the supposed discoveries of men – men that need a Savior.

wisdom” stands in opposition to “simplicity and godly sincerity.” It is the artificial, and consequently unacceptable, mode of living. **Things that distinguish the people of this world have no relevance in the kingdom of God.** Those who are wise in the ways of the world are generally obtuse in matters pertaining to life and godliness. This is not a condition that necessarily exists. **However, one must overcome the ways of the world in order to achieve any degree of status before the Living God.** Through Jesus, God is delivering us from “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). **Only a modicum of thought should confirm to your heart that one’s spiritual resources cannot come from the world, from which he is being delivered.**

Corinth was a citadel of worldly wisdom. It was this very circumstance that compelled Paul to write, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). **In all of his preaching, Paul was**

had thrown his old life – particularly his religious manner – away, considering it to be “dung.” He knew the world had kept him from Christ, and was therefore not about to allow the world to shape his thinking or set his agenda.

That is what happens when men live by faith. **Faith connects us with the unseen world, the invisible God, and the enthroned Christ.** It simply cannot be sustained by this world or anything within it. That is, as one might say, “Theology 101.”

It would be refreshing to see a zealous embrace of this approach by those who claim to represent God. After over fifty years of focused observation, I conclude there is too much of the world in the professed church. Its wisdom is too common among those who wear the name of Jesus. **If it is true that friendship with the world brings sure enmity with God, then this is a most sobering circumstance!** How good it is when anyone has a conscience that testifies before God that they have zealously avoided the world’s manners and wisdom in their representation of the Lord of lords!

BY THE GRACE OF GOD

“^{12c} . . . but by the grace of God . . .”

The Apostle has affirmed that he did not fulfill his ministry by employing “fleshly wisdom,” or wisdom that can only be developed through the Adamic, or fallen, nature. **If God has totally repudiated the wisdom of this world, counting it to be foolishness (1 Cor 3:19), it is the height of absurdity to seek to use it in the propagation of a Gospel that announces deliverance from that very world.** I understand it is not popular to say such things, but they must be said. Those who drape their religion with the world’s wisdom demand an explanation for such statements, but

BY
“ . . . but by . . . ” Other versions read, “but in,”^{NASB} “according to,”^{NIV} and “on the.”^{NJB} From the standpoint of empowerment and enablement, it is “**by**.” From the perspective of the environment, it is “**in**.” From the viewpoint of reliance or dependency, it is “**on**.”

This phrase equates to saying “by the means of.” It also means “in accordance or harmony with,” and “while depending and relying upon.”

Paul fulfilled his ministry not “with fleshly wisdom,” but with the only acceptable alternative. There is, then, an acceptable way to minister in the name of

environ in which true ministry is accomplished. What ever is done in the name of the Lord must be strict harmony with God’s grace, and never be at variance with it. That is, it must at no point rely upon human resources, worldly wisdom, or the mind of the flesh.

Further, the person who ministers must depend upon the grace of God. It is God’s grace that makes us what we are in Christ (1 Cor 15:10). The grace of God is what effectively teaches us deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Tit 2:12). We initially believed “through grace” (Acts 18:27). Grace is what saved us (Eph 2:5,8), and will bring the fulness of salvation to us (Acts 15:11). Justification has come to us “freely by His grace” (Rom 3:24). Our forgiveness is “according to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7). Everlasting consolation and good hope has been brought to us “through grace” (2 Thess 2:16). **Why should it surprise anyone that an efficacious ministry is “by the grace of God?”** God has said enough on this subject to remove all doubt about it.

Grace is the Divinely appointed repository from which the resources are supplied, and the acceptable environ in which true ministry is accomplished. What ever is done in the name of the Lord must be strict harmony with God’s grace, and never be at variance with it.

we will give them none. It is they that must provide the explanation. They must account for their recourse to a well from which God forbids us to draw. They must explain why they continue to court what God has plainly and openly declared is “foolishness.” How is it that they seek to buttress the proclamation of things that cannot pass away with the frail timbers of withering wisdom? The Apostle had separated himself from this world’s wisdom, refusing to use it in the proclamation of the Gospel. Now he will tell us how he maintains his efforts.

the Lord, and here it is declared.

THE GRACE OF GOD
“ . . . the grace of God . . . ”

Valid ministry is by means of God’s grace, which supplies all of the gifts and abilities required for kingdom labors. Therefore, those who minister in any effective capacity are said to be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Grace is the Divinely appointed repository from which the resources are supplied, and the acceptable

It ought to be noted that where the grace of God is not known, or where it is rarely mentioned, whatever purposed ministry has been done and received, it has **not** been “by the grace of God.” **When people have received a ministry that has been directed and empowered by the grace of God, they will make much of that grace.** Such people will be conversant with the grace of God, and entertain joyful contemplations of it. They will speak highly or grace and seek more of it. I do not believe it is possible to effectively contradict this observation.

OUR CONVERSATION IN THE WORLD

“^{12d} . . . we have had our conversation in the world . . .”

Paul widens his consideration, not

limiting it to what he has taught. **His ministry was buttressed with a manner of life that, beyond all controversy, had been impacted by**

the grace of God. The requirement for slaves was fulfilled in him: “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10).

Elsewhere Paul said this same thing in other words. *“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe”* (1 Thess 2:10). And again, *“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you”* (2 Thess 3:7).

This is an elaboration of the arena in which Paul maintained the demeanor of *“simplicity and godly sincerity.”*

OUR CONVERSATION

“ . . . we have had our conversation . . . ” Other versions read, *“we conducted ourselves in the world,”* NKJV *“we have behaved ourselves in the world,”* NRSV *“our way of life in the world,”* BBE *“we have conversed in this world,”* DOUAY *“we have always behaved towards everyone,”* NJB *“we have acted toward everyone,”* NLT and *“we have had our manner of life.”* Webster

The Meaning of the Word

The word *“conversation”* is translated from the Greek word ἀνεστρέφην (an-es-tref-of-amen), which lexically means *“manner of life, behavior, conduct . . . life as it is comprised in conduct,”* THAYER *“a way of life, conduct, behavior,”* FRIBERG *“to conduct oneself, with apparent focus upon daily behavior,”* LOUW-NIDA *“a mode of life.”* LIDDELL-SCOTT

When referring to *“speaking,”* the English word *“conversation”* means *“an informal spoken exchange of news between two or more people,”* OXFORD *“oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, or ideas.”* MERRIAM-WEBSTER This is **NOT** the meaning of the word *“conversation”* in Scripture. Most standard dictionaries identify the *“obsolete”* meaning of the word as *“conduct, behavior”* – *“obsolete”* meaning people today do not ordinarily use the word in this way. However, this is a good word, and it behooves us to be acquainted with its meaning. **We will find that the words “conduct” and “behavior” are not large enough to hold the Spirit’s meaning of the word used in this text.**

A brief review of how this word is used in Scripture will shed light on the verse before us. The following verse contains the Greek word in the precise verb form as our text.

☛ *“Among whom also we all had our **conversation** in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others”* (Eph 2:3). Other versions read, *“conducted ourselves,”* NKJV *“lived,”* NASB *“conversed,”* DOUAY *“manner of life,”* Webster and *“walk.”* YLT

There are also other texts that use this same Greek word, yet are translated in a slightly different manner.

☛ *“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). Other versions read *“conduct yourself.”* NKJV/NIV

(2 Pet 2:18). Other versions read, *“are living,”* BBE *“walk,”* DARBY *“wrapped in,”* GENEVA and *“conducting.”* YLT

In the Old Testament Scriptures

The word *“conversation”* is used twice in the King James Bible, and carries the same general meaning as in the New Testament Scriptures.

- ☛ *“The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright **conversation**”* (Psa 37:14). Other versions read, *“conduct,”* NKJV *“ways,”* NIV *“walk,”* NRSV *“of heart,”* DOUAY *“conduct,”* NAU and *“do.”* NLT
- ☛ *“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his*

When referring to “speaking,” the English word “conversation” means “an informal spoken exchange of news between two or more people,” OXFORD “oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, or ideas.” MERRIAM-WEBSTER This is NOT the meaning of the word “conversation” in Scripture.

☛ *“Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to **live** honestly”* (Heb 13:18). Other versions read, *“conduct ourselves,”* NASB *“act,”* NRSV *“walk,”* DARBY and *“behave.”* DOUAY

☛ *“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, **pass** the time of your sojourning here in fear”* (1 Pet 1:17). Other versions read, *“conduct,”* NKJV *“live,”* NIV *“go in,”* BBE *“converse,”* DOUAY and *“live out.”* NJB

☛ *“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who **live** in error”*

***conversation** aright will I show the salvation of God”* (Psa 50:23). Other versions read, *“conduct,”* NKJV *“way,”* NASB *“go,”* NRSV *“ways,”* BBE *“keep to my path,”* NLT and *“deportment.”* Webster

As used by Moses and the Prophets the word translated *“conversation”* has the same general meaning. It is ordinarily translated *“way”* (over 700 times), and means *“course of life or mode of action, custom, journey, road, manner, or toward.”* STRONG’S

The largeness of this word is seen in the different nuances that are emphasized in the various translations. All of these nuances are inherent in the word. Some translators chose to emphasize one or more of them. Others selected the word *“conversation,”* which,

to them, provided for more consideration. Here are the emphases as seen in various translations.

- ☛ Conduct
- ☛ Living
- ☛ Conversing
- ☛ Manner
- ☛ Walking
- ☛ Behavior
- ☛ Acting
- ☛ Going in
- ☛ Living out
- ☛ Wrapped in
- ☛ Way
- ☛ Of the heart
- ☛ Doing
- ☛ Keeping to the path
- ☛ Deportment

“Conversation” involves the DIRECTION in which we are living –

The Meaning

Paul is saying that “simplicity and godly sincerity” were found in every facet of his life. It was not simply his “pulpit manner,” or the way he conducted himself when he was around fellow believers. He maintained this posture of life before Agrippa and Felix as well as Luke and Epaphroditus. He held to this way in the market place in Athens, on a boat with prisoners and government officials, or among the churches. This is how he lived – all of the time.

IN THE WORLD

“... in the world ...”

“The world” is the fallen realm – where sin and death have entered (Rom 5:12). From the standpoint of language “world” means the universe (Rom 1:20), the inhabitants

referred to Satan as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31), and taught the Spirit would convince men Satan had already been “judged” (John 16:11). He said He chose His disciples “out of the world” (John 15:19).

The Apostles Spoke of This World

The Holy Spirit moved Christ’s Apostles to speak of “this world” in a certain way. Those in Christ are not to be “conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2). God has made foolish “the wisdom of this world” (1 Cor 1:20), and portrayed its “princes” among those who “crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8). Saints are to “use this world,” and not abuse it or allow it to dominate them (1 Cor 7:31). Following the “course of this world” constitutes one a child or wrath (Eph 2:2-3). We “brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Tim 6:7).

“Conversation” involves the DIRECTION in which we are living – toward God or toward self. It identifies THE WAY on which we are traveling – toward destruction or toward eternal life. There is a certain PROGRESSION in “conversation” – becoming more like the Son of God, or more like the world.

Believers are crucified “unto the world, and the world unto” them (Gal 6:14). The “rudiments [or fundamental points of reason] of the world” tend to spoil and corrupt the people of God (Col 2:8). Solemnly we are told to “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). They are to remain “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). “Friendship with the world” constitutes one “the enemy of God” (James 4:4). The “spirit of antichrist” is “in the world” (1 John 4:3). The person who is “born of God” overcomes “the world” (1 John 5:4). Many deceivers are “entered into the world” (2 John 1:7).

toward God or toward self. It identifies THE WAY on which we are traveling – toward destruction or toward eternal life. There is a certain PROGRESSION in “conversation” – becoming more like the Son of God, or more like the world. What is IN THE HEART is lived out in our “conversation” – whether it is corruption or living water. There is a certain MIND-SET that dictates our “conversation” – citizenship in heaven or friends of this present evil world. Our “conversation” is shaped by the focus of our CONSCIENCE – an acute awareness of God, or a desire for the things that are in the world.

“Conversation” involves a dialog of life. That is, there is a message being delivered by the manner in which we live – a manner that helps or hinders, blesses or curses, strengthens or debilitates. Our aim is to make it a good message.

of the earth (1 Cor 4:9), the whole mass of men alienated from God (Rom 3:19), the entire defiled moral realm (1 John 2:15-16), and the domain occupied by humanity (Rom 5:12-13).

More precisely, “the world” is the domain over which Satan has been given temporary rule. He is, in this sense, “the God of THIS world” (2 Cor 4:4).

Jesus Spoke of This World

Jesus said of “the cares of THIS world” “choke the Word,” so that it becomes unfruitful (Matt 13:22). He spoke of “the end of this world” (Matt 13:40) and “the children of this world” (Lk 16:8). He declared that He was not “not of this world” (John 8:23), and that His kingdom was “not of this world” (John 18:36). He affirmed that our life “in this world” was to be “hated” if we were to possess eternal life (John 12:25). Jesus

I hardly see how it is possible for the Lord to have spoken with any more clarity about the world – “this world.” **In view of what has been declared, how ought we to live “in the world?”** What kind of demeanor ought to be found in us? Is it in any way right for a child of God to adopt the manners of this world? Can such a posture of life be defended? Is it proper for any professing believer to be more knowledgeable of this world than of matters pertaining to life and godliness? Should it be difficult to determine who is of God and who is of this world?

These questions ought to be pressed upon the church, for there is too much world in it. The spot of the world is found upon its programs, its ministers, its

music, and its appearance. Such a condition is altogether unacceptable.

Paul affirms that the godly virtues of *“simplicity and godly sincerity”* were dominant in his life *“in the world.”* *“Holiness and sincerity”*^{ASV} accompanied him in the market place, the synagogue, and among the brethren. *“Unalloyed holiness that comes from God”*^{NJB} was his manner whether sailing with prisoners, on an island with barbarians, or in the school of Tyrannus.

At no point are the followers of Jesus allowed to step out of the posture of “strangers and pilgrims” and lives as though they belong in this world. They are not allowed to vacate the role of a disciple in their appearance, their words, or their deeds. This is not something to be enforced by rules and regulations imposed by men – and that is not the intention of these words. It is, however, incumbent that we remember *“God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing,*

The knowledge of these things, together with the persuasion of love for the Savior, compelled Paul to be spiritually consistent in the entirety of his life – never departing from the norm of faith and hope.

whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecc 12:14). Make no mistake about this, *“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known”* (Luke 12:2). The Lord will eventually “make manifest the counsels of the heart” (1 Cor 4:5), *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (2 Cor 5:10).

The knowledge of these things, together with the persuasion of love for the Savior, compelled Paul to be spiritually consistent in

the entirety of his life – never departing from the norm of faith and hope. He lived in this manner everywhere, and before everyone.

Let pretension, guile, and deception be altogether put behind us. Let there be a zeal for keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, and maintaining a conscience that testifies of singleness of heart and purity before God. How sorely the world needs to behold such a witness. Beside this, it is a requirement for ministering in the name of the Lord – it is even essential for entering into heaven.

MORE ABUNDANTLY TO YOU-WARD

^{12c} **“ . . . and more abundantly to you-ward.”**

While *“simplicity and godly sincerity”* characterized Paul in all places and before all people, there were times when they reached a sort of crescendo, and when they were displayed in an extended manner. **Some environments were more conducive to their reception, and provided a context in which they could more readily express themselves.**

MORE ABUNDANTLY

“ . . . and more abundantly . . . ”

Other versions read, *“especially,”*^{NASB/NIV} *“all the more,”*^{NRSV} *“still more,”*^{RSV} *“most of all,”*^{BBE} and *“supremely.”*^{ESV}

The expression *“more abundantly”* is translated from a single word that means “more, in a greater degree; more earnestly, more exceedingly,”^{THAYER} “greater degree, so much (the) more, far more, especially, all the more, more earnestly,”^{FRIEBERG} and “a degree which is considerable in excess of some point . . . very great,

excessive, emphatic, surpassing, all the more, much greater.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

This too is a kingdom manner: **there are individuals toward whom, and places in which, more of the life of God can be expressed.** Moses saw more of God than the Israelites (Psa 103:7). Ezekiel excelled in *“visions of God”* (Ezek 1:1; 8:3; 40:1). As one *“greatly beloved,”* Daniel was given special insights not given to others (Dan 9:23). Jesus told His disciples MORE than He did the multitudes (Mk 4:11,34). Paul received an *“abundance of revelations”* (2 Cor 12:7). The generation to whom Jesus spoke received more than the one to whom Jonah spoke (Matt 12:41). Those who heard Jesus heard more than those who heard Solomon (Matt 12:42). Nicodemus was given to hear more than the other Pharisees (John 3:1-21). When Christ upon on the earth, Peter, James, and John were exposed to more than the other nine Apostles (Matt 17:1; Mark 5:37; Mk 14:33). On one occasion, Peter saw more in Jesus that the others (Matt

16:16-17).

There are individuals toward whom Paul’s guileless life was more expressive – those toward whom the river flowed more abundantly from his inmost person. More, for example, was divulged to the Philippians concerning Christ’s humiliation (Phil 2:6-8), and Paul’s motivation (Phil 3:7-14). Now the Apostle will affirm the Corinthians had received more from him than others.

TO YOU-WARD

“ . . . to you-ward.” Other versions read, *“in our relations with you,”*^{NIV} and *“in relation to you.”*^{BBE}

The expression *“to you-ward,”* or *“toward you,”* means more than simply addressing something to the people. **It rather implies the teaching was tailored for the Corinthians, to give them certain spiritual advantages.** Paul did not simply throw words up into the air, letting them fall where they may. A lot of preaching and teaching that I

have heard is much like that – hurling a fistful of sorted words into the air. There appears to be little objective or aim in the speaking, with no one particularly in mind. This was not the manner of the Apostle, or anyone else who is moved to speak by *“the spirit of faith”* (2 Cor 4:13).

If we are speaking of the **length of time** the Corinthians were exposed to Paul’s preaching, it was more than *“a year and six months”* (Acts 18:11). *“And more abundantly to youward!”* If we are speaking of the **volume of writing** addressed to them, it was twenty-nine chapters (sixteen in First Corinthians,

and thirteen in Second Corinthians). By way of comparison, note the number of chapters written others: Romans–16, Galatians–6, Ephesians–6, Philippians–4, Colossians–4, Thessalonians–8 (5+3), Timothy– 10 (6+4), Titus– 3, Hebrews–13, and Philemon–1. Of the seventy-one chapters written to believers by Paul, twenty-nine were written to the Corinthians – 41%! *“And more abundantly to youward!”*

Of all the people to whom Paul ministered, the Corinthians should have had no reason to question his Apostleship. Yet, they

ranked among the greatest of all doubters in this regard. It is no wonder Paul was concerned about them being turned aside by the devil (2 Cor 11:3).

A Principle

Those who are exposed to more truth are expected to be leaders in the love and reception of that truth. Such exposures are not common, nor are they to be treated with disdain. It is ever true, *“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more”* (Luke 12:48).

WE WRITE

“¹³ For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end.”

As it characteristic of anyone who is working together with God, **Paul has a profound desire to be understood.** Among other things, this confirms that he

or the Spirit of God, is the absence of a desire to be understood, and fore the hearers to benefit from the words that are spoken. Under the direction of the wicked one, spiritual Babylon has raised up an environment in which people have little or no regard for spiritual understanding. In fact, if anything is placed before the people that

nothing other,^{NRSV} *“in our letters we say no other things to you,”*^{BBE} and *“my letters have been straightforward.”*^{NLT}

The idea here is that Paul; has not departed from *“simplicity and godly sincerity”* in his writings. He has placed a limitation on what he writes, and will specify that limitation in the clause that follows. **Among other things, this confirms that Paul was not promoting some sort of private agenda that was unrelated to the purpose of God and the true needs of His people.**

When it comes to godly communications, there are limitations – spiritual boundaries beyond which godly and discerning men will not go. However, where private or institutional intentions are being served, there are no such limitations. The aim, in such cases, is not to advantage the people of God, but to contribute to the welfare of the one or ones whose purpose is being served.

READING OR ACKNOWLEDGING

“ . . . than what ye read or acknowledge . . . ” Other versions read, *“than what you read and understand,”*^{NKJV} *“anything you cannot read or understand,”*^{NIV} *“what you can read and also understand,”*^{NRSV} *“those which you are reading, and to which you give agreement,”*^{BBE} *“what ye well know and recognize,”*^{DARBY} *“what you have read and known,”*^{DOUAY} *“there is nothing that you cannot read*

One of the sure marks of a person without a message from God or the Spirit of God, is the absence of a desire to be understood, and fore the hearers to benefit from the words that are spoken.

was not tickling *“itching ears,”* or spouting a sectarian line that placated uninformed people. Neither, indeed, was he a religious entertainer. He did not desire the reception Ezekiel received – which reception Ezekiel did not want. *“And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not”* (Ezek 33:32).

One of the sure marks of a person without a message from God

challenges their thinking or requires some sound judgment, the people draw back as though something unlawful has occurred.

Let us learn from Paul’s example to say things that can only bring advantage when they are understood.

WE WRITE NONE OTHER THINGS

“For we write none other things unto you . . . ” Other versions read, *“we are not writing any other things to you,”*^{NKJV} *“we write nothing else to you,”*^{NASB} *“we do not write you anything,”*^{NIV} *“we write*

clearly and understand,"^{NJB} and "there is nothing written between the lines and nothing you can't understand."^{NLT}

The word "acknowledge" comes from a word that means "to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, to know accurately, know well,"^{THAYER} "to recognize, know, perceive, notice, become aware of, acknowledge, understand,"^{FRIEBERG} and "to possess knowledge with a degree of thoroughness or competence."^{LOUW-NIDA}

The point Paul is making is this: "What I have said about myself – my simplicity and godly sincerity – is very apparent to everyone you knows me, you Corinthians included. No one can successively charge me with being insincere, for I have experienced disadvantages because of what I preach, not earthly advantages." **In other words, Paul's words were fully supported by his life and manners.** He bore no resemblance in any way to those who "commend themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and compared themselves among themselves" (2 Cor 10:12).

I ought to note that the writing of reference is not confined to Paul's comments about himself. **The greater context of his writing was the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.** Paul's comments about himself and his motivation are within this greater context. **Were it not for the message of the Gospel and its implications, Paul would not have said a word about himself.** If his Apostleship had not been questioned, he would never have engaged in this dialog. The exposition of Christ Jesus and the realities of redemption were Paul's focus. I will reserve some comments concerning the overall thrust of Paul's writing for the conclusion of this lesson.

Paul has the very Spirit of the exalted Christ, refusing to write in veiled and difficult to understand words. You will recall that Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25). Whether speaking of the Person of Christ, or of his own ministry, Paul spoke and wrote plainly, meaning exactly what he said. This was confirmed by his manner of life while among the Corinthians, as well as everywhere else.

It is to be apparent to the honest heart that the labors of God's "workman" are not self-serving or self-honoring. No one should be left suspecting the motives or

acknowledge,"^{ESV} "I hope that you will understand completely,"^{NAB} "I hope someday you will fully understand us."^{NLT}

To "acknowledge to the end" is to see the whole picture, or grasp the entire message. It is not to miss anything, but obtain the full benefit. **Paul desired that the people understand him as well as his message.** He wanted them to know his motives as well as the mystery he had been given to see and proclaim. A person who is walking in the flesh cannot have such desires, much less speak them. Carnal people do not want to be discovered or have their motives made known.

J.B. Phillips' translation of the Epistles does a good job of conveying the

In other words, Paul's words were fully supported by his life and manners. He bore no resemblance in any way to those who "commend themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and compared themselves among themselves"

ambitions of the person who speaks or writes in the name of the Lord.

I TRUST

" . . . and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end." Other versions read, "Now I trust you will even understand to the end,"^{NKJV} "I hope you will understand until the end,"^{NASB} "I hope you understand fully,"^{RSV} "and, it is my hope, will go on doing so to the end,"^{BBE} "I hope that you shall know unto the end,"^{DOUAY} "I hope you will fully

thought of this passage. "Our letters to you have no double meaning – they mean just what you understand them to mean when you read them. We hope you will always understand these letters."^{LETTERS TO YOUNG CHURCHES, 1955} Whether Paul was rebuking, comforting, exhorting, instructing, or testifying of his manner of life, he was "speaking the truth in love," veiling nothing, and always opening his heart. It is ever true that "honest and good" hearts are never afraid of being discovered.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT IN PART

"¹⁴ **As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.**"

Here we deal with, what might be called, pious or devout glorying. It is not

the glorying in men that is strictly forbidden. As it is written, "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours" (1 Cor 3:21). However, there is a glorying, or boasting, that is permitted when our hearts are dominated by a love for God and a desire to please Him alone. In such a posture we rise into lofty realms

that cannot be occupied by those who walk in the flesh and seek to please men. What is more, **these things can only be understood by those who have ceased to live for themselves, and are living for the One who loved them and gave Himself for them.** To all others, the words that follow will

The most noble Kingdom work can be "helped" by those who are in Christ Jesus– by Given O. Blakely

necessarily gender confusion.

ACKNOWLEDGE IN PART

“As also ye have acknowledged us in part . . .” Other versions read, *“you have understood us in part,”* ^{NKJV} *“you also partially understood us,”* ^{NASB} *“you have understood us in part,”* ^{NIV} *“you have already understood us in part,”* ^{NRSV} *“ye have recognized us in part,”* ^{DARBY} and *“even if you don’t fully understand us now.”* ^{NLT}

Paul means the Corinthians,

declared He wanted to be known, and the person who knew Him could delight in the fact that he did know the Lord (Jer 9:23-24). The Lord Jesus *“is come to give us understanding, that we might know Him that is true”* (1 John 5:20). The Lord Jesus said the person who loved Him and kept His word would enjoy His presence, and that He would manifest, or make Himself known, to such a person (John 14:23). **That is the way the Lord is – He delights to be known.**

Now Paul reveals that he has the

acquaintance with the Apostle whom some of them were presently doubting.

YE ALSO ARE OURS

“ . . . even as ye also are ours . . .”

Other versions read, *“as we will boast of you,”* ^{NIV} *“as you are our boast,”* ^{NRSV} *“The same way that you are ours,”* ^{BBE} *“as we will boast of you,”* ^{ESV} and *“in the same way was we are proud of you.”* ^{NLT}

The rejoicing and boasting would not be limited to the Corinthians reaction to Paul. **Paul affirms a time when he would rejoice that he had known them**, even though their relationship in this world had once proved to be troublesome. There was a time coming when he would be proud he knew them, and boast in the fact that he did.

It should be obvious that the boasting and glorying of reference does not take place in this world. However, lest that prove to be too difficult to receive, the next expression clarifies this to be the case.

IN THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS

“ . . . in the day of the Lord Jesus.” All standard translations use these same words. Other versions read, *“when the day of the Lord Jesus comes,”* ^{NJB} *“when our Lord Jesus comes back again.”* ^{NLT}

The *“day of the Lord Jesus”* is the day when God will *“show”* Him, unveiling Him in all of His glory. Presently, the Lord Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, exalted above all. Yet, this is not obvious to the flesh. It is a reality perceptible only to faith, the faculty by which we *“see Him who is invisible,”* together with realities inaccessible to the flesh. Of the day of Christ’s showing it is written, *“That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen”* (1 Tim 6:14-16). That time is *“the day of the Lord Jesus.”*

Paul is speaking of a time when the Corinthians would rejoice their paths had crossed his own. It would be a time when they would boast that they had known and been taught by him. There would be a time when they would glory in their acquaintance with the Apostle whom some of them were presently doubting.

however well they may have thought they knew him, **only knew him partially**. They had not grasped the fulness of the scope of his understanding of the kingdom. They had not plumbed the depths of his profound love for Christ. They did not know the extent to which he had abandoned all competing interests, and the degree to which he was pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They only saw the border of his deep love and concern for them, their growth, and their obtainment of the fulness of eternal life.

There partial understanding was not owing to any reluctance on the part of Paul to make himself known. As he will state later, he would *“very gladly spend and be spent”* for them (2 Cor 12:15). **They could have known much more about Paul and his insights than they did.** Yet, Paul rejoices in even their partial knowledge of his person, manner of life, and message.

The desire of Paul to be known by those he taught reflected the very character of God and the Lord Jesus Themselves. The Lord takes great delight in being known, and extends Himself to that end. Through Jeremiah the Lord

same attitude – certainly not one that was obtained from Adam, or is inherent in the natural man. Men make efforts to conceal who they really are, veiling their motives, and hiding their intentions. But when a person becomes a laborer together with God, such traits are removed. This was so true of Paul that he rejoiced in being even partially known. He knew that such knowledge would enable the people to begin to receive what He had been given by God to declare.

WE ARE YOUR REJOICING

“ . . . that we are your rejoicing . . .”

Other versions read, *“that we are your boast,”* ^{NKJV} *“that we are your reason to be proud,”* ^{NASB} *“that you can boast of us,”* ^{NIV} *“we are your glorying,”* ^{ASV} and *“we are your rejoicing.”* ^{GENEVA}

The language almost seems too strong – a man being one’s *“rejoicing,”* *“boast,”* *“reason to be proud,”* and *“your glorifying.”* Yet, that is precisely what is here affirmed. **Paul is speaking of a time when the Corinthians would rejoice their paths had crossed his own.** It would be a time when they would boast that they had known and been taught by him. There would be a time when they would glory in their

This is *“the day of the Lord Jesus,”* when being *“saved”* will be the critical matter (1 Cor 5:5). It is the time when the Lord Jesus will *“come as a thief in the night”* (1 Thess 5:2). This is the day when *“the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”* (2 Pet 3:10).

This is the time when you want to be found *“blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor 1:8). Personally, you want to be able to *“rejoice in the day of Christ,”* that you have not *“run in vain, neither labored in vain”* (Phil 2:16). This is the time of Christ’s *“appearing”* (1 Tim 6:14) – the time when the Lord Jesus Christ *“shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom”* (1 Cor 1:7; 2 Tim 4:1). It is the time for which believers are waiting (1 Thess 1:10), *“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:13; Phil 3:20).

That is the day when the Corinthians will be able to boast in Paul –

Our labors also are to be driven by the expectancy of the day of the Lord Jesus. It is then that the validity and effectiveness of our labors will be confirmed, and appropriate rewards ministered.

the *“minister”* by whom they believed (1 Cor 3:5). On that day, the Corinthians in whom faith is found will be rejoice they knew Paul! They will boast of his presence, his message, and his willingness to spend and be spent. The message he brought put the salvation of God within their reach.

The day of the Lord will cause Paul to rejoice in the Corinthians that held on their way. He will be able to say of them as of the Thessalonians, *“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”* (1 Thess 2:19). He will boast in them, in

their faith, and in the forwardness to believe the Gospel. Those taught by Paul, who have held *“forth the word of life”* in this world will cause him to *“rejoice in the day of Christ”* that he did not *“run in vain, neither labor in vain”* (Phil 2:16).

We do well to anticipate the day of the Lord, and all of the things that will be made known at that time. The validity of our labors and commitment will be made known. **Our labors also are to be driven by the expectancy of the day of the Lord Jesus. It is then that the validity and effectiveness of our labors will be confirmed, and appropriate rewards ministered.**

CONCLUSION

The marvelous interdependence that is found in the body of Christ is orchestrated by the Lord Jesus for the profit of His people and the glory of God. It is edifying to consider that the most noble and advanced works of the Kingdom are *“helped”* by the prayers of the saints. As they, by prayer and supplication, put their hands on the plow of Kingdom activity, the reigning Savior moves to distribute insight, grace, and power for the accomplishment of His will.

All of this occurs in an environment of spiritual openness

and liberality. The *“love of the truth”* is maintained in a surrounding of brotherly love and an earnest quest for heaven. As these things work together, the *“spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind”* assume a prominent role, and the things of this present evil world recede into the background.

It is also important to see now understanding – *“spiritual understanding”* – is an essentiality to a productive and God-honoring environment. Ignorance regarding the things of God is something from which we are delivered in Christ

Jesus. **The professed church must cease from its tendency to develop “specialized ministries” that leave people in the dark concerning kingdom realities.** We have too many youth, young married couples, singles, etc. who are inordinately ignorant about the things of God. They have become the victims of programs that are driven by the wisdom of the world and have objectives that are too low.

All of this is relevant to the text we have just reviewed. The last segment of the text dealt with the *“acknowledgment,”* or understanding, of what Paul had written. Earlier I mentioned that **Paul wrote within the greater context of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.** That is why it is now appropriate to associate *“understanding,”* or *“acknowledgment,”* with that circumstance. Paul is to be understood in the light salvation.

The professed church must cease from its tendency to develop “specialized ministries” that leave people in the dark concerning kingdom realities.

Concerning understanding Paul wrote, *“For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand”*^{NIV} (2 Cor 1:13). Because of the unacceptable level of understanding within the nominal church, I must draw attention to the things that Paul wrote – things that were *“not anything”* the Corinthian believers – all of them – could not read and understand. As I make a partial list of these items, it will become apparent to you that there is hardly any understanding of them at all in the common church. There are vast segments of believers who know little or nothing of these things. Yet, they are matters concerning which no provision has been made for ignorance.

- ☛ Immorality is not acceptable in any way in the church – 1 Cor 5:1-11
- ☛ Those who preach the Gospel ought to be supported in their endeavors – 1 Cor 9:7-14.
- ☛ The church is not to respond to Divine direction like Israel – 1 Cor 10:1-12
- ☛ Conduct at the Lord’s table – 1 Cor 10:16-22; 11:24-32.
- ☛ Spiritual gifts – 1 Cor 11-14
- ☛ The resurrection of the dead – 1 Cor 15:12-56
- ☛ The reason for trouble – 2 Cor 1:3–10; 4:6-18
- ☛ The distinction of the New Covenant

Any ministry that does not in some way contribute to this kind of understanding is not valid, regardless of its appearance. In fact, such activity is a deterrent. Make it your aim to be a person through whom God can work, building up His people and readying them for the day of judgment and a consequent reign with Jesus. These are areas in which no church is to remain deficient.

– 2 Cor 3:6-18

- ☛ The reason for the Gospel being hidden to those who do not believe – 2 Cor 4:3-4
- ☛ The resurrection body – 2 Cor 5:1-8
- ☛ The constraining power of the love of Christ – 2 Cor 5:14-16
- ☛ The effectiveness and implications of reconciliation – 2 Cor 5:17-21
- ☛ The role of the saints in the day of judgment – 2 Cor 6:1-3
- ☛ The means of Divine approval in our ministries – 2 Cor 6:4-10
- ☛ The necessity of holiness – 2 Cor 6:14-7:1
- ☛ Restoring the fallen – 7:9-16

- ☛ Reasoning about financial giving – 2 Cor 8:1-9:15
- ☛ Spiritual weaponry – 2 Cor 10:3-6
- ☛ The purpose for Paul’s ministry – 2 Cor 11:1-7
- ☛ A reason for bodily infirmity – 2 Cor 12:1-11

This is family language, and no member of the family should count it a strange thing. Any ministry that does not in some way contribute to this kind of understanding is not valid, regardless of its appearance. In fact, such activity is a deterrent. **Make it your aim to be a person through whom God can work, building up His people and readying them for the day of judgment and a consequent reign with Jesus.** These are areas in which no church is to remain deficient.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 7/9/2004. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The fifth lesson will cover verses fifteen through seventeen of the first chapter: **“A SECOND BENEFIT.”** There is no such thing as static, or inactive, life in Christ Jesus. There is such a thing as a **“second benefit,”** or **“experience of grace.”**^{ESV} We will explore this Kingdom reality, and confirm its advantages. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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