

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 #22

COMMENTARY ON: 5:6-10

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

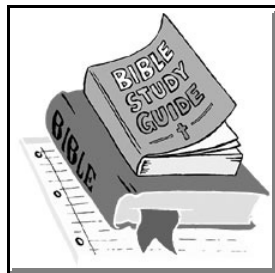
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

MINISTERING IN CONFIDENCE

One of the curses of a merely academic approach to preaching and teaching, is that it does not gender the full assurance of faith. However, such confidence is needed if the work of the Lord is to be done. In this passage, Paul testifies to the possession of such confidence. That assurance relates to the experience that is common to all who are in Christ Jesus – the possession of the treasure of the knowledge of the glory of God in an earthen vessel. What appears to the flesh to be a source of doubt and fear is actually the very basis for a strong and stable confidence.

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"



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The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 22



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

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

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

MINISTERING IN CONFIDENCE

“^{5:6} Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: ⁷ (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) ⁸ We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. ⁹ Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. ¹⁰ 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 5:6-10)

INTRODUCTION

Paul is engaged in spiritual reasoning – **“handling aright the Word of truth.”** The basis of his reasoning is the nature and effectiveness of the New Covenant. It is a covenant of “life,” through which fellowship with the Lord and participation in His work are realized (2 Cor 3:3,6). It is a covenant of “glory,” providing a means through which men are changed into the image of the Lord – God’s Son (2 Cor 3:7,9,18). This is

a covenant in which God is known, for, the Lord says, **“for all shall know Me, from, the least to the greatest”** (Heb 8:11). This consists of **“the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,”** and is **“shined into our hearts”** by God Himself (2 Cor 4:6). The knowledge is referred to as a **“treasure,”** and is maintained in weak **“earthen vessels.”** The arrangement is in order **“that the excellency of the power may be**

of God, and not of us” (2 Cor 4:7). This is the perspective of our text.

THE OUTCOME OF DICHOTOMY

The outcome of this dichotomy (a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel) is that contradicting influences have gained access to us by means of our **“earthen vessels.”** Thus the saints experience, **“trouble on every side,”** being **“perplexed,”** **“persecuted,”** and **“cast**

A strong and stable confidence is essential to the effective preaching and teaching of the Gospel – by Given O. Blakely

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down.” Confirming the superiority of this glorious treasury of spiritual knowledge, however, we are “*not distressed,*” “*not perplexed,*” “*not in despair,*” and “*not destroyed*” (2 Cor 4:7-8).

SIMULTANEOUS EXPERIENCES

In addition to these experiences from without, there are two contradicting experiences occurring **within** the child of God. Both “*the dying of the Lord Jesus*” and the “*life also of Jesus Christ*” are being realized within. The “*dying of the Lord Jesus*” is accomplished in the severing of our affection from this world, the passing away of our mortal frame, and the various persecutions and oppositions that are leveled against it. “*The life also of Jesus*” is revealed in the day-by-day renewal of the “*inward man,*” which is gaining in both strength and perspective (2 Cor 4:10-12,16).

A RESULT

There are certain results that flow out from these dichotomous experiences. The first is that the “*spirit of faith*” moves those possessing it to speak what they have seen and heard (2 Cor 4:13;

Acts 4:20). This is done in the full persuasion “*that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with*” those who receive our testimony (2 Cor 3:14).

A CONCLUSION

Reasoning upon this, the Apostle concludes that our trials have actually been orchestrated by God in order that “*the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God*” (2 Cor 4:15). That is, Divine influences have been brought to bear upon men by the “*treasure*” within flowing out from the “*earthen vessels,*” in spite of fierce and relentless opposition.

AN OUTCOME

The realization of this empowers the Kingdom laborer to “*faint not,*” knowing that while the “*earthen vessel*” is, in fact, in a state of decreasing and deterioration, the “*inward man,*” in which the “*treasure*” resides, is gaining strength daily as the believer is being changed from one stage of glory to another, by the Spirit of God (2 Cor 4:16).

The consideration of these things lightens the weight of affliction, causing it to appear as nothing in comparison to the glory that awaits us. **That glory is rightly perceived as being in direct proportion to our sufferings for righteousness’ sake.** Our afflictions are, in fact, “*working for us*” as our employees. For every weight of suffering that is laid upon us, a “*greater,*” corresponding, and compensating “*weight of glory*” is laid up in heaven particularly for us (2 Cor 4:17).

THE REASON FOR APPARENCY

All of this becomes very apparent to us “*while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen*” – the things that are “*above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God*” (2 Cor 4:18; Col 3:1-2). When we

focus upon the things that are “*seen*” – (things to which our “*earthen vessels*” are subjected) – suffering becomes unbearable and unreasonable. However, as we fasten our attention on the “*unseen things*” – (things that can only be perceived by faith) – sufferings are seen as “*light*” and “*momentary,*” and thus become bearable. This analysis is produced by our conviction that “*the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*” (2 Cor 4:18b).

A PERSUASION

This form of reasoning is further buttressed by the persuasion that our tenure in these “*earthen vessels*” is not only temporary, but will yield to a condition in which we will inhabit a “*building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*” (2 Cor 5:1). **This is not something for which we merely wish, but something of which faith has convinced us.** It is something we “*know,*” and of which we have been joyfully persuaded.

A DEEP LONGING

This whole scenario, together with the acute awareness of what is happening in it, has provoked a deep longing within to be “*clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*” (2 Cor 5:2). We have come to know the absolute superiority of life – that it will some day “*swallow up*” death. Thus, we yearn for the time when death will give way to life, mortality will yield to immortality, and corruption will not be able to remain in the wake of incorruption.

Now, by faith, we see that God has, in fact, created us in Christ Jesus to put on immortality, and to dwell in a realm from which death, and everything related to it, has been excluded. Our spirits are being cultured for another body, and another world. In Christ, the connection with this world is severed, and an identity with the world to

That glory is rightly perceived as being in direct proportion to our sufferings for righteousness’ sake. Our afflictions are, in fact, “working for us” as our employees.

The manner in which Christian thinking is being shaped by religious sophists has caused much of Scripture to be beyond the reach of the average believer – and even uninterestingly so. However, the very tone of this passage (to say nothing of its content) demands that it be perceived as something that can and must be grasped.

come has being formed and is in the process of being matured. In order to facilitate our preparation for the time to come, when we will be clothed with our resurrection bodies, the Holy Spirit has been given to us as a pledge of the culmination is to come. He has come to us “from heaven” (1 Pet 1:12), being sent “into our hearts” to orient us for eternity (2 Cor 5:5; Gal 4:6).

A STRANGE SOUND

Behold how the Apostle has reasoned, and what he has affirmed to be the motivations, longings, and objectives of the people of God. Do they not have a strange sound amidst the religious jangling of our time? Do they fit in with the thrust of the religion of our day? **If this is a proper representation of spiritual emphasis, then much of what is flying under the banner of “Christianity” is nothing more than**

a miserable delusion! One is hard-pressed to find any modern Christian convention or special series of meetings that does not emphasize methodologies, interpersonal relationships, or major in promoting contemporary trends. It is as though Christ, the Gospel, and the New Covenant were no longer of any fundamental relevance. **This is, in my judgment, indicative of an extensive falling away that has taken place in our time.** It has been led by the scholastic leaders, book sellers, and lifeless institutions within the Christian community.

If this appears a bit strong, consider that the passage before us is actually neutralized by the thrust of contemporary religion. It looks as though it has little or no relevance. The manner in which Christian thinking is being shaped by religious sophists has caused

much of Scripture to be beyond the reach of the average believer – and even uninterestingly so. **However, the very tone of this passage (to say nothing of its content) demands that it be perceived as something that can and must be grasped.** When we are confronted with such things as the inevitable decay of our bodies, the appointed confrontation of the Lord Jesus, and the putting on of immortality, we can not afford to remain in the dark. **These are matters having to do with salvation itself.** They are not the pointless speculations of high minded and impractical theologians, and they must not be treated as though they were. We are dealing with absolute essentialities.

When we are in an environment that makes it difficult to grasp the truth, we are not in the proper place. When it comes to setting our affection on things above (Col 3:1-2), competing influences are confirmation that our adversary is near and at work – perhaps even in a “church” environment. **When other thoughts and desires surface, inviting us to ignore the things of God in preference for other things, the “fiery darts” of the evil one have been hurled at us.** Only “the shield of faith” will “quench” those “darts,” stopping them from infecting our thoughts (Eph 6:16) – and faith relies upon a word from God..

WE ARE ALWAYS CONFIDENT

“5:6a Therefore we are always confident . . .”

This is the reasoning of the “new man,” or “new creation.” Paul does not mean that a contrary thought never enters his mind, but that this is the posture of his real person – the “I myself” of Romans seven. Further, Paul is not speaking only of himself and those laboring with him. This is a statement that applies to those who “have this treasure in earthen vessels” (4:7) – those who are being changed “from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our God” (3:18). The “we” of this verse are those into whose hearts God has shined, “to

give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6). These are the ones whose “sufficiency is of God” (3:5), who “bear about” in their bodies “the dying of the Lord Jesus,” and in which “the life also of Jesus” is being manifested (4:10-11). These are the ones who are not fainting, who know their outward man is perishing, and that their inward man is being renewed day by day (4:16). They are the ones who, while looking at the things that are not seen, find their afflictions are perceived as momentary and light. This is done in view of the greater weight of glory that is being accrued for them in the glory (4:17-18).

Where these perceptions and experiences are not being realized, **this text will provide no comfort, and no nourishment for the soul.** It will not speak of anything common to those who are not fighting the good fight of faith. For that reason, and **only** for that reason, it will, to such souls, appear irrelevant. **That very condition signified that such people are in a state of lostness – profession notwithstanding.** This is not a mere speculation, and thus is not to be ignored. It is written, “*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are LOST: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest*

the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor 4:3-4). Let me also confirm that we are speaking about the message of the Gospel, the essential chronicle of the New Covenant, upon which all other teaching is based.

THEREFORE

"Therefore . . ." Other versions read "So,"^{NKJV} "Being therefore,"^{ASV} "So, then,"^{BBE} and "Now."^{LIVING}

The following is the reasoning of faith, based upon the foregoing statement: "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (2 Cor 5:5). If God has, in fact, "wrought," or "made us."^{NIV} to "put on immortality," inhabiting our resurrection body, or "house that is from heaven," faith immediately takes hold of that affirmation. **Faith is not content to merely embrace a theological position – it must DO something with the truth that has been affirmed.**

The anticipation of being "clothed upon" with our "house which is from heaven," will produce certain God-glorifying responses. If what is said is believed, fellowship with the Son will produce a certain mind-set. Where the condition that follows is not found, the stated truth has not been believed, and thus it is not perceived. Further, if the laws of God have, in fact, been written upon the heart and put into the mind, a profitable recognition of the truth will ensue, producing the following reaction. This is the nature of spiritual life.

WE ARE ALWAYS

". . . we are always . . ." Other versions read, "being always,"^{NASB} "we are ever,"^{BBE} "having always,"^{DOUAY} "being always,"^{NAU} "at all times,"^{YLT} and "we have."^{WEYMOUTH}

True spiritual life produces a certain consistency. Where inconsistency and wavering are found, unbelief is present, sitting upon the throne of the heart. As it is written, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. **For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.** For let not that man think that

he shall receive any thing of the Lord. **A double minded man is unstable in all his ways**" (James 1:6-8). Without dealing with the immediate context of James' statement, it is enough to see that wavering and instability are clearly contrasted with faith. These are qualities that cannot be joined to faith, or exist simultaneously with it. **When, therefore, a consistent spiritual life is depicted, it is always the result of faith, and is never traced to happenstance or cyclical occasions.** Because God Himself is unchangeable (Mal 3:6), and because Jesus Christ is "the same, yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8), it is not possible for faith to take up residence in an individual, and that person remain unstable and vacillating. That ought to be clear enough to require no further elaboration.

CONFIDENT

". . . confident . . ." Other versions read, "of good courage,"^{NASB} "without fear,"^{BBE} "always bold,"^{GENEVA} "courageous,"^{NAB} "look forward with confidence,"^{LIVING} "cheerful,"^{IE} "have a cheerful confidence,"^{WEYMOUTH} "cheerful and confident,"^{WILLIAMS} and "full of good hope and confident courage."^{AMPLIFIED}

which is from heaven, moves us into a state of assurance that what we have experienced is in synch with God's revealed objective. It only remains for that objective to be fulfilled in us, who have tasted of the appointed and satisfying foretaste of that purpose. In this way, God is working all things together for our ultimate good (Rom 8:28).

All of this means that Paul is writing about something that is fundamental to the life that is in Christ Jesus – the life that is lived by faith. This is not a novel view but an essential one. It is not something to be placed into the background of our thinking, but is to be brought into the foreground of thought, and purpose. **It is not possible to maintain proper views of God, Christ, and salvation without this consideration of the coming immortality.** A view of the Word of God that does not require this posture cannot possibly be right.

As is true of every aspect of faith's foundation, the matter of immortality can neither be defined nor clarified by the wisdom of men. Whatever value is thought to be found linguistics, historical

When, therefore, a consistent spiritual life is depicted, it is always the result of faith, and is never traced to happenstance or cyclical occasions.

Confidence is the exclusive quality of faith, for "faith is . . . the confidence of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1). This is a very real confidence that is founded upon a solid hope that anchors the soul (Heb 6:19). Here, the hope is that we have been destined to be clothed with immortality. Further, what we now have from God – a treasure in an earthen vessel and the earnest of the Spirit – has confirmed to our hearts that we do not belong in or to this present evil world. **The fact that we are groaning within, desiring to put on our house**

and cultural analyses, and human reasoning, withers and dies when it comes to the matter of putting on our "house which is from heaven." This matter is clarified by Apostolic doctrine, which confirms the reality of the intuitive knowledge of the "new man." **Only Divine statement can nourish faith.** The life that is conferred upon men in Jesus Christ can only be sustained by "every word of God" (Lk 4:4). As soon as that word becomes sparse, the new man begins to suffocate, for he cannot possible live with that vivifying word!

WHY WE ARE CONFIDENT

“^{6b} . . . *knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.*”

Unlike the instinct of the brute creation, spiritual confidence can be explained in words. Men can only speculate about the seeming confidence animals have in water, or that birds seem to have in their migratory flights over the ocean. God has not divulged the curious details of the impersonal creation. He has not told us precisely how the sea is normally confined within its boundaries,

complexities, is perceived as unrelated to the God of heaven, and to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, “*sound doctrine*” will be abandoned in favor religious procedures and regimens, neither of which require the input of both heart and mind.

Now Paul will explain why “*we are always confident.*” He will show that this remarkable confidence is not as mere human delusion. Nor, indeed, is it a sort of miraculous phenomenon that defies explanation.

In the Kingdom of God, only what is revealed by God can really be “known.” This is fundamental to sound theology. Further, the “knowledge” that is related with our salvation always pertains to intimate fellowship with God, and the awareness of what He has declared, or revealed.

or how and why the currents of both the sea and air are of such stability and consistency that voyages and flights can be based upon them. Men can only observe the creation, classify the knowledge, and draw some cursory observations.

However, when it comes to life in Christ Jesus, reasons and causes are expounded. Already the Spirit has moved Paul to provide an explanation of trouble, which ordinarily is confusing, and often appears illogical and without reason. **Of course, such explanations are only possible because salvation in all of its aspects is the deliberate and objective work of God.** Divine commentary is itself proof that God is in the matter, controlling, managing, and causing all things to “*work together for the good of them who love God and are the called according to His purpose*” (Rom 8:28). This is something that must, to some degree, be comprehended. As long as life, in all of its

KNOWING THAT

“ . . . *knowing that . . .*” Other versions read, “*and know that,*”^{NIV} “*even though we know,*”^{NRSV} “*though conscious that,*”^{BBE} “*realizing,*”^{NJB} and “*because I well know.*”^{MONTGOMERY}

In the Kingdom of God, only what is revealed by God can really be “known.” This is fundamental to sound theology. Further, the “*knowledge*” that is related with our salvation always pertains to intimate fellowship with God, and the awareness of what He has declared, or revealed. All other knowledge is inferior, and often even inimical, or aggressively hostile, toward spiritual knowledge. A few words on this will suffice to confirm this is the case.

The “*knowledge of God*” is the most advanced form of cognition. This is the knowledge that God makes known through His servants (2 Cor 2:14). It is the knowledge that is conferred in the new birth (2 Cor 4:6), and in which

true spiritual advancement is realized (Col 1:10). “*Grace and peace*” are ministered to us through this knowledge (2 Pet 1:2). All things “*that pertain to life and godliness*” come to us within the context of this knowledge (2 Pet 1:3).

Allow me to be more precise on this point. When Paul associates his confidence with “*knowing that,*” **he is saying that his understanding of God Himself, and of the purpose He is fulfilling in Christ Jesus, has produced the confidence he will now expound.** This is not a confidence that has come upon him unwittingly and independently of the investment of his thoughts. Such a confidence could not be explained. Rather, this is an assurance that has been birthed in the crucible of Divine fellowship. It is one of the marvelous results of “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6). As Paul has pondered what has been revealed of God through Jesus Christ, taking into consideration the context of trouble in this world, he has reached certain sound conclusions. **Just as great boats are carried along by the currents of the ocean, so these thoughts have been brought to him on the current of Divine love and purpose as revealed in the Gospel.**

It will at once become apparent that some people have never thought long enough within the courts of the Lord to arrive at a sound conclusion concerning their trouble. They have rather lingered in the vestibule of flesh, and pondered things that can be seen. The result has been “*confusion of face*” (Ezra 9:7) and “*vexation of spirit*” (Eccl 1:14; Isa 65:14). It is these conditions that has made them the victims of psychiatrists and counselors, who cannot properly account for either of these circumstances.

WHILST

“ . . . *whilst . . .*” Other versions read, “*As long as,*”^{NIV} “*being,*”^{YLT} and “*every moment we spend.*”^{LIVING}

Here is an expression that takes eternity into account – “*whilst,*” or “*as*”

long as.” It is a word of equivalence in which the temporal is compared with the eternal. In this text, it is part of a single word that speaks of a certain condition. An experience will be explained that is confined to a certain time and place – “*whilst.*” **It is an experience that has boundaries of both time and effects.** In other words, it is a temporal circumstance, and the things that occur within that experience are confined to it.

AT HOME IN THE BODY

“... *we are at home in the body.*” . . . Other versions read, “*are in the body,*”^{BBE} “*as long as we live in these bodies,*”^{NLT} “*In these earthly bodies,*”^{LIVING}

At Home

The expression “*whilst we are at home*” comes from a single Greek word: ἐνδημοῦντες (end-a-moon-tes). It means “to stay at home,” or be confined to a certain residence. It does not mean that the situation is necessarily one to be preferred – like saying, “at last I feel at home.” In this text, it refers to a residence that has been temporarily appointed to us – like the tents in which Israel dwelt while journeying through the wilderness.

In the Body

This is “*the body*” in which we are presently “*bearing about*” the “*dying of the Lord Jesus*” (4:10). It is the “*earthen vessel*” in which God has placed the “*treasure*” of “*the light of the knowledge of His glory, as seen “in the face of Jesus Christ.”*”

There are at least two things that can be seen in this expression. **First**, this confirms that no life is by accident, but is rather the result of God’s own working. Therefore, such things as abortion and euthanasia are sins against God, who is the sole Author of life – particularly, in this case, life “*in the body.*” **Second**, this postulates that our real person is, in fact, separate from our body. We will find that the person can, contrary to the postulation of the soul-sleepers, exist apart from, the body. While it is true that the individual spirit and the body apparently had their genesis simultaneous in the womb, they are nevertheless separate from one another, just as surely as Jacob and Esau were separate. **The continuance of the spirit will exceed the duration of the body, as will**

become apparent from this text.

It ought to be quite clear that a view of life that majors on the body, neglecting the spirit, is the result or pure delusion. **Such a view bears directly upon the eternal destiny of the individual.** It is not possible to obtain glory, while at the same time majoring on the body, which is only our temporary “*home.*” A religion that focuses upon the body is the greatest of all delusions, for it is driven by fallen man rather than the Living God. It cannot possible sustain spiritual life. This ought to be apparent.

It ought to be quite clear that a view of life that majors on the body, neglecting the spirit, is the result or pure delusion. Such a view bears directly upon the eternal destiny of the individual. It is not possible to obtain glory, while at the same time majoring on the body, which is only our temporary “home.”

ABSENT FROM THE LORD

“... *we are absent from the Lord.*” Other versions read, “*We are away from the Lord,*”^{NIV} “*we are exiled from the Lord,*”^{NJB} “*we are not at home with the Lord,*”^{NLT} “*is spent away from our eternal home in heaven with Jesus,*”^{LIVING} “*we are not with the Lord – where our home is,*”^{IE} “*we are banished from the Lord,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*I am away from home and the Lord,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*I am an banishment from the Lord,*”^{MONTGOMERY} “*we are abroad from the home with the Lord [that is promised us],*”^{AMPLIFIED} “*to some extent we are ‘away’ from the Lord.*”^{PHILLIPS}

There is a sense in which this is a “*groan,*” **for no informed soul is content with this condition** – “*absent from the Lord.*” For some, this statement is too strong. They call our attention to the fact that we have been “*joined unto the Lord*” (1 Cor 6:17), are “*in Christ*” (2 Cor 5:17), and have been “*raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*” (Eph 2:6). We have been “*called*” into “*the fellowship*” of God’s Son (1 Cor 1:9), and

our lives “*are hid with Christ in God*” (Col 3:3). How, then, can it be said that while we remain in the body we are “*absent from the Lord?*”

The relationship we hold with God through Christ Jesus is one of faith, and it is only as sure as our faith. This is a consideration that has been greatly muddled by the confusing maze of religion found within professing Christendom. When this facet of spiritual life, which is nearly the whole of it, is seen, it at once clears up many otherwise mysterious doctrinal areas. This is the

very point of the next verse, in which I will deal more extensively with this subject.

The Absence Foreshadowed

Suffice it to say, at this point, our present absence from the Lord was foreshadowed in Israel’s tenure in Egypt for 430 years (Ex 12:40-42). That was not the land that had been promised to them, nor were they intended to remain there. Being “*absent from the Lord*” is also seen in Joseph’s absence from the promised land. **He did not belong in Egypt, and thus gave commandment that his bones be carried into Canaan at the time of the exodus** (Gen 50:25,26). Our “*absence*” from the Lord was also foreshadowed by the pilgrimage of the faithful Israelites through the wilderness, en route to the promised land. Joshua and Caleb, for example, spent forty years journeying through the wilderness – a wilderness in which God did not intend for them to remain or die. **They survived that ordeal because they believed God, and were finally brought into their intended land** (Num 32:11-12).

We should also mention Daniel, who spent the bulk of his life away from his homeland – absent from Jerusalem and its attending blessings. While he was

present in Babylon, he was “*absent*” from the place in which he belonged. He prospered under the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the

Mede, and Cyrus the Persian (Dan 2:46; 5:29; 6:28). Yet, in spite of the seeming success he enjoyed, he was really “*absent*” from the intended place of blessing.

FAITH VERSUS SIGHT

“⁷ *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*”

This is a parenthetical statement – an amplifying and explanatory word. This kind of expression is inserted in a passage. It appears to be a diversion from the subject under consideration, but is really a brief statement that allows for a more precise focus.

FOR

“*For . . .*” Other versions read, “*That is why.*”^{NLT}

This is the Spirit’s

grasp of both our hearts and minds.

WE WALK BY FAITH

“*. . . we walk by faith . . .*” Other versions read, “*we live by faith,*”^{NIV} “*we are walking by faith,*”^{BBE} “*guided by faith,*”^{NJB} “*we live by believing,*”^{NLT} “*through faith we walk,*”^{YLT} “*we are living a life of faith,*”^{IE} “*here I live by what I believe,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*For we walk by faith [we regulate our lives and conduct ourselves by our conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and Divine things, with trust and holy fervor, thus we walk],*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*we have to live by trusting Him.*”^{PHILLIPS}

shall live BY FAITH” (Rom 1:17).

- ☛ **The righteousness of God is realized by faith:** “*Even the righteousness of God which is BY FAITH of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference*” (Rom 3:22; Phil 3:9).
- ☛ **We are justified by faith:** “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified BY FAITH without the deeds of the law*” (Rom 3:28).
- ☛ **We have access to grace by faith:** “*By whom also we have access BY FAITH into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*” (Rom 5:2).
- ☛ **We stand by faith:** “*Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for BY FAITH ye stand*” (2 Cor 1:24).
- ☛ **We are children of God by faith:** “*For ye are all the children of God BY FAITH in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:26).
- ☛ **We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith:** “*For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness BY FAITH*” (Gal 5:5).
- ☛ **Christ dwells in our hearts by faith:** “*That Christ may dwell in your hearts BY FAITH; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love*” (Eph 3:17).
- ☛ **Christ’s blood avails through faith:** “*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation THROUGH FAITH in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*” (Rom 3:25).
- ☛ **We are saved by grace through**

This is the Spirit’s explanation for our present absence from the Lord. We are not completely absent from the Lord, but presently sustain our relationship by faith instead of in His immediate presence.

explanation for our present absence from the Lord. We are not completely absent from the Lord, but presently sustain our relationship **by faith** instead of in His immediate presence. This is a matter concerning which considerable confusion exists in the Christian community. In my judgment, this confusion is owing to the remarkable propensity to Law that dominates Christendom. **This dominance decidedly diminishes a spiritually intelligent grasp of the nature and role of faith,** for “*the Law does not rest on faith [does not require faith, has nothing to do with faith], for it itself says, He who does them [the things prescribed by the Law] shall live by them [not by faith]*” (Gal 3:12)^{AMPLIFIED} If we do not understand that we live by faith, the whole of life in Christ Jesus becomes unintelligible, and is moved beyond the

Presently, our spiritual associations are all by faith. A brief rehearsal of these associations will confirm this to be the case.

- ☛ **Hearts are purified by faith:** “*And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts BY FAITH*” (Acts 15:9).
- ☛ **We are sanctified by faith:** “*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified BY FAITH that is in me*” (Acts 26:18).
- ☛ **We live by faith:** “*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just*

faith: “For by grace are ye saved **THROUGH FAITH**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).

- **Salvation is through faith:** “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation **THROUGH FAITH** which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15).
- **Through faith and patience we inherit the promises:** “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who **THROUGH FAITH** and patience inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12).
- **By faith we understand:** “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb 11:3).
- **We are kept by the power of God through faith** “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5).
- **The victory that overcomes the world is our faith:** “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, **EVEN OUR FAITH**” (1 John 5:4).

All of these advantages, and more, are only as sure as our faith. None of them are held directly, but are possessed **indirectly**, by our faith. Their “*substance*” is found in our faith, not in their direct possession. The “*evidence*” of their reality is our faith, not what we hold in our hands, or by any other form of human experience. Thus it is written, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1).

Let it be clear, none of the realities that are held by faith can be possessed independently of that faith. Where people are not believing, they have neither the “*substance*” nor the “*evidence*” of those things. This, of course, has some significant and far-reaching ramifications. **The benefits that are held by faith cannot**

possibly be experienced independently of that faith. In fact, which faith is not found, everything that is realized through faith is forfeited – else the expressions “*by faith*” and “*through faith*” are nothing more than idle religious chatter.

Walking By Faith

Walking by faith is descriptive of a life that is **motivated by faith** – a life that is being lived in view of the things that faith perceives. Further, if it is true that “*faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself)*” ^{AMPLIFIED} (Rom 1:17), then **where this message is not being proclaimed, all of the benefits of faith are being withheld from the people.** Preachers

Further, if it is true that “faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself),” then where this message is not being proclaimed, all of the benefits of faith are being withheld from the people.

and teachers who do **not** declare and expound the Gospel of Christ have done precisely the same thing as the scribes and Pharisees. They have “*shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces*” ^{NIV} (Matt 23:13). They have put all of the things required for a triumphant walk, and salvation itself, out of the reach of the people. All of their suggestions and methodologies are nothing more than stubble, and they themselves are obstacles to the obtainment of eternal life.

Those who boast they, by their earth-centered preaching, are dealing with the issues of the day, or assisting the people in the resolution of their problems are preaching with blinders over their eyes. **There are no problems that faith does not thoroughly address, for faith itself “is the victory that conquers the world”** ^{AMPLIFIED} (1 John 5:4).

All of the valid areas of life are addressed by faith. That is precisely why the children of God “*walk by faith.*” The Spirit employs various expressions to show us the truth of this matter.

- **Continuance, even in tribulation:** “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to **continue in the faith**, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).
- **Standing fast, or firm:** “Watch ye, **stand fast in the faith**, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13; Col 2:7).
- **Loving the brethren:** “All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that

love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen” (Titus 3:15).

- **Resisting the Devil:** “Whom resist **steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” (1 Pet 5:9).
- **In the matter of prayer:** “But let him **ask in faith**, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:6).
- **In the matter of personal assessment:** “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man **the measure of faith**” (Rom 12:3).

Faith establishes the perimeter of Kingdom experience and participation. We are no stronger than our faith. The work of God within us is in strict concert with our faith. The successful resistance of Satan is determined by our faith.

Men do not become “more than

- ☛ “For **we walk** by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7).
- ☛ “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just **shall** live by faith” (Gal 3:11).
- ☛ “Now the just **shall** live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall

America, is the professed church noted for such things? Where is the place, or even the congregation, where such a posture is not the exception and unusual? I do not deny that such a place can be found, but not without a diligent search! The fact of the matter is that the very phrase, “walking by faith,” emits a strange sound among the churches. It is not a common way of thinking or speaking. If men employ such words, they will invariably be asked what they mean. At the very best, they will be presented in a sort of idealistic way, as though they spoke of a far-distant attainment.

Paul, however, does not speak hesitatingly or idealistically. He confidently affirms, “we walk by faith.” This is the “we” into whose hearts God has shined “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). This is the “we” who have received “the earnest of the Spirit” (5:5), are “burdened” with mortality (5:4), and are groaning with travail in the anticipation of being clothed with “their house which is from heaven” (5:1-2).

All religion – every whit of it – falls to the ground in a useless heap where faith is not found. There is no moral virtue that has any worth without faith. There is no human achievement that is any value without faith. A faithless prayer is not heard. A faithless deed is not recognized. A faithless life will be the cause for condemnation!

conquerors” through their academic knowledge of the Bible. Scholastic credentials and acquaintance with writings of religious men do not make men good ministers. **There is nothing – absolutely nothing – that can compensate for a lack of faith.** It makes no difference how impressive an individual may appear, “without faith, it is impossible to please” God (Heb 11:6). **All religion – every whit of it – falls to the ground in a useless heap where faith is not found.** There is no moral virtue that has any worth without faith. There is no human achievement that is any value without faith. A faithless prayer is not heard. A faithless deed is not recognized. A faithless life will be the cause for condemnation!

have no pleasure in him” (Heb 10:38).

As it stated in Hebrews 10:38, the individual who is **not** living by faith is a source of displeasure to God. Although such individuals may have once believed, they are, if not living by faith, actually drawing back from God. This is the antithesis of God’s purpose in salvation. **If the aim of Christ’s work, and the salvation that He effects, is to “bring us to God” (1 Pet 3:18), then drawing back from Him can only be the revelation of a hard heart and a rebellious spirit.** Where a person is not living by faith, they are in a state of spiritual decline, for newness of life cannot be sustained independently of faith. Such a thing is an impossibility – with both men and God.

If all of this seems too visionary and impractical, ponder what has been revealed of this matter. In salvation itself, God has “wrought us for the selfsame thing” – i.e. to put on immortality (5:5). This salvation uproots a person from this “present evil world,” creating a “new man” who has a fundamental longing to be with the Lord. **How can it be remotely possible for a person to be saved, yet be wholly lacking of the evidence of the reason for the salvation – separation from this world and a longing to be with the Lord?** Is such a posture possible? Can God save a person, and yet they do not long to be with Him? Can God shine light into the heart, and yet the person remain in a state of blindness and ignorance? Can God give the “earnest of the Spirit” to a person, and a preference for this world remain? Is it possible to really have faith, and yet it not determine how we walk or live? Are such things even possible?

“We Walk by Faith”

Notice, our text does not say we “OUGHT to walk by faith.” **This is not a goal!** It is not an exhortation to walk in this manner. **Everyplace walking or living by faith is mentioned, it is a reality, not an objective! It is not a goal, but a present stance.**

Something That Is Necessary

It is necessary to speak with such candor because of the nature of the times in which we live. **Within the Christian community, faith and its sustainment is not at the forefront.** Let me be clear about this matter. Faith has to do with “substance” and “evidence,” ^{KJV} with “assurance” and “conviction,” ^{NASB} with “being sure and certain,” ^{NIV} and with “guarantee” and “proof” ^{NJB} (Heb 11:1). Where, in all of

And, let us suppose for a moment that these things were, in fact, possible. By what means can such a possibility be established? What single or collective word from God will lead us to such a conclusion? Where is their a syllable of

encouragement for such a person? Where is there a solitary promise of blessing for such an one? **What good thing can you hold out to a person who is not walking by faith?** Is there some word of Divine comfort for such an individual? I realize some, speaking out of their own imbecility, will suggest that such words can be found. However, they must devote themselves to the finding of such commitments, keeping silence on the matter until they have uncovered them.

I speak with such candidness because of the conditions that exist within the churches – nearly all of them. Men and women of faith are not common. They are certainly not the bulk of those who claim to be “Christians.” Nearly every honest person will acknowledge that people of faith are rare. Those who live and walk by faith are generally considered to be rather different from the religious masses. Notwithstanding that situation, and in stark contradiction of it, Paul writes, **“we walk by faith!”** May those words be a suitable description of your own personal life. Who is the person willing to say “we do NOT walk by faith, but are nevertheless Christians?”

NOT BY SIGHT

“... *not by sight.*” Other versions read, “*not by seeing,*”^{BBE} “*not yet by*

Where is there a solitary promise of blessing for such an one? What good thing can you hold out to a person who is not walking by faith? Is there some word of Divine comfort for such an individual?

sight,”^{NJB} “*not through sight,*”^{YLT} “*not one of sight,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*not by what I see,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*not by sight [or appearance],*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*without seeing Him.*”^{PHILLIPS}

The lives of the godly are not determined by what they see in this world. They do not assess things “*according to the appearance*” (John 7:24). They do not “*judge after the flesh*” (John 8:15). It is quite true that now, as in Paul’s day, there are those who “*glory in appearance*” (2 Cor 5:12). **These, however, are not the children of God!** Those whose lives are directed by what they see in this world are obviously **not “strangers and pilgrims on the earth”** (Heb 11:13). That very condition betrays a state of lostness, for Jesus “*gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and*

our Father” (Gal 1:4). There is no such thing as a salvation that contradicts the purpose for which Jesus “*gave Himself for our sins.*” **No person is a genuine “Christian” who remains a willing and integral part of the world from which Jesus has delivered us!** If that seems judgmental, so be it. It is far better to see the truth of this now than to face it when the Lord Jesus comes again!

The child of God is guided by “*things that are not seen,*” **not “the things that are seen”** (2 Cor 4:18). If, therefore, you want to appeal to them, do not appeal to their eyes, but to their heart! Do not show them “*the buildings,*” as the disciples did when they heard Jesus speak of the Temple being left desolate (Matt 24:1). If you want to move the saints for good, you must get beyond the things that are seen, for they walk by faith, “*and not by sight.*”

CONFIDENCE AND WILLINGNESS

“⁸ ***We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.***”

I want to ever keep before you the manner that characterizes Paul’s words. **There is a spirit of confidence and willingness that is becoming very obvious.** These are qualities found in faith. They are not traits of scholarship or human achievement. What is even more, these spiritual properties have surfaced when speaking about life AFTER death. They have surfaced while speaking of the demise of flesh and the donning of immortality. **The consideration of what is “in heaven” has caused confidence and willingness to burst**

forth!

You must see how remarkable this is. After several decades of extensive involvement in the religious community, and with Christian preachers and leaders, there is a consistent feature of preaching, teaching, and religious writing that I have noted. **As soon as the subject deals with eternity, or things occurring after death, or after the resurrection, or after the passing of the heavens and the earth, a certain spirit of uncertainty and uncomfortableness at once surfaces.** Theory and speculation seem to rush into the arena of thought, and the writings of men are taken as a sort of theological crutch to hold up the withering human

spirit. We are living in a time when the traffickers of the occult are speaking more of unseen things than those who are seemingly aligned with Christ.

There are people who have been subjected to preaching and teaching for scores of years, and have never heard any extended discourse on the resurrection of the dead, the coming of Jesus, immortality, being forever with the Lord, an eternal inheritance, judging the world and angels, reigning with Jesus, being joint-heirs with Jesus, etc., etc. And why does this condition exist? **It is because the preachers and teachers of the day are not comfortable in such subjects.** They are not truly informed in these areas, and therefore have no driving

A strong and stable confidence is essential to the effective preaching and teaching of the Gospel – by Given O. Blakely

compulsion to speak about them.

This is an enormous spiritual abnormality! Our text has told us that God has “wrought us” for immortality. It has affirmed that God has given us “*the earnest of the Spirit*” as a prelude to the Divine appointments that are to come. We have been informed that proper living takes place “*while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen.*” **How, then, is it possible for spiritual life to be advanced while these unseen realities are ignored?**

But we have said enough on this

FRIBERG There is a note of joy in confidence, the presence of expectation, and the presence of courage and boldness. Synonyms for “*confidence*” include courageous, bold, fearless, assured, certainty, certitude, and conviction.

“*Confidence*” cannot be attached to uncertainty, but is the very opposite of it. **Men cannot walk in spiritual certitude while their eyes and minds are fastened on the things that relate to this world** – even if they are religious things and seemingly valid ministries. Confidence, assurance, and sureness can neither be developed or maintained in the domain of the seen.

and our present earthen vessel. That is too obvious and elementary to require further explanation.

AND WILLING RATHER

“ . . . and willing rather . . . ” Other versions read, “*yes, well pleased rather,*”^{NKJV} “*I say, and prefer rather,*”^{NASB} “*and would prefer,*”^{NIV} “*we would rather be,*”^{NRSV} “*desiring to be,*”^{BBE} “*and pleased rather,*”^{DARBY} “*and have a good will rather,*”^{DOUAY} “*and love rather,*”^{GENEVA} “*and would prefer to be,*”^{NIB} “*and long instead to be,*”^{NJB} “*are well pleased rather,*”^{YLT} “*we are quite content,*”^{LIVING} “*and we anticipate with greater delight,*”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*that we would really rather.*”^{PHILLIPS}

One of the chief effects of the newness of life concerns the human will. Contrary to much of what is said concerning that will, prior to being in Christ Jesus, it too was in bondage to sin. Death “*in trespasses and sins*” does not **exclude** the will (Eph 2:1-2). Being “*servants of sin*” (Rom 6:17,20) was not a condition from which the will was **exempted**, nor is there the slightest indication in Scripture that this was the case.

When one ponders the greatness of the thing that is here “*willed,*” it becomes obvious that such a notable response is far beyond the “*will*” of the “*natural man.*” **Here, those who have the “earnest of the Spirit” are described as having a will, or preference for something that transcends mere human experience.** It is something that, in fact, contradicts human nature – something that is actually transcendent to ordinary human experience. **In this text, the things for which the will longs cannot be attested to by any purely human inclination.** It is something that can only be grasped by faith. There is not, nor has there ever been, a person without faith who has ever longed to be “*absent from the body*” in order to be “*present with the Lord.*” In fact, this is not a common yearning within the professed Christian community. It is, however, the stance of all who are really living by faith.

TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY

“ . . . to be absent from the body, . . . ” Other versions read, “*away from the body,*”^{NIV} “*free from the body,*”^{BBE} “*to*

In the sight of God, no man can say “we are confident” if he limits his considerations to this world. If any person prefers to remain in this world, the door of confidence is shut to him, and he is confined to the realm of fear and uncertainty.

subject. You must be willing to take up the matter in your own thinking. Once you do this, you will see that I have really understated the present situation.

WE ARE CONFIDENT, I SAY

“*We are confident, I say . . .*” Other versions read, “*We are of good courage,*”^{NASB} “*Yes, we do have confidence,*”^{NRSV} “*We are without fear,*”^{BBE} “*Nevertheless, we are bold,*”^{GENEVA} “*Yet we are courageous,*”^{NAB} “*we are full of confidence,*”^{NJB} “*We are fully confident,*”^{NLT} “*And we are not afraid,*”^{LIVING} “*But we are cheerful,*”^{IE} “*So we have a cheerful confidence,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*and yet I am cheerful and confident,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*[Yes], we have confident and hopeful courage,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*We are so sure of this.*”^{PHILLIPS}

“*Confidence*” is a marvelous spiritual property. **It is an attribute of faith itself, and is essential to overcoming this world and obtaining the world to come.** The word from which “*confidence*” is translated means, “to be of good courage, to be hopeful, confident; to be bold,”^{THAYER} and “be cheerful (about), rely on.”

If edification is to occur, faith strengthened, and hope made strong, the domain of the seen must cease to be the focus. Man himself must discontinue being the center of things and the spotlight thrown upon the Lord Himself and “*the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him*” (1 Cor 2:9).

The phrase “*we are confident*” means, “we are cheerfully certain about the outcome of our faith.” It depicts a situation where the believer boldly faces life, certain that salvation is all-encompassing, and that grace abounds “*much more*” than the wake of sin.

In the sight of God, no man can say “*we are confident*” if he limits his considerations to this world. **If any person prefers to remain in this world, the door of confidence is shut to him, and he is confined to the realm of fear and uncertainty.** If the purpose for which God has wrought us is to be clothed with immortality, you may be sure that purpose will not and cannot be profitably accomplished in an environment of at-homeness in this world

remove out of the body,"^{GENEVA} "to rather leave the body,"^{NAB} "to be exiled from the body,"^{NJB} "to die,"^{LIVING} "banished from the body,"^{WEYMOUTH} and "away from the body (in death)."^{PHILLIPS}

To be "absent from the body" is to no longer be clothed with mortality. It is to be freed from incumbrance of "flesh and blood," which "cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 15:50). **It is the individual himself who is no longer in the body, confirming that the seen and unseen parts of men are not locked together in the grave.** This is the opposite of being "at home in the body" (verse 6).

The soul-sleeping doctrine teaches that both soul and body sleep in the grave. According to this heresy, the next conscious moment following death will be at the resurrection of the dead. If this is true, then Paul is here speaking of the resurrection of the dead. However, this is not the case, as is confirmed throughout Scripture.

It is true that when the Lord comes again, those who are "alive and remain" will be "changed," then being "clothed upon" with their "house with is from heaven." Then, the living will, indeed, be "absent from the body." However, in death there is also a **departure** from the body, and Paul is quite willing for even this absence to occur.

At Death

Various scenes of death, that are recorded in Scripture, confirm the separation of the unseen, or inward, man from the body at death.

- When Abraham died, he is said to have been "**gathered to his people**" (Gen 25:8). This cannot refer to the occupants of the grave, for such are never said to be "people." Thus, his body went into the grave, which is "the way of all the earth" (Josh 23:14). His spirit, however, was "gathered" into a society of personalities. This was according to God's promise, "thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace" (Gen 15:15). It is the Lord who did this "gathering."
- Jacob is also said to have been

gathered to his people when he died, yielding up his departing spirit. "And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was **gathered unto his people**" (Gen 49:33).

- When Rachel, the wife of Jacob, died while giving birth to Benjamin, the experience was described most precisely. "And it came to pass, **as her soul was in departing**, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin" (Gen 35:18).
- When Elijah was confronted with the body of the deceased son of a certain widow, he raised him from the dead. The words used to describe that occasion confirm that death involves a departure of the soul from the body. "And he stretched himself upon the

- Paul spoke of his imminent death as a "departure." "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of **my departure** is at hand" (2 Tim 4:6).
- Peter also spoke of his death as a separation of his person from the body. "Knowing that shortly I must **put off this my tabernacle**, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me" (2 Pet 1:14).
- In one of His matchless parables, Jesus spoke of death as a person's soul being required of him – that is, the person was demanded to give it up to God. "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night **thy soul shall be required of thee**: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20).
- When Jesus Himself died, He

It is the individual himself who is no longer in the body, confirming that the seen and unseen parts of men are not locked together in the grave. This is the opposite of being "at home in the body"

child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, **let this child's soul come into him again.** And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and **the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived**" (1 Kgs 17:21-22).

- When Simon saw the Lord's Christ, he also was "willing to depart." He said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant **depart in peace, according to thy word**" (Luke 2:29). Here, departing "in peace" is the same as Abraham being gathered to his fathers "in peace."
- Paul spoke of the "willingness" of our text to the Philippians, clearly stating his preference. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a **desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better**" (Phil 1:23).

commended His spirit to God, yielding it up to Him. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, **into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost**" (Luke 23:46).

- When Stephen died, he cried out to Jesus, "Lord Jesus, **receive my spirit**" (Acts 7:59).

There is, then, a condition that is appropriately described as being "absent from the body" – a time when the essential person is no longer within, or identified with, the body of flesh and blood.

Not A Time of Non-existence or Inactivity

Life, or being alive, is never applied to a time of total inactivity or unconsciousness. In fact, Jesus made a

point of this by saying that God was not the “*God of the dead.*” In a sterling example of Divine wisdom, Jesus spoke of the resurrection in this way. “*But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*” (Mat 22:31-32).

Jesus was speaking to a cluster of Sadducees who had posed a trick question to Jesus concerning the resurrection of the dead. Their question was thoroughly dishonest, for they taught “*that there is no resurrection*” (Matt 22:23). The book of Acts affirms that this Jewish sect also said there was “*neither angel nor spirit*” (Acts 23:8). In other words, they did not acknowledge the unseen part of man, nor the existence of angels, who are celestial “*spirits*” (Psa 104:4; Heb 1:7).

In affirming that God was, in fact,

within the framework of the “*newness of life.*” **The ultimate reason for the creation of man cannot be realized in a body of flesh and blood.** Nor, indeed, can it be accomplished by merely being “*absent from the body.*” The understanding of, and acquiescence to, this fact is what caused Paul to be “*willing to be absent from the body.*”

This exposes the utter falsity of an approach to religion that majors upon the body and life in this world. It is not possible for such a view to yield any blessing from God, for it is in opposition to the very reason for the new birth, the new covenant, deliverance from sin, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Such a religion, like the wisdom that is from the beneath, is “*earthly, devilish,*” and “*sensual*” (James 3:15).

AND PRESENT WITH THE LORD

“*. . . and to be present with the Lord.*” Other versions read, “*at home*

To be “*present with the Lord*” will be fully realized following the resurrection from the dead. However, that is not the end of the matter. At death, or when we put off this earthly tabernacle, departing from it, **there is an interim state of blessing** – being “*with the Lord.*” This is not said to take place when the dead are raised, but when we are “*absent from the body,*” or “*depart*” from this life.

The details of this presence are not provided. In fact, there is a note of mystery in this expression, and it has been a source of confusion within the church. However, there is a sense in which, upon death, we are, in fact, “*present with the Lord.*” This is why Stephen asked the Lord to “*receive*” his spirit (Acts 7:59).

Some Holy Reasoning

The notion that, upon death, the redeemed fall into a sleep, becoming totally inactive, is by no means a comforting thought. This is the view entertained by all who embrace the soul-sleeping heresy. They conceive of the sleeping of the soul as divorced from any kind of time, so that when the dead are raised, the sleeping spirits of the saved awaken with no sense of a lapse of time between their death and the resurrection. Such a view, of course, is utterly incompatible with the vision of martyred souls “*under the altar,*” inquiring about the vindication of their blood (Rev 6:9-10). There is, however, much more to be said on this matter.

Eternal life, we are reminded, is knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). **This postulates a state of awareness and fellowship, of knowledge and sensitivity, for there can be no “life” where these are not present.** Speaking of those who possess eternal life Jesus said, “*And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?*” (John 11:26). This is not a mere play on words. It would be difficult, indeed, to support the proposition that knowing God and Christ does **not** exist following death and prior to the resurrection of the dead. I do not know how it would be possible to substantiate such a postulate.

Additionally, in salvation God has

Salvation does not promote satisfaction with being simply “unclothed,” or being without an inhibiting body. From one point of view, the ultimate objective of the Lord is fervently desired – to “put on incorruption,” or “put on immortality”

going to raise the dead, Jesus points out that the reason for the resurrection is that God is “*not the God of the dead.*” In confirmation of this, He cites God’s own affirmation, “*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*” (Ex 3:6). At that time, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been dead for several centuries – yet they are classed with “*the living.*” They were not the sleeping, but “*the living.*” In the resurrection “*the living*” will “*put on immortality,*” but they themselves have always been “*alive*” – conscious and active.

This confirms that men are intended to occupy a resurrection body. That intention is most fully revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, within the context of the New Covenant, and

with the Lord,”^{NASB} “*to be with the Lord,*”^{BBE} “*and to dwell with the Lord,*”^{GENEVA} “*and go home to the Lord,*”^{NAB} “*going home to the Lord,*”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*to live with the Lord.*”^{IE}

This is the reason why those in Christ are “*willing rather to be absent from the body.*” It is in order that they might be “*present with the Lord.*” As discussed in the previous part of this chapter (5:1-5), getting out of these “*vile bodies*” is not the real point. **Salvation does not promote satisfaction with being simply “unclothed,” or being without an inhibiting body.** From one point of view, the ultimate objective of the Lord is fervently desired – to “*put on incorruption,*” or “*put on immortality*” (1 Cor 15:53-54). Here, however, we are confronted with yet another view.

“called us unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9). What “miserable comforters” (Job 16:2) they are who would have us believe such wonderful fellowship is brought to a temporary cessation when we “depart” from our body. Where is such a notion promoted by Scripture? **Where is there the slightest hint that, for those in Christ Jesus, death brings a halt to the vibrant knowledge of God and the refreshing fellowship of Jesus Christ?** Are we to believe that after we die and before the resurrection we no longer have an awareness of the kingdom to which we “are come” – a kingdom that includes the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, God the Judge of all, the spirits of just men made perfect, Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the blood of sprinkling? Are such associations thrust from us at death? Does our coming to them abruptly terminate for a season when we are “absent from the body?” How can we “come” to these things independently of life, consciousness, and understanding?

Let us suppose for a moment that this is, in fact, the case – even though such a thought is pure nonsense. **This would mean that Paul found it difficult to decide whether to live in fellowship with Christ, or die and thus pass into a state of unconscious sleep.** It would mean that in death he would find “gain” in being unaware of God and Christ, not enjoying fellowship with them. Where is there a person of sound mind willing to support such an absurdity!

Did not Paul write, “For me to live is Christ [His life in me], **and to die is gain** [the gain of the glory of eternity]. If, however, it is to be life in the flesh and I

am to live on here, that means fruitful service for me; so I can say nothing as to my personal preference [I cannot choose], But I am hard pressed between the two. **My yearning desire is to depart** (to be

free of this world, to set forth) and be with Christ, for that is far, far better; But to remain in my body is more needful and essential for your sake” ^{AMPLIFIED} (Phil 1:21-24). What sense does such an expression make if, when one departs from the body, he enters into a state of unconsciousness and inactivity – however brief the experience might be? If a day in the courts of the courts of the Lord “better than a thousand” (Psa 84:10), what may be said of even a fleeting moment apart from them?

The clear statement of Scripture is that the state following an absence “from the body” is fitly described as being “present with the Lord.” This is further enhanced by the revelation that when Jesus comes again, “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with bring WITH Him” (1 Thess 4:14). It is their bodies that “sleep.” It is their spirits that will be “brought.” That means that, in some sense and to some degree, those departed spirits are “with the Lord,” just as our text affirms. You may be sure that Jesus will not “bring” those who are not, in some sense, “with” Him.

Too, if the purpose of God is to take us “from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18), advancing us closer toward the appointed objective, **what kind of reasoning is required to support the notion that**

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the advancement and conformation is held in a state of suspension between death and the resurrection? Even when Jacob “blessed” the sons of Joseph and “worshiped,” “when he was a dying,” he confessed, “I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD” (Gen 49:18; Heb 11:21). It is then affirmed, “he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people” (Gen 49:33). **It stretches the imaginary capacities of our minds to see these words as applying to a state of unconsciousness and inactivity.** In fact, I regard such notions to be the height of absurdity, an insult to our intelligence, and a reproach to the living Christ.

Let us choose the enlightened view of death that has been given – (particularly since “life and immortality” have now been “brought to light” through the Gospel (2 Tim 1:10) – “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” There is no reason for any believer to draw back from this clear affirmation in preference for spiritual ambiguity.

LABORING

“^{9a} **Wherefore we labor . . .**”

Paul continues his reasoning – a reasoning that proceeds from faith, and because of spiritual insight. **This is not**

carnal or worldly reasoning, but reflects the implications and conclusions that are based upon realities revealed from heaven. The American church is in a state of spiritual

poverty in its reasoning. As a rule, its thoughts and determinations are closer to the world than they are to heaven. For this cause, this kind of reasoning is like a foreign language that floats over the head

A strong and stable confidence is essential to the effective preaching and teaching of the Gospel – by Given O. Blakely

of the average churchman. But it will resonate with refreshing encouragement to those who are living by faith.

WHEREFORE

“Wherefore . . .” Other versions read, “Therefore,”^{NKJV} “So,”^{NIV} and “For this reason.”^{BBE}

In the New Covenant, the individual must do something with the truth. **It is not enough to simply embrace some valid propositions.** In Christ the embrace of the truth is a **beginning**. It opens the door to sound and profitable thought, which is part of the inner circumference, or deeper strata, of the “newness of life.”

The word “wherefore” precedes an explanation of an otherwise difficult-to-understand

causing us to “groan” in our present bodies (5:4a).

- We are anticipating being clothed with our new body, “that mortality might be swallowed up of death” (5:4b).
- In salvation, God has “wrought us” in order to be clothed with our new bodies, putting on immortality (5:5a).
- In order to prepare us for putting on immortality, God has given to us the “earnest of the Spirit” (5:5b).
- We are “always confident,” knowing our present condition, and persuaded of our appointment with immortality (5:6-8).

It is the awareness of these

ambition,”^{NJB} “we always want,”^{IE} “my constant ambition,”^{WILLIAMS} and “we are constantly ambitious and strive earnestly.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “labor” denotes more than activity or effort. There is a certain pattern of thought that accompanies labor, or genuine effort. **“Labor” implies an objective – a reason for working.**

This word – “labor” – comes from the Greek word φιλοτιμούμεθα (phil-ot-im-oh-mei-tha). Lexical meanings of the word include, “to be fond of honor; to be actuated by love of honor; from a love of honor to strive to bring something to pass; to be ambitious to; to strive earnestly, make it one’s aim,”^{THAYER} “to be ambitious to, endeavor earnestly to, aspire to,”^{FRIBERG} “make it one’s ambition or aim, endeavor, strive,”^{UBS} “to earnestly aspire to something, implying strong ambition for some goal,”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “pursuing some object of ambition; strive eagerly and emulously (rivalrous) to do a thing, endeavor earnestly, aspire.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

This certainly does not speak of a casual and haphazard attempt! In the following texts, I have highlighted the word translated from φιλοτιμούμεθα. These uses of the word confirm the nature of this word. “And that ye **STUDY** to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (1 Thess 4:11). “Yea, so have I **STRIVED** to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation” (Rom 15:20).

In each case, strong effort was extended **for a specific purpose**. In First Thessalonians, believers were admonished to extend themselves to “be quiet,” doing their own business and refraining from meddling in other people’s affairs. In Romans, Paul acknowledged that he put forth a hearty effort to preach the Gospel where it had not yet been heard and embraced. **In this case, therefore, the REASON for the “labor” is the point, and not the labor itself.** At this point, Paul was not concerned about **how** his peers viewed his labor. What it gained for him in this world was **not** the point of his efforts. He was **not** laboring out of a mere sense of obligation, being moved forward by a moral law, or some compulsion external to himself.

In the New Covenant, the individual must do something with the truth. It is not enough to simply embrace some valid propositions. In Christ the embrace of the truth is a beginning. It opens the door to sound and profitable thought, which is part of the inner circumference, or deeper strata, of the “newness of life.”

statement. Paul is here giving an account for something, and he bases it upon the foregoing statements. This is said in view of the following facts.

- We **know** that our present bodies are in a state of dissolution (5:1a).
- We **know** that the deterioration of these bodies does not cause hopelessness, for we have a “building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (5:1b).
- In these present bodies we “groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with out house which is from heaven” (5:2).
- We do not want to be “found naked,” or without a body (5:3).
- Our present mortality is a burden,

things that compels Paul to do the following. This mind-set is not unique to him. It is the frame of mind that is integral to the New Covenant. It is the posture of the “new man.” It is the consequence of being saved. If you have had any exposure to the contemporary way of church-thinking, you know the realities I have listed are not at all common among professing Christians. You will be hard-pressed to find a Christian preacher or teacher who reasons in this manner. That very condition explains the glaring absence of true Kingdom labors.

WE LABOR

“ . . . we labor . . .” Other versions read, “we make it our aim,”^{NKJV} “we have as our ambition,”^{NASB} “we make it our goal,”^{NIV} “we make it our purpose,”^{BBE} “we are zealous,”^{DARBY} “we covet,”^{GENEVA} “we aspire,”^{NAB} “we make it our

What, then, was the reason for Paul's prodigious labors? At the root of the matter, what was he seeking to do? What was the objective that moved him to such faithful and extensive labors. Was it that he might win the lost? Was it that he might make believers more stable? Was it to meet the needs of the poor? Was he targeting the correction of unacceptable laws among men? Was he seeking more equality among men, and more unity in the church? That these things were

included in his thinking cannot be denied. **However, they were not at the root of his purpose. All of those things could come short of fulfillment, for they depended too much upon human response.**

However, even if all of his efforts, according to appearance and the evaluation of men, seemed to fail, what cause or objective could sustain his efforts?

That is what Paul will now place before us – an objective that proved to be a powerful compelling force in his ministry. He worked with certain unwavering realities in mind – **things that cannot possibly fail of fulfillment.** As we will see, they are wrapped up in a keen awareness that we will ultimately stand before the Lord! What Paul will now declare was something that dominated his thinking.

WHETHER PRESENT OR ABSENT

^{9b} *... that, whether present or absent ...*

I want to underscore the necessity of this kind of thinking. Should any person involved in the Lord's vineyard fail to take this into account, either he will soon become discouraged and quit, or he will be locked into mediocrity – **and neither option is acceptable!** Today there is a vast number of **former** laborers – **former** workers in the vineyard of the Lord. Equally true, there is an even greater number of *"workers"* who are merely bidding their time in the flesh, laboring half-heartedly and with no compelling purpose. These are, in every sense of the word, "normal" and "average," who cannot rise above the flesh, labor fervently, or be counted on to ride through the storms of life. **These are the people who lack the purpose, or objective, that will now be placed before us.**

THAT



... that ... Other versions read, *"we covet that both."*^{GENEVA} This word is like an arrow pointing to the

intended purpose. It focuses our thoughts on the **REASON** for Paul's labors – in fact, this is the **ultimate** reason for all valid kingdom labors.

Some never get deep enough with God to be able to reason in this manner. **Their minds have not been effected by their religion.** They cannot employ *"spiritual understanding"* (Col 1:9), or the *"wisdom that is from above"* (James 3:17). Therefore, the purpose that holds up their religious endeavors is limited to a career, some institutional goal, or some other worldly aim. It should not surprise us that such pitiful objectives cannot sustain the soul when labor gets difficult, and satisfactory results are not realized at once. **There is a reason why the religious landscape is cluttered with the carcasses of men and women who have withdraw themselves from the work of the Lord.** They did not have a strong and relentless reason for continuing them!

WHETHER PRESENT OR ABSENT

... whether present or absent . . . Other versions read, *"whether at home or absent,"*^{NASB} *"whether we are at home in the body or away from it,"*^{NIV} *"whether we are at home or away,"*^{NRSV} *"in the body or away from it,"*^{BBE} *"both dwelling at home, and removing from home,"*^{GENEVA} *"at home or exiled,"*^{NJB} *"here in this body or away from this body,"*^{NLT} *"whether we stay on earth or go home,"*^{IE} and *"whether we are at home [on earth away from Him] or away from home [and with Him]."*^{AMPLIFIED}

Here is a cause that deals with

both time and eternity. It addresses being in the body or out of the body. It is an objective that covers the time when we are *"present"* in the body, and when we will be *"absent"* from it. **The one who labors in the vineyard of the Lord is required to properly assess the present, and to correctly anticipate the future.** His work is set within the context of time and eternity, and he must learn to work with that reality in view.



Faith, which is the spiritual actuator behind all valid work, scans the horizon of eternity as well as that of time. Hope looks to the end, and not to the beginning. The true assessment of religious activity takes the state of the individual **AFTER** death into consideration. What effect will our labors have **AFTER** we have left our bodies? What difference will our work make when we are *"absent from the body,"* and *"present with the Lord?"* **More particularly, as we will now see, how does the Lord Jesus regard our labors right now, as well as in the future?** Is Jesus presently accepting what we are doing? And, how confident

are we of that acceptance? In the end, when all of our works are known, will He

accept them? I suggest to you that confidence in both case – in the body and

absent from it – requires diligent and consistent consideration.

CONSIDERING DIVINE ACCEPTANCE

^{9c} . . . *we may be accepted of Him.*”

Man has been created with the desire for acceptance. It is inherent in the human nature. The question, therefore, is not whether or not men **want** to be “*accepted*.” Rather, it is WHO does the accepting.

It is possible to labor only for the accolades of men. The Scriptures refer to

Other versions read, “*be well pleasing,*”
NKJV “*to please Him,*” NIV “*to be agreeable,*”
DARBY and “*please perfectly.*” WEYMOUTH

Right here we are brought to stretch our minds beyond the boundaries of stilted theology. From one point of view, we are presently accepted in Christ. As it is written, “*To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath **made us accepted in the Beloved***” (Eph 1:6). However, that is

as Israel was brought out of Egypt in order to enter into Canaan, so we have been brought out of sin in order to inhabit “*the heavenly places*” (Eph 2:6).

Here we see that what we **do** is not the main thing. **Rather, it is whether of not we ourselves, within the context of our labors, are accepted.** I must acknowledge that, in my judgment, the concept of pleasing God is nearly lost because of the doctrines and theologies of men. I also know of no Christian school of higher learning in which the acceptance of God is the **primary** thing. I do not question the possibility of the existence of such an institution. However, such a place would be exceedingly rare. In the minds of men, that kind of acceptance is **not** perceived as promoting a sectarian cause. This assessment is a true one, for it does not.

have been “made accepted” in Christ, the “Beloved one.” On the other hand He confesses that He is laboring that he may be “accepted.” For some, this is too difficult.

this as “*the praise of men,*” and in inform us that some prefer this recognition to “*the praise of God*” (John 12:43). Paul takes up this matter and affirms, “*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I **should not be the servant of Christ***” (Gal 1:10). The Amplified Bible reads, “*Now am I trying to win the favor of men, or of God? Do I seek to please men? If I were still seeking popularity with men, I should not be a bond servant of Christ (the Messiah).*” **If this is, in fact, an accurate statement of the case, it has some rather disturbing implications.** Those who seek to please the institutional hierarchy have abruptly **ceased** to serve Christ. Those who aim to build a career by gaining the approval of men are **not** working for Jesus, and He will **not** honor their labors. Those who make it their objective to “*please men*” are **no longer** in the Lord’s field, for He allows no such laborers in His work.

WE MAY BE ACCEPTED

“ . . . *we may be accepted . . .* ”

the **beginning** of the matter, and not the end of it. Our present acceptance in Christ is intended to provide us with the opportunity to “*obtain grace to help in the time of need*” (Heb 4:16). It is what paves the way to receive “*wisdom*” from above (James 1:5), and be “*filled with all joy and peace in believing*” (Rom 15:13), together with a host of other required resources.

On the one hand, Paul affirms that we have been “*made accepted*” in Christ, the “*Beloved one.*” On the other hand He confesses that He is laboring that he may be “*accepted.*” For some, this is too difficult. However, there is no need for this to be. We have not only been saved **from** something in order to Divine acceptance, we have been saved **to** something in order to become “*partakers of the Divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4), and be “*laborers together with God*” (1 Cor 3:9).

There is no need to try and harmonize these matters, because they are not at variance with one another. Just

OF HIM

“ . . . *of Him.*” Other versions read, “*to Him,*” NKJV “*unto Him,*” ASV “*by Him,*”
RWB and “*God.*” IE

The idea here is that the final assessment of our labors is made by the Lord Himself, and not by men. It is foolish, therefore, to seek to please men. The word “*Him*” refers specifically to God the Father, who has been the theme of chapters three through five.

- ☛ The writing of the New Covenant is accomplished by the “*Spirit of the living GOD*” (3:3).
- ☛ Our trust is “*through Christ to GODward*” (3:4).
- ☛ Our sufficiency “*is of GOD*” (3:5).
- ☛ The word that is “*handled*” by the faithful minister is “*the word of GOD*” (4:2).
- ☛ The Gospel is the “*gospel of Christ, who is the image of GOD*” (4:4).

- The glory that is seen in *“the face of Jesus Christ”* is the *“glory of GOD”* (2 Cor 4:6).
- The *“excellency of the power”* is declared to be *“of GOD”* (4:7).
- Abundant grace is declared to be in order that the *“thanksgiving of many”* may *“redound to the glory of GOD”* (4:15).
- The resurrection body is said to be *“a building of GOD”* (5:1).
- The One who has *“wrought us”* to inhabit an immortal body is *“GOD”* (5:5).

If the purpose of salvation is to reconcile us *“to God”* (Eph 2:16), and if Jesus is bringing us *“to God”* (1 Pet 3:18), **then whether or not God accepts us is critical.** This is not intended to provoke vain speculations, or loose fears upon the saints. Rather, it is meant to give us a reason for laboring properly and effectively in the vineyard of the Lord.

The underlying supposition here is that when men are motivated to be accepted by God, it has a sanctifying effect upon their labors. Such endeavors will not be overlooked by God, who is *“not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love”* (Heb 6:10).

If it is countered that one may very well have a misconception of the Lord and his will, thus invalidating his labors, a further consideration is required. That this can happen cannot be denied. Saul of Tarsus is a case in point. His labors nor his person were *“accepted of Him”* when he was breathing out *“threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord”* (Acts 9:1). However, he thought he was living *“in all good conscience before God,”* thinking that he was serving God’s purpose (Acts 26:9; Gal 1:13-14). **He was, in fact, seeking to please the Lord.** It was this very frame of spirit that led him into further light, bringing him to the point where he ceased to make *“havoc of the church”* (Acts 8:3), and embarked on the glorious work of building up the body of Christ.

SOME OF THE IMPLICATIONS

If Paul labored in order that,

whether present in the body, or absent from it, he might be *“accepted”* of the Lord, then it is possible to be unacceptable because of one’s labors. A considerable point is made of this by both Jesus and Paul.

Jesus

In two telling parables, Jesus spoke of the Divine reaction to unacceptable stewardship. In both cases, the consequences were undeniably strong.

The Parable of the Talents – Matt 25:14-30

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus likened the *“kingdom of heaven”* to a man *“traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.”* HIS goods were delivered to HIS servants. The goods were distributed in strict accordance with each man’s *“several ability.”* Three particular servants are the object of consideration. One received *“five talents,”* *“another two,”* and *“another one.”* Translated into today’s currency, the gifts were approximately \$5,000, \$2,000, and \$1,000. Each man was then left to handle his stewardship, while the owner *“took his journey.”*

We are told that the first servant *“traded”* with his money, and *“made other five talents.”* The second servant

of the Lord. The second, making known the two additional talents that had been gained was told exactly the same thing. **He too was “accepted” of the Lord.** The third servant did not even present his talent, but told his master he was afraid, hid the talent, and that it remained in the ground for the master to retrieve. After upbraiding the unfaithful servant, the master took his talent and gave it to the one with ten. He then said, *“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Mat 25:30). **He was NOT acceptable to the Lord!**

Now, a persons theology might move him to say the last servant was really not a servant at all – but that would contradict what Jesus said. Another might reason that he was never intended to receive a reward at all – that would only be a betrayal of abysmal ignorance. Still another might say that what he did really had no bearing on his reward at all – but that would only violate everything Jesus said about the man.

These words of Jesus are intended to be taken seriously. **Let no person imagine that it is not possible for some who has genuinely received a gift from the Lord to eventually be cast into outer darkness, where**

The underlying supposition here is that when men are motivated to be accepted by God, it has a sanctifying effect upon their labors. Such endeavors will not be overlooked by God, who is “not unrighteous

“also gained other two more.” The servant receiving one talent *“went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.”*

“After a long time,” the master returned and called the servants into account. The first servant, making known the five additional talents that had been gained, was told, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”* **He was “accepted”**

there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth. And should some fool step forward to say there is such a place in the glory, we will only stop our ears and refuse to listen! It is important to *“labor”* to be *“accepted”* by the Lord!

Paul

The Temple of God – 1 Cor 3:10-17

Paul declared that the people of God were *“the temple of God”* – the place where God dwells by the Spirit (1 Cor

3:16-17). Reasoning on this matter (concerning building on the foundation of Christ), the apostle warned, *“But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”* He likened the converts made by the laborers to *“gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble.”* Some of those converts would be able to pass the

He states the case in words that are most solemn. *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”* (1 Cor 9:27).

And precisely what is a

Faithfulness Is Required – 1 Cor 4:2

Everyone in Christ is a steward, having received from the Lord responsibilities that are consonant with their abilities. The Holy Spirit states the case in this way: *“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him”* (1 Cor 12:18). Whether one is an apostle, one who shows mercy, a teacher, or one who has the gift of giving, there is a requirement placed upon each one. *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (1 Cor 4:2).

In our text, Paul is affirming he is laboring to fulfill that requirement – being *“found faithful”* when the Lord Jesus appears in all of His glory. No other person will be *“acceptable.”*

He then made clear that the destiny of a kingdom laborer would be determined by two things. First, how his converts stood the test of judgment, and second, how he himself passed through the judgment.

fiery trial of eternal judgment (gold, silver, precious stones). Some would not be able to pass the test, and would be consumed (wood, hay, stubble). He then made clear that the destiny of a kingdom laborer would be determined by two things. **First**, how his converts stood the test of judgment, and **second**, how he himself passed through the judgment. He then made this solemn declaration: *“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”* (1 Cor 3:17).

That is a description of NOT being acceptable to the Lord. Judge for yourself whether or not that is an enviable state in which to be found!

Becoming a Castaway – 1 Cor 9:27

Realizing the liability of having this treasure in an *“earthen vessel,”* Paul extended himself to make his body a slave to him, and not himself be in bondage to

“castaway?” This word comes from the Greek word ἀδόκιμος (ad-ok-ee-mos), which means “not standing the test, not approved, and that which proves itself not to be what it ought,” THAYER “failing to meet the test, worthless, unqualified, disqualified, rejected, proven false,” FRIBERG “pertaining to not being in accordance with what is right,” LOUW-NIDA and “rejected as false, disreputable, reprobate.” LIDDELL-SCOTT This word is also used in the sixth chapter of Hebrews, where it is equally strong. *“But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned”* (Heb 6:8).

Paul’s point in both texts is that of an unacceptable condition. It is a state in which a person is found where only rejection follows. The picture is of the substance of a person being tested like gold and silver. This is why Paul labored to be *“accepted”* by the Lord. **He knew that to be rejected by Christ is to be damned** – all opposing theology notwithstanding.

A BRIEF COMMENTARY

One of the great failings of the modern clergy is that of **not** laboring to be found *“acceptable”* by the Lord. Far too many endeavors (if, indeed, they can even be called that) are career and institutional centered. The results that are being produced by these inferior labors are by no means acceptable. **I am going to wax bold and say that the spiritual juvenility and carnality that is found in the American church is largely owing to unacceptable labors.** It is a serious condition that is in flagrant contradiction of the salvation of God.

We are facing a religion in which the *“earthen vessel”* has become more prominent than the heavenly *“treasure.”* The container has upstaged the contents. What is seen is more prominent than what is not seen. The Lord Jesus will not accept that condition.

SOMETHING WE MUST ALL DO

“10a For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”

One of the chief weaknesses of a people-centered or problem-solving approach to religion, is that it obscures the fact of our ultimate appearing before

Christ. When our religion hugs the earth, we simply cannot see or consider eternal consequences. Let it be clear that there is not a single facet of *“pure religion”* that allows for ministry in this world to the exclusion of remaining uncontaminated by it. This is precisely

why James said, *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27). The faithful servant must master the art of ministering in this world while

remaining separate from it. The following gives the reason for this requirement.

FOR

“For . . . ” Because we have already commented extensively on this word, here, a few brief words will suffice. **Paul will now give the reason WHY he labored, whether present in the body or absent from it, to be accepted by the Lord.** There was something on the Divine agenda that compelled him to reason in this way.

WE MUST ALL

“ . . . we must all . . . ” Other versions read, *“all of us,”*^{NRSV} *“we all have to,”*^{BBE} *“we are all to be seen for what we are,”*^{NJB} and *“every one of us will have to.”*^{PHILLIPS}

This is something that *“must”* take place. **It cannot be avoided.** Further, it is something that will be experienced by *“all”* of us. It is not something for a select few, or the leaders, or those in places of prominence. **Everyone in Christ has been saved, and everyone must appear.** Everyone has been given something to do, and everyone must appear. As the Spirit says elsewhere, *“it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Heb 9:27).

Here again is a subject that is quite rare in our day. **With all of the courses being offered in schools of higher Christian learning, and with all of the conferences, workshops, how-to books, and the likes, I know of little or nothing that addresses this subject.** Those who are teaching people how to obtain health and wealth are strangely silent about the subject that will now be addressed - even though it involves something that all of us **must** do.

APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

“ . . . appear before the judgment seat of Christ. . . ” Other versions read, *“come before Christ to be judged,”*^{BBE} *“manifested before the judgment seat of the Christ,”*^{DARBY} *“at the judgment seat of Christ we are all to be seen for what we are,”*^{NJB} *“stand before Christ to be judged,”*^{NLT} *“it behoveth us to be manifested before the tribunal of the Christ,”*^{YLT} *“appear in front of Christ’s*

judgment bench,”^{IE} *“appear before Christ’s judgment-seat in our true characters,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“be made manifest in our true characters, before the judgment seat of Christ,”*^{MONTGOMERY} *“we must all appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“will have to stand without pretense before Christ our judge.”*^{PHILLIPS}

This is a most arresting statement! **I do not believe it is possible to take it seriously and not at once become remarkably sober.** It is not possible to be slothful in matters pertaining to life and godliness, and seriously consider appearing before *“the judgment seat of Christ.”*

Appearing

Ponder this matter of our

places where verdicts are issued by worldly dignitaries. Pilate had a *“judgment seat”* (Matt 27:19). Gallio has a *“judgment seat”* in Acahai (Acts 18:12). Festus had a *“judgment seat”* (Acts 25:6). Caesar had a *“judgment seat”* (Acts 25:10). But what are they in comparison to *“the judgment seat of Christ!”*

Believers who are swift to judge their brethren are told, *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ”* (Rom 14:10). This is the throne from which the Lord will *“judge the world in righteousness,”* according to the Father’s appointment (Acts 17:31). It is where every man’s work will be evaluated, and every *“idle word”* will be reviewed.

This is a most arresting statement! I do not believe it is possible to take it seriously and not at once become remarkably sober. It is not possible to be slothful in matters pertaining to life and godliness, and seriously consider appearing before “the judgment seat of Christ.”

“appearing.” We will be made publically known – seen for what we really are. **Our works will be displayed before an assembled universe, and will be evaluated by the King of kings.** Everything about us will be made known. We ourselves will be *“manifested,”*^{DARBY} *“seen for what we are,”*^{NJB} and *“be revealed as we are.”*^{AMPLIFIED} This will not be a private hearing, but one conducted before an assembled universe. Speaking of this occasion Jesus said, *“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be proclaimed upon the housetops”* (Luke 12:2-3). The recollection of this will provoke one to labor *“to be accepted of Him.”*

The Judgment Seat

Men have their judgment seats –

No person who considers this appearance will take his stewardship lightly! Those who speak for God will not be drawn to humorous little anecdotes and worldly expressions when they take this appearance into consideration. It is no wonder the devil does not what the church to speak of this day – the time when *“we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”*

This is the place in which you want to appear *“faultless,”* in an unfallen state, and with great joy. If it seems that such a condition is not possible, recall the refreshing words of Jude. *“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”* (Jude 1:24). The *“judgment seat of Christ”* equates to Jude’s *“the presence of His glory.”* This is the time to which Jesus referred when He spoke of Himself

sitting “in the throne of His glory” (Matt 19:28). It is the time when “all nations” will be gathered before Him, and the ultimate separation will take place (Matt 25:31-32).

During His ministry, Jesus referred to “the judgment” no less than five times (Matt 5:21,22; 12:42; Lk 10:14; 11:32). He referred to matters surrounding the day of judgment numerous times (Matt 7:22-23; 8:29; 10:15; 11:22; 12:36-37; 13:30,40,42,49; 16:27; 23:14; 25:14-30, 31-46; Mk 4:22; 8:38; Lk 10:10-12; 12:2-5; 13:28-30; 20:45-47; John 12:48). **No person who listened to Jesus remained ignorant of the time when Jesus would judge every man.**

The apostles reminded us, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12). They spoke of “the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom 2:16). That time is described as one of “eternal judgment” (Heb 6:2), and it is a sure appointment

that follows death (Heb 9:27). On that day, there will be “judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb 10:27). Peter reminds us that Jesus is “ready to judge the quick and the dead” (1 Pet 4:5).

Of Christ

God Himself is often represented as judging the world (Psa 50:3,6; Rom 2:5,16; 14:12; 1 Cor 4:5; Rev 20:12). **However, God will execute that judgment through the Lord Jesus Christ.** Jesus announced this when He said, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). Again He said, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man” (John 5:26-27).

Paul declared it when he said to the Athenians, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now

commandeth all men every where to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which **He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead**” (Acts 17:30-31). Again, Paul wrote to the Romans, “In the day when **God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel**” (Rom 2:16).

Men will, therefore, be judged by a Man – “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). **This will allow for the most merciful judgment, as well as one that is in strict accordance with the truth.** He will judge the world as a Man who Himself was faithful to the Father. He will judge all of His stewards as One who stood ready to aid and succor them.

Our text is quite clear. Knowing that “we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” will contribute to laboring to be accepted by Him.

COMPENSATION FOR WHAT WAS DONE IN THE BODY

“^{10b} . . . that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

The Spirit will now summarize what will occur at “the judgment seat of Christ.” From our viewpoint, we will “give an account” of our ourselves to Him.

There will be no partiality on the day of judgment, just as there was none in the distribution of responsibilities among His people. This implies that every one has been given something.

From His viewpoint, He will give us an appropriate reward. Both of these will be accomplished at His “judgment seat.”

THAT EVERY ONE

“ . . . that every one . . . ” Other versions read, “that each one,”^{NKJV} “every one of us,”^{BBE} “that every man,”^{GENEVA} “we will each,”^{NLT} “each of us,”^{LIVING} and “each person.”^{IE}

There will be no partiality on the day of judgment, just as there

was none in the distribution of responsibilities among His people. This implies that every one has been given something. As it is written, “But

unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7). And again, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as **God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith**” (Rom 12:3). And again, “But as **God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches**” (1 Cor 7:17). And again, “But the manifestation of the Spirit **is given to every man to profit withal**” (1 Cor 12:7). And again, “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, **dividing to every man severally as He will**” (1 Cor 12:11). Jesus said, “For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, **and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch**” (Mark 13:34).

It makes sense, therefore, that “everyone” is involved in the appointed time of accountability.

MAY RECEIVE THE THINGS

“ . . . may receive the things . . . ”

Other versions read, “*may be recompensed*,”^{NASB} “*may receive*,”^{NIV} “*may receive recompense*,”^{NRSV} “*may get his reward*,”^{BBE} “*may receive the proper things*,”^{DOUAY} “*may be recompensed for*,”^{NAU} “*may then receive an reward*,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*may get his pay*,”^{WILLIAMS} “*receive*,”^{MONTGOMERY} “*may receive [his pay]*,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*shall be rewarded for what*.”^{PHILLIPS}

This is the language of sowing and reaping – an inviolable law of the Kingdom. The language is very precise: “*receive the things*.” Solomon referred to this principle when he wrote, “*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find IT after many days*” (Eccl 11:1). Some versions use the words “*recompense*,”^{NRSV} “*reward*,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*pay*.”^{WILLIAMS} While these are doctrinally correct, they are not the focus of the verse. **Here, what is received is of the same order as what was done.** Paul put it this way, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*” (Gal 6:7-8).

Speaking of this very principle during extremely primitive spiritual times, Eliaphaz well said, “*Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same*” (Job 4:8). While he misapplied this to the trials of Job, the statement itself was true. Solomon said much the same thing: “*Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices*” (Prov 1:31). Hosea said, “*For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind*” (Hosea 8:7). Again Hosea said, “*Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy*” (Hosea 10:12).

What is dispensed from the “judgment seat of Christ” will be of the same order as the investment made by men. Those have shown mercy here, will themselves be shown mercy

there. Those who have been inconsiderate here, will themselves receive the ultimate inconsideration there. Those who have been tender will face a tender Judge. Those who have been hard will face a hard Judge. Just as the fruit of a tree is of the same order as the seed which produced the tree, so what we “*receive*” on that day will be of the same order as the focus of our lives.

DONE IN THE BODY

“ . . . done in his body . . . ” Other versions read, “*his deeds in the body*,”^{NASB} “*done while in the body*,”^{NIV} “*what he did in the body*,”^{NAB} “*done in his earthly body*,”^{LIVING} “*did while he was in his physical body*,”^{IE} “*his actions in this life*,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*what we did while we lived in our bodies*.”^{PHILLIPS}

The Spirit continues to narrow

could very well have a bad appearance. **His point was that wicked people often have good appearances – that wolves wear sheep’s clothing** (Matt 7:15). Sheep never wear “*wolves*” clothing! The ungodly Pharisees appeared outwardly to be “*righteous*,” but inwardly they were “*full of hypocrisy and iniquity*” (Matt 23:28). **The righteous, however, do not appear unrighteous outwardly, while being full of goodness and truth within.** Who would dare to think in such a slovenly manner? Speaking of what people “*do*” in the body, John wrote, “*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning*” (1 John 3:8). **What we do in the body reveals what we are.**

We will receive according to what we did while the Master was away, and we remained “in the body” in charge of His goods. Therefore, while men are waiting for the Lord from heaven, they are perceived as doing something – something that will determine what they receive at the “judgment seat of Christ.”

down the subject of appearing before “*the judgment seat of Christ*.” The time of investment is precisely defined as **when** we were “*in the body*” – “*absent from the Lord*.” **We will receive according to what we did while the Master was away, and we remained “in the body” in charge of His goods.** Therefore, while men are waiting for the Lord from heaven, they are perceived as **doing** something – something that will determine **what** they receive at the “*judgment seat of Christ*.”

It becomes apparent, therefore, that what is “done in the body” actually reveals what we are. Those who glibly say “*You cannot judge a book by its cover*” only display their ignorance. When Jesus warned us not to judge according to appearance (John 7:24), He was not saying that good people

This, of course, puts the lie to the “once-saved-always-saved” doctrine! Those who imagine that what we do has no bearing upon our eternal destiny have failed to take this passage into consideration – as well as many others. In fact, in their position, they make quite clear that men, not God, have provided their doctrine.

ACCORDING TO THAT HE HATH DONE

“ . . . according to that he hath done . . . ” Other versions read “*what is due him*,”^{RSV} “*what is due him*,”^{NIV} “*what is deserved*,”^{NJB} “*the proper things*,”^{DOUAY} “*in accordance with what he has done*,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*get his pay for what he has done*,”^{WILLIAMS} and “*considering what his purpose and motive have been, and what he has achieved, been busy with, and given himself and his attention to*

accomplishing.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The Spirit will not let this matter go with a weak statement. He knows that men tend to excuse what they do in their bodies, making appeals to, what they conceive to be, more noble motives than actually reside within.

The point here is that what is within, works itself out in doing. When the Lord came to grips with Eve, He asked her, *“What is this that thou hast*

What we do is going to determine what we receive from the Judge in the day when we stand before His *“judgment seat.”*

WHETHER IT BE GOOD OR BAD

“. . . whether it be good or bad.”

Other versions read, *“whether good or evil,”*^{NRSV} and *“whether it be good of whether it be worthless.”*^{WEYMOUTH}

Here is further Kingdom precision. Everyone is going to receive something, **and it will be determined by what**

to communicate” (1 Tim 6:17-18). Again, the saints are exhorted, *“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (Heb 13:16). Peter reminds us that those who *“love life”* and would *“see good days”* are to *“eschew evil, and do good,”* and *“seek peace, and ensue it”* (1 Pet 3:11).

And what will the Lord Jesus do for the those who *“do good?”* He will *“do good”* to them, calling them into the Kingdom that was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. God will *“do good”* to such. As it is written, *“Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts”* (Psa 125:4).

“Bad”

There is also such a thing as doing *“bad”* – expressing *“in the body”* things that are contrary to God, essentially evil, and nothing more than the works of the devil. Jesus told the unbelievers He confronted, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do”* (John 8:44).

The word *“bad”* is translated from the Greek word *κακόν* (kaak-on), which means “of a bad nature; not such as it ought to be; base, wrong; troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful,”^{THAYER} and “pertaining to being bad, with the implication of harmful and damaging.”^{FRIEBERG} A deed that is *“bad”* is more than something that is wrong by definition, or evil by nature. Those meanings are certainly inherent in the word *“bad.”* **Here, however, “bad” refers to a deed that has an unacceptable and wicked effect.** It is like a disease that corrupts and causes deterioration, just as *“good,”* when properly seen, is something that assists and builds up in the most holy faith.

This is the word used in Acts 28:5, when Paul shook a viper from his hand and was found with no *“harm.”* It is also used in Revelation 16:2, where a *“noisome”* and grievous sore fell upon men. The idea conveyed in the word *“bad”* is that of **a kind of infection that spreads beyond the one who commits the evil deed.** Just as the poison of a viper spreads throughout the nervous system of the one it bites, so *“bad”* deeds infect and contaminate the society of men, as well as the individual who commits

In this world we establish the rate and kind of exchange that will be accomplished at “the judgment seat of Christ.” The “things” we receive will not differ from the “things we sought and did while we remained in the body.

DONE?” (Gen 3:13). When God confronted Cain, He said, *“What hast thou DONE?”* (Gen 4:10). When the Lord blessed Abraham on the mountains of Moriah He said, *“And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast DONE this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies”* (Gen 22:17).

When the Lord spoke to Jehu He said, *“And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast DONE well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast DONE unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel”* (2 Kgs 10:30). When the Lord judged Amaziah for his idolatry He said to him through a prophet, *“I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast DONE this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel”* (2 Chr 25:16).

Let no person imagine that what they “do” is of no consequence!

they have “done,” “whether it be good or bad.” Whatever they have invested in, is what they will be given in return. **In this world we establish the rate and kind of exchange that will be accomplished at “the judgment seat of Christ.”** The *“things”* we receive will not differ from the *“things”* we sought and did while we remained in the body.

“Good”

It might be countered that it is written, *“there is none that doeth good, no, not one”* (Rom 3:12; Psa 14:1,3; 53:1, 3). How is it, then, that doing *“good”* can be the basis for righteous judgment and reward? This, of course, is not a difficult question to answer, and those who suggest that it is do not know what they are talking about. **The phrase “none that doeth good” refers to men in a natural state** – those who only have an association with Adam. People who do good are those who are in Christ Jesus.

Thus believers are admonished, *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Gal 6:10). Again, Paul admonishes Timothy to charge those who are *“rich in this world”* to *“do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing*

them.

From the higher vantage point, every deed is under the direction of either God or Satan. No deed is strictly the work of men. In the case of deeds that are “bad,” especially by those who wear the name of the Lord, the individual has become the willing vassal of the devil. The compounding factor is that such a person was once delivered “from the power of darkness,” yet was in some way overcome by that power once again. For those who are in Christ, this can only occur when an “evil heart of unbelief” rises within (Heb 3:12).

SAVED BY GRACE, BUT JUDGED BY WORKS

For those who do not know the manner of the Kingdom, the fact that we are “saved by grace” does not appear to mesh with being “judged according to our works” – or receiving the things done in the body, whether they are good or bad. No person should stumble over this, for both conditions are clearly stated in God’s Word.

• We are saved by grace. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Eph 2:5). “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8). Again it is written, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24).

• We will be judged according to our works. “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Mat 16:27). “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev 20:12). “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev 20:13).

These seemingly contradictory considerations are not to be viewed through the filter of systematized theology. They are not subjects to be hashed out among men until they come to some form of consensus. These are precise statements of truth – articulations that have been inspired by the Spirit of God. Our analysis of them must begin with that postulate.

REAL LIFE	
DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS	TRANSLATED INTO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST
PUT OFF THE OLD MAN	PUT ON THE NEW MAN
DEAD INDEED UNTO SIN	ALIVE UNTO GOD
UNRIGHTEOUS	WASHED, JUSTIFIED
DENYING UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS	SOBER, RIGHTEOUS, AND LOOKING FOR JESUS
DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS	QUICKENED, AND RAISED TO SIT WITH CHRIST
STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS	SAINTS AND FELLOW CITIZENS
DID SIN	DO RIGHTEOUSNESS

The truth of the matter is that salvation consists of two vital parts – and there is no salvation where both of these parts are not found. They are like two sides of the same coin. The parts are stated in as follows.

- “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13).
- “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:9-10).
- “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11).
- “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?”

Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11).

- “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13).
- “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1).
- “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19).
- “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous . . . In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:7,10)

Salvation is not theoretical – something to be argued in the classrooms of philosophers.. It involves a very real separation from one order, and a very real joining to another. There is a cessation of one kind of life, and a genesis of another. Regeneration involves a change of character, where “old things” pass away, and “all things” become new (2 Cor 5:17). Further, it is not possible for a change of character not to result in a change of life. “Newness of life” is something in which we do “walk” (Rom 6:4). In fact, if men are not walking in the “newness of life,” it nullifies any claim to having been made new.

It is for this reason that the

judgment of men will be “*according to their works.*” **Their works are the unquestionable revelation of what they are.** Just as surely as bondage to sin

produced a sinful life, so release from that bondage, and being “*joined to the Lord,*” produces a corresponding life of God-glorifying newness.

The persuasion of the truth of these things is a powerful, and necessary, compelling factor in every valid Kingdom laborer.

CONCLUSION

In order for men to labor consistently and effectively in the vineyard of the Lord, their efforts must be expended within the context of perception, understanding, and persuasion. Paul has presented himself as an example of this – not a unique example, but as one who is living in the powerful effects of the New Covenant.

While Paul, as all who wrote Scripture, was moved along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21), **he does not write merely as an inspired man, but as one who is participating in the Divine nature** (2 Pet 1:4). His participation is that of an Apostle, but in the matter of the participation itself, He is a member of the body. He is a “*partaker*” by grace – just like the rest of us (1 Cor 10:30). He “*obtained mercy,*” just as all who are in Christ Jesus (1 Tim 1:13,16).

Ponder the magnitude of the expressions in our text. **They lift us from the domain of mediocrity, and move us to consider things beyond the boundaries of time and space – things that only faith can grasp.**

- We are **always** confident (5:6a).
- We are **always** knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (5:6b).
- We do, in fact, **walk** by faith, and not by sight (5:7).
- We **are** willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord (5:8).
- We **do** labor in order to be accepted by the Lord, whether we are in the body, or absent from it (5:9).
- We **understand** that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (5:10a).
- We **understand** that we will receive

from the Lord precisely according to the things that we have done in the body (5:10b). What we have “*done*” will determine what we “*receive.*”

- We **acquiesce** to the truth that we

This is true of anything that has its genesis with man –anything that is conceived by man, originated by man, or depends upon man for its maintenance. Unless God Himself is in

In order for men to labor consistently and effectively in the vineyard of the Lord, their efforts must be expended within the context of perception, understanding, and persuasion. Paul has presented himself as an example of this – not a unique example, but as one who is living in the powerful effects of the New Covenant.

will receive the same kind of things on which we have expended our energies, whether good or bad.

As I have already mentioned, these perspectives are **not** common within the professed church. The reason for this condition is that those who lack discernment in these areas are simply not living by faith – for these **are** traits, or qualities, of faith. When faith “*comes*” (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:25), it brings these wonderful insights with it. It never leaves them behind, or in the barrel of theological mystery.

What is even more, the **thrust** of contemporary religion is not at all conducive to faith. It has an emphasis that makes no room for dominating faith – and that is the only way faith can be of benefit. When faith takes a back seat, all of the things that are perceived and apprehended by faith sits in the back with it. If men refuse to believe, they are, by that very stance, rendered incapable of receiving.

a thing, it is not possible for it to accrue to His glory or accomplish His objectives. God never enters what man initiates, thereby obtaining glory for Himself. Rather, of glory is to be experience, it is man that must enter into what the Lord has done.

When God shines the light of the knowledge of His glory “*in the face of Jesus Christ*” into our hearts, powerful results ensue. In the beginning, when God commanded the light to shine, everything was changed. That light had a pervasive quality about it that caused it to accomplish the purpose of the Almighty. Nothing remained the same. That was a very real “*beginning.*”

Just as surely as the skin on Moses’ face could not remain the same after being in the presence of God, so our hearts cannot remain the same after God has shined light into them. A very real change accompanies that marvelous light.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 3/18/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The twenty-third lesson will cover verses eleven through thirteen of the fifth chapter: **“KNOWING AND PERSUADING.”** In a very arresting statement of the case, Paul affirms that his knowledge of “the terror of the Lord” moves him to persuade men. This powerful motivation has nearly been totally obscured by the modern attempts to swell the numbers of the local congregation. 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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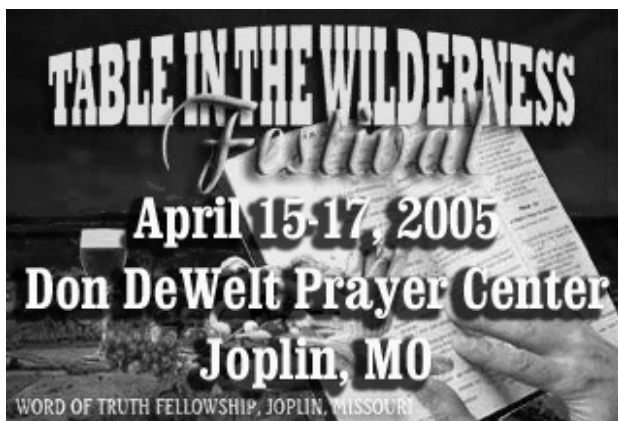
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A strong and stable confidence is essential to the effective preaching and teaching of the Gospel – by Given O. Blakely
