

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. Blahely

Lesson #44

COMMENTARY ON: 11:5-11

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

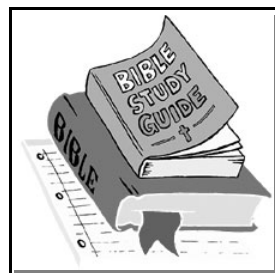
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

PAUL EXCELLED AS AN APOSTLE

It is a most unfortunate circumstance when Paul, who had delivered such a marvelous message, accompanied by various signs, together with abundant fruit among men, must speak of himself. This is particularly true when the defense must be made to a church that was originated through his labors. Paul's defense is not an effort to promote himself, nor is it in any way an expression of pride. It is rather driven by his understanding of the nature of Christ's dealings with men. Jesus made quite clear that anyone who did not receive the person He sent was guilty of not receiving Him, and the one who did not receive Him had, in fact, rejected the Father as well. Jesus will not rescind this word. It will be heard on the day of judgment, and solemnly pronounced to those who ignored it. Paul is, therefore, engaging in effort to recover the Corinthians so they can finally stand confidently before Jesus.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

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



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

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The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 44



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

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

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

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

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

PAUL EXCELLED AS AN APOSTLE

“ 11:5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. ⁶ But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. ⁷ Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? ⁸ I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. ⁹ And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man; for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. ¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.” (2 Corinthians 11:5-11)

INTRODUCTION

It is a most unfortunate circumstance when Paul, who had delivered such a marvelous message – accompanied by various signs, together with abundant fruit among men – must speak about himself. This is particularly true when a defense must be made to a church that was originated through his labors. It is one thing for Paul to defend himself before a Jewish council (Acts 22:1-23), a governor (Acts 24:10-21), or before Agrippa (Acts 26:2-23). But when

he must defend himself before a church that was the result of his own labors, it is a sad thing, indeed! It confirms the depths to which professing believers will stoop when they are driven by “*the flesh*.”

Paul's defense is not an effort to promote himself, nor is it in any way an expression of fleshly pride. It is rather driven by his understanding of the nature of Christ's dealings with men. Jesus made quite clear that anyone who

did not receive the person He sent was guilty of not receiving Him, and the one who did not receive Him had, in fact, rejected the Father as well (Matt 10:40; Luke 10:16). Jesus will not rescind this word. It will be heard on the day of judgment, and solemnly pronounced to those who ignored it.

Paul is, therefore, engaging in an effort to recover the Corinthians so they can finally stand confidently before

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Jesus, giving an account of themselves with joy. He will do this in two ways.

- First, he will remind the Corinthians of his ministry – its source, nature, and effectiveness.
- Second, he will vigorously oppose those who have demeaned him, denying the validity of his ministry and contradicting the Gospel that he preached. He will do this by employing spiritual weaponry which is “mighty through God.”

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Spiritual warfare is a diverse activity, requiring the whole armor of God, together with wisdom and fortitude. This is an aspect of life in Christ Jesus that is grossly neglected in our time. From this perspective, ponder something

of what is involved in living by faith.

- We must “*put on the whole armor of God*” (Eph 6:10-18).
- We must “*fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Tim 6:12).
- We must “*resist the devil*” (1 Pet 5:7-8).
- We **wrestle** “*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*” (Eph 6:12).
- There are men – religious men – “*whose mouths must be stopped*” (Tit 1:11).
- We are to “*abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul*” (1 Pet 2:11).
- There are also bastions of erroneous thought to be **pulled down**, and imaginations and high thoughts to be **cast down** (2 Cor 10:4-5).

None of these activities can be accomplished with a “*carnal mind*” (Rom 8:7). All of them are necessary, for they involve the possible depletion of spiritual resources, the overthrow of faith, and deep spiritual loss. None of them can be taken casually, for powers outside of ourselves are at work in all of them. The Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and a great host of angels are engaged in activity on the side of righteousness. The devil himself, together, his hierarchy of evil, and those in whom he is working, are fighting against the truth and all who have embraced it.

HOLDING BACK THE TRUTH

Involved in all of this activity is the holding back, or suppression of, the truth. Speaking of this circumstance the Scripture affirms, “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*” (Rom 1:18). This does not mean that people have a grasp of the truth, and maintain a hold of it while they themselves are unrighteous. **Truth cannot be held by an unrighteous person.** The word “*hold*” has to do with

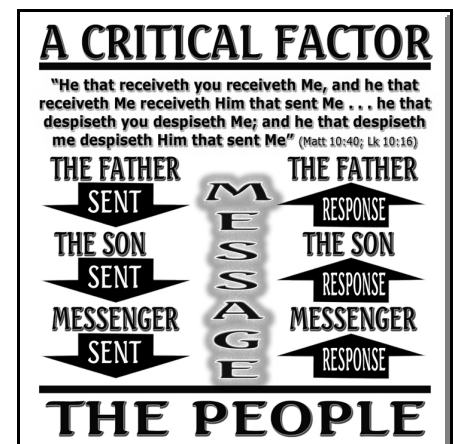
restraining, or holding back. The word means “to hold back, detain . . . restrain, hinder the course or progress of,” THAYER “hold back, detain, prevent . . . hold down, suppress,” FRIBERG “to prevent someone from doing something by restraining or hindering,” LOUW-NIDA “to check, restrain, control, bridle, to be held down, to be bound.” LIDDELL-SCOTT

Other translations of this verse confirm that **the restraint of the truth** is the particular subject. “*Who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*” NKJV “*who suppress the truth by their wickedness,*” NIV “*who by their wickedness suppress the truth,*” NRSV “*who hinder the truth in unrighteousness,*” ASV “*who keep down what is true by wrongdoing,*” BBE “*Who withhold the truth in unrighteousness,*” GENEVA “*holding down the truth in unrighteousness,*” YLT and “*who in their wickedness repress and hinder the truth and make it inoperative.*” AMPLIFIED

There are two ways in which unrighteousness suppresses the truth.

- First, unrighteousness causes the individual to lose all appetite for the truth. Therefore, it is **not proclaimed**.
- Second, the presence of unrighteousness creates an environment in which truth **does not work**. Thus Jesus “*could do no mighty work*” in his own country, because of their unbelief (Mk 6:5-6).

The outbreak of iniquity among the Corinthians (division, immorality, a lack of love, confusion, despising the Lord’s table, etc), **was owing to the suppression of the truth of the Gospel.** Teachers had penetrated their ranks



Satan and his ministers come in disguises, and are only detectable to those living by faith— by Given O. Blakely

whose hearts were not right with God. That is why they preached “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another Gospel.”

What happened at Corinth is precisely what happened within Israel – **truth fell down in the street, and therefore could no longer to its liberating work!** Isaiah declared to wayward Israel, “And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for **truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot**

enter. Yea, **truth faileth;** and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment” (Isa 59:15). This was completely intolerable in Israel. **It was even more so in Corinth,** where “a more sure word of prophecy” had been faithfully delivered (2 Pet 1:19), and the people had been “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” (1 Cor 6:11). **When contaminated teachers bring in contaminated teaching, what appears to**

be nothing more than a “**little leaven**” finally leavens “**the whole lump**” (1 Cor 5:6).

It is for this reason that Paul now comes to grips with these false teachers – the ones who had preached “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another Gospel.” He will point to his own ministry, confirming that it is precisely the kind of ministry that Jesus ordained, and that he had excelled in that ministry according to the grace of God.

NOT A WHIT BEHIND

“ 11:5 **For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.**”

Paul now compares himself with those who have been deceiving and disrupting the Corinthians. This section extends through the conclusion of the epistle – chapter thirteen, verse fourteen. It is a remarkably extensive defense of his apostleship, and a most severe rebuke of the Corinthians for having been turned against him.

This text is not the eruption of pride, or an effort on Paul’s part to merely promote his own praise. His work among the Corinthians was now in being held in question, and Paul will show how utterly foolish it was to look at a man with a superior revelation and a driving quest to proclaim it, as in any way being inferior.

I SUPPOSE

“For I suppose . . .” Other translations read, “For I consider that,” NKJV “I consider myself,” NASB “But I do not think,” NIV “For I reckon,” ASV “For, in my opinion,” BBE “Yet, I don’t feel,” LIVING and “Yet I cannot believe.” PHILLIPS

Now Paul unveils how his godly mind and thought. **Here is a man who had abandoned every conceivable to lay hold of Christ** (Phil 3:7). With determination he classified as “dung” every competing interest (Phil 3:8). He no longer lived for himself, but for the One who loved him and gave Himself for him (Gal 2:20). He was not “disobedient to the

heavenly vision” that was given to him as one “born out of due time” (Acts 26:19; 1 Cor 15:8).

How does a man like this think?

How does he react to those who have allowed false teachers to turn his own converts against him? We will see that he does not mince words.

NOT A WHIT

“I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.” Other versions read, “I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.” NKJV “But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those

than the great apostles.” DOUAY “these marvelous ‘messengers from God,’ as they call themselves are [not] any better than I am,” LIVING “not a single bit inferior to those surpassingly superior apostles of yours,” WILLIAMS “I am in no respect behind your ‘super-apostolic’ apostles,” MONTGOMERY “myself as in no way inferior to these [precious] extra-super [false] apostles.” AMPLIFIED and “I am not the least inferior to these extra-special messengers of yours.” PHILLIPS

A significant number of commentators think that Paul is comparing himself to the “twelve apostles” – something that he had done before. In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul refers to some he met in Jerusalem “who seemed to be somewhat,” or were held in very high regard. However, “in conference,” Paul said, “they added nothing to me” – that is, they did not unveil to him anything that he did not already know (Gal 2:6). Instead, when those who “seemed to be pillars” – James, Cephas, and John – “perceived the grace that was given to” Paul, they gave him and Barnabas “the right hands of fellowship; they they should go to the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal 2:9). **They were able to recognize the great grace that had been given to Paul, yet some in Corinth had not been able to do so.**

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul described himself as one “born out of due time,” who was “the least of the apostles, that am not meet to

“super-apostles.” NIV “I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles.” RSV “I am in no way less than the most important of the Apostles.” BBE “I have done nothing less

be called an apostle," because he persecuted the church of God. Yet, in spite of that seeming disadvantage, and because of the remarkable measure of grace that was given to him, he "labored more abundantly than they (the apostles) all." Yet, he confessed, this was not owing to any fleshly superiority or giftedness, but was "by the grace of God" which was with him (1 Cor 15:10). There was, then, a very definite sense in which he was in no way inferior to the leading apostles of the Lamb.

Yet, in this passage he has

themselves (2 Cor 10:12c).

- They boasted of things without their measure (2 Cor 10:14-15).
- They were preaching "another Jesus," "another Spirit," and "another Gospel" (2 Cor 11:4).

Later Paul refers to these men as "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (1 Cor 11:13).

These men had represented

another. Their assemblies were disorderly. Their observance of the Lord's table was uncomely. They even found it easy to forget the poor saints in Jerusalem, for whom they had determined to take up an offering.

Deterioration in the church is not coincidental. It is the fruit of embracing the wrong "Jesus," the wrong "Spirit," and the wrong "Gospel." I realize that this is a strong statement, but consider the alternatives.

- Is it possible for the real "Jesus" to inspire or condone sin?
- Is it possible for the real "Spirit" to fail to lead one in the mortification of the deeds of the body?
- Is it possible for the real "Gospel" to fail to be the "power of God unto salvation," and for it to actually promote ungodliness?

But one will say this is not a fair assessment of the case. They will say, "Those who have retrogressed to the flesh have surely not done so because of Jesus. It is not owing to the influence of the Holy Spirit, or to the working of the Gospel of Christ. The people have simply forsaken Jesus, grieved the Spirit, and forgotten the Gospel. That is why they have conducted themselves in a wayward manner!"

However, the matter is not as simplistic as that. The people with whom Paul is dealing, and many with whom we are dealing, have not publicly rejected Jesus. They have chosen to be called "Christian," and maintain their identity with the church. They fancy themselves to be genuine "Christians," indeed. They are maintaining a "form of godliness," even though they "deny the power thereof" (2 Cor 3:5).

And precisely what does that mean? It means they have adopted a Jesus that allows them to be the way they are. They have a view of the Holy Spirit that permits them to walk in the flesh. They have embraced a Gospel that does not announce that "the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom 1:18). That is what had happened in Corinth,

Those who do not preach the real Jesus, the real Spirit, and the real Gospel, cannot go about telling us of their faith! They do not have a better message, and that reality is seen in the results that it produces.

introduced another set of teachers who did NOT represent Christ. These were men who has intruded into the Corinthian assembly and had wrought all manner of confusion. At this point we must recall some things that have been said of them.

- They had provoked an examination of Paul as though he was an imposter (1 Cor 9:3).
- They were saying there was no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12-13).
- They affirmed that Paul needed some letters of recommendation (2 Cor 3:1).
- They thought Paul walked "according to the flesh" (2 Cor 10:2).
- They commended themselves (2 Cor 10:12a).
- They measured themselves by themselves (2 Cor 10:12b).
- They compared themselves among

themselves as superior to Paul, and delivering a superior message – for no person preaches "another Jesus," or "another Spirit," or "another Gospel," who does not think it to be superior. When the real "Jesus" is not preached, it is because the preacher does not see Him as superior. When the real "Spirit" is preached, it is because He is considered to be inferior and irrelevant. When the real "Gospel" is not preached, it is because it is not perceived as being necessary to the accomplishment of the objectives that have been adopted.

Those who do not preach the real Jesus, the real Spirit, and the real Gospel, cannot go about telling us of their faith! They do not have a better message, and that reality is seen in the results that it produces. For the "false apostles" at Corinth, their fruit included division carnality, converts that were wood hay and stubble, powerless words, and the toleration of fornication. As if that was not enough it left believers thinking they could sue one another before unbelievers. It also made them ignorant of basic things concerning marriage and the consideration of one

and it is what has taken place in our day, and has even been made popular in our

time. This is a relevant word, and it is to be taken quite seriously! What was found

in Corinth is all around us, and I measures that are disconcerting.

RUDE IN SPEECH, NOT IN KNOWLEDGE

“^{6a} But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge . . .”

Paul is now addressing the charges that have been registered against him. The **“false apostles”** have gained the confidence of the people by demeaning Paul, and representing him as grossly inferior in the field of religion.

RUDE IN SPEECH

“But though I be rude in speech . . .” Other versions read, *“untrained in speech,”* ^{NKJV} *“unskilled in speech,”* ^{NASB} *“may not be a trained speaker,”* ^{NIV} *“rough in my way of talking,”* ^{BBE} *“in the matter of speech I am no orator,”* ^{ISV} *“untrained as an orator,”* ^{ISV} and *“Perhaps I am not a polished speaker.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

Keep in mind that no one who received Paul as Christ’s representative every said he was **“rude,”** or **“unskilled”** in speech. The Galatians had received Paul – even when he was sick – *“as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus”* (Gal 4:14). Who, in all of human history, has ever been subjected to the voice of an angel and thought his speech to be **“rude,”** or in any way lacking in presentation? Who ever heard the Lord Jesus and said He was an **“untrained”** speaker? Did men not confess that *“His word was with power”* (Lk 4:32).

The Thessalonians received Paul’s word, *“not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually also in you that believe”* (1 Thess 2:13). **There was, therefore, a sense in which Paul’s speech was not at all crude, but powerful and persuasive.**

As I have before pointed out, at Lystra, when Paul spoke, they thought he was the god Mercurius, because he was the **“chief speaker”** (Acts 14:12). Some might object that he was stoned after that occasion (Acts 14:19), and that stoning may have affected his speech.

However, he delivered stirring speeches to the chief priests and the Jewish council (Acts 22:30-23:10), Governor Festus (Acts 24:10-21), Felix (Acts 24:24-26), and Agrippa (Acts 26:1-28).

As used here, the word **“rude”** means **“without professional training.”** ^{STRONG’S} In the common Greek writings, this word was used to denote a private, or common, person, as distinguished from a magistrate, ruler, or king. As used here, it meant **“unskilled in eloquence,”** ^{THAYER} that is,

case that the jury would release a vicious murderer on some seeming technicality.

It is not that oratory is wrong, but that it is not superior. The man of God, however, does not depend upon emotional stirrings, catch phrases, touching illustrations, and the likes. His aim is to deliver the truth of God to the people without the color of **“the flesh”** upon it, and absent of the odor of man.

As used in our text, **“rude in**

It is apparent that the “false apostles” who had corrupted the Corinthians had not declared the Gospel, for the Gospel cannot corrupt human thought or action. A false message can only be pressed with human skill, fleshly reasoning, and outwardly impressive speech. There is no other way to promote a lie!

not a trained speaker. In our day, public speaking does not have the weight that it did among the Greeks, and other cultured nations. There were men who were especially trained orators – like Tertullus, who presented an outwardly impressive case against Paul (Acts 24:1-9). The English definition of **“oratory”** includes the following, which is a most excellent definition: **“public speaking that is characterized by the use of stock phrases and that appeals chiefly to the emotions.”** ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} **“An orator is primarily persuasive rather than informative. Oratorical greatness is invariably identified with strong emotional phrasing and delivery. When the intellectual qualities dominate with relative absence of the affective appeals, the oration fails just as it does when emotion sweeps aside reason.”** ^{BRITANNICA} Historical orators include Sophocles, Euripides, Arisophanes, Xenophon, and Plato. A modern example of an orator would be a skillful lawyer who could so plead his

speech” is the opposite of such an approach. Paul did not seek to inflame human emotion with manipulative speech. **To believers in Christ, Paul would come across as an outstanding speaker.** However, to the carnal Corinthian who had an appetite for the oratorical presentations of crafty politicians and shrewd false prophets, he was not at all appealing. Rather than impressing them with his ability to make language serve his own purposes, the truth of God came to the forefront, convicting sinners, and edifying and comforting saints.

It is apparent that the **“false apostles”** who had corrupted the Corinthians had not declared the Gospel, **for the Gospel cannot corrupt human thought or action.** A false message can only be pressed with human skill, fleshly

reasoning, and outwardly impressive speech. There is no other way to promote a lie!

The charge leveled against Paul was that his speech was “contemptible,” or “unimpressive”^{NASB} (2 Cor 10:10). He did not employ the popular vernacular or appeal to the demotic occurrences of the day. His speech did not reflect worldly values. He did not preach “with wisdom of words” – worldly words (1 Cor 1:17). He did not resort to “excellency of speech,” as the world counts “excellency” (1 Cor 2:1). Instead of standing before

and not enough illustrations. It is not uncommon for young preachers to actually be instructed in the use of worldly illustrations and examples that will add weight to their message. **However, this is thinking that is more like that of the world than of God.**

It might be objected that Jesus Himself used illustrations to help the people to better understand the truth – as in His employment of parables. But this is a lot of nonsense! The Scripture neither confirm nor suggest such a thing. **Let us put this bit of sophistry to the**

unfruitful.” (Matt 13:7,22).

☛ *“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold”* **VERSUS** *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”* (Matt 13:8,23).

In precisely what way did the parable clarify the truth, or bring it within the reach of the people? Do not forget that the multitudes only heard the parable. Jesus did not give them the explanation, but reserved that for His disciples. His disciples did not understand the parable either, for they asked Him for an explanation of it (Mk 4:10). They also asked Him why He spoke to the multitude in parables. He forthrightly answered them, “He answered and said unto them, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, **but to them it is not given” (Matt 13:11). Mark provides an even more lengthy explanation: “And He said unto them, *Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them”* (Mark 4:11-12). Luke says, “And He said, *Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand”* (Luke 8:10).**

The Point

The point is that the more a person’s speech parallels that of the world, whether in parables or in oratory, the more obscure the truth becomes. Jesus hid the truth from those to whom it was not given to know it – **and He did it by speaking in parables.** Paul knew that impressive speech would appeal to the **wrong** part of the Corinthians – their “flesh” – and therefore he did not resort to that manner of speaking.

Now Paul will show that there is more to the matter of preaching than **how** words are delivered. The “sound” of

The point is that the more a person’s speech parallels that of the world, whether in parables or in oratory, the more obscure the truth becomes. Jesus hid the truth from those to whom it was not given to know it – and He did it by speaking in parables.

them in the confidence of an orator, he was with them “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (1 Cor 2:3). He did not use “enticing words of man’s wisdom,” appealing to the lower, or emotional, nature of the people (1 Cor 2:4). He therefore freely acknowledges that, in their assessment, he was “rude in speech.” **He did not measure up to the impressive speakers who had so affected them.**

There is one significant difference between a mere orator and one who speaks for the Lord in fear and trembling. **The one speaking for the Lord knows the eternal destiny of the people hinges upon their acceptance of his message.** He also knows that he will be held in strict accountability before God for what he has said. The mere orator has to interest in either of these things.

There is a remarkable emphasis on oratory (at least a lower form of it) in many preacher-training schools. I well remember one of our own brethren preaching when he was in his early teens at a local preaching contest. One of the local Bible College judges upbraided him for having too much Bible in his message

test. Compare these statements.

☛ *“Some seed fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air devoured them up”* **VERSUS** *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side”* (Matt 13:4,19).

☛ *“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away”* **VERSUS** *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended”* (Matt 14:5-6,20-21).

☛ *“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them”* **VERSUS** *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh*

words cannot possibly be more important than the message they chronicle.

NOT IN KNOWLEDGE

“. . . yet not in knowledge . . . ”

Other versions read, “but I do have knowledge,”^{NIV} “this is not the case with my knowledge,”^{NJB} “but I know what I am talking about,”^{NLT} “yet in knowledge I am not deficient,”^{WEYMOUTH} “I am not so in the field of knowledge,”^{ISV} and “yet [I am] not [unskilled] in knowledge [I know what I am talking about].”^{AMPLIFIED}

In the work of the Lord, a preacher without kingdom knowledge is a walking contradiction. Those who are not conversant with the truth of God have no business preaching, or making an attempt to teach. How many times I have seen ignorant people stand before a “class” and read or teach out of the “brotherhood” quarterly – even though they did not even have an elementary understanding of the things of God. I have heard preachers who were well known, and noted for ministering to large and outwardly impressive congregations who were nothing more than toddlers in spiritual understanding (and that is the complimentary view).

Countless churches have been organized with nothing more than administrative skills and carnally persuasive speech. In fact, when some of these religious administrators speak, hearing them is like sitting in a pre-school class. Such circumstances are completely out of order, and ought not to be tolerated. **The level of spiritual understanding that as person speaking for God possesses is a critical factor.**

Even Paul’s critics had to confess, “his letters . . . are weight and powerful” (2 Cor 10:10). And why was this so? **Because they reflected a level of knowledge that staggered the minds of his critics.** They simply could not contend with him in the arena of knowledge. Actually, that same knowledge was found in all of his personal preaching and teaching, but his critics had compared the **manner** in which Paul spoke rather than the content of his message.

Why is it that Paul had to correct the Corinthians concerning the matter of divisions (1 Cor)? Why did not these

“false apostles” do so? Why was it necessary for Paul to answer the many questions that had arisen among the Corinthians over the matter of marriage (1 Cor 7). Were the “false apostles” out of town when the issues arose? And why did Paul have to straighten them out on the matter of spiritual gifts and their role in the assembly (1 Cor 12-14)? Why were these “false apostles” so unlearned in that area? What was it that required Paul to teach so extensively on the superiority of love (1 Cor 13). Why was this matter not clarified by the “false apostles?” Why was it necessary for Paul to teach them so extensively concerning the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15). Where were the “false apostles” on this matter? What was it that required Paul to lead them into understanding concerning the collection for the poor saints (1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15)? Why could not the “false apostles” address that matter?

Where were all of the leaders in Corinth, and what were they doing?

In the work of the Lord, a preacher without kingdom knowledge is a walking contradiction. Those who are not conversant with the truth of God have no business preaching, or making an attempt to teach.

Why weren’t the tongue speakers delivering interpreted messages on such critical matters? Why weren’t the prophets opening up these things to the people? Where were the words of wisdom and knowledge that could have clarified these matters? Why could not those gifted to “discern the spirits” detect these “false prophets” and duly expose them as Paul is doing?

This whole matter is confirming that Paul was **not** unskilled in knowledge – even in the eyes of the carnal Corinthians! Even **they** knew if they really wanted to know the mind of the Lord on a matter, they could not go to the men who had duped them.

When it came to preaching and teaching, Paul affirmed **what** he had been given to see. He did not become embroiled in the social issues or religious fads of the day. **Often Paul spoke of what he had been given to see, and his letters confirmed that is exactly what constituted the burden of his preaching and teaching.**

☛ “Who also hath made us **able ministers of the new testament**; not of the letter, but **of the spirit**: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” (2 Cor 3:6-8).

☛ “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation

he made known unto me the mystery: (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; **that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel**” (Eph 3:2-6).

☛ “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, **to fulfil the word of God**: even the mystery

which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**" (Col 1:27).

As is made known in the mystery revealed to Paul, **the sum and substance of the whole of true religion is found in our perception of Christ and reception of the blessings procured through Him.** Where Jesus – the real Jesus – is not perceived, **all** religion is vain, pointless,

confess, "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb 13:6).

Some of the areas in which the apostle Paul received insight include the following.

- The appropriation of the righteousness of God (Rom 1:16-17; Rom 3:21-26; 4:3-25; 5:17-19; 10:10; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9).
- The nature and effectiveness of faith (Rom 3:22-31; 4:1-16; 5:1-2; Gal 3:2-

matters outside of the writings of Paul. When, therefore, he speaks, he does not do so as a common laborer in the vineyard of the Lord. He is not one of a host of men who had been given to see these things. He did, in fact, **excel** in knowledge, and yet his critics treated him as though he was nothing more than an average Jewish teacher. They were bold enough to examine him, doubt him, contend with him, and speak derisively of him. Paul was patient with them. Now, however, he will unveil their folly by showing what was involved in him bringing the Gospel to the Corinthians.

MEN ARE RESPONSIBLE

If it is known that God has spoken to men through a messenger, people are obligated to learn what that messenger has said. If God speaks through Moses, Israel must listen to him. If He speaks through the prophets, the people must give heed to them. If He speaks through John the Baptist, men must go to him and hear what he is saying. If He speaks through Jesus of Nazareth, it is the duty of all who know it to subject themselves to His word. If He speaks through the Apostles, we must give heed to them. If there are some insightful souls in our time who are evangelists and pastor/teachers who have insight into the things of God, they are not to be ignored. To refuse those who are "sent" by Christ (Rom 10:15), is to reject Christ, and to reject Christ is to reject God the Father. This is what Jesus taught (Lk 10:16).

This is the manner of the kingdom. God will not tolerate those who turn a deaf ear to those He "sends" (Rom 10:15). He will not place "gifts" within the body of Christ (Eph 4:8-11; 1 Cor 12:28), and pass over those who ignore them. Paul knows this well, and is giving good reasons for the Corinthians to refuse to listen to his critics or give ear to the other Jesus, Spirit, and Gospel.

In our day, a kind of democratic church has arisen that is being governed by consensus instead of Jesus. It is something like Corinth, only worse. This spiritual monstrosity is being perpetuated by its own schools, and is being foisted upon the people as though it really came from God. This is not the time for the people to be ignorant of what is being taught in this text!

Where Jesus – the real Jesus – is not perceived, all religion is vain, pointless, and totally without genuine profit. Where the blessings secured for us by the Lord Jesus Christ are not actually received, being a "Christian" is nothing more than being an unregenerated person with a religious label.

and totally without genuine profit. Where the blessings secured for us by the Lord Jesus Christ are not actually received, being a "Christian" is nothing more than being an unregenerated person with a religious label.

Some of the blessings obtained in Christ Jesus include washing, sanctification, and justification (1 Cor 6:11). There is Divine acceptance, access with confidence to God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:6; Eph 3:12; Gal 4:6). In Him we become a "new creation," created "unto good works" (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). The is "righteous, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17), as well as "no condemnation" and freedom from the curse of the law (Rom 8:1; Gal 3:13). In Him we become "the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21), experience "victory" over the world (1 John 5:4-5), and can successfully "resist the devil" (1 Pet 5:8-9). We rejoice in the prospect of being "absent from the body," knowing that we will then be "present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:6-8). Those who are in Christ Jesus can confidently

26; Eph 2:8).

- The glory and benefits of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:6-18; Gal 3:15-17).
- The nature of the Gentiles participation in the promises made to Israel (Rom 15:8-18; Gal 3:14; Eph 2:11-22; 3:1-8; Col 1:27).
- The manner, means, and outcome of Christ dwelling within (; Rom 8:1-4,39; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 2:15; 5:17; Eph 3:16-18; Col 1:27; 3:3; 1 Tim 1:14; Tit 3:5-6).
- The superiority of the Gospel over all other words (Rom 1:16; 10:14-17; 1 Cor 1:17-18; 2 Cor 4:3-6; Eph 3:6; 2 Thess 2:14; 1 Tim 1:11; 2 Tim 1:10).
- The dominancy of hope within the New Covenant (Rom 5:2-5; 8:24-25; 12:12; Gal 5:5; Eph 1:18; 4:4; Col 1:5,23,27; 1 Tim 1:11; Tit 1:2; 2:13; 3:7).

You will be hard-pressed to find any extensive commentary on these

THOROUGHLY MADE MANIFEST

“ 6b . . . but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.”

Paul has stated that his purpose was to present the Corinthians *“as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* This purpose has been fueled by his godly jealousy over them, and has erupted in a profound concern that the devil will seduce them because of their carnality. Rarely will you find such a candid statement of purpose by modern-day ministers.

THOROUGHLY MADE MANIFEST

“ . . . but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you . . .” Other versions read, *“in every way we have made this evident,”* NASB *“we have made this perfectly clear to you,”* NIV *“we have made this evident to you,”* NRSV *“we have made this plain to you,”* RSV *“but in everything making the truth manifest,”* DARBY *“but among you we have been made manifest to the uttermost,”* GENEVA *“as we have openly showed to you at all times,”* NJB *“I think you realize this by now, for we have proved it,”* NLT *“We have always made this very clear to you,”* IE and *“both what I am and what I say is pretty familiar to you.”* PHILLIPS

The objective that Paul has stated – **to present the Corinthians as a chaste virgin to Christ** – has been made very evident in the ministry of Paul, whether in person or in writing. This is not a purpose that has been hidden, or has not been abundantly evident in Paul’s conduct among the Corinthians, together with his teaching, preaching and writing. It has been made *“perfectly clear,”* NIV so that to doubt it requires **refusing** to consider what Paul has said and written.

Every man’s work among the saints contains certain indicators as to his purpose or objective. The only reason the Corinthians were failing to see Paul’s purpose was that they had given their ears and hearts to **other** men who were demeaning Paul.

When I consider some of the stated objectives of modern day ministers, and lay them along side of

those of Paul, it is startling to the soul. Some of the obvious contemporary objectives are as follows.

- To build a large and prosperous congregation.
- To have influence in the community.
- To produce tightly knit families.

None of these things are wrong in and of themselves. Their wrongness is found in them becoming the primary aim. **If one’s approach to such matters is not within the more basic objective of presenting the people as a chaste virgin to Christ, they are only a religious distraction.** If godliness, holy determination, the expectation of the

TO CHRIST

↑

TO PRESENT THE PEOPLE AS A CHASTE VIRGIN

FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE

HOLINESS

SAVING THE LOST

IDEAL DOMESTIC CIRCUMSTANCES

REACHING SPECIAL PEOPLE GROUPS

RESOLUTION OF MORAL DIFFICULTIES

BUILDING AN IMPRESSIVE CONGREGATION

THESE OBTAIN VALUE ONLY

AS THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE

FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE.

- To engage in a variety of recovery ministries that can be enjoyed by the whole community.
- To build a large youth constituency.
- To assist people in the difficulties of life in this world.
- To “win the lost.”

return of Jesus, and a compelling desire to be separate from the world are not in the wake of one’s ministry, that ministry is skewed in the wrong direction. **Make no mistake about this, if we shine the spotlight of attention on any lower thing, regardless of its seeming importance, the Lord Jesus Christ will become less clear, less prominent, and less essential.**

Even purposes that are wholesome and good of themselves obtain value **only** when they contribute to the fundamental aim of being presented in a state of purity to the Lord. Holiness, for example, can become an end of itself, so that a person thinks that conduct in this world is the whole of the matter. **In such a case, there will an invariable gravitation to outward appearance.**

When both the minister and those to whom he ministers are targeting standing unblameable before the Lord of glory, **it changes their approach to everything.** It is not possible to cleave to such a purpose and become in any way deficient because of it. No person or group can neglect moral and spiritual obligations when their aim is to be a "chaste virgin" for Jesus.

I will wax bold and say it is not at

^{ISV} and "in all things and among all men,"
MONTGOMERY

In every way – in Paul's preaching, teaching, conduct, and manners – it was very evident what he was doing. His objectives were clear. He was aiming at presenting the people as a chaste virgin to Christ. In so doing, he was fulfilling the commission that had been given to him, and which he wholeheartedly embraced.

☛ "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).

☛ "... And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery,

supported by everything he did.

☛ "But what things were gain to me, those **I counted loss for Christ.** Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: **that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death;** if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:7-14).

☛ Stated more concisely Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

This is the kind of commitment and purpose that flesh cannot emulate. The false teachers that were seducing the Corinthians were wholly lacking in these areas, for "another Jesus," and "another Spirit," and "another Gospel" cannot move a person in this direction. **Unholy means cannot produce holy ambitions. A flawed message cannot produce a flawless purpose.**

You will find that it is exceedingly rare to find a person within institutional Christianity that approximates the objectivity of Paul's life and purpose. **In other words, the modern church is being faced with precisely the jeopardy that**

It is apparent from Paul's whole life that he would not allow himself to be distracted from the purpose that had been revealed to him. This consistency is accounted for upon the basis of his personal commitment to Christ.

all apparent that the noble objective of this text has been embraced by the modern church. Such a purpose is not clearly seen in the churches, the religious educational institutions, or the multitude of para-church organizations. **The aims are commonly too low, too mundane, and too temporal.** They rely too much on money and too little upon grace. They make too much room for men, and too little for Christ Jesus.

Paul states that his objective was very apparent – very evident, and beyond all question. **Ours must be also,** and it cannot be different than his.

IN ALL THINGS

"... in all things." Other versions read, "in every way,"^{NIV} "by all our acts among you,"^{BBE} "at all times and before everyone,"^{NJB} "again and again,"^{NLT} "to the utmost,"^{PNT} "in every possible way,"

which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph 3:9).

☛ "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (2 Cor 5:9).

☛ "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col 1:28).

It is apparent from Paul's whole life that he would not allow himself to be distracted from the purpose that had been revealed to him. This consistency is accounted for upon the basis of his personal commitment to Christ. How marvelously this is revealed in his own testimony – a testimony that was fully

was found among the Corinthians. A spurious message is producing powerless

and misdirected lives. An erroneous Jesus is moving men into religious vanity

– a vanity that allows flesh to dominate. It is a serious condition, indeed!

HAVE I COMMITTED AN OFFENSE?

“Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?”

Paul will now address the manner in which he preached among the Corinthians. Unlike his critics, he did not seek to exploit them, or to profit outwardly from his ministry to them.

HAVE I COMMITTED AN OFFENSE?

“Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted . . .” Other versions read, *“Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted,”* ^{NKJV} *“Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you,”* ^{NIV} *“Or did I do wrong in making myself low so that you might be lifted up,”* ^{BBE} *“Have I committed sin, abasing myself in order that ye might be exalted,”* ^{DARBY} *“Have I done wrong, then, humbling myself so that you might be raised up,”* ^{NJB} *“Did I do wrong when I humbled myself and honored you.”* ^{NLT} *“Did I do wrong and cheapen myself and make you look down on me,”* ^{LIVING} *“Did I do wrong when I lowered myself to lift you up?”* ^{IE} *“Did I do wrong in taking a lowly place to let you have an exalted one?”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“But did I perhaps make a mistake and do you a wrong in debasing and cheapening myself so that you might be exalted and enriched in dignity and honor and happiness?”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“Perhaps I made a mistake in cheapening myself (though I did it to help you).”* ^{PHILLIPS}

Humility is an excellent spiritual virtue, but it is not honorable in the eyes of the flesh. Flesh tends to vaunt itself, and will not take the back seat. It insists on having its own way, and thrives upon its own desires. Therefore, the more fleshly Corinth became, the more they despised Paul for being so humble, and not arrogating to himself great outward worth.

There are two ways to be

humbled: voluntarily and involuntarily. In the case of Israel, God Himself humbled them, putting them through circumstances with which they could not contend in the energy of the flesh. Thus it is written, *“And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live”* (Deut 8:3). Those days in

suggesting Paul and his message were inferior, and that his critics were at liberty to speak derisively of him. But this was erroneous thinking.

I PREACHED THE GOSPEL FREELY

“. . . because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?” Other versions read, *“because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge,”* ^{NKJV} *“because I gave you the good news of God without reward?”* ^{BBE} *“because I gratuitously announced to you the glad*

In this case, Paul will voluntarily forfeit something that was allowed to him by the Lord. In fact, it was something that was expected. Yet, he laid his rights aside, humbling himself. His actions will be misinterpreted as suggesting Paul and his message were inferior, and that his critics were at liberty to speak derisively of him.

the wilderness were times when the flesh of the Israelites was put down. They were made humble.

In Paul’s case, he, like the Lord Jesus, *“humbled himself”* (Phil 2:8). He did as Jesus said: *“. . . and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee”* (Luke 14:10).

In this case, Paul will voluntarily forfeit something that was allowed to him by the Lord. In fact, it was something that was expected. Yet, he laid his rights aside, humbling himself. His actions will be misinterpreted as

tidings of God?” ^{DARBY} *“by preaching the gospel of God to you for nothing?”* ^{NJB} *“by preaching God’s Good News to you without expecting anything in return?”* ^{NLT} *“without charging you anything,”* ^{LIVING} *“I preached the Good News to you at no cost,”* ^{IE} *“I proclaimed God’s Good News to you without fee or reward,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“I preached the Good News about God to you without accepting any pay,”* ^{WILLIAMS} and *“by preaching God’s Gospel without expense to you.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul has acknowledged that, by human standards, he did not measure up to the Corinthian’s imagined standard of speaking – using impressing words and flattering speech that were utterly lacking of content. He had delivered insightful messages to them that were

certainly not lacking in either content or the power of God. His presence among them was for the most noble purposes – to present them as a “*chaste virgin to Christ*.” He had not only affirmed his apostleship, but had given evidence of it with “*the signs of an apostle*” (2 Cor 12:12). **What, then, had provoked the ill will toward him?** How is it that these new leaders, who had intruded into his work, could speak so derisively of him?

Now, in a very convicting manner, he asks them if perhaps he has sinned in abasing himself to preach the Gospel among them for nothing – without

receiving any remuneration from them. **Had they misinterpreted this to mean that they really owed him nothing?** Could it be true that the ordinary rule of sharing material goods with those who delivered spiritual advantages had been suspended in his case? Did he not reason with them in his first epistle, “*If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ*”(1 Cor 9:11-12).

The Corinthians had apparently shared their goods with others who came to them – particularly the “*false apostles*” with whom he will deal. Were they suggesting that the message of “*another Jesus*,” “*another Spirit*,” and “*another Gospel*” was superior to the Gospel he preached? Did the fact that he refused their support infer that he was less of a preacher and teacher than the ones to whom they were submitting themselves?

Paul, unwilling to let this matter go, will press the issue with godly wisdom. There is simply too much at stake for him to ignore the situation.

I ROBBED OTHER CHURCHES

“I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.”

Because of the presence of self-seeking charlatans within the professed church, some have tended to develop

“I robbed other churches by receiving support from them,” ^{NIV} *“I took money from other churches as payment for my work,”* ^{BBE} *“I spoiled other assemblies, receiving hire for my ministry,”* ^{DARBY} *“I plundered other churches by accepting*

This is an unusually strong expression. By saying he “*robbed other churches*,” Paul does not mean that he took from them unjustly, or coerced funds from them. The idea is that he had not given them an equivalent service for the support that he received from them. **He was ministering in Corinth, yet receiving wages from those to whom he was not ministering at the time.**

The only church to which Paul refers that regularly sent him support was the church in Philippi. I will address this more fully in the ninth verse, which refers to the churches in Macedonia that supplied his wages.

Keep in mind, Paul is here explaining how he was able to preach without remuneration among the Corinthians. It is NOT because he was making tents – something that he did when he first arrived in Corinth

some rather loose thinking concerning the support of those who preach the Gospel. Abuses in this area have moved some to conduct themselves dishonorably in this area. Others simply see no need to support those who bring true spiritual benefits to them. This text will serve to clarify this area of congregational responsibility. It is especially noteworthy because the one speaking on the matter was not demanding personal remuneration from the Corinthians, even though it would have been thoroughly right for them to support him.

I ROBBED OTHER CHURCHES, TAKING WAGES OF THEM

“I robbed other churches, taking wages of them . . .” Other versions read,

from them,” ^{NAB} *“Instead, I robbed other churches by taking what they sent me,”* ^{LIVING} *“I sponged on other churches by taking pay from them,”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“Other churches I have robbed by accepting [more than their share of] support,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“As a matter of fact I was only able to do this by ‘robbing’ other churches.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

Keep in mind, Paul is here explaining how he was able to preach without remuneration among the Corinthians. It is NOT because he was making tents – something that he did when he first arrived in Corinth (Acts 18:3).

I Robbed Other Churches

It is well to note the sensitivity of Paul to this matter, remembering that he is speaking of meeting his personal needs. **The general rule is that those receiving the benefit of the ministry of a person should be the ones who support that individual.** That is what is intended by the expression, “*Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel*” (1 Cor 9:13-14). Under the Law, or First Covenant, the people who were profiting from the ministry of the priests were charged with supporting them. That was the purpose of giving the tithe. Therefore,

Satan and his ministers come in disguises, and are only detectable to those living by faith— by Given O. Blakely

it was written, *“Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe”* (Num 18:26). The people gave their tithes to the priests, and the priests gave a tenth part of that (a *“tithe of the tithes,”* Neh 10:38), to the Lord. **Paul refers to this as the Divine basis for supporting those who minister the Gospel.**

However, in the case of Paul, while at Corinth, he was receiving *“wages”* from those to whom he was **not** ministering. Suffice it to say, this kind of sensitivity is exceedingly rare. It does, however, convey an aspect of ministry that deserves a greater measure of attention than it is ordinarily given.

• **First, those who do receive remuneration are responsible to deliver the things required for growth up into Christ in all things** (Eph 4:15). The children of God must not be subjected to meager spiritual diets, and things that do not pertain to life and godliness. No person who comes in the name of the Lord is worthy of support who does not contribute to the faith of the saints – who does not *“feed the flock of God”* (1 Pet 5:2), or who does not *“labor in the Word and the doctrine,”* of teaching (1 Tim 5:17). No place is made in the work of the Lord for mere *“hirelings,”* who have no care for the sheep, and do not protect them from wolves who devour the flock (John 10:12-13). When, for example, members of a church are being subverted by the religious literature and media of the day, it is imperative that there be a shepherd who will rise up and defend the flock. Where this does not occur, there is no valid reason for supporting such a person. He ought to be dismissed. Where the people continue year after year in an immature state, with no grasp of the truth, and failing to lay hold on eternal life, due consideration must be given to whether or not an appropriate minister is present among them.

• **Second, whether we are speaking of, what is commonly called “missions,”**

or established works in the homeland, where people are genuinely profiting from the labor of a man of God, they ought to support him. If it be countered that they are poor, then they ought to set aside a portion of what few goods they have to support as best they can the one who is laboring among them. Only a people who cannot support themselves can possibly be freed from this obligation. **Even then, it must be considered that it is possible**

instruction in the Word [of God] share all good things with his teacher [contributing to his support.] ^{AMPLIFIED} Is such a thing really reasonable? Is this merely a suggestion? Does it stand the test of spiritual scrutiny? Indeed it does. As it is written, *“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”* (1 Cor 9:11), or *“If we have sown [the seed of] spiritual good among you, [is it too] much if we reap from your material benefits?”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

In order for Paul to minister to the Corinthians – which appeared to be a significant assembly – he had to receive support from someone else. Let it be clear that this is not the kingdom standard! The standard is, “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things”

to give above your ability, as did the churches in Macedonia (2 Cor 8:1-3). In my judgment, there is a lot of loose thinking on this matter in the Christian community.

TO DO YOU SERVICE

“ . . . to do you service.” Other versions read, *“to minister to you,”* ^{NKJV} *“to serve you,”* ^{NASB} *“so as to serve you,”* ^{NIV} *“in order to serve you,”* ^{NRSV} *“so that I might be your servant,”* ^{BBE} *“receiving hire for ministry among you,”* ^{DARBY} *“in order to work for you,”* ^{NJB} *“so I could serve you at no cost,”* ^{NLT} *“for your ministration,”* ^{YLT} *“and using it up while I was with you, so that I could serve you without cost,”* ^{LIVING} *“to help you,”* ^{IE} and *“for it was what they paid me that made it possible to minister to you free of charge.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

In order for Paul to minister to the Corinthians – which appeared to be a significant assembly – he had to receive support from someone else. Let it be clear that this is **not** the kingdom standard! The standard is, *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things”* (Gal 6:6), or *“Let him who receives*

We will find, however, that although it was wholly right for Paul to receive support from the Corinthians, it was **not something that could be facilitated by law.** He had already told them of the Divine economy, and how those who labor in the Gospel receive support from those among whom their labors are expended. Had the Corinthians volunteered this support, Paul surely would have received it, just as surely as he did from others. However, he would not demand his own rights, but would forfeit them in the interest of the greater glory and honor that comes from Christ.

The man of God will not press the matters that are purely personal, even though Divine reasoning would have fully supported that position. He would, in this instance, receive support from people who were not, at the time, receiving benefit from his immediate presence. From one point of view, this was *“robbing”* the contributing churches. From another point of view, it was being considerate of the church at Corinth, that it not lose any more ground than had already been lost. Paul’s actions were driven by noble and godly motives.

I WAS CHARGEABLE TO NO MAN

“^{9a} And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man . . . ”

Here we are exposed to the great heart of Paul, and what he was willing to go through in order to fulfill his commission to “open men’s eyes.” This passage is a stirring rebuke to those who easily cease kingdom labors for want of support from those among whom they labor.

WHEN I WANTED

“And when I was present with you, and wanted . . . ” Other versions read, “And when I was present with you, and was in need,”^{NKJV} “And when I was with you and needed something,”^{NIV} “And being present with you and lacking,”^{DARBY} “When I was with you and needed money,”^{NJB} “And when I was with

David is referring to the whole of life, and not to isolated instances. On one occasion, he himself had to ask for bread (1 Sam 21:3-6) – but that was not the manner of his life. Additionally, God provided a means for the hunger of David and his men to be satisfied. We also know that Lazarus was a righteous man, for when he died, he was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. Yet, in this world, he begged for bread, even desiring the “crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table”(Luke 16:20-21). There were some people of great faith, we are told, who were “**destitute, afflicted, tormented**” (Heb 11:37). James spoke of a “**brother or sister**” in Christ who was “**naked, and destitute of daily food**” (James 2:15). James then spoke of how God would supply those needs through the brethren, and of the obligation placed upon the saints to recognize such a circumstance

a vast difference between the meeting of human needs and the opulence that is being promoted by some. Also, none of the people were forsaken, even though it might have appeared to the unlearned as though that was their situation.

The Example of Paul

Paul confesses that while he was among the Corinthians, laboring in the Gospel, and teaching them the good things of God, there were times when he “**wanted**,” was “**in need**,” and “**didn’t have enough to live on**.” **What a tragic circumstance it was, and what a miserable commentary on the degree of perception that existed among the Corinthians.** The very situation confirmed the greatness of Paul and the smallness of the Corinthians.

CHARGEABLE TO NO MAN

“ . . . I was chargeable to no man . . . ” Other versions read, “I was a **burden to no one**,”^{NKJV} “I **let no man be responsible for me**,”^{BBE} “I **did not lazily burden anyone**,”^{DARBY} “I was not slothful to the **hindrance of any man**,”^{GENEVA} “I **did not ask you to help me**,”^{NLT} “I was **grievous to no man**,”^{TNT} “And when that was gone and I was getting hungry I **still didn’t ask you for anything**,”^{LIVING} “There was no one to whom I became a burden,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “I never burdened a single one of you for a cent.”^{WILLIAMS}

What a tragic circumstance it was, and what a miserable commentary on the degree of perception that existed among the Corinthians. The very situation confirmed the greatness of Paul and the smallness of the Corinthians.

you and didn’t have enough to live on,”^{NLT} “And when I was with you and **my resources failed**,”^{WEYMOUTH} “Even when I **lacked the actual necessities of life while I was with you**,”^{MONTGOMERY} “And when I was with you and **ran short financially**,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “Even when I was with you and **very hard up**.”^{PHILLIPS}

(v16).

It is also so with the “seed” of the righteous. While they may be consigned to a life of destitution, there will be times when their need will be supplied by another. This was the case with Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth. When David inquired about any of the house of Saul to whom he could “**show the kindness of God**,” he was told of Jonathan’s son. At that time he did not have a place of his own, but was living “**in the house of Machir**.” David had him brought to his own house, and provided him a continual place at his own table, gave him land, and had others till it for him (2 Sam 9:3-10).

In these cases, however, there is

Paul did have thoughts about this matter, but they were not selfish ones. He is telling them now that their reluctance to support him was not right. Yet, it was something he desired for them to see. That is why he did not impose himself upon them.

In his first letter to them, Paul told the Corinthians that he had a right to receive support from them, but he did not use that right.

- He affirmed that he and Barnabas had the “**right to refrain from working**” for their needs (1 Cor 9:6).
- Such a condition was contrary to even the reasoning of the world, for, “**Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and**

Satan and his ministers come in disguises, and are only detectable to those living by faith— by Given O. Blakely

does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?" NKJV (1 Cor 9:7).

- As if that was not enough, Paul reminded the Corinthians that even the rudimentary Law spoke clearly on this matter: "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1 Cor 9:8-10).
- Additionally, the support of those who preach the Gospel is supported by godly thinking: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Cor 9:11).
- Others, who were vastly inferior to Paul in both commission and knowledge had been supported by them: "If others be partakers of this power **over you**, are not we rather?" (1 Cor 9:12).
- The support of those who labored among God's people was also ordained obviously and clearly by God. "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor 9:13-14).
- Yet, in the interest of not inhibiting the Gospel, Paul had forfeited this right. "Nevertheless we have not

used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ" (1 Cor 9:12). And again, "But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void" (1 Cor 9:15).

- Paul saw his ministry as primarily his response to God, not the response of the people to him. Therefore he wrote, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me" (1 Cor 9:16-17).
- It was for the above reason, that

synonymous with receiving no wages. This does not mean that Paul refused the support of people, for he has already said he did, in fact, received wages from other people. Had the Corinthians offered him wages, he would have received them, just as surely as he did from the churches in Macedonia. However, they did not offer, and he did not press the matter.

In this, it is my persuasion that he cast his care upon the Lord (1 Pet 5:7). **However, when false teachers came among the Corinthians, and they supported them with no apparent hesitation, the matter became more serious.** It is not that the Corinthians were averse to supporting their preachers and teachers, for they were doing so with others. It was their attitude toward Paul himself that troubled him. It became clear that this was not merely a matter of spiritual growth, or being inferior in

Let it be clear that making the Gospel of Christ "without charge" is not synonymous with receiving no wages. This does not mean that Paul refused the support of people, for he has already said he did, in fact, received wages from other people.

Paul did not attach a "charge" to the Gospel that he preached, insisting that he be appropriately paid. "What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more" (1 Cor 9:18-19).

Let it be clear that making the Gospel of Christ "without charge" is not

understanding. They had been despising the messenger of the Lord, and God Himself will not tolerate such a thing. He will now seek to provoke them to jealousy by speaking of other brethren.

Up to this point, Paul has chosen to demean himself rather than the Corinthians. Now he has served notice that he is going to use spiritual weaponry against his critics, and that he will not be timid or backward in doing so. In this passage he is endeavoring to turn the Corinthians so this will not be necessary.

BRETHREN FROM MACEDONIA HELPED ME

"^{9a} . . . for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied . . ."

It is saddening to read of a man who made such enormous sacrifice, forfeiting whatever was gain to him, to be

put to an additional disadvantage by some of the very people he had converted and nurtured.

THAT WHICH WAS LACKING

“... for that which was lacking to me . . .” Other versions read, “for what I lacked,”^{NKJV} “my need,” “for my needs,”^{NRSV} and “for that which was wanting to me.”^{DOUAY}

There was a time, or times, when Paul was lacking basic needs – and it occurred when he was ministering in Corinth. Elsewhere he told the Corinthians how he had experienced hardship at other times. “Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and

What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33)?

Here was a servant of Christ – yea, the premier servant of Christ, who “labored more abundantly than they all” (1 Cor 15:10). He had certainly sought the kingdom of God and His righteousness “first,” counting all other

doctrine. We have a text before us that contradicts such folly. Paul was suffering from lack – a lack the Corinthians did not supply.

The point here is that God did not stop such a condition from arising, but He did not allow it to continue. Paul’s lack was met, but he did have to suffer the condition before he experienced the remedy. It appears from this text that there were people whom the Corinthians did not permit to continue in such a state, but they did allow Paul to do so. Further, Paul did not ask them for assistance – not even for a penny.

BRETHREN FROM MACEDONIA

“... the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied . . .” Other versions read, “for when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need,”^{NASB} “for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed,”^{NIV} “for my needs were supplied by the friends who came from Macedonia,”^{NRSV} “for the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, gave me whatever was needed,”^{ASV} “for the brothers from Macedonia brought me as much as I needed when they came,”^{NJB} “For the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me another gift,”^{NLT} and “was abundantly made up by the brethren who came from Macedonia.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The brethren in Macedonia had already been presented to the Corinthians as a sterling example of doing more than they were able to do. “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves” (2 Cor 8:1-3). This was in order to contribute to the poor saints in Jerusalem. Now Paul says they had also extended themselves to assist him in his need.

The reference here is doubtless to the church of Philippi, who was noted for its consistent care for Paul. On one occasion, Paul said they were the only church who assisted him. “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the

Those false prophets who are teaching the people of God that the wealth of the world presently belongs to them, and that they can always live in opulence never experiencing lack, hunger, thirst, or nakedness, will have to answer to Christ for their miserable doctrine.

have no certain dwellingplace” (1 Cor 4:11). He also wrote to the Philippians, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Phil 4:12). Concerning the various trials he faced, he will say later, “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (2 Cor 11:27).

All of these things took place while Paul was engaged in the work of the Lord! Now, Paul is referring to times when he was among the Corinthians, going among them teaching and preaching the whole counsel of God. He does not mention the extent or duration of this experience, for that is not the point. The point is that while he was among them there were times when he did not have the necessities of life.

A sophist might conclude that Paul had somehow proved to be unfaithful, or that he was not seeking first the kingdom of God. After all, did not our Lord say, “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or,

things “but dung” that he might win Christ (Phil 3:7-14). How is it then that while he was working for Jesus in Corinth he was “lacking” the necessities of life? Did that situation contradict the promise of Jesus? I suppose there are some who think that it does – but they are wrong, seriously wrong.

Jesus was not saying His servants would never be inconvenienced, or that they would not have to search, pray for their daily bread, or labor with their hands. He was not saying there would never be a situation where they would have to be helped, or some brother or sister would have to minister to them. Those who teach that our store of money, food, and other supplies will always be running over have simply not told us the truth! Jesus Himself did not have place to lay His head (Lk 9:58). There were even women of means who regularly ministered to Him and His disciples (Luke 8:3). Those false prophets who are teaching the people of God that the wealth of the world presently belongs to them, and that they can always live in opulence never experiencing lack, hunger, thirst, or nakedness, will have to answer to Christ for their miserable

beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, **no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.** For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity” (Phil 4:15-16). Even before Paul got to Corinth, while he was yet preaching in Thessalonica, it was the Philippians alone who met his needs, “not only once, but a second time.”
AMPLIFIED

Now, this must refer to the third gift Philippi sent Paul, when he came to Corinth (Acts 18:1-3). After he had been

there for a short time, Silas and Timothy arrived “**from Macedonia,**” doubtless bringing the gift to which he now refers (Acts 18:5).

It is a tragic state of affairs when the apostle “to the Gentiles” must have his needs met by brethren in Macedonia while he is ministering in Achaia! But that is precisely the situation we find in this text. In their demeaning speech about Paul, certain men had caused the brethren in Corinth to despise him.

I want to underscore that this

situation was brought on by the skepticism and misrepresentation of the “**false apostles**” that had invaded Paul’s work in Corinth. We have personally experienced the adverse effects of Babylonian critics (who have no real message), yet speak things concerning us like, “He is very controversial,” “Their meetings are too long,” “I am not sure they are one of us,” and “They fellowship with people from other denominations.” **Such comments are not innocent, and provide an opportunity for the wicked one to work.** They are not prompted by the Holy Spirit, but “*another spirit.*”

I HAVE KEPT MYSELF FROM BEING BURDENSOME

“^{9c} . . . **and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you . . .**”

While others have taken upon themselves to speak so freely about Paul, of his appearance and motives, he will now place before them some considerations that involve how he conducted himself among them. He will explain why he did not insist on receiving wages from them, even though it would have been wholly appropriate for him to receive them.

IN ALL THINGS

“ . . . **and in all things . . .**” Other versions read, “*And in everything,*”^{NKJV} “*in any way,*”^{NRSV} and “*I have always been careful.*”^{NJB}

There was a refreshing consistency in Paul’s life. It was the result of the way in which he lived, choosing to live for Christ rather than for self (Gal 2:20). His quest was not merely to be a better human being, but to be “*found*” in Christ, not having a righteousness of his own, but the one which comes from God by means of faith in Christ. **This kind of life impacts upon everything a person thinks, says, and does.** It is true that in God we “*live, and move, and have our being*” (Acts 17:29). That is, there is no aspect of life that is lived independently of Him – of His awareness, scrutiny, and ultimate judgment. When, however, men live by

faith and walk in the Spirit they become consciously and joyously aware of this circumstance, and fully acquiesce to it. This causes their lives to be thoroughly and consistently directed toward the good and acceptable and perfect will of God..

- Such a soul is “*temperate in all things*” (1 Cor 9:25)
- They are “*obedient in all things*” (2 Cor 2:9).
- Such are being approved as ministers of God “*in all things*” (2 Cor 6:4).
- These grow up into Christ “*in all things*” (Eph 4:15).
- They do “*all things without murmuring and disputing*” (Phil 2:14).

- They are “*faithful in all things*” (1 Tim 3:11).
- Such find that “*godliness is profitable unto all things*” (1 Tim 4:8).
- These are the people who are “*in all things showing*” themselves to be a “*pattern of good works*” (Tit 2:7).
- In their lives, they are “*adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in all things*” (Tit 2:10).

One of the besetting sins of the modern church is that it has embraced a form of religion that does not impact upon the whole of life. This is a most serious error, for God has no salvation that is like this. If what a person calls “*salvation,*” or “*being saved,*” does not touch every part of their life, then they

One of the besetting sins of the modern church is that it has embraced a form of religion that does not impact upon the whole of life. This is a most serious error, for God has no salvation that is like this. If what a person calls “salvation,” or “being saved,” does not touch every part of their life, then they have embraced nothing more than a lie.

have embraced nothing more than a lie. It is not possible for “newness of life” to be restricted to a certain area of life. Nor, indeed, is it possible to be a “new creation” without “old things” passing

allowed myself to be a burden to you,”^{1E} and “I kept myself from being in the least a burden to you.”^{WEYMOUTH}

As I have stated before, it is not

when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you: **and I partly believe it**” (1 Cor 11:18). That is, “and I believe there is some truth in it.”^{MONTGOMERY} **The report of divisions among the Corinthians was not something Paul found it difficult to believe.** The reason is that there had been some evidence of rising carnality among them, so that when it blossomed forth in his absence, he knew there was some reality to the report. It was not a simple exaggeration with no basis.

Being dominated by the flesh, their hearts had become calloused, and their wills had become impotent, for that is the effect of a carnal mind. As it is written, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). Thus Paul did not press for personal advantages, even though it was right for him to receive them. He was not tolerant of sin, to be sure, but here was an area in which he could be lenient, allowing for the Corinthians to make some advancement without bludgeoning them with personal demands. Paul did not seek dominion over their faith (2 Cor 1:24), or personal advantages while he was among them. Suffice it to say, there are precious few souls who could conduct themselves in such an amiable and holy manner.

Being dominated by the flesh, their hearts had become calloused, and their wills had become impotent, for that is the effect of a carnal mind. As it is written, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”

away and “all things” become “new” (2 Cor 5:17). This is very rudimentary – something like “Religion 101.” Yet, this knowledge is not prevalent in the modern church.

KEPT FROM BEING BURDENSOME

“ . . . I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you . . . ” Other versions read, “So, I refrained . . . from burdening you in any way,”^{NRSV} “I kept myself from being a trouble to you,”^{BBE} “I kept myself . . . That I should not be grievous to you,”^{GENEVA} “I have never yet asked you for any support,”^{NLT} “I never

that Paul refused any support from the Corinthians. **It is rather that they did not offer any, and therefore he did not ask for any.** In this case, “burdensome” does not mean the Corinthians could not afford to support him. It is not that any offerings from them would result in them becoming paupers. **The burden came about because freely giving was against their will.** While the difficulties the Corinthians were experiencing surfaced after Paul had left Corinth, the seeds of carnality were among them, and Paul knew it. That is precisely why he wrote to them in his first letter, “For first of all,

SO WILL I KEEP MYSELF

“^{9d} . . . and so will I keep myself.” Other versions read, “and will continue to do so,”^{NASB} “and will continue to refrain,”^{NRSV} “and will refrain,”^{RSV} “and I will go on doing so,”^{BBE} “and I never will,”^{NLT} “and will do so still,”^{WEYMOUTH} “as I shall always do,”^{WILLIAMS} and “and so I intend to do in the future.”^{PHILLIPS}

With great care, Paul gives the Corinthians to understand that he is not writing in order to gain their financial support. Subordinating his body, and keeping it in subjection (1 Cor 9:27), he informs them that he will continue to refrain himself from burdening them.

The condition of the Corinthians,

and Paul’s response to it, was made known in his first epistle. “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but **ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in**

Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor 4:10-15).

The wisdom of the Corinthians was really pseudo-wisdom, for they employed it for ignoble purposes – not the least of which was the examination of Paul. Their “honor” was more in their own estimation than in the eyes of the Lord. Unlike Paul, they were being honored by men, while Paul was being despised. While the real preacher, Paul, was hungry, thirsty, “poorly clothed,”^{NKJV} “brutally treated,”^{NIV} and “homeless,”^{NKJV} their preachers were faring well, being received by the world, and were without persecution – even though they preached a spurious gospel.

Satan and his ministers come in disguises, and are only detectable to those living by faith— by Given O. Blakely

Yet, in spite of this circumstance, Paul would not demand support from the Corinthians. It would not impose himself upon them. There were other more pressing matters than his own comfort and provision in the flesh. His aim was to present them as a “chaste virgin to Christ,” and he sensed that was not likely at the present time. They were actually in a state of possible rejection. That is why he wrote to them earlier, “Wherefore **come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and**

daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God**” (2 Cor 7:1).

Some of this separation doubtless had to do with the teachers to which they were subjecting themselves. They had to do what he had told Timothy to do. “*But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus . . . But in a great house there are not only*

vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. **If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work**” (2 Tim 2:16-21).

With all that was required to present them to Christ in a pure and unsullied state, Paul had no intention of distracting them with burdens relating to his own personal comfort. In this, Paul confirmed his own true greatness. He did not seek his own, but “another's wealth” (1 Cor 1 0:24).

THE TRUTH OF CHRIST IS IN ME

“ 10a **As the truth of Christ is in me . . .**” Other versions read, “As surely as the truth of Christ is in me,”^{NIV} “As the true word of Christ is in me,”^{BBE} “I promise this with every ounce of truth I possess,”^{LIVING} “Christ knows that it is true when I say,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “By the truth of Christ within me.”^{PHILLIPS}

The importance of “**the truth of Christ**” being within a person – especially a preacher or teacher – cannot be overstated. This is the condition to which Jesus referred when He said, “**And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**” (John 8:32). This is a knowledge that springs from a perception of the truth – a perception that comes from faith.

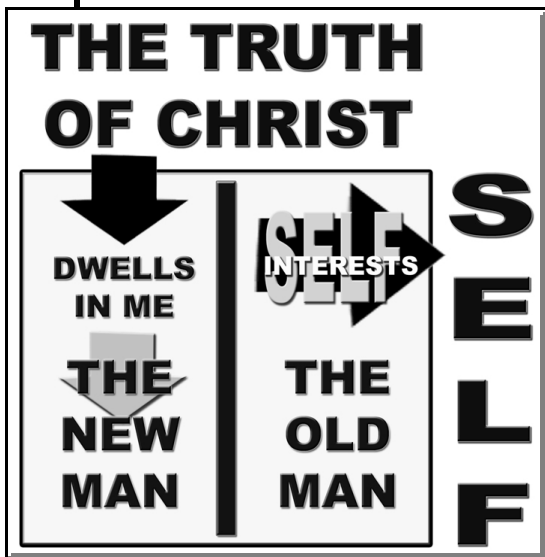
The phrase “**the truth of Christ**” is a form of an oath. It is as though he said, “**I promise this with every ounce of truth I possess.**”^{LIVING} That is, “It is the indwelling truth of Christ that is prompting me say this. I am speaking in strict accord with me fellowship with Christ in the truth.” To the precise degree that “**the truth of Christ**” dwells in us, we refuse to seek our fleshly self-interests – even if an argument can be presented for the technical propriety of doing so. As soon as we ourselves become the most prominent thing, we have departed from the truth. If we do not adjust our emphasis to agree with the purpose of God, the truth itself will soon

depart from us. It is obvious that some in Corinth thought Paul was, in fact, only seeking his own interests. Therefore he labors to show them that such a thought is utterly absurd.

Solemnly we are admonished, “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly**” (Col 3:16). Part of the effects of this rich indwelling is found in our speech. In this text, the truth of Christ within has compelled Paul to seek the spiritual welfare of the Corinthians, not the temporal welfare of himself. **Neither Christ nor His Word will move a person to act or speak with only fleshly interests in mind.**

This saying is very much like a word Paul wrote to the Romans, and one which was written to Timothy. “**I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost**” (Rom 9:1). “**Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not,) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity**” (1 Tim 2:7). In other words, Paul conducted his life and his ministry in strict speaking with his calling. He did not depart from what Jesus had sent him to do, by seeking his own good, or seeking to constrain people to thinking primarily of him.

What he is saying here is designed to move the Corinthians to see him as a true apostle of Christ. **This is not intended to constrain them to make up for the neglect of the past by supporting him in the future.** He will not change his mind about receiving support from them. He will continue to strive with all that is within him to bring them to a point where they are ready for



Christ's return – ready to be presented to Him as a “*pure virgin*,” with no competing commitments. Nothing will cause him to swerve from this revealed and sanctified purpose.

NO MAN SHALL STOP ME

^{10b} . . . **no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.**” Other versions read, “*this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia,*”^{NASB} “*nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine,*”^{NIV} “*this boast of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia,*”^{NRSV} “*I will let no man take from me my cause of pride in the country of Achaia,*”^{BBE} “*this glorying shall not be broken off in me in the regions of Achaia,*”^{DOUAY} “*this rejoicing shall not be shut up against me in the regions of Achaia,*”^{PNT} “*I will tell everyone in Greece about it,*”^{LIVING} “*Nobody in the while Achaian area can take that away from me,*”^{IE} “*I will not be*

maintain this refusal to demand support throughout that whole region. He knows that it is festering with the infection of worldly wisdom and religious shallowness. That is why he exercised himself in that area to avoid flamboyant presentations of the Gospel, using impressive oratory and dramatic presentations. That is why he wrote, “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came **not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my***

and people will not be ready to be presented to Christ.

Thus, Paul will not play to the carnal weaknesses of the Corinthians. He will not depart from his purpose to present them pure before Christ by becoming a sort or actor or entertainer.

The “*rejoicing*” to which Paul refers is found in the fact that he can preach the Gospel “*without charge.*” **If he has needs, he knows the Lord will meet them through another people.** He also knows that taking “*care*” for such things as food, clothing, and housing, tends to distract the soul and promotes unbelief. As Jesus Himself said, “*Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things*” (Matt 6:30-32). **The proper response to times of need is this:** “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Mat 6:33).

Presentations that are impressive to the flesh are not the means through which Divine power comes. It is what impressed Grecians, and especially the citizens of Corinth. However, Paul knew that to stoop to their use meant the power of God would be forfeited, for that is simply not how the Lord works.

stopped of boasting of this anywhere in Greece,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*this boasting of mine will not be silenced within the boundaries of Greece,*”^{MONTGOMERY} “*As the truth of Christ is in me, this my boast [of independence] shall not be debarred (silenced or checked) in the regions of Achaia (most of Greece).*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*no one shall stop my being proud of this independence throughout Achaia.*”^{PHILLIPS}

The “*regions of Achaia*” are the regions in which Corinth was found. **What Paul is saying here is that he will**

preaching was **not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power**” (1 Cor 2:1-4).

Presentations that are impressive to the flesh are not the means through which Divine power comes. It is what impressed Grecians, and especially the citizens of Corinth. However, Paul knew that to stoop to their use meant **the power of God would be forfeited**, for that is simply not how the Lord works. And, if **He** does not work, men are not really converted, there is no victory over sin,

Also, Paul will not allow the false prophets to undermine his work, and even draw him into a contest of self-promotion. He will not insist that since the Corinthians supported them, they should also support him. Such an approach would be nothing more than fighting with carnal weapons. He will fight against them with “*the weapons of our warfare*”— weapons that are “*mighty through God,*” and can overthrow bastions of unsound and distracting thoughts.

GOD KNOWS!

¹¹ **Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.**”

Why is Paul taking this seemingly hard and unbending position? He knows this may very well be misinterpreted. He

will simply make a brief statement about the matter, and then commend himself to the Lord who knows all things.

Satan and his ministers come in disguises, and are only detectable to those living by faith— by Given O. Blakely

BECAUSE I LOVE YOU NOT?

"Wherefore? because I love you not? . . ." Other versions read, *"Why? Because I do not love you?"*^{NKJV} *"Why? Because I have no love for you?"*^{BBE} *"Why should it be? Because I do not love you?"*^{NJB} *"And why? Because I do not love you [do not have a preference for you, wish you well, and regard your welfare]? God perceives and knows that I do."*^{AMPLIFIED} and *"Does this mean that I do not love you?"*^{PHILLIPS}

Flesh is so fickle that it will conclude that Paul will not take support from them because he does not love them – even though they made no effort support him. It will make no attempt to consider why, in the case of Corinth, he was apparently consistently without support among the very people to whom he was ministering. It will not ponder with profit why the less-fortunate churches in Macedonia sent support to Paul while he was among the Corinthians, thereby supplying what he lacked. **The suggestion, therefore, that Paul did not love them was a most foolish one. It was neither a sound thought for an honest one.**

Paul is not driven by pride. That was a trait of the *"false apostles,"* but it did not belong to him. Among the Corinthians, their carnality made it best for him to forfeit something that was his right. **It is a sad state of affairs when something that is right, even ordained of God, must be forfeited in order that the Gospel may do a more full work.** Such a forfeiture is noble for Paul. However, the necessity of it among the Corinthians did not speak well for them, nor would it do so on the day of judgment.

Those who had withheld assistance from Paul when he *"lacked,"* having *"need,"* will eventually face the thundering words: *"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was*

thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (Matt 25:42-43). If the matter had never been resolved, and if those guilty of such neglect have not repented, that day will not be attended by any good.

Often, those who are loved must be dealt with sternly – as Paul is dealing with the Corinthians. In an elementary way, Solomon alluded to this when he wrote, *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful"* (Prov 27:6).

This is something for churches to consider who insist that those who serve the Lord among them be reduced to a state of abject poverty. When the true servants of the Lord are willing to do as

Paul. The answer is simple: **the flesh!**

Paul is declaring that his love for the Corinthians will not allow him to do something that gives their flesh the advantage. His tender affection for them moves him to labor for their souls. He knows that if he received support from them, they would draw the wrong conclusions. That act, though it was not sinful of itself, would have turned their eyes away from Christ and the Gospel. They would then have viewed Paul merely as a man – something like those *"false apostles"* who were among them.

GOD KNOWETH

" . . . God knoweth." Other versions read, *"God knows I do,"*^{NASB} *"Let God be the judge,"*^{BBE} *"God knoweth it,"*^{DOUAY} *"God hath known,"*^{YLT} *"God knows that I do love you,"*^{IE} *"God perceives and*

Paul is declaring that his love for the Corinthians will not allow him to do something that gives their flesh the advantage. His tender affection for them moves him to labor for their souls. He knows that if he received support from them, they would draw the wrong conclusions.

Paul, laboring with their own hands (1 Cor 4:12), it is a virtue for them. But it will not go well for those in whose hands was the power to relieve the servant that was in need, yet who did not do it. Such people would not think of withholding their resources from the grocer, the utility company, or the clothier. They do not expect to receive their fuel for nothing, and will do everything within their power to have the means to procure such services. What would possibly move a church like Corinth to refuse to support

knows that I do,"^{AMPLIFIED} and *"God knows it doesn't."*^{PHILLIPS}

Does Paul really love the Corinthians? Is his love for them *"in tongue,"* or is it in *"deed and truth"* (1 John 3:18). Paul commits his case to the Lord. He knows that God has appointed a day when He will *"make manifest the counsels of the heart"* (1 Cor 4:5). He knows that God will speak on this very matter before an assembled universe, confirming that what Paul has said is the truth. He is willing to wait for that word.

CONCLUSION

Behold what kind of influences follow in the wake of the proclamation of *"another Jesus," "another Spirit,"* and

"another Gospel." When *"the truth of the gospel"* (Gal 2:5,14; Col 1:5) is not presented, room is being made for

"another gospel" that proclaims *"another Jesus"* and *"another Spirit."* The effects of such circumstances tell us very much

When “the truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:5,14; Col 1:5) is not presented, room is being made for “another gospel” that proclaims “another Jesus” and “another Spirit.” The effects of such circumstances tell us very much about their nature, whether it is a message, a messenger, or a church who receives them. It reveals how God does NOT work, and how the devil DOES work.

about their nature, whether it is a message, a messenger, or a church who receives them. **It reveals how God does NOT work, and how the devil DOES work.** Think of the tragic consequences that took place in Corinth. While I have already drawn attention to these situations, they must now be seen as the direct result of distorted preaching.

- Divisions and the party spirit rose up among them when they came together (1 Cor 1:10; 11:12).
- As a direct result of their divisions, there were “contentions” among them (1 Cor 1:11).
- Carnality was found among them,. As confirmed in “envying and strife,” together with “divisions”(1 Cor 3:3).
- Paul could not speak unto them as he would to a spiritually minded people, but had to speak to them as though they were infants (1 Cor 3:1-2).
- They had lost sight of the fact that, as an assembly, they were God’s temple (1 Cor 3:16-17).
- They judged Paul (1 Cor 4:3).
- They became arrogant, supposing they were reigning as kings (1 Cor 4:8).
- Fornication erupted among them (1 Cor 5:1).
- Rather than mourning over the grievous sin of fornication, they

became “puffed up”(1 Cor 5:2).

- Although they gloried, their glorying was “not good”(1 Cor 5:6).
- They were going before “unjust” people to settle differences among them (1 Cor 6:1-6).
- They had to be told to “flee fornication” (1 Cor 6:15-20).
- They became confused about marriage, unequal yokes, being single, and being widowed (1 Cor 7).
- Some among them did not know there is “one God” (1 Cor 8:6-7).
- Some were examining Paul, thinking that he was not an apostle (1 Cor 9:1-5).
- They had not supported Paul, but thought it proper for him to support himself in the preaching of the Gospel (1 Cor 9:6-14).
- They had to be tutored concerning the danger of falling away (1 Cor 10:1-15).
- They had to be told they could not drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (1 Cor 10:21-22).
- When they came together, it was not to eat the Lord’s supper (1 Cor 11:20).
- God Himself had to severely discipline them because of their conduct at the table of the Lord (1 Cor 11:21-31).

- Although they “came behind in no gift” (1 Cor 1:7), there was an unusual degree of ignorance among them concerning spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1-14:40).
- Some among them said “there is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:12).
- Some in their assembly did not have the knowledge of God (1 Cor 15:34).
- They had not gathered together the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem – an idea that they themselves had introduced (1 Cor 16:1-3; 2 Cor 8:10; 9:2).
- Paul had to plead with them to receive him – even though he was the one through whom they were converted (2 Cor 7:2-3).
- Paul had to threaten some of them, saying he would fight against them with powerful spiritual weapons (2 Cor 10:1-8).
- Some there charged Paul with being contemptible in speech, and base in appearance (2 Cor 10:10-11).
- The Corinthians had readily received those who preached “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another Gospel”(2 Cor 11:4).
- They allowed “fools” to bring them into bondage, devour them, take from them, exalt themselves, and smite them on the face (2 Cor 11:19-20).
- Paul was afraid when he finally got to Corinth there would be “debates, enyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults,” and that some would not have “repented of the uncleanness and fornication which they” had “committed”(2 Cor 12:20-21).
- They actually sought proof that Christ was speaking in Paul (2 Cor 13:3).

Judge for yourself if there really are any effects to embracing an erroneous Jesus, accepting a spurious

Gospel, and receiving a fictitious Spirit! Judge whether or not our times do not testify of a predominately erroneous religion – one that has allowed for a lack of newness, the absence of holiness, and the dominance of self will. Ask yourself

what would happen to the professional religious world if people were actually born again, lived by faith, and walked in the Spirit. Under such a condition, what would happen to the religious colleges and seminaries. Let it be clear that the

salvation makes absolutely no allowance for the absence of newness of life, failing to live by faith, or not walking in the Spirit. If this assessment is true, then how can it possibly be right for men to accommodate themselves to such things?

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/20/2006. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The forty-fifth lesson will cover verses twelve through fifteen of the eleventh chapter: **“INTRUSIVE MINISTERS.”** False ministers are actually servants of the devil. Both Satan and his ministers “transform” themselves. Satan comes as “an angel of light,” and his ministers come as “ministers of righteousness.” It is not possible to distinguish these intruders from real ministers while one is walking in the flesh. This is a very timely passage, tailored for our day. 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.

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

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

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

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

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)

Adah Hutchcraft (adahhutchcraft@hotmail.com), Jason Hutchcraft (hcchurch@interlink-cafe.com)

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

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

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

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

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

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