

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

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

# SECOND CORINTHIANS

✠ II CORINTHIANS

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

## Lesson #46

### COMMENTARY ON: 11:16-33

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

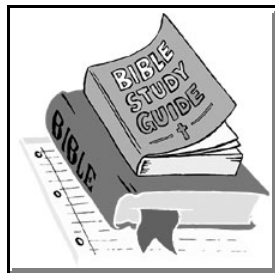
*“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”*

#### THE EXPERIENCE OF PAUL

One of the evidences of a genuine minister of Christ is the degree of suffering through which he is willing to go in order to fulfill his ministry. In this section, Paul shares things about himself that were not apparently commonly known. He did not make it a practice of chronicling his own experience. However, since he and his teaching have been maligned by certain teachers, and since their influence has been felt by the Corinthian church, Paul now speaks of these things. He does so to compare the course through which his work has carried him, with that of his critics. One of the sure signs of a religious man who is really of the world, is that the world hears him. That is because he speaks of the world – that is, of things that are familiar to and preferred by the world (1 John 4:5). Paul’s experience confirms his practical and theological detachment from the world.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

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



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



## The Epistle of Second Corinthians

### Lesson Number 46



**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 Stand 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 -----

# THE EXPERIENCE OF PAUL

“ 11:16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. 17 That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. 18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. 19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. 20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. 21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. 22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? 30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. 32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: 33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.” (2 Corinthians 11:16-33)

## INTRODUCTION

One of the evidences of a genuine minister of Christ is the degree of suffering through which he is willing to go in order to fulfill his ministry. There is a sense in which Divine approval is

determined by what it costs a person to follow Jesus, and fulfill his personal calling. Jesus said that discipleship (which includes both following and ministering) was conditioned upon the

abandonment of all competing pursuits. “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, **he cannot be My disciple**” (Luke 14:33). In order for Christ to teach and use an individual, He

*Paul's personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world— by Given O. Blakely*

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will not permit any other person to be loved more than Himself. **That is, no other individual can be preferred before Him, given more time than Him, or considered more consistently than Him.** *“If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, **he cannot be My disciple**”* (Luke 14:26). There must also be a daily mortification of fleshly desires, a subordination of the body, and the enduring of reproach that comes because

Christ has been embraced. *“And whosoever doth not **bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be My disciple**”* (Luke 14:27).

These requirements are not being taught in the contemporary American church. This is largely owing to the quest for numbers, worldly status, and the appeal of seeming success and mere appearance. Notwithstanding this distorted emphasis, Jesus has laid out the requirements for following and serving Him, and they will not be retracted. Those who are unwilling to *“forsake all,”* love Jesus preeminently, and daily bear the cross of self-crucifixion, **are excluded from Christ’s followers.** They will receive **no** benefits from Him. They will **not** be taught by Him. They will **not** be employed by Him. The One who *“learned obedience by the things that He suffered”* (Heb 5:8) insists that His followers do the same. He that *“humbled Himself and became obedient”* (Phil 2:8) will not allow any of His followers to be exempt from that requirement.

In this section, Paul shares things about himself that were not apparently commonly known. He did not make it a practice of chronicling his own experience. However, since he and his doctrine have been maligned by certain teachers, and since their influence has been felt by the Corinthian church, Paul now speaks of these things. **He does so to compare the course through which his work has carried him, with that of his critics.**

### False Teachers Speak of the World

One of the sure signs of a religious man who is really of the world, is that the world hears him. That is because he speaks of the world – that is, of things that are familiar to and preferred by the world. As John wrote, *“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them”* (1 John 4:5).

### Jesus Speaks of The World

Jesus confirmed this is the world’s manner – to be attracted to those who belong to its order: *“If ye were of the world, **the world would love his own:** but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world,*

*therefore the world hateth you”* (John 15:19). On the eve of His betrayal, Jesus prayed about his disciples, acknowledging that the world hated them because they were not of its order. *“I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”* (John 17:14).

### Jeremiah Speaks

In the time of Jeremiah, there were also prophets who catered to the fickle whims of the people. In order to do this, they could not speak the Word of the Lord, but delivered a message fabricated of lies and gross misrepresentations. Thus it is written, *“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and **my people love to have it so:** and what will ye do in the end thereof?”* (Jer 5:31).

### Micah Speaks

During the time of Micah there were also prophets who delivered a crowd-pleasing message. God spoke of them in this way: *“If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink: **he shall even be the prophet of this people,**”* or *“he would be just the prophet for this people”* <sup>NIV</sup> (Micah 2:11).

### When the World Gets In the Church

When the world gets in the church, all manner of sin erupts, and those who speak the Word of the Lord become unpopular. This very thing is depicted in the attitude Israel had toward the truth of God and those who spoke it. Isaiah wrote, *“Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, **speak unto us smooth things,** prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us”* (Isa 30:10-11). Paul said this condition would eventually come upon the church – and lo, the time is here. *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they **heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth,** and shall be turned unto fables”* (2 Tim 4:3-4). Both Israel and the corrupt church want to remain religious. It is not that they want to abandon all

religion and be obviously immersed in the world. Instead, like the Israelites of old, they choose to fulfill this word: *“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men”* (Isa 29:13). Jesus said the people of His time were doing the same thing (Matt 15:7-9). This is what Paul referred to as *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away,”* or *“Have nothing to do with them”*<sup>NIV</sup> (2 Tim 3:5).

This is a dreadful condition where people’s religion becomes their chief weakness. This is so because their approach to it allows for their own alienation from God – dwelling at a distance from Him. It also permits the flesh to express itself, and concedes to the world, while quenching and grieving the Holy Spirit and freely opposing those who speak for God.

This is precisely what had happened at Corinth – their religion, received under their new leadership, had reduced them to such a state that Paul had to say, *“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”* (1 Cor 3:1). Therefore Paul observed, *“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”* (1 Cor 3:3). **What a dreadful condition – and it was their religion that had made them this way.** It had, in fact, moved them closer to the world than to God – such *“walk as men.”*

**IN THIS SECTION**

In this section, Paul expresses a stinging rebuke in a remarkable display of Apostolic sarcasm, or satire. His statements are caustic and blistering. He is, in fact, employing spiritual weaponry to reveal how foolish their teachers are, who have opposed and maligned him. **He will do this by showing what the real**

**grace of God does in a teacher sent from Christ.** Rather than boast of the great successes he has had, or of his earthly lineage, **he will confirm his practical and theological detachment from the world.** His ministry provoked certain adverse reactions from the world – both the unconverted Jews and the Gentiles. The message he proclaimed not only brought out *“the faith of God’s elect”* (Tit 1:1), it also provoked the opposition of those who were being ruled by the devil – among the Jews, the Gentiles, and even certain teachers who had *“crept in unawares”* (Jude 1:4) among those who were *“the body of Christ.”* This opposition confirmed the legitimacy of Paul’s ministry. Paul could say to his critics what Jesus said to His: *“The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil”* (John 7:7).

Now, let us behold how boldly and confidently a spiritually wise man speaks to his critics.

**DO NOT THINK I AM A FOOL**

<sup>11:16</sup> *I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.”*

There is a certain manner in which *“carnal”* people must be addressed – particularly when they are in the church, and have once known the truth as it is in Jesus. **Backslidden people, by that very posture, have forfeited the right to hear the comforting things of the Spirit of God.** They must be addressed in a manner befitting of their wretched condition. Of course, this does not apply to those who have seen the error of their ways and are in a state of God-glorifying recovery. In the case of the Corinthians, Paul is addressing the *“false apostles”* that are not among them, and those who have chosen to listen to and follow them.

**I SAY AGAIN**

*“I say again . . .”* Other versions read, *“I repeat,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“Once again,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“Again I plead,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“Again I am saying,”*<sup>IE</sup> *“To return to what I was*

*saying,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“I will say it again,”*<sup>ISV</sup> *“Let me say it again,”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *“I repeat then,”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *“once more.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

In Christ, repetition is **not** the mother of learning, but is required by carnality. **It is the dominance of the carnal mind that provokes the repetition of otherwise self-evident realities.** This is why Jesus repeated the necessity of the new birth to Nicodemus: *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . .*

*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again . . . If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”* (John 3:3-7,12).

When *“the flesh”* dominates a person, and the individual cannot think above the earth, a certain obtuseness, or

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dulness, descends upon the soul. In such a case the man of God has to say something like this:

- ☛ *“I have yet many things to say unto you, but **ye cannot bear them now**” (John 16:12).*
- ☛ *“And he said unto them, **Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?**” (Mark 4:40).*
- ☛ *“**How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the***

retarded condition. There appears to be absolutely no alarm about the status of the churches at large, who appear to be like middle-aged toddlers, having never grown up into Christ. This is not an innocent situation, for the Divine purpose is that we all *“grow up into Christ in all things”* (Eph 4:15). It is that we all be *“filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”* (Col 1:9). **This is not only an objective, it is a condition that salvation is calculated to produce.**

This is what the grace of God will

- ☛ Either they have hardened their hearts, stopped their ears, and become obstinate against the truth.
- ☛ Or, they have embraced another message, proclaimed by a person or persons that were not sent forth by the Head of the body, Jesus Christ.

With some of the Corinthians, the latter was the prevailing reason. It was complicated in that it produced the condition of hard-heartedness and obstinance against the truth of God.

Now, as though he was speaking to spiritual toddlers, Paul will elaborate on a comparison of himself with those teachers who had corrupted the minds of some of the Corinthians.

**DO NOT THINK I AM A FOOL!**

*“Let no man think me a fool . . .”* Other versions read, *“let no one think me foolish,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“Let no none take me for a fool,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“Let me not seem foolish to anyone,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“no one should consider me foolish,”* <sup>NAB</sup> *“don’t think I have lost my wits to talk like this,”* <sup>NLT</sup> and *“let me advise you not to look upon me as a fool.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The manner in which Paul will now speak is not actually foolish, but it will appear to be so to some within the Corinthian church – as though he had lost his wits and begun to babble. What he now says is *“foolish”* like talking baby-talk is foolish. It is not the manner in which an adult ordinarily speaks, nor is it intended to become the official nomenclature of the adult populous.

I am compelled to observe that we have a similar situation on our hands today. Men are lisping in baby-talk to the church, and even codifying such speaking into a permanent form. It is like teaching mature adults to chant “Momma” and “Dadda.” Some of the more advanced baby talk is like saying “Run, Jane, Run.” In the text before us, Paul will talk like an immature adult to small children.

**In this passage, Paul is not writing to teach. He is not opening up the mysteries of the Kingdom either.** He is rather using holy sarcasm to unveil the spiritual stupidity of some who had been teaching the Corinthians. He had to stoop to this form of speaking because of

**It really makes no difference what men may say, or how innocent they may appear. The fruit tells the story! If results are being produced that God has not ordained, then the means that God has given are being rejected by the professed believer. Either they have not been heard, or they have been heard and neglected.**

*leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?” (Mat 16:11).*

- ☛ *“And I, brethren, **could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ**” (1 Cor 3:1).*
- ☛ *“I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: **for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able**” (1 Cor 3:2).*
- ☛ *“Of whom [Melchisedec] we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing **ye are dull of hearing**” (Heb 5:11).*
- ☛ *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, **ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat**” (Heb 5:12).*

It is quite true that professed Christians have learned to live with this

do (Tit 2:11-12). It is what the Holy Spirit will do (Rom 8:13-14). It is what the Word of God will do (2 Tim 3:16-17). When this does not happen in the church, it has been diverted by some novel teaching – *“another Jesus,” “another Spirit,”* and *“another Gospel”* (2 Cor 11:4). It really makes no difference what men may say, or how innocent they may appear. **The fruit tells the story! If results are being produced that God has not ordained, then the means that God has given are being rejected by the professed believer.** Either they have not been heard, or they have been heard and neglected. If the person is really in Christ, yet has not heard the purpose of God delineated, then he is being subjected to spurious and intrusive preachers and teachers. They have not been sent from God, and it is not possible for the fruit God ordained to result from their ministry. If the people have, in fact, heard the truth (as the Corinthians did from Paul), and if they still refer to themselves as “Christians,” yet have swerved from the truth, then a most serious condition exists. One of two things has happened.

the carnality of the Corinthians. As he said elsewhere, he could not speak unto them *“as unto spiritual.”*

**THINK OF ME THE WAY YOU  
THINK OF SOME OF YOUR  
TEACHERS!**

*“ . . . if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.”* Other versions read, *“at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“but if you do, receive me even as foolish, that I may boast a little,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“yet as foolish receive me, that I also may glory a little,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“but if I do, put up with me as such, so that I may take a little glory to myself,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“but even if you do, listen to me, as you would to a foolish person, while I boast a little,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“but even if I do, listen to me anyway – a witless man, a fool – while I also boast a little as they do,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“But, if you do, bear with me, as you would a fool. Then I can brag a little,”* <sup>1E</sup> *“Or if you must, at*

**Here, the point Paul is making is that the Corinthians had allowed “fools” to speak to them – men who commended themselves, measured themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves**

*any rate make allowance for me as being foolish, in order that I, as well as they, may boast a little. Or if you must, at any rate make allowance for me as being foolish, in order that I, as well as they, may boast a little,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“but if you do, please treat me like a fool and let me do a little boasting too, as other fools do.”* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

Here, the point Paul is making is that the Corinthians had allowed “fools” to speak to them – men who commended themselves, measured themselves by

themselves, and compare themselves among themselves (2 Cor 10:12).

One additional perspective on this matter: **this is a sanctified view of those who speak about themselves – they speak “as fools,” for the more a person has to say about themselves, the more their folly is revealed.** From heaven’s vantage point, they are not wise. You will see in this text that what Paul says about himself is of no worth at all to the fleshly mind. The things of which he will boast are not held in high regard by the world.

**I SPEAK IT NOT AFTER THE LORD**

<sup>417</sup> ***That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.”***

The manner in which Paul now writes is most wise. What he will say is certainly the truth. It is not an exaggeration, nor is it designed to draw attention to himself. As he proceeds with his testimony, this will become obvious.

**I SPEAK NOT AFTER THE LORD**

*“That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord . . .”* Other versions read, *“What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord.”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“That which I am speaking, I am not speaking as the Lord would,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“What I am saying in regard to this boastful confidence, I am saying not with the Lord’s authority,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“What I am now saying is not by order of the Lord,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“Such bragging is not something the Lord wants”* <sup>NLT</sup> and *“What I say by way of this confident boasting, I say not with the Lord’s authority [by*

*inspiration].”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Paul is not saying that he is writing this in defiance of the Lord, for that is not the case. **He is rather saying that the Lord did not send him forth to talk or write about himself.** The substance of Paul’s message was not himself. Nor, indeed, was he inspired in order to write his own biography.

Because of the spiritual obtuseness of the Corinthians, Paul was forced to speak in this juvenile manner. This was not his ordinary posture. That is abundantly evidenced by the lack of such an approach in most all of his writing.

**THE CONFIDENCE OF BOASTING**

*“ . . . but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.”* Other versions read, *“but as a fool in this boastful confidence,”* <sup>RSV</sup> *“but as in foolishness, in this confidence of glorying,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“but as a foolish person,*

*taking credit to myself, as it seems,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“but will be speaking out of foolishness in the conviction that I have something to boast about,”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“but will be speaking out of foolishness in the conviction that I have something to boast about,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“but will be speaking out of foolishness in the conviction that I have something to boast about,”* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> *“but, as it were, in pure witlessness,”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *“but as a fool which must be ‘in on’ this business of boasting.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**Even when Paul “boasts,” it will be in something that is of no value whatsoever to the world.** By “confidence,” Paul means that what he will say confirms that what he has declared is the truth. It is not the only, or even the primary, evidence of the legitimacy of his apostleship and message. However, since the Corinthians had placed such a great value on what some of their teachers had said about themselves, he will now say something about himself. It will, however, be something from which he can derive some measure of confidence.

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

**I WILL GLORY ALSO**

***“<sup>18</sup> Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.”***

Paul will not ignore the stupefied state of the Corinthians, for they ought not to have been in such a condition. Thinking they had climbed the ladder of Divine acceptance, they had actually fallen off of it. Before he proceeds further, and because carnality robs men of their spiritual understanding, he will again

*themselves.*”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Keep in mind, Paul is not speaking of politicians, business men, athletes, educators, or the wealthy. **He is speaking of religious men – men in the church who have claimed to be teachers, even superior teachers.** However, if they did not speak about themselves, no one would have the faintest idea that they were great. If they could not point to

healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor 12:28). Indeed, it is true that God has placed “governments,” or “administrations,”<sup>NASB</sup> or “forms of leadership”<sup>NRSV</sup> in the church. **However, from whence is the idea that such men are not teachers – even profound teachers?** Is it not written, “Remember your leaders and superiors in authority [for it was they] who brought to you the Word of God. Observe attentively and consider their manner of living (the outcome of their well-spent lives) and imitate their faith (their conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things, the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ, and their leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness)”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> (Heb 13:7).

Is there really a place in the body of Christ for a “leader” who does not have an understanding of the things of God, and declare them faithfully? Much of what is billed as the ability to manage or lead people, or build an impressive institution, is nothing more than carnal skills. The same techniques could be used to build a business, or some other worldly institution.

Genuine spiritual leaders are so gifted by the God of heaven – and God never does anything apart from His revealed purpose to conform those whom He has foreknown “to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29). **If following the leader and giving heed to what he says is not resulting in the follower becoming more and more like Jesus, then the leader is not from God, and therefore he is not doing the work of God.** Whatever may be said of his administrative skills, if they are not yielding a godly and informed people, then that person does not have the gift of “government,” or “administration.” **There should be no need to establish that the gifts God gives cannot possibly fail to yield results that are in consonance with God’s revealed objective.** There is no such thing as an unprofitable “spiritual gift.”

**I WILL GLORY ALSO**

**. If following the leader and giving heed to what he says is not resulting in the follower becoming more and more like Jesus, then the leader is not from God, and therefore he is not doing the work of God. Whatever may be said of his administrative skills, if they are not yielding a godly and informed people, then that person does not have the gift of**

affirm why he is speaking in this most unusual way.

**MANY GLORY AFTER THE FLESH**

“Seeing that many glory after the flesh,” Other versions read, “Seeing that many boast according to the flesh,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “Since many are boasting in the way the world does,”<sup>NIV</sup> “since many boast according to human standards,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “since many boast of worldly things,”<sup>RSV</sup> “Seeing that there are those who take credit to themselves after the flesh,”<sup>BBE</sup> “So many people boast on merely human grounds,”<sup>NJB</sup> “And since others boast about their human achievements,”<sup>NLT</sup> “Yet those other men keep telling you how wonderful they are,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “Many men are bragging in a human way,”<sup>IE</sup> “Since many boast for merely human reasons,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “Since many boast in accordance with their human nature,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “Since so many are making worldly boasts,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> “[For] since many boast of worldly things and according to the flesh,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “since all the others are so proud of

something the world values, they would not appear great at all. Their greatness was totally owing to their own assessments, and what appeared to be of worth before the unregenerate.

I cannot begin to tell you the times I have been disappointed when confronting a “successful” Christian preacher or teacher. After hearing them speak, or reading what they had written, I was brought to wonder how they could have possibly risen to such greatness. Others, who followed such men, never did boast of what they said. When inquiring about such “leaders,” I was told of their “people skills,” “administrative skills,” “organization skills,” and the likes. **However, that is a worldly assessment, not a godly one.** It makes too much room for the flesh, and not enough room for God.

The sophist may shout out, “Wait a minute! Has not God placed ‘governments’ in the church? After all, is it not written, ‘And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

“ . . . I will glory also.” Other Versions read, “I will also boast,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “I will do the same,”<sup>BBE</sup> “I will rejoice also,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “So I will brag too,”<sup>IE</sup> “I will do it, too,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and “let me do a little

boasting as well.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Having witnessed how the Corinthians were disposed to listen to teachers who talked about themselves, and boasted of their human

achievements, Paul will now speak of the things that he has experienced while engaged in the Lord’s work “in the body.” To be sure, it will be quite different than the boasts of the imposters.

**YOU WILL LISTEN TO FOOLS**

“<sup>19</sup> For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.”

As we enter into this section, I must confess how much sense it all makes to me. It has not always been this way. However, by the grace of God, I too become irritated with those who have nothing more to say than what they have accomplished. I do expect such boasting from the world of acting, athletics, and business – for they have nothing more in which to boast.

**YOU GLADLY SUFFER FOOLS**

“For ye suffer fools gladly . . .” Other versions read, “For you put up with fools gladly,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “For you . . . bear with the foolish,”<sup>NASB</sup> “You gladly put up with fools,”<sup>NIV</sup> “You bear with the foolish gladly,”<sup>ASV</sup> “For ye bear fools readily,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “For you . . . tolerate the foolish gladly,”<sup>NAU</sup> “I know how happy you are to put up with fools,”<sup>NJB</sup> “After all you . . . enjoy listening to fools,”<sup>NLT</sup> “you find pleasure in tolerating fools,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “Since many people boast in a fleshly way,”<sup>ISV</sup> “you put up with fools willingly enough,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> “For you readily and gladly bear with the foolish,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “I am sure you can smile tolerantly on a fool.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Admittedly, this is strong language – but the church needs to hear it. This is particularly true when you can see how the average American church bears so much resemblance to the Corinthian congregation.

**TEACHER  
+ SPEAK OF SELF  
= FOOL**

Here are the facts in the case. When people – particularly preachers and teachers – speak a lot about themselves, it reveals they are “fools.” As used here, the word “fool” means “without reason, senseless, foolish, stupid, without reflection or intelligence, acting rashly,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “ignorant, unlearned,”<sup>UBS</sup> “unwise,”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> and “without sense . . . frantic, silly.”<sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup>

This is like a spiritual idiot or

truth”<sup>NASB</sup> (2 Tim 2:15).

The Corinthians joyfully received such miserable teachers, imagining that they were gaining some benefit from them. Now Paul will momentarily adopt the manner of these “false apostles” and “deceitful workers,” speaking about himself, but in quite a different manner than that to which the Corinthians were accustomed.

**This is like a spiritual idiot or insane person. They have not been deprived of common sense or worldly wisdom. In fact, they may be very cultured and astute concerning the things of this world. However, they are woefully ignorant of the things of God, and of the nature of His Kingdom.**

insane person. They have not been deprived of common sense or worldly wisdom. In fact, they may be very cultured and astute concerning the things of this world. However, they are woefully ignorant of the things of God, and of the nature of His Kingdom. They are actually incapable of thinking in a sound and acceptable spiritual manner because they willingly live in the cursed zone of “this present evil world.”

Because such men can often present themselves in a very impressive way, some of the Corinthians “gladly put up with fools” among their teachers. I have found that such men fall down like crippled men when they are forced to confront the real things of God. They simply cannot navigate in spiritual realms, or “handle accurately the word of

**YOU ARE WISE**

“ . . . seeing ye yourselves are wise.” Other versions read, “For you, being so wise,”<sup>NASB</sup> “since you are so wise,”<sup>NIV</sup> “being wise yourselves,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “whereas yourselves are wise,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “After all, you, who think you are so wise,”<sup>NJB</sup> “since you are so smart and wise in yourselves,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “from the heights of your superior wisdom.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The is apostolic sarcasm, designed to plunge the dagger of conviction into the hearts of the Corinthians. Some of them professed themselves to be wise – wise enough to “examine” the apostle Paul to see if he was really an apostle (1 Cor 9:3). Whatever may be said of their imagined wisdom, however, they had been taken in by “false apostles and deceitful workers”

Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely

(1 Cor 11:13). Having once been “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified,” they had been reduced to a state that involved division, carnality, immorality, having to be severely chastened by the Lord, and even doubting the apostleship

of the one who had converted them.

Therefore, when Paul says “*ye are wise*,” he does not mean that they really were wise – not as God counts wisdom. He is chiding them for being exploited by Jewish opportunists, and then daring to

present themselves as able to examine the apostle Paul. This was the Corinthian’s assessment of themselves – at least some of them. Paul is going to point out that their imagined wisdom did not protect them.

## LOOK WHAT YOU TOLERATE!

**“<sup>20</sup> For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.”**

Paul’s aim here is to show how foolish the Corinthians had been in giving themselves to these “false apostles and deceitful workers.” **Whatever advantage they may have appeared to gain was really a serious setback, and they had been spiritually harmed because of it.** They were like baby

This is one of the worst of all delusions.

Jesus once rebuked the church in Thyatira for tolerating the false prophetess “Jezebel” to freely teach among them. It resulted in Christ’s servants committing fornication, and eating meat that was offered to idols. Here is what Jesus said. “*Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest [you allow <sup>NKJV</sup>] that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and*

*spirit*” (Ezek 36:26), and were “born again” of “incorruptible seed” (1 Pet 1:23). Their “old man” was “crucified” when they were baptized into Christ (Rom 6:6), they had “peace with God” (Rom 5:1), and God “called” them “into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9). They began their walk in “newness of life” (Rom 6:4) with a “new man” that was “created in all righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24), and “which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10).

**Paul’s aim here is to show how foolish the Corinthians had been in giving themselves to these “false apostles and deceitful workers.” Whatever advantage they may have appeared to gain was really a serious setback, and they had been spiritually harmed because of it.**

The grace of God stood ready to teach them that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:12-13). They had “access into this grace” in which they stood (Rom 5:2), had “access to the Father,” and had it “with confidence by the faith of Him” (Eph 3:12).

warriors who had been outsmarted and defeated by a cunning enemy.

### FOR YOU SUFFER

“For ye suffer . . .” Other versions read, “For you put up with it,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “For you bear with,” <sup>NASB</sup> “In fact, you even put up with anyone,” <sup>NIV</sup> “for you endure,” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “Oh, you’re tolerant all right! You don’t mind, do you.” <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The word “suffer” means, “to sustain, bear with, endure . . . to hear, to listen,” <sup>THAYER</sup> and “to put up with, bear with, accept as valid.” <sup>FRIBERG</sup> Here, the word refers to a harmful and detrimental circumstance that is tolerated. This is done either out of total indifference, or because the individuals have been duped into thinking what is actually harmful is really helping them.

*to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols*” (Rev 2:20).

**A lot can be known of a person or a church by what they “suffer,” permit, or allow.** There is a sense in which false teachers are “allowed” within the body of Christ.

### How Every Believer Gets Started

Everyone that is born again has been “baptized” by the Spirit “into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). They are “set,” or “placed,” <sup>NASB</sup> by God “in the body as it hath pleased Him” (1 Cor 12:18). They come in “washed,” “justified,” and “sanctified” (1 Cor 6:11). Their hearts have been “purified by faith” (Acts 15:9), they received a “new heart and a new

Because they were “sons,” the Holy Spirit was “sent” into their hearts crying “Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). That same Holy Spirit began making intercession for them when they did not know “what to pray as they ought” (Rom 8:26-27). He also “led” them forth in the mortification of the “deeds of the body,” confirming that they were “the sons of God” (Rom 8:13-14). An “innumerable company of angels” was even dispatched from the throne “to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). There real situation was this: “all things are yours” (1 Cor 3:21-23), and God began working “all things together” for their ultimate “good” (Rom 8:28).

They were now in a position where the devil would “flee” from them if

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

they but “resisted” him (James 4:7). They were in possession of the anchor of hope, “both steadfast and sure, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb 6:19). If they sinned, they had “an Advocate with the Father,” (1 John 2:1), and if they confessed their sins, they were told, God “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). They even possessed the promise, “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

They were given “exceeding great and precious promises,” that by means of them they could become “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). Great promises, indeed! They include being like Jesus (1 John 3:2), inheriting the earth (Matt 5:5), reigning with Jesus (2 Tim 2:12), judging the world and angels (1 Cor 6:2-3), and being confessed before God (Rev 3:5). It is even written that overcomers will be given “to eat of the tree of life” (Rev 2:7), “not be hurt by the second death” (Rev 2:11), will be given to “eat of the hidden manna” will receive a “new name” (Rev 2:17), will be given “power over the nations” (Rev 2:26), will not have his name blotted “out of the book of life” (Rev 3:5), will be made “a pillar” in the temple of God and never again “go out” (Rev 3:12), will “sit” with Christ in His “throne” (Rev 3:21), and “will inherit all things” (Rev 21:7).

**How is it possible to receive such marvelous benefits, and such great promises, and still be taken in by miserable false prophets?** How can men descend into the valley of carnality, immorality, and inconsideration after being lifted to such lofty spiritual heights? Some have imagined that such a descent is not possible – even though the church in Corinth is an example of such a plummet.

**Is their a solitary soul in all of the world that thinks Jesus is the “Beginning” of a process that leads us into Satan’s domain, causes us to yield to temptation, or finds us overcome by his devices?** I suppose some might be bold enough to postulate such a conjecture, but they only betray their ignorance in doing so.

Alas, these remarkable benefits are not communicated by false messengers. Instead, they preach a “Jesus,” a “Spirt,” and a “gospel” that makes the person completely aware of these consistent and effective benefits. They come with laws, routines, disciplines, and ordinances of their own making. They do not require much of the Scriptures, as their own traditions serve as the pillars of their thought. Their religion brings them advantages in this

AMPLIFIED and “if a man takes away your liberty.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Satan and “his ministers” are not content to be added to the church staff. They insist on running the show, making men their vassals to do their will. These men may come in the guise of preachers, teachers, elders, or the likes. When all is said and done, however, the people end up doing **their** will instead of the will of God, which is at variance with their will.

**Men who teach gospels that produce such effects must be willingly “allowed.” They must be consciously permitted to speak and teach among the saints. But it will not be without the most severe penalty, as Paul will now affirm.**

world – at least that is what they proclaim. **When they speak, their speech is so earth-centered that souls who listen to them go to sleep spiritually.** They forget what they have received. They cannot see afar off – either in the past or in the future. Their sense of values are changed, so that life in this world actually appears to be the most important life, and thus they cease preparing for eternity.

Men who teach gospels that produce such effects must be willingly “allowed.” They must be consciously permitted to speak and teach among the saints. But it will not be without the most severe penalty, as Paul will now affirm. **Their teaching will bring men into a place where all of the benefits of salvation are forfeited, and where grace will not work.** When men are in such depths, they can only talk about grace, the Spirit, and glory – and even then, they do so sparingly.

**YOU ALLOW BONDAGE**

“ . . . if a man bring you into bondage . . . ” Other versions read, “if he enslaves you,”<sup>NASB</sup> “when someone makes slaves of you,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “if he makes servants of you,”<sup>BBE</sup> “if a man assumes control of your souls and makes slaves of you,”

This is what the Spirit refers to as lording it over the flock – something that is strictly forbidden: “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:3). It is when a person becomes domineering, insisting on his own will among the flock of God. What right have they to impose their will upon God’s own flock? They are to do **His** bidding, and nourish **His** people so they will pass **His** scrutiny on the day of judgment. Ezekiel said of such men, “but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them” (Ezek 34:4). During earlier times, such a man was found among the saints, and was named by John. “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not” (3 John 1:9).

These “false prophets and deceitful workers” do this with their teaching. They captivate the souls of men, making “merchandise” of them with “feigned words” (2 Pet 2:3). “The souls of men” are nothing more than a means of reaching their own earthly objectives (Rev 18:11-13), for “they mind earthly things” (Phil 3:19).

**The indictment against the Corinthians is that they allowed this to happen.** They permitted these men to

preach and teach, and even lead them. God did not send these men, yet they listened to them. If someone suggests that all of this was quite innocent, and that it could not be helped, ponder again the staggering advantages that have been given to the saints. After due consideration of them, bring forward some sound reason why deception and spiritual enslavement came into the church in spite of such benefits. Let me assure you, it will be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to justify the existence of such bondage.

*his orders and sets himself above you, or even slaps you in the face,* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“eats up all you possess, keeps you under his orders and sets himself above you, or even slaps you in the face,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“eats up all you possess, keeps you under his orders and sets himself above you, or even slaps you in the face,”* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> *“or devours [your substance, spends your money] and preys upon you, or deceives and takes advantage of you, or is arrogant and puts on airs, or strikes you in the face,”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> *and “spends your money, makes a fool of you or even*

as well.

“And among the simple (empty-headed and emptyhearted) ones, I perceived among the youths a young man void of good sense, sauntering through the street near the [loose woman’s] corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening; night black and dense was falling [over the young man’s life]. And behold, there met him a woman, dressed as a harlot and sly and cunning of heart. She is turbulent and willful; her feet stay not in her house; now in the streets, now in the marketplaces, she sets her ambush at every corner. So she caught him and kissed him and with impudent face she said to him, sacrifices of peace offerings were due from me; this day I paid my vows. So I came forth to meet you [that you might share with me the feast from my offering]; diligently I sought your face, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with rugs and cushions of tapestry, with striped sheets of fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us console and delight ourselves with love. For the man is not at home; he is gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him and will come home at the day appointed [at the full moon]. With much justifying and enticing argument she persuades him, with the allurements of her lips she leads him [to overcome his conscience and his fears] and forces him along. Suddenly he [yields and] follows her reluctantly like an ox moving to the slaughter, like one in fetters going to the correction [to be given] to a fool or like a dog enticed by food to the muzzle till a dart [of passion] pierces and inflames his vitals; then like a bird fluttering straight into the net [he hastens], not knowing that it will cost him his life. Listen to me now therefore, O you sons, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart incline toward her ways, do not stray into her paths. For she has cast down many wounded; indeed, all her slain are a mighty host. [Neh. 13:26.] Her house is the way to Sheol [Hades, the place of the dead], going down to the chambers of death” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> (Prov 27:7-27).

**They allowed these “false apostles and deceitful workers” to make exorbitant demands of them. Some would say they “ate them out of house and home.” All of this the Corinthians took patiently, all the while forgetting about the poor saints in Jerusalem who needed some of their resources, and even frowning on Paul, by whom they had come to know the Lord.**

**THINK WHAT MEN ARE DOING TO YOU**

“... if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.” Other versions read, “if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you, if he exalts himself, if he hits you in the face,” <sup>NASB</sup> “or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face,” <sup>NIV</sup> “or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or gives you a slap in the face,” <sup>NRSV</sup> “if he makes profit out of you, if he makes you prisoners, if he puts himself in a high place, if he gives you blows on the face,” <sup>BBE</sup> “if any one devour you, if any one get your money, if any one exalt himself, if any one beat you on the face,” <sup>DARBY</sup> “if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you, if he exalts himself, if he hits ou in the face,” <sup>NAS</sup> “or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face,” <sup>NIB</sup> “eats up all you possess, keeps you under his orders and sets himself above you, or even slaps you in the face,” <sup>NJB</sup> “eats up all you possess, keeps you under

*smacks your face.* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**DEVOUR YOU.** Here we see Paul speaking with bitter sarcasm. He has told the Corinthians, “ye yourselves are wise” (verse 19). Yet they have allowed religious bigots and exploiters to take them in and consume them. They allowed these “false apostles and deceitful workers” to make exorbitant demands of them. Some would say they “ate them out of house and home.” All of this the Corinthians took patiently, all the while forgetting about the poor saints in Jerusalem who needed some of their resources, and even frowning on Paul, by whom they had come to know the Lord.

**TAKE OF YOU.** The idea is that these men preyed on the people, always presenting themselves as being in need of what the Corinthians possessed. Contrast this with Paul’s remark concerning himself: “And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man” (2 Cor 11:9). The picture is that of a simple soul who is captivated by the cunning of another. Solomon spoke of such a person to his own son. While this passage is rather lengthy, it speaks volumes, not only of moral seduction, but of spiritual conquest

There are leaders in the “Christian” world who are precisely like the harlot of Solomon’s words. **They take, and give nothing but delusion.**

**EXALT HIMSELF.** We will find that these teachers were Jewish, and therefore they exalted preeminently their nation, their lineage, their parents, their education, and any other carnal advantages they may have possessed. When you came away from their discourse, you were thinking about them, not Jesus. They were previously described as “some that commend themselves” (10:12). That is, they were their own primary promoters.

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

In the world, self-exaltation is comely, and the more a person can say about himself, the more they are accepted. However, here is what God has to say about those who exalt themselves, speaking of themselves and their accomplishments: *“For **whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased**”* (Luke 14:11). And again, *“**everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased**”* (Luke 18:14). Concerning this abasement, it is said of God Almighty, *“He hath put down the mighty from their seats”* (Luke 1:52). Those who are “proud” are at a forced distance from God: *“the proud he knoweth afar off”* (Psa 138:6). Solomon said, *“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty”* (Prov 18:12), and *“A man’s pride shall bring him low”* (Prov 29:23).

Peter said, *“God resisteth the proud”* (1 Pet 5:5). But this is not what the “wise” Corinthians did – at least not some of them. They gladly tolerated such men in their presence, even allowing them to teach them.

**SMITE YOU ON THE FACE.**

This phrase denoted treating the people with contempt, talking down to them, insulting them, and treating them with little or no respect. As if that was not enough, the Corinthians allowed these men to continue this practice, apparently even respecting them for doing so.

Often I have heard naive church members say, “He really stepped on our toes today!” Of all of the times I have heard this ignorant expression it has **never** been because the people were rebuked for not availing themselves of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, or for being spiritual midgets, or neglecting so great salvation, or not seeking the things that are above, or not fighting the good fight of faith and laying hold on eternal life. If such rebukes were given, they did not take kindly to them. They did not mind someone challenging them to be a good neighbor, or help the poor, or get out and vote, be a good citizen, or work hard and raise your children to be hard workers. Of course, none of those

things are wrong. **It is just that they are too low, and do not tend toward greater and more God-glorifying works.** Carnal people can be tolerate of, what they call, “tough love,” in such areas. But when they are rebuked for being so far from God, and being so ignorant of His salvation, or failing to run the race with patience, that is quite another matter.

As you can see, what a person or church tolerates, reveals a lot about who they really are, where they have really come, and where their preferences are really found. It confirms how far they have come, and whether or not they have a proper focus. It makes known the value they have placed upon Christ. When the church allows shallow preaching, juvenile expressions in song, brief exposure to the good Word of God, and the promotion of methods and techniques, it has fallen on hard times, and is in a dangerous situation.

That is why Paul is speaking in this rather forthright manner.

**I SPEAK CONCERNING REPROACH**

*“<sup>21</sup> I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.”*

When professing believers are really “in the flesh,” it alters the way in which godly men must speak to them. In the case of the Corinthians, their conduct confirmed they were in the flesh, and their theology substantiated that they had been led astray by their teachers. In spite of this condition, however, they still considered themselves wise – even to the point of examining Paul, and regarding him with near disdain. Therefore Paul will subtly chide them, speaking as though he had overlooked speaking a lot about and promoting himself.

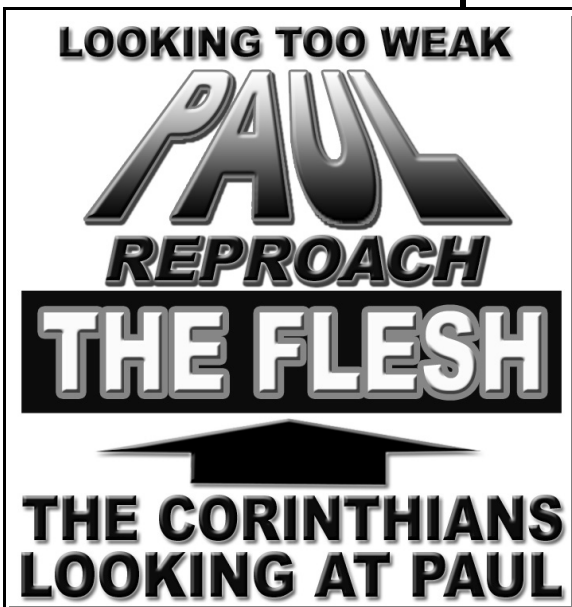
*shame I must say,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“To my shame I admit,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“I speak by way of disparagement,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“I say this by way of shaming ourselves,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“I speak as to dishonor,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“I’m ashamed to say,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“in reference to dishonor I speak,”*<sup>YLT</sup> *“I use language of self disparagement,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“To my discredit I must say.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The “reproach” of which Paul speaks in irony is as follows:

- Not coming to them with excellency of speech (1 Cor 2:1).
- Not knowing anything among them except Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2).
- Not informing them of any wants, or needs, that he experienced while among them (2 Cor 11:9).
- Forgoing his right to their support (1 Cor 9:12,15).

**I AM SPEAKING OF REPROACH**

*“I speak as concerning reproach . . .”* Other versions read, *“To our shame, I say”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“To my*



*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

Not boasting of his fleshly or religious pedigree (1 Cor 4:4; 2 Cor 12:5).

When a “leader” assumes such a posture, the world considers it a sign of weakness and reproach. Paul acknowledges that, in the view of the world, this is exactly how it appeared. **The Corinthians had, in fact, embraced the world’s view of Paul instead of the view of God and Christ.** Through Christ Jesus, as Paul will later affirm, God gave unparalleled benefits to Paul. Yet, the Corinthians handed him disdain and disrespect on a religious platter.

There is a sense in which those who despise you are a kind of commentary on who you really are. **If a person is offensive to those who are not living by faith, that confirms they have been received by God** (John 15:18; 1 John 3:13).

**AS THOUGH WE WERE WEAK**

“ . . . as though we had been weak.” Other versions read, “we were too weak,” NKJV “we have been weak by comparison,” NASB “we were too weak for that,” NRSV “as if we had been feeble,” BBE “as if we had been weak in this part,” DARBY “we were not strong enough to do that,” NLT “I’m not strong and daring like that,” LIVING “as though I were admitting our own feebleness,” WEYMOUTH “we have shown ourselves too weak [for you to show such tolerance of us and for us to do strong, courageous things like that to you]!” AMPLIFIED and “I never did brave strong things like that to you.” PHILLIPS

This is apostolic irony at its best, and is consequently very convicting to the flesh. Paul is admitting he never was strong enough (as the Corinthians counted strength) to do what the “false apostles” did: bring the people into bondage, “devour” them, “take from” them, exalt himself before them, and strike them in the face (11:20). Speaking vulgarly men would say, “I did not have enough guts to do that!”

**In other words, Paul’s faith would not permit such inconsiderate conduct.** His knowledge of God would not allow him to exploit or damage the people. His fellowship with Christ would not

countenance an abuse of His body, the church. The hope of glory made no provision for Paul to do what those “false apostles” were doing. His conscience forbade such conduct. His “new man” refused to indulge in such abuse. His awareness of the day when he would give an account to God caused such ignoble actions to wither and die. His heart for the people of God, and His desire to see them standing faultless before the presence of the Lord crucified, drove away the inordinate consideration of self.

about – I am speaking as a fool – I also dare to boast about,” NIV “But if anyone puts himself forward (I am talking like a foolish person), I will do the same,” BBE “but wherein any one is daring, (I speak in folly,) I also am daring,” DARBY “Whatever bold claims anyone makes – now I am talking as a fool – can make them too,” NJB “But whatever they dare to boast about– I’m talking like a fool again – I can boast about it, too,” NLT “But whatever they dare to boast about – I’m talking like a fool again – I can boast about it, too,” WEYMOUTH “But whatever

**Through the Spirit, Paul is backing the Corinthians into the corner of consideration. He knows it will appear to them as though he has changed his mind, and undergone a kind of conversion to their way of thinking. But this is not at all the case.**

How is it, then, that these “false apostles” could so freely exploit, plunder, and harm the people of God? **It is because of their absolute lack of faith and hope.** It is because they did not think in terms of giving an account to God. Their minds were immersed in the cesspool of this world, and therefore they could not “minister” with eternity in view. Those conditions made all of their work nothing more than an obstacle to the people of God. It resulted in their bondage, exploitation, and harm.

Let no man think for a moment that false teachers have no effect, or that the church can easily endure them. As soon as “sound doctrine” is thrown out of the window in favor of childish exercises, the door is thrown wide open for the devil – and he will not fail to enter through it.

**I AM BOLD ALSO**

“Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.” Other versions read, “But in whatever anyone is bold: I speak foolishly; I am bold also,” NKJV “But in whatever respect anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am just as bold myself,” NASB “What anyone else dares to boast

they dare to boast about – I’m talking like a fool again – I can boast about it, too,” ISV “But in whatever any person is bold and dares [to boast]—mind you, I am speaking in this foolish (witless) way—I also am bold and dare [to boast],” AMPLIFIED and “Yet in whatever particular they enjoy such confidence I (speaking as a fool, remember) have just as much confidence.” PHILLIPS

Through the Spirit, Paul is backing the Corinthians into the corner of consideration. He knows it will appear to them as though he has changed his mind, and undergone a kind of conversion to their way of thinking. But this is not at all the case. He is going to “brag,” or “boast” – but not at all in the manner of the “false apostles and deceitful workers.” **The thing in which Paul glories will be the things those imposters do everything in their power to avoid.** The source of his “pride” will be something that is held in disdain by the world. He will, in fact, glory in his infirmities 2 Cor 11:30; 12:5). In so doing, he not only distances himself from the pretenders of his day, but from those who are abounding in our day as well.

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

Paul knows that God will not allow any flesh to “glory in His presence” (1 Cor 1:29). Therefore, his glorying, boasting, or bragging, will be in the handicap of the flesh, and not in its attainments.

**I AM A HEBREW EVEN MORE THAN THEY**

**“<sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.”**

The manner in which Paul boasts is intended to be a comparison with the boastful “false apostles” that were plaguing the Corinthians. It can be summarized in these three points.

- His fleshly lineage.
- His association with Jesus Christ.
- His labors for Christ and the jeopardy experienced in them.

**ARE THEY HEBREWS?**

“Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.” Other versions read, “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I,”<sup>NASB</sup> “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I,”<sup>ESV</sup> “They say they are Hebrews, do they? So am I,”<sup>NLT</sup> “They brag that they are Hebrews, do they? Well, so am I. And they say they are Israelites, God’s chosen people? SO am I. And they are descendants of Abraham? Well, I am too,”<sup>LIVING</sup>

Here we learn that these “false apostles” were actually Jews. These, and others like them, were a constant plague to Paul. Elsewhere he said of them, “For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, **even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us: and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost**” (1 Thess 2:14-16). Many of the Jews who opposed Paul were

described as those who “believed not” (Acts 13:50; 14:5,19; 17:5, 13; 18:12-13; 19:8-9; 21:27-28). **Those with which Corinth was contending were professed followers of Christ.**

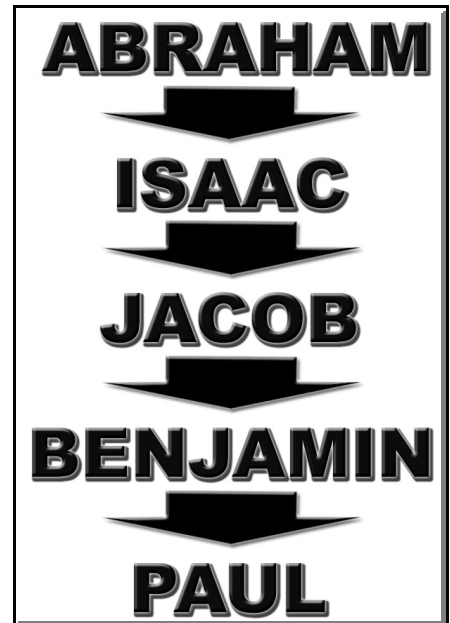
He speaks of the Jews from differing perspectives.

• **HEBREW:** “*Hebrew*” emphasizes the Jews as a unique nation in the world. Abraham is referred to as a “Hebrew” (Gen 14:13). Potiphar’s wife called Joseph a “Hebrew,” as well as did a baker and butler from the Egyptians (Gen 39:14,17; 41:12). Joseph referred to Canaan as “the land of the Hebrews” (Gen 40:15). We are also told that the Egyptians would “not eat bread with the Hebrews” (Gen 43:32). Fourteen times the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy refer to the Israelites as “Hebrews” (Ex 1:15,16,19; 2:6,7,11,13; 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1,13; 10:3; 21:2; Deut 15:12). The Philistines referred to the Israelites as “Hebrews” (1 Sam 4:6,9; 13:3,7,19; 14:11,21; 29:3). Jeremiah used the term also (Jer 34:9; 34:14). Jonah said that he was a “Hebrew” (Jon 1:9). In the book of Acts the “Hebrews” were distinguished from the Gentiles (Acts 6:1). **It is generally understood that this term had particular reference to their language, which was distinct in the world – “the Hebrew tongue”** (John 5:2; Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14; Rev 9:11; 16:16).

• **ISRAELITES:** This refers to the lineage of the Jews through Jacob, the last of “the fathers,” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The twelve tribes of Israel were derived from the twelve sons of Jacob. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, thus making this a distinctive term (Gen 32:28). “Israel” is a most prominent word in Scripture, occurring no less than 2,566 times! It refers to Jacob (Gen

35:10), the Jewish people (Gen 36:31), the “tribes” (Gen 49:16), and the “land” (1 Sam 13:19). The terms “Israelite” and “Israelites” are found twenty-two times in Scripture (Ex 9:7; Lev 23:42; Num 25:14; Josh 3:17; 8:24; 13:6,13; 20:21; 1 Sam 2:14; 13:20; 14:21; 25:1; 29:1; 2 Sam 4:1; 2 Sam 17:25; 2 Kgs 3:24; 7:13; 1 Chron 9:2; John 1:47; Rom 9:4; Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22).

• **SEED OF ABRAHAM.** This associates Israel with Abraham and the Messianic promise. According to God’s promise, the nation of Israel sprang from him (Heb 11:12). The Gospel is first said to have been preached to Abraham (Gal 3:8). Christ is called “the Seed” (or offspring) of Abraham” (Heb 2:16). The children of Israel are referred to as the “seed of Abraham,” and “the children of Jacob” (Psa 105:6).



Thus Paul has traced his lineage back to Abraham, to whom the promises were made (Gal 3:16). He was a bonafide member of the most significant nation in

all of history. He was a very real member of the most significant people according to the flesh. He could precisely trace his lineage to one of the most distinguished members of the human race, through whom the Savior of the world came.

Elsewhere Paul says of his earthly lineage, *"I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin"* (Rom 11:1). Again he wrote, *"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee"* (Phil 3:5). Again he said, *"I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee"* (Acts 23:6). Again he said, *"after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee"* (Acts 26:5).

Did these *"false apostles"* want to boast of their fleshly pedigree? Even there, they would have to take a back seat to Paul. He excelled as a Hebrew: *"an Hebrew of the Hebrews."* He came

*"esteeming the reproach of Christ of greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"* (Heb 11:26).

**Let no one doubt that this is a sound rebuke to all who glory in mere fleshly distinctions.** Whether it is education, looks, giftedness, or some other item of uniqueness in the flesh, **it brings no distinction in Christ Jesus** – absolutely none! There is nothing in *"the flesh,"* or what man is *"by nature,"* cultured or uncultured, that brings anything to the table of salvation.

If glorying in the flesh was legitimate, then Paul outstripped his critics, for he was a bonafide Jew who could trace his lineage back to Abraham.

It is of note that Paul does not even mention such things as being learned in the ways of the world – sitting under one of the famous world philosophers, or attending one of the

*out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more,*"<sup>NIV</sup> *"Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman – I am a better one,"*<sup>NRSV</sup> *"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I more,"*<sup>ASV</sup> *"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as being beside myself) \*I\* above measure so,"*<sup>DARBY</sup> *"Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one – I am talking like a madman,"*<sup>ESV</sup> *"They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more!"*<sup>NLT</sup> *"ministrants of Christ are they? – as beside myself I speak – I more,"*<sup>YLT</sup> *"They say they serve Christ? But I have served Him far more! (Have I gone mad to boast like this?)"*<sup>LIVING</sup> *"Are they servants of Christ? (I'm talking like a madman). I am more of a servant than they are,"*<sup>IE</sup> *"Are they ministers of Christ? SO am I. I am talking like a man that has gone crazy – as such I am superior!"*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *"Are they [ministering] servants of Christ (the Messiah)? I am talking like one beside himself, [but] I am more,"*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *"Are they ministers of Christ? I have more claim to this title than they. This is a silly game but look at this list."*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Precisely what is a *"minister of Christ?"* This is servant of Christ – one who is serving the interests of Christ, fulfilling the will of Christ, and promoting the cause of Christ. By the very nature of this vocation, such a person has been sent forth by Christ, for no one else can serve His interests. The **"minister of Christ"** delivers a message that focuses upon Christ, depends upon Christ, and glorifies Christ. His premier message is referred to as *"the Gospel of Christ,"* which is the designated means, or *"power of God unto salvation"* (Rom 1:16). It is a message that expounds what God Himself has revealed about Christ, and is therefore called *"the record God gave of His Son"* (1 John 5:10). If you were to boil this message down to one succinct sentence, it would be this: *"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son"* (1 John 5:11).

Now, let me be clear about this. If what a person is preaching and teaching cannot be summarized in God giving us eternal life in His Son, then it is not remotely possible that the person is a **"minister of Christ."** **When the real message of the real "minister" is**

**Precisely what is a "minister of Christ?" This is servant of Christ – one who is serving the interests of Christ, fulfilling the will of Christ, and promoting the cause of Christ. By the very nature of this vocation, such a person has been sent forth by Christ, for no one else can serve His interests.**

from a significant tribe that joined with Judah to make up a kingdom: *"of the tribe of Benjamin."* He excelled in "the Jews' religion, surpassing his peers: *"profited in the Jews religion above many my equals."* He excelled as a part of the most rigid sect of the Jews: *"the most staitest sect of our religion."* How did these *"deceitful workers"* measure up to that kind of distinction?

Yet Paul, in deference to gaining Christ, threw all of that overboard, considering it *"but dung"* and refuse in comparison to *"winning"* Christ (Phil 3:8). Moses did much the same thing,

world's great universities. Even in the flesh, the only credentials he sites have to do with being identified with the Hebrews, the Israelites, the *"seed of Abraham."* And, he threw all of that away in quest of *"some better thing"* (Heb 11:40). Such an approach is thoroughly devastating to all glorying in the flesh.

#### **ARE THEY MINISTERS OF CHRIST?**

*"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more . . ."* Other versions read, *"Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"Are they servants of Christ? (I am*

*Paul's personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

examined under the microscope of spiritual understanding, it will be filled with Jesus – who He is, what He has accomplished; what He is doing now, and His relationship to the future. If this is not found in the thrust of the man’s ministry, then he is not a minister of Christ! Christ did not send him, Christ is not glorified by his work, and people are not being “saved” through his ministry. I understand that this is a strong statement. If there is a soul in all of the world who wishes to contest it, or defend some other message and emphasis, let him step forth. Be assured that such a person will go down like Goliath before David.

### Something More on the Subject

Allow me to make a few cursory remarks about this, for Paul has declared he is “more” of a “minister of Christ” than his critics. Paul wrote thirteen autographed epistles (Romans through Philemon). I believe he also wrote Hebrews. That would make fourteen books in all. Consider this overview of Paul’s writings.

- There are 67 references to “the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- There are 55 references to “Jesus Christ”(without “Lord”).
- There are 18 references to “Jesus” (without “Christ” or “Lord”).
- There are 191 references to “Christ” (without “Jesus” or “Lord”).
- There are 8 references “the Son of God.”
- There are 2 references to “the Son” (without “of God”).
- There are 8 references to “His Son” (without “Jesus Christ”).
- There are 2 references to “His own Son.”
- There is 2 reference to “My (God’s) Son.”
- There are 2 references to “a Son.”
- Key phrases used by Paul are “gospel of Christ,” “body of Christ,” “the

*Spirit of Christ,” “the love of Christ,” “judgment seat of Christ,” “the churches of Christ,” “the testimony of Christ,” “the cross of Christ,” “the mind of Christ,” “ministers of Christ,” “members of Christ,” “blood of Christ,” “sufferings of Christ,” “the person of Christ,” “a sweet savor of Christ,” “epistle of Christ,” “glory of Christ,” “meekness and gentleness of Christ,” “truth of Christ,” “apostles of Christ,” “power of Christ,” “grace of Christ,” “servant of Christ,” “law of Christ,” “mystery of Christ,” “riches of Christ,” “gift of Christ,” “fulness of Christ,” “kingdom of Christ,” “the day of Christ,” “the work of Christ,” “the knowledge of Christ,” “the faith*

*Firstbegotten,” “the Forerunner,” “God blessed forever,” “God manifest in the flesh,” “God’s dear Son,” “the Great Shepherd of the Sheep,” “the Head of the church,” “the Savior of the body,” “Heir of all things,” “High Priest,” “the Head of every man,” “our Hope,” “the brightness of His (God’s) glory,” “the express image of His (God’s) Person,” “Jesus,” “Jesus Christ,” “Jesus Christ our Lord,” “Jesus Christ our Savior,” “Jesus the Son of God,” “King of kings,” “Lord,” “the Lord from heaven,” “Lord Christ,” “Lord Jesus,” “Lord Jesus Christ,” “the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior,” “Lord both of the dead and the living,” “Lord over all,” “the man*

**Paul wrote extensively concerning Christ’s birth, death, resurrection, High Priesthood, Mediatorship, and coming again. He associated Christ Jesus with God, the Holy Spirit, salvation, the Gospel, the church, the New Covenant, and the world to come.**

*of Christ,” “the afflictions of Christ,” “The circumcision of Christ,” “the word of Christ,” “the name of Christ,” “partakers of Christ,” “the doctrine of Christ,” “the reproach of Christ,” “the preaching of Jesus Christ,” “the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,” “the face of Jesus Christ,” “the life also of Jesus,” “the revelation of Jesus Christ,” “the prisoner of Jesus Christ,” “the bowels of Jesus Christ,” “a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” and “the knowledge of the Son of God.”*

- Paul refers to Jesus as “the Last Adam,” the “Second Man,” “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession,” “the Author and Finisher of our faith,” “the Beloved,” “the Blessed and only Potentate,” “the brightness of His (the Father’s) glory,” “The Captain of their salvation,” “Christ,” “Christ Jesus,” “Christ Jesus our Lord,” “Christ the power of God,” “the wisdom of God,” “The Chief Cornerstone,” “the Deliverer,” “the Author of our faith,” “the Finisher of our faith,” “the

*Christ Jesus,” “Mediator,” “Minister of the sanctuary,” “our Passover,” “the blessed and only Potentate,” “the power of God,” “the wisdom of God,” “a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec,” “a Ransom for all,” “who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” “the righteous Judge,” “that spiritual Rock,” “our Savior Jesus Christ,” “the Savior of the body,” “the Seed of David,” “that Great Shepherd of the sheep,” “a Surety of the better testament,” and “Unspeakable Gift.”*

- Paul wrote extensively concerning Christ’s birth, death, resurrection, High Priesthood, Mediatorship, and coming again. He associated Christ Jesus with God, the Holy Spirit, salvation, the Gospel, the church, the New Covenant, and the world to come.

**Paul’s preaching and teaching confirmed he had a more thorough acquaintance with Christ, and a more**

extensive commission by Christ. He saw more, understood more, and spoke more than any of his critics – or, for that matter, anyone else. The fact that the Corinthians had allowed imposters to move them to embrace “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another gospel,” was serious beyond human comprehension.

Now, this has moved Paul to speak in a most unusual manner. He will now boast of his experiences, but it will not be boasting after the manner of the

flesh, which is to be crucified.

**“I SPEAK AS A FOOL”**

Paul readily admits that in speaking so extensively of himself, he is speaking “as a fool,” or “as if insane.”<sup>NASB</sup> It is the height of absurdity for someone who has been called and commissioned by the Lord to speak of himself, or what he had done. **He speaks in this manner, not because it is his aim to promote himself, but because he is exposing the falseness of the ministers in Corinth who had chosen to ridicule him and his**

message.

In speaking of himself, however, he will assume a totally different posture than his critics. What he will set before the people has no value whatsoever in this world. In fact, the world considers them a sign of weakness, and even inferiority.

The things of which he will now boast are considered signs of weakness, inferiority, and the lack of proper preparation.

**MORE LABOR, STRIPES, IMPRISONMENT, AND DEATH**

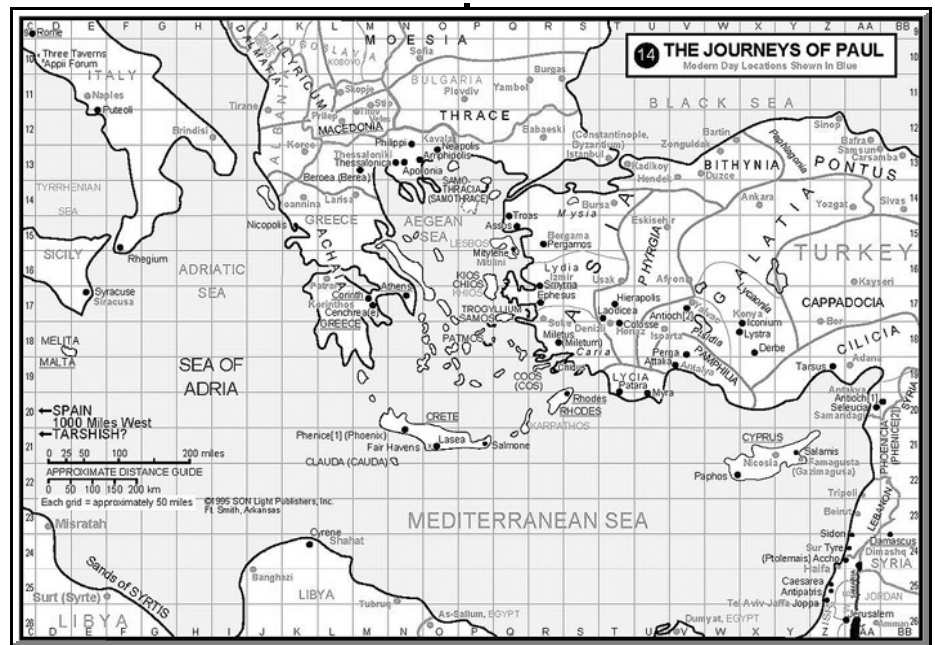
<sup>423b</sup> . . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.”

Paul is not merely chronicling his accomplishments, but is making a factual comparison of himself with his critics, who had managed to capture the heart of some of the Corinthians.

**LABORS MORE ABUNDANT**

“ . . . in labors more abundant . . . ” Other versions read, “in far more labors,”<sup>NASB</sup> “I have worked much harder,”<sup>NIV</sup> “with far greater labors,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “I have had more experience of hard work,”<sup>BBE</sup> “in labors exceedingly,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “in many more labors,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “I have done more work,”<sup>NJB</sup> “I have worked much harder than they have,”<sup>IE</sup> “serving Him more thoroughly by my labors,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “I have been involved in far greater efforts,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “with far more extensive and abundant labors,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “I have worked harder than any of them.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Paul’s “labors” had extensively to do with turning men “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me” [Christ] (Acts 26:18). They had nothing whatsoever to do with tent making, institutional organization, the promoting of himself, administrating institutional affairs, or any other form of religious specialization. His “labors” were



viewed as the carrying out of Christ’s commission to him.

**Paul’s Gospel labors are in a category by themselves.** Apart from the work of Jesus, they are unparalleled. In truth he said of himself, “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor 15:10).

His extensive labors are traced back to the extensive revelation that was given to him, for, as the Lord Jesus said, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48).

Paul once testified, “For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round

about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ”<sup>NASB</sup> (Rom 15:18-19).

The scope of Paul’s ministry is staggering to consider. Even in today’s world, with advanced modes of travel and all manner of technical aids, his accomplishments are monumental. His ministry covered approximately thirty years, from 37 through 67 AD. He preached the Gospel to three continents – Europe (ex, Rome), Asia (ex, Ephesus), and Africa (ex, Alexandria).

Over half of the book of Acts is about Paul’s ministry (chapters 9, 13-28). Of the twenty-seven books in the New Covenant Scriptures, thirteen (fourteen counting Hebrews), were written by Paul.

Paul preached in Damascus, Jerusalem, Caesarea, Antioch, Selucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Pamphylia, Iconium, Derbe, Pisidia, Attalia, Lystra, Phygia, Galatia, Samothracia, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus,

substantiating that he was not of the world, having crucified it unto himself, as the well as the world crucifying him to itself (Gal 2:20).

### STRIPES ABOVE MEASURE

“... in stripes above measure...”

Other versions read, “beaten times without measure,”<sup>NASB</sup> “been flogged more severely,”<sup>NIV</sup> “with countless floggings,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “with countless beatings,”<sup>RSV</sup> “of blows more than measure,”<sup>BBE</sup> “in stripes to excess,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “far worse beatings,”<sup>NAB</sup> “beaten times without number,”<sup>NAU</sup> “been whipped times without number,”<sup>NLT</sup> “I have been beaten more times,”<sup>IE</sup> “by excessively cruel floggings,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “with floggings vastly worse,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “in floggings beyond measure,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> “with countless stripes,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “I have been beaten times without number.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Paul was not beaten or flogged because of civil disobedience. It was not for crimes he had committed, or for being an “evil doer.” He knew well that it is never right or commendable to “suffer as

### PRISONS MORE FREQUENT

“... in prisons more frequent ...

“Other versions read, “in prisons more frequently,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “in far more imprisonments,”<sup>NASB</sup> “in prisons more abundantly,”<sup>ASV</sup> “in prisons exceedingly abundant,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “in prison more plenteously,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “been put in jail more often,”<sup>NLT</sup> “been put in jail oftener,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “and more thoroughly also by my imprisonments,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “I have served more prison sentences.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Paul’s imprisonments were also the result of his preaching the Gospel, and delivering the truth about the kingdom of God. We are provided some records of his imprisonments, and they are sad to read.

- He was imprisoned with Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:19-34).
- Once Paul was bound “with two chains” (Acts 21:33).
- He was confined to the castle while he awaited examination (Acts 22:24-30).
- He was returned to the castle for a brief confinement, in which the Lord stood by him, saying he would bear witness to Him in Rome (Acts 23:10-11).
- He was kept in “Herod’s judgment hall” for five days while he awaited the presentation of charges against him (Acts 23:35-36).
- Because he saw that it pleased the Jews, Felix left Paul bound in prison for two years (Acts 24:27).
- He is taken as a prisoner to Rome in the custody of Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band (Acts 27:1-5).
- As a prisoner, Paul was delayed for three months in Syracuse (Acts 28:11-16).
- As a prisoner, Paul dwelt in his own house for two years in Rome (Acts 28:30-31).
- Paul is referred to by a certain Centurion, as well as by himself, as “the prisoner” (Acts 23:18; Eph 3:1;

**Paul’s imprisonments were also the result of his preaching the Gospel, and delivering the truth about the kingdom of God. We are provided some records of his imprisonments, and they are sad to read.**

Macedonia, Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Trogyllium, Miletus, Coos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Caesarea, Rome, and Melita.

Paul also ministered to a number of Mediterranean islands as well, (Cyrus, Samothracia, Chios, Mitylene, Samos, Coos, Rhodes, Melita).

How appropriate are his words: “in labors more abundant!” Paul now begins the burden of his boast – and it is quite different from how “the flesh” speaks. He will glory in his infirmities – the things that confirmed the weakness of the flesh and its unsuitable and inadequate nature. These accounts will also confirm the world’s rejection of Paul,

a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters” (1 Pet 4:15). His “stripes” were the result of fulfilling his calling to “make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:9). He will provide some detail of these beatings in the next verse. They were all administered to him because of his work for Christ. He referred to the scars he bore from such beatings in this manner: “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal 6:17). They were delivered to him because of “the offense of the cross” (Gal 6:17), and not because of any wrong doing. They were persecution, not punishment for crimes – the world’s reaction, not just reprisals.

4:1).

- Paul appeared before a governor in Rome in chains (Acts 28:20).
- Onesiphorus sought imprisoned Paul out in Rome, and was “not ashamed” of his chain (2 Tim 1:16).

Once Paul went to Jerusalem preach the Gospel, even though, he acknowledged, “that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me” (Acts 20:23). Even with this word, out of his deep love for Christ, and his desire to fulfill the commission delivered to him, Paul said, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

On another occasion, the prophet Agabus came down from Judaea, bound himself with a girdle and said, “Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles” (Acts 21:11). When the people who heard this prophesy sought to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem he answered, “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13). He knew his ministry was coming to an end, and yet he would not be turned from his ministry.

#### DEATHS OFTEN

“... in deaths oft.” Other versions read, “often in danger of death,”<sup>NASB</sup> “and been exposed to death again and again,”<sup>NIV</sup> “and often near death,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “and numerous brushes with death,”<sup>NAB</sup> “many times exposed to death,”<sup>NJB</sup> “faced death again and again,”<sup>NLT</sup> “and faced death again and again and again,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “Many times I have been close to dying,”<sup>IE</sup> “and with risk of life many a time.”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

“and I have faced death more than once,”<sup>ISV</sup> and “and often at the point of death.”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

**What is a person willing to go through in order that the Word of Christ might be delivered?** For Paul, he was willing to be exposed to death time and time again. On occasions Paul testified to his brushes with death.

- “And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, **supposing he had been dead**” (Acts 14:19).
- “And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, **all hope that we should be saved was then taken away**. But after long abstinence

**fought with beasts at Ephesus**, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die” (1 Cor 15:32). Paul probably refers to this in his rather intriguing word to Timothy: “I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (1 Tim 4:17).

- “But we **had the sentence of death in ourselves**, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the **dead**. **Who delivered us from so great a death**, and doth deliver in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2 Cor 1:9-10).
- “For we which live are always **delivered unto death** for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor 4:11).

**Paul's ministry involved a path that led through frequent exposures to death. Yet, he did not swerve from what Jesus sent him to do. Such a tenacious spirit could not be found in Paul's critics. In contradiction of the Savior's mandate, they loved their own lives.**

Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss” (Acts 27:20-21).

- “And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, **yet vengeance suffereth not to live**” (Acts 28:3-4).
- “If after the manner of men **I have**

- “As unknown, and yet well known; **as dying**, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed” (2 Cor 6:9).

Paul's ministry involved a path that led through frequent and challenging exposures to death. Yet, he did not swerve from what Jesus sent him to do. These experiences did not move him. Such a tenacious spirit could not be found in Paul's critics. In contradiction of the Savior's mandate, they loved their own lives. “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and **he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal**” (John 12:25). Indeed, Paul treasured life in Christ above life in the flesh.

### MORE BODILY ABUSE

“<sup>24</sup> Of the Jews five times | received I forty stripes save one. <sup>25a</sup> | Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was

Paul's personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world— by Given O. Blakely

*I stoned . . . ”*

The persecutions and sufferings of Paul are one of the great anomalies (abnormalities or peculiarities) of human history. Here was a man close to Christ, given much from Christ, and in possession of Divine power – yet his sufferings transcended human imagination. There is a reason for this. **The closer one is to the Lord Jesus, the further that person is from the world; and, the further one is from the world, the more the wrath of the world is incurred.** Jesus once said, *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”* (John 15:19).

It also ought to be noted that Paul abandoned every competing pursuit in order that he might *“know Him (Christ), and the power of His resurrection, and*

*“Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“Five different times the Jews gave me their terrible thirty-nine lashes,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“On five different occasions the Jewish leaders whipped me 39 times,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“Five times at the hands of the Jews, I have received one short of forty lashes,”* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> and *“I have been beaten the regulation thirty-nine stripes by the Jews five times.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The practice of administering forty stripes “*save one*” (39 stripes), was **not a Roman custom**, but was a Jewish practice. Thus Paul says he received these beatings “*five times*” from **“the Jews.”**

Novices have written songs about the redemptive efficacy of “*thirty-nine*” stripes that were laid upon Christ. It was Pilate who had Jesus “*scourged,*” or “*flogged*” (Matt 27:26; Mk 15:15; John 19:1). The number of times these severe lashes were applied had no place in

*righteous, and condemn the wicked. And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall **cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed:** lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee”* (Deut 25:1-3). One of these beatings was sufficient to remember for a lifetime. Paul was beaten in this manner by the Jews on five separate occasions.

Jesus told His disciples how they would be received by their Jewish brethren. *“But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you **in their synagogues**”* (Matt 10:17). And again, *“in the synagogues ye shall be beaten”* (Mk 13:9). Thus, they would be punished in the name of true religion. We know that Paul was noted for preaching in the synagogues (Acts 9:20; 13:5,14,15; 14:1; 17:17; 18:4).

Paul once said of his previous life, when he persecuted the church, *“I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee”* (Acts 22:19). Now, in strict accord with what Jesus had told him in the beginning, he would suffer in a manner similar to the way in which he caused other believers to suffer. *“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: **for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake**”* (Acts 9:15-16).

The vehemence of the Jews reached its apex in their treatment of Paul. The “*five times*” to which Paul alludes are not detailed in Scripture. Once, in Jerusalem, *“all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple.”* They then set out *“to kill him.”* Their efforts, by the providence of God, were thwarted *“the chief captain and soldiers”* of the Roman guard came to his rescue. It is said that upon seeing this, the Jews *“stopped beating Paul”* <sup>NKJV</sup> (Acts 21:30-32). **Considering that this beating was aborted, it appears that not a single one of the beatings to which Paul refers is recorded in the book of Acts.**

**The purpose of Scripture, as confirmed in this instance, is not to provide a detail record of the sufferings of God’s people. The primary sufferings of Scripture are those of Christ Jesus, not His followers.**

*the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death”* (Phil 3:10). What Paul is now testifying involves a “*fellowship of,*” or participation in “*the sufferings of Christ.*” These are **not** the “*sufferings of Christ*” by which salvation was wrought out for us (1 Pet 1:11). Rather, these are the sufferings that Jesus left “*behind*” (Col 1:24) – sufferings that have to do with the world’s rejection of us, and our own perfection as well.

**FIVE TIMES**

*“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.”* Other versions read, *“From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“Five times the Jews gave me forty blows but one,”* <sup>BBE</sup>

Roman law. It is said of these beatings, “*This was the usual preliminary to crucifixion, especially in the case of shires, and was a punishment of a most severe and cruel nature. The verb here used, φραγελλῶ, is formed from the Latin flagellum, and denotes the employment of that terrible implement the Roman scourge. This was no ordinary whip, but commonly a number of leather thongs loaded with lead or armed with sharp bones and spikes, so that every blow cut deeply into the flesh, causing intense pain. The culprit was stripped of his clothes, pinioned, and bound to a stake or pillar, and thus on his bare back suffered this inhuman chastisement.*” <sup>PULPIT COMMENTARY</sup>

The beatings administered by the Jews had an element of mercy in them – and that was by Divine intent. Here is how the Law read. *“If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the*

The purpose of Scripture, as confirmed in this instance, is not to provide a detail record of the sufferings of God's people. **The primary sufferings of Scripture are those of Christ Jesus, not His followers.** Although there are considerable references to the persecution of the godly, they are only a very small percentage of their sufferings. The emphasis of the Spirit is not placed upon what it cost men to follow Christ, but upon the magnitude of the benefits they receive from God for doing so. Those benefits, as confirmed by the magnitude of the sufferings of the godly, are not to be found in *"the flesh"* or activities limited to *"this present evil world."* **Those who present "the Christian life" as one of remarkable fleshly advantage and joy have only betrayed their spiritual blindness.** They preach a spurious gospel that promotes friendship with the world rather than being a stranger in it.

**THREE TIMES**

<sup>25a</sup> *Thrice was I beaten with rods . . .* "Other versions read, *"Three times I was whipped with rods,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"Three times I have been beaten with Roman rods,"*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *"Three times I was beaten with a stick,"*<sup>ISV</sup> and *"Three times I have been scourged by the Romans."*<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup>

These refer to the beatings by the Gentiles – particularly the Romans. These were of a most severe nature, and often ended in the death of the one being so beaten. Only one of these beatings is mentioned in Scripture – the one that took place in Philippi. There, after being stripped of their clothing, it is said Paul and Silas were *"beaten with rods,"*<sup>NKJV</sup>

**Those who present "the Christian life" as one of remarkable fleshly advantage and joy have only betrayed their spiritual blindness. They preach a spurious gospel that promotes friendship with the world rather than being a stranger in it.**

and *"with many stripes"* (Acts 16:22-23). Apart from this, we have no other record of these severe beatings.

**Once again, this accents that the Scriptural record is not intended to be a biography of Christ's servants.** Christ is the thrust of Scripture, not those who serve Him. As it is written, *"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"* (Rev 19:10). Jesus also said of the Scriptures, *"they are they which testify of Me"* (John 5:39).

Men must not allow their preaching and teaching to be saturated with their own experiences. This is precisely why Paul says he is speaking *"as a fool,"* and one who is *"like a madman."*<sup>NRSV</sup> This is also why he is enumerating instances of his rejection and opposition by men, rather than his successes among them. He knows that those who have preached about *"another Jesus,"* and *"another Spirit,"* and *"another Gospel,"* cannot speak in this manner. Nor, indeed, do they have the slightest inclination to do so.

**ONCE**

*"... once was I stoned . . ."* Other

versions read, *"Once I received a stoning,"*<sup>NRSV</sup> *"Once they tried to stone me to death,"*<sup>IE</sup> and *"once I was pelted with stones."*<sup>ISV</sup>

By its very nature, stoning is intended to be experienced but once. It was not intended to be a temporal punishment. It was a form of capital punishment (Ex 19:3; Deut 13:10; 17:5; 22:21; Heb 11:37). So far as we know, Paul is the only person who was able to testify that he was *"stoned."* God, however, was gracious to him, and he only had to endure this one time. The record of Paul's stoning is provided in Acts 14:19-20, and is most unusual, to say the least. *"And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe"* (Acts 14:20).

Although there is no firm word on this, it is generally understood that Paul was, in fact, dead. Death was the intention behind stoning, and it is highly unlikely that those wicked Jews did not ensure that their work was completed.

**SUBJECTED TO MORE CALAMITIES**

<sup>25a</sup> *. . . thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep . . .*

A small percentage of any given generation are exposed to calamities – and they are never forgotten. Here Paul mentions four catastrophes he endured – passing **through** all of them.

**THREE SHIPWRECKS**

*"... thrice I suffered shipwreck . . ."* Other versions read, *"Three times I was shipwrecked,"*<sup>NKJV</sup> *"three times the ship I was in came to destruction at sea,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"I was on three different ships that wrecked,"*<sup>IE</sup> and *"Three times I have been aboard a ship wrecked at sea."*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

For most, this would be one of the most frightening of all calamities, attended by a sense of utter helplessness *"at*

*sea."* The single shipwreck that is recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 27:1-44), occurred en route to Rome (AD 60). That took place **after** the writing of this epistle, which was three years earlier while Paul was in Macedonia (AD 57). This means that Paul actually experienced a staggering number of four shipwrecks. Thus surely must be a record for any person traveling the high seas – even a ship captain.

*Paul's personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

The one that **is** recorded speaks of things involved in a shipwreck at sea.

- A tempestuous wind arose on the sea (Acts 27:14).
- The ship could not be navigated by men, and was thus whipped about by the storm (Acts 27:15).
- Coming into an island, they undergirded the ship, holding it together with ropes (Acts 27:16).
- In danger of being caught in quicksand, they again set sail, and were driven by the wind (Acts 27:17).
- The tempest became so fierce, they had to “*lighten the ship*” (Acts 27:19).
- Three days into the storm, they threw the ship’s “*tackling*” overboard

- Paul urged the men to eat something, as they had not eaten in fourteen days (Acts 27:33-34).
- When the 276 souls on board had eaten, they “*lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea*” (Acts 27:38).
- Seeing a “*bay with a sandy beach,*”<sup>NIV</sup> they took up the anchors and “*committed themselves to the sea*” (Acts 27:39-40).
- Striking a sandbar, the ship “*ran aground,*”<sup>NIV</sup> and “*the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf*”<sup>NIV</sup> (Acts 27:41).
- Being providentially moved to spare the prisoners, the centurion in charge of them “*commanded that*

to be tried. According to the word of the Lord Himself, he was going to “*bear witness also in Rome*” (Acts 23:11).

**We are to understand that all of the shipwrecks to which Paul refers were experienced while he was doing the work of the Lord** – fulfilling his commission to “*make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*” (Eph 3:9-10).

### A NIGHT AND DAY IN THE DEEP

“ . . . a night and a day I have been in the deep . . . ” Other versions read, “*a night and a day I have spent in the deep,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*I spent a night and a day in the open sea,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*for a night and a day I was adrift at sea,*”<sup>NRSV</sup> “*Once I was in the open sea all night and the whole next day,*”<sup>LIVING</sup> “*I was in the ocean for about 24 hours,*”<sup>IE</sup> “*once for full four and twenty hours I was floating on the open sea,*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “*and I drifted on the sea for a day and a night.*”<sup>ISV</sup>

There is no record of this occurrence, saving for this testimony. We assume it was occasioned by one of the shipwrecks that he experienced. In some way he supported himself in the murky deep until he was delivered. In the worst of circumstances, he would treaded water for that unimaginably long time – twenty-four hours. In the best case, he would have clung to some plank or part of the broken vessel until God sent him relief. At any rate, this was a most perilous situation. The dangers of further storms, sea-creatures, dehydration, and being virtually baked by the hot sun of that region are theoretic possibilities. At any rate, Paul mentions it as one of the epochs of suffering and tribulation that he endured while serving Christ.

**We are to understand that all of the shipwrecks to which Paul refers were experienced while he was doing the work of the Lord – fulfilling his commission to “ make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ**

(Acts 27:19).

- The tempest was so fierce that “*for many days neither sun nor stars appeared*” (Acts 27:20).
- About fourteen days after Paul assured those on the ship that no lives would be lost, as they were being driven “*up and down the Adriatic sea,*”<sup>NIV</sup> they came near to an island (Acts 27:27).
- They threw out four anchors, and anxiously waited for the day to come (Acts 27:29).

*they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land*” (Acts 27:43).

- It is then written, “*And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land*” (Acts 27:44).

That is one shipwreck that Paul experienced – **and our text says that there were three more!** This particular shipwreck took place while Paul, according to the word of the Lord, was being taken to Rome. From the human point of view, he was going as a prisoner

## CONSTANT DANGER

*“<sup>26</sup> In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren .”*

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

As if the sufferings already mentioned were not enough, Paul provides an overview of his ministry – one that included continual exposure to danger. **Admittedly, this has no appeal to a person seeking a good career in religion.** However, if a person has a desire to serve the Lord in this world, he must come to know that his service will be carried out in a hostile and foreign environment. Satan is the “*god of this world*” (2 Cor 4:4), and the servant Christ is invading his territory. Whatever may be said of Satan, his thorough corruption, and his diabolical desires, he is **not** a quitter. He will oppose those who penetrate his domain with the Gospel of Christ, doing so to the fullest extent allowed by his Head, Jesus Christ.

**Contrary to the notions of some, Satan does not shrink in fear from the servants of the Lord.** He will flee from those who “*resist*” him – but not out of a sense of fear. He and his motley hosts have a certain dread of their appointed future (Matt 8:29). James reminds us that they “*believe and tremble*” in the presence of God (James 2:19). But this is “*trembling*” of another order. Their very natures are opposite and vastly inferior to that of God – which means they will ultimately be destroyed. It is the clash of their nature with that of God, coupled with their keen awareness of their future, that causes them to tremble.

**So far as men are concerned, they can only cause disruption among the hosts of Satan to the degree that Christ is dwelling in them.** And even then, as we will see in this text, the God of heaven has allowed an unusually wide latitude in which Satan can work. That latitude has to do with this world and flesh and blood, not with the “*heavenly places*” from which the devil has been excluded (Lk 10:18; Rev 12:7-9).

But, alas, while our spirits have the privilege of enjoying “*fellowship*” with Christ (1 Cor 1:9) in those heavenly realms (Eph 2:6), while we are “*in the body*” (2 Cor 4:10; 5:6; Heb 13:3), we are in a domain where Satan works. To be sure, that working is controlled by the Lord, who is over Satan. **Yet, we learn from Scripture that life in Christ Jesus is not intended insulate us from all of Satan’s activity.** God will use “*the old*

*serpent*” (Rev 12:9; 20:2) to test and try us. The “*perils*” that will now be mentioned are a sort of New Covenant parallel to Israel’s journey through the wilderness. **The parallel must not be pressed too far, so as to suggest the saints are fundamentally wayward and recalcitrant.** It was said of Israel’s wilderness trek:

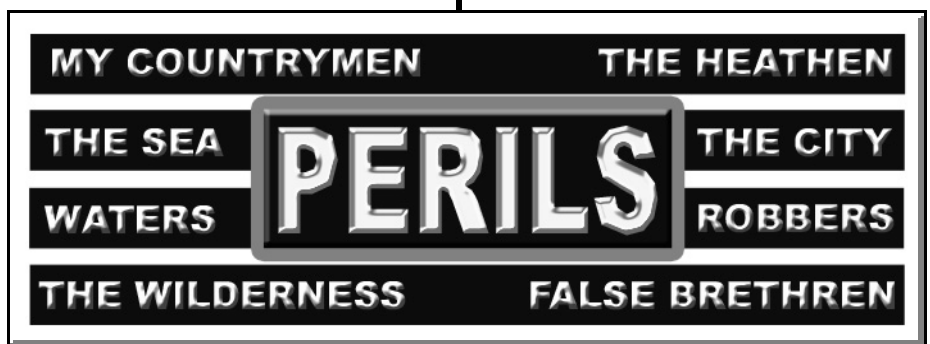
*“Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end”* (Deut 8:15-16).

So it is that in our troubles there is a kind of sifting that is accomplished. The extent of our commitment to the Lord is measured, and our hearts are made known. Additionally, there is a gallery of heavenly witnesses who are learning of the “*manifold wisdom*” of God through our conduct during these times (1 Cor 4:9; Eph 3:9). It is for this reason that we are admonished, “*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of*

*traveled many weary miles.*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*I’m always traveling.*”<sup>IE</sup> “*I have served Him by frequent traveling.*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “*I have been involved in frequent journeys.*”<sup>ASV</sup> “*My journeys have been many.*”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> and “*Many times on journeys.*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Paul’s frequent journey’s were not sight-seeing trips. They were not intended for personal pleasure, or to study the various world cultures. The extent of his journeys was determined by the extent of his ministry. He was “*the apostle of the Gentiles*” (Rom 11:3), and “*a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity,*” or “*truth*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (1 Tim 2:7). By the will of God, he had been “*appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles*” (2 Tim 1:11). The Gentiles were the “*heathen,*” or the “*nations*” – those who “*knew not God*” (1 Thess 4:5).

Paul was not sent only to the “*lost,*” but to the “*churches*” (Acts 15:41; 16:5), and individual believers as well. This is confirmed by his letters to Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and the Hebrews. These letters were an expression of his apostleship. His ministry was the reason for his “*frequent journeys*” – journeys that often brought him into regions that were nearly always dominated by the



*Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy*” (1 Pet 4:12-13).

**FREQUENT JOURNEYS**

“*In journeyings often . . .*” Other versions read, “*I have been on frequent journeys.*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*I have been constantly on the move.*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*in frequent travels.*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*continually traveling.*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*I have*

devil – held within the grip or darkness. Thus, it is no marvel that he was exposed to great dangers in his travels.

**CONSTANT PERILS**

“*. . . in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils*

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

among false brethren.” Other versions read, “in dangers,”<sup>NASB</sup> “I have faced danger,”<sup>NLT</sup> “and have often in great danger,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “amid danger,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “[exposed to] perils,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “in

For Paul, he confessed the quest was to “finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God”(Acts 20:24). Another place,

travelers, fattening their own coffers and the expense of the innocent.

**OWN COUNTRYMEN.** Other versions read, “my own people,”<sup>RSV</sup> “my own race,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> and “Jews.”<sup>IE</sup> His own people – the Jews – hounded Paul everywhere he went. From the very beginning of his ministry they “took counsel to kill him” (Acts 9:23). In Antioch, they spoke against Paul, “contradicting and blaspheming” (Acts 13:45), eventually stirring up the people so that Paul was “expelled out of their coasts” (Acts 13:50). In Iconium, they “stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren” (Acts 14:2). In Lystra they instigated the stoning of Paul (Acts 14:19). They opposed him in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5). Then the Jews from Thessalonica pursued Paul to Berea, forcing Paul to leave that area (Acts 17:13-14). In Corinth they “made an insurrection” against him (Acts 18:12). When he was in Greece, the Jews “laid wait for him”(Acts 20:3). When Jews “from Asia” saw Paul in the Jerusalem Temple, they “stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him” (Acts 21:27). In Jerusalem a number of Jews bound themselves with a curse, “saying they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul” (Acts 23:12). How grievous this was to Paul.

**THE HEATHEN.** Other versions read, “Gentiles,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “the nations,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> and “non-Jews.”<sup>IE</sup> Paul was also opposed and jeopardized by those who were not Jews, or his “own countrymen.” Stirred up by the Jews, the Gentiles in Antioch of Pisidia “expelled” him from their coasts (Acts 13:50-51). The Gentiles in Iconium joined with the Jews and their leaders in a conspiracy to kill Paul (Acts 14:4). He was persecuted, beaten, and thrown into prison by the Gentiles in Philippi – specifically by certain soothsayers whose living was destroyed when Paul cast the divining demon out of their promoter (Acts 16:19-34). He was “mocked” by the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:32). He was opposed by Demetrius, a silversmith from Ephesus, who stirred to the people because their idol-making was jeopardized by the preaching of Paul (Acts 19:24-35). At the instigation of the Jews he was tried before Felix, the governor (Acts 24:1-27). Felix held Paul in custody for two full years, willing to



constant danger.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The word “perils” means, “danger,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “a condition of threatening circumstances danger, risk,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “a state of dangerous or threatening circumstances,”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> and “a danger, risk, hazzard.”<sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup>

Ordinarily, men do not venture into territories fraught with danger. Before they will do such a thing, there must be a cause that is judged worthy of such a venture. Some men feel as though climbing a mountain is worthy of such a risk. They know they may face inclement weather and treacherous terrain, but they do it anyway. Explorers have also felt their effort was worth subjecting themselves to danger. They feel that discovery is worth such a pursuit. Treasure hunters frequently engage in their searches, knowing very well that a certain risk attends their efforts.

**Man has been created in such a manner as to be governed by his heart and preference.** Once a mortal really wants something, there is hardly anything that he will not do to satisfy that preference – even if the desire is ignoble and wretched, such as pleasure, drug-induced euphoria, and the likes. That how man is. That nature can be governed by either Satan or Christ. The quest can be for good or evil. However, whatever the quest, the fervent soul will be willing to risk all in order to obtain satisfaction.

he said his aim was to “obtain” the appointed prize (1 Cor 9:24). In another place he said it was to “apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus”(Phil 3:12). In yet another place he spoke of how he kept in control of his body so he would not be disqualified from the prize: “No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize”<sup>NIV</sup> (1 Cor 9:27). **Paul had been convinced in his spirit of the worthiness of his work, and the sureness of the prize set before him.** He therefore continued his labors, even though the led through many “perils,” risks, and jeopardies.

#### The Areas of Danger

The areas of danger have an unparalleled scope: waters, robbers, among his own countrymen, among the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren.

**WATERS.** Other versions read “rivers,”<sup>NASB</sup> “flooded rivers,”<sup>NLT</sup> and “crossing rivers.”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> Here “waters” refers to swollen and flooded rivers that had to be crossed in order to get where Jesus was sending Paul.

**ROBBERS.** Other versions read “bandits,”<sup>NIV</sup> “outlaws,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “brigands” (predators).<sup>NJB</sup> These predators, or marauders, preyed on travelers who had to pass through desolate places. They sought to plunder

bring pleasure to the Jews (Acts 24:27). He is tried before Festus, Roman procurator of Jerusalem (Acts 25:1-12). He was examined before Agrippa, one of the Gentile Herods (Acts 25:13-26:32). He was taken in custody, and transported to Rome by Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band (Acts 27:1-5).

**CITY.** Other versions read, "in the town,"<sup>BBE</sup> and "mobs in the city."<sup>LIVING</sup> Paul ministered mostly in cities, and experienced opposition and jeopardy there also. Cities where he experienced "peril" include Damascus (Acts 9:22-23), Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:50-52), Iconium (Acts 14:1-6), Lystra (Acts 14:8-19), Philippi (Acts 16:16-24), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10), Berea (Acts 17:10-13), Athens (Acts 17:16-34), Corinth (Acts 18:12-18), Ephesus (Acts ), Caesarea (Acts 23:35).

**WILDERNESS.** Other versions read, "the country,"<sup>NIV</sup> "the waste land,"<sup>BBE</sup> "the open country,"<sup>NJB</sup> "the deserts,"<sup>NLT</sup> and "death in the deserts."<sup>LIVING</sup> There is no record of these jeopardies, unless some of them may have been encountered when he spent time in Arabia (Gal 1:17).

**SEA.** Other versions read, "the stormy seas,"<sup>NLT</sup> and "the ocean."<sup>IE</sup> It appears here that Paul had weathered several fierce storms at sea, in addition to the four shipwrecks he experienced.

**FALSE BRETHREN.** Other versions read, "false brothers,"<sup>NIV</sup> "false brothers and sisters,"<sup>NRSV</sup> "people masquerading as brothers,"<sup>NJB</sup> "men who claim to be Christians, but are not,"<sup>NLT</sup> "spies in our midst,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "those posing as believers [but destitute of Christian knowledge and piety]."<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

"False brethren" are "pretended associates," or "spurious brethren."<sup>STRONG'S</sup> Like those false brethren of whom John wrote, they are found among the brethren, but are really not of the same nature, nor do they deliver the same Gospel (1 John 2:19). When the "apostles and elders" met together to consider the acceptance of the Gentiles, reference was made to such men. "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised,

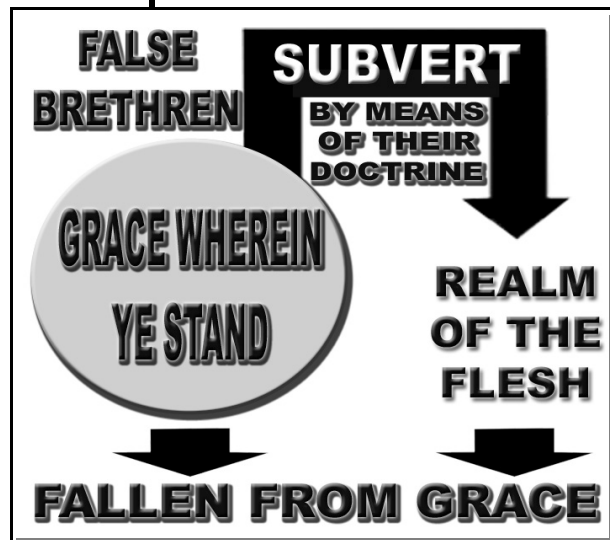
and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment" (Acts 15:24). The word "subvert" means "to pack up baggage in order to carry it away to another place . . . dismantle, plunder, overthrow, ravage . . . turn away violently from a right state, to unsettle,"<sup>THAYER</sup> "tear down, upset, unsettle, of unsetting one's mind,"<sup>FRIBERG</sup> "to cause someone distress and worry,"<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

Here is what takes place when a soul is "subverted." When a person is "born again" (1 Pet 1:23), God puts him "in Christ" (1 Cor 1:30). From the standpoint of potential, the person has been "raised up and made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places" (Eph 2:6). All of the resources required to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12) are located here, for God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3). This is the beginning status of every person who is "baptized into Christ" (Gal 3:27). Their hearts have been "purified by faith" (Acts 15:9), and they have been "justified from all things" (Acts 13:39).

Working under the auspices of Satan, "false brethren" move these people out of the domain of the grace of God, wherein they "stand" (Rom 5:2; 1 Pet 5:12), into the domain of "the flesh," from which they had once been delivered. Once this happens, there is a certain fall from grace, for faith itself is of no consequence in the realm of the flesh. "Works" – meritorious works – are the whole of the matter in religious flesh. Thus Paul writes, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal 5:4). Subversion is the work of "false brethren," and it is a damnable work in which they are engaged.

On one occasion, certain "false brethren" were secretly brought in to "spy out" the "liberty which we have in Christ Jesus" (Gal 2:4). They sought to

compel Paul to circumcise Titus as he did Timothy. However, Paul testifies, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal 2:5). There were also the "false apostles" at Corinth, who sought to turn the people to "another Jesus," "another Spirit," and "another Gospel" (2 Cor 11:4). Paul told



the Philippians of those who came in Christ's name, yet were "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil 3:19). There were those who "troubled" the Galatians, "and would pervert the Gospel of Christ" (Gal 1:7). Some sought to turn the grace of God "into lasciviousness" (Jude 1:4). These "false brethren" created perilous conditions for Paul, often even seeking his life. They also created spiritual peril for all who subjected themselves to their erroneous doctrine.

Once again, let me emphasize that these jeopardies were experienced while Paul was engaged in fulfilling his heavenly commission – while he was being led by the Spirit, walking by faith, and running the race set before him. He boasts of these things, not because they were pleasant, but because they confirmed he had, indeed, been crucified unto the world, and the world unto him (Gal 6:14). He was, in fact, Christ's disciple, and he knew the world first hated the Savior (John 15:18).

**PERSONAL HARDSHIP**

<sup>427</sup> *In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

**WEARINESS AND PAINFULNESS**

*“In weariness and painfulness . . .”* Other versions read, *“weariness and toil,”* NKJV *“labor and hardship,”* NASB *“labored and toiled,”* NIV *“toil and hardship,”* NRSV *“labor and travail,”* ASV *“hard work and weariness,”* BBE *“worked with unsparing energy,”* NJB *“I have lived with weariness and pain,”* NLT *“laboriousness and painfulness,”* YLT *“in toil and hardship,”* AMPLIFIED and *“I have known exhaustion, pain.”* PHILLIPS

There is a certain joy involved in working in the vineyard of the Lord – but it is not like *“having fun.”* It is more like the joy that follows the travail of birth. As it is written, *“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you”* (John 16:21-22).

Today, there is a new emphasis on **“having fun”** – even in **“worship.”** This is a dreadful and noisome plague that has struck the church. A flood of novices who, under any other set of circumstances, would be confined to *“the room of the unlearned”* (1 Cor 14:16), have not been vaulted into places of prominence. Many of them are even *“leading”* the people of God in what they call praise – which is usually nothing more than the unintelligent lisps of babies (and that is the most charitable view of the matter). There is no place for this kind of nonsense among the saints of God. Those who do the work of the Lord – the **real** work of God – will find themselves experiencing *“weariness and painfulness.”* There are circumstances involved in serving the Lord that are like the travail of an expectant mother. **There are perceptions of spiritual realities that can only be obtained by forging turbulent streams, and going through the fire of trial.** Those who seek easy modes of

teaching are walking in the devil’s domain. Truth is not ministered in such docile climes! The truth does not blend with this world, it is antithetical to it. But convenience, painlessness, and fleshly pleasantries are of the world.

Think of *“weariness and painfulness”* in association with *“labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, prisons more frequent, in deaths oft”* (11:23). Thus Paul speaks of this depleting duo as being *“pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired of life”* (2 Cor 1:8). Do not imagine for a moment that the servants of God are carried to heaven on beds of ease!

**WATCHING OFTEN**

*“. . . in watchings often . . .”* Other versions read, *“in sleeplessness often,”* NKJV *“through many sleepless nights,”* NASB *“have often gone without sleep,”* NIV *“for many nights without sleep,”* NJB *“often in sleepless watching,”* MONTGOMERY *“watching often [through sleepless nights],”* AMPLIFIED and *“long vigils.”* PHILLIPS

Whether from pain, fatigue, perilous surroundings, imminent danger, or other circumstances, Paul’s ministry often led him through sleepless nights. We know of one time when, at the midnight hour, he joined with Silas in praying and singing praise to Gods (Acts 16:25). There is also no doubt that sleeplessness often attended such things as *“stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labors, and watchings”* (2 Cor 6:5). Sleeplessness also suggests times when he had *“no certain dwelling place”* (1 Cor 4:11).

**HUNGER AND THIRST**

*“. . . in hunger and thirst . . .”* Other versions read, *“I have known hunger and thirst,”* NIV *“going without food and water,”* BBE and *“I have been hungry and thirsty.”* NLT

Once again, some may be unable to receive the fact that this condition existed. They interpret *“God shall supply all your need”* (Phil 4:19) as meaning

**AM I A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS?  
THE CROSS?**



Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follower of the Lamb,  
And shall I fear to own His cause,  
Or blush to speak His Name?

Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?

And when the battles over  
We shall wear a crown!  
Yes, we shall wear a crown!  
Yes, we shall wear a crown!  
And when the battle’s over  
We shall wear a crown  
In the new Jerusalem  
Wear a crown (wear a crown)  
Wear a crown (wear a crown)  
Wear a bright and shining crown;  
And when the battle’s over  
We shall wear a crown  
In the new Jerusalem.

Isaac Watts 1674-1748

there is never a time when there is a lack of food and water. **But those who imagine such a thing are wrong, and betray a lack of acquaintance with the nature of life in Christ Jesus.** In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul also mentioned this condition. *“Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst”* (1 Cor 4:11). Earlier in this letter, he spoke of not having *“necessities”* (2 Cor 6:4). To the Philippians Paul confessed, *“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). It is a singular blessing, indeed, to know HOW to do this.

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

And just how do we suffer need, necessity, and a lack of food and drink? **You endure it with prayer and supplication, seasoned with hope. You use the occasion to draw near the Lord, and father away from the world.** Know that there have been saints before you, who had a dominating faith, yet were “*destitute*” (Heb 11:37). Admittedly, this is not an enviable condition, but let no one imagine that serving the Lord makes such experiences impossible.

**FASTINGS OFTEN**

“... *in fastings often* ...” Other

those words describe particular occasions when the pain of hunger and thirst were experienced in unusual measures. Here, “*fastings*” refers to long periods when there were not adequate provisions, or any firm prospect of receiving such. The point is the duration of such times, and not the effect they had upon the body.

This also contradicts the teaching of many who view poverty as a curse, and teach the people that no such condition can happen to those who trust the Lord. It will surely be embarrassing for them when they confront the apostle Paul on

thorough adequacy, as though their faith had caused it to happen. They point us to the words of our blessed Lord: “*And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe assume 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?*” (Matt 6:28-30). Now, they reason that what Jesus really meant was that you would **never** be without proper clothing. But is that what He said? When Paul said he frequently experienced “*cold and nakedness*,” was he contradicting Jesus? **Is it possible that this was an expression of unbelief, rather than of unwavering faith?**

Have such miserable interpreters forgotten that God moved Isaiah to prophesy “*naked and barefoot*” for “*three years*” (Isa 20:2) – “*nakedness*,” **NOT** meaning stark naked, but with only a loin cloth. Did not Jesus speak of some of his brethren experiencing nakedness (Matt 25:36,43)? Did not Paul confess in his first letter to the Corinthians, “*Even to this present hour we . . . are naked*” (1 Cor 4:11)? And, did not James speak of “*a brother or sister*” being “*naked*,” and in need of our assistance (James 2:15)? **Let us have done with these simplistic views of Scripture that move people to equate Divine acceptance with worldly ease and comfort!** If men insist on maintaining such views, then they ought to cut this testimony out of their Bibles, for it contradicts what they say. Of course, at the same time, they should know that they will be faced with this testimony on the day of judgment. **Paul, by his own testimony, contradicted their theology – and he was approved, commissioned, and perceived as faithful, by the living God!** It is therefore not possible that these merchants of prosperity are right.

**Closing Considerations**

Whatever it means to be held up by the Lord and be “*safe*” (Psa 119:117), it does **not** mean trouble – even great and sore trouble – will not be experienced. It does not require being a doctor of the Law to see that! Whatever it means to be “*delivered*” (2 Cor 1:10), caused to “*triumph*” (2 Cor 2:14), and given the “*victory*” (1 Cor 15:57), it does not mean

**Although you cannot prove from the original Greek word that this is not the kind of fasting to which Paul refers, no such proof is even required. The nature of spiritual life does not permit such boasting, and nothing more really needs to be said about this.**

versions reads, “*often without food*,”<sup>NASB</sup> “*and have gone without food*,”<sup>NIV</sup> “*through frequent fastings*,”<sup>NAB</sup> “*and often altogether without food and drink*,”<sup>NJB</sup> “*I have been hungry many times*,”<sup>IE</sup> “*through many a fasting season*,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “*often without anything to eat*,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> “*frequently driven to fasting by want*,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*going without meals*.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**It seems to me that this could not refer to voluntary fasting, for how could that possibly be classed as a suffering or tribulation, or things endured?** It is not likely that Paul would “*boast*” or “*glory*” in the fact that he “*fasted*,” in the ordinary sense of the word. This would put him in the category of that Pharisee who prayed “*with himself*,” boasting “*I fast twice a week*” (Lk 18:12). Although you cannot prove from the original Greek word that this is not the kind of fasting to which Paul refers, no such proof is even required. **The nature of spiritual life does not permit such boasting, and nothing more really needs to be said about this.**

Whereas “*hunger and thirst*” also means being without food and water,

the day of judgment. Being the premier apostle, and laboring more abundantly than they all, he had experienced deprivation many times, and done so **while** he was serving the Lord “*acceptably with reverence and godly fear*” (Heb 12:28). What is more, he wrote his experience in a book so that all would know the truth about serving Christ. It is inexcusable that men have twisted the Word of God to justify their own miserable lusts.

**COLD AND NAKEDNESS**

“... *in cold and nakedness*.” Other versions read, “*in cold and exposure*,”<sup>NASB</sup> “*cold and in need of clothing*,”<sup>BBE</sup> “*Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm*,”<sup>NLT</sup> “*I’ve been cold and without enough clothes*,”<sup>IE</sup> “*poorly clad and exposed to cold*,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “*in cold and exposure and lack of clothing*,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*cold and lack of clothing*.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

“*Cold and nakedness*” have to do with being exposed to the elements, and not having sufficient protective covering. Once again, this flies squarely into the face of many false teachers of the day. Some of them even boast of their

that we will not experience affliction, trial, discouragement, opposition, and oppressive persecution. **Deliverance presumes being under some form of**

**oppression. Triumph and victory postulate warfare and trouble, for neither be realized independently of conflict and warfare.** None of these terms

presume exclusion from difficulty and hardship, but rather posit **the existence** of adversity, hardship, trouble, and inconvenience.

## A PROFOUND CARE FOR THE CHURCHES

***“<sup>28</sup> Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”***

In the matters that Paul has briefly listed, he has distanced himself from his critics. He has shown that he has persevered under circumstances that cause the flesh to quit, and moves the person who is of the world, to cease what he is doing. However, the gap between Paul and those who were sitting in judgment of him, and corrupting those converted under his ministry, needed to be widened even more. Now, Paul will soar far above them, dealing with the profound concern that he has for the churches.

### BESIDE THINGS WITHOUT

*“Beside those things that are without . . .”* Other versions read, *“besides the other things,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“Apart from such external things,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“Besides everything else,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“And, apart from other things,”* <sup>RSV</sup> *“In addition to all the other things,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“Besides the things which are outward,”* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *“Then, besides all this,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“On top of everything else,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“not to mention other things,”* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> and *“Apart from all external trials.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

By their very nature, *“those things that are without,”* or *“external,”* are vastly inferior. It is not that they do not hurt and cause grief. However, they are *“temporal.”* As it is written, *“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for **the things which are seen are temporal:** but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Cor 4:18). Knowing this, Paul did not focus on what could be seen – like beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, being *“in the deep,”* *“perils,”* and difficult outward circumstances. These happened frequently, to be sure. However, they were not continual. There were blessed

periods of relief, lest he be overcome.

However, there was no relief from the matter that Paul now mentions.

### COMING EVERY DAY

*“. . . that which cometh upon me daily . . .”* Other versions read, *“there is the daily pressure upon me,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“I face daily the pressure,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“I am under daily pressure,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“here is that which presseth upon me daily,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“there is that which comes upon me every day,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“the crowd of cares pressing on me daily,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“my daily instance,”* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *“I am cumbered daily,”* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *“here is the daily pressure upon me,”* <sup>NAB</sup> *“there is, day in day out, the pressure on me,”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“I have a daily burden,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“my daily encumbrance,”* <sup>PNT</sup> *“the crowding upon me that is daily,”* <sup>YLT</sup> *“I have the constant*

to self-interests. This he had every day – *“day in and day out.”* <sup>NJB</sup> He awoke with this concern, and retired with it as well. It was a burden – a daily burden, and a blessed one also, for it was a godly concern.

### THE CARE OF ALL THE CHURCHES

*“. . . the care of all the churches.”* Other versions read, *“my deep concern for all the churches,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“my anxiety for all the churches,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“the burden of all the assemblies,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“the solicitude for all the churches,”* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *“of how the churches are getting along,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“care for all congregations,”* <sup>TNT</sup> *“the constant worry of how the churches are getting along,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> and *“my care and anxiety for all the churches.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Right here we again come to grips

**Here is something from which Paul could not escape. There was no spiritual mountain peak that made this experience go away. Nor, indeed, were there any personal griefs that managed to divert his attention from this concern to self-interests. This he had every day – “day in and day out.”**

*worry,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“every day I feel the pressure,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“there is the crowding pressure of each day,”* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> *“there is the daily [inescapable pressure],”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *“I have the daily responsibility.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Here is something from which Paul could not escape. **There was no spiritual mountain peak that made this experience go away.** Nor, indeed, were there any personal griefs that managed to divert his attention from this concern

**with an erroneous emphasis that is dominant among the churches.** Almost without exception, spiritual concern is expressed for *“the lost,”* or those who *“know not God.”* I am swift to say that such a concern is by no means to be demeaned, or looked upon as in any way unacceptable. Jesus spoke of *“other sheep,”* which were not of the Jewish fold, declaring, *“them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice”* (John 10:16). Concern for the lost is integral to life.

In this text, however, we are confronted with something that is almost unknown in our time – a “*deep concern for all the churches.*”<sup>NKJV</sup> What does the “*apostle of the Gentiles*” mean by this expression? And why is it that he experienced it “*everyday*”?<sup>BBE</sup>

Early in his ministry, this aspect of Paul’s heart was made known: “*And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do... And he went through Syria and Cilicia,*

*the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col 2:1-3).

Paul prayed for the churches, that God would give unto them “*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*” (Eph 1:17). He desired that they would “*be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God:*

them of false Jewish teachers; “*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision*” (multitators – Phil 3:2).

**Paul knew that a weak and emaciated church is not in any way the product of Divine working.** The new birth does not produce such a church (1 Pet 1:23). The Holy Spirit does not culture such a church (Rom 8:13-14). The Scriptures do not develop such a church (2 Tim 3:15-17). This kind of church is not the result of Christ’s intercession (Heb 7:25). It is not the consequence of a seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). The gifts God has placed within the church do not yield faulty assemblies (Eph 4:8, 11-17).

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The provisions obtained in Christ Jesus are thoroughly adequate to bring the church to maturity. The “*whole armor of God*” is not deficient (Eph 6:11-18). The “*weapons of our warfare,*” are “*mighty through God*” (2 Cor 10:4-5). The grace of God is an environment in which we can “*stand*” (Rom 5:21 Pet 5:12). Everything about salvation – EVERYTHING – is for “*the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*” (Eph 4:12-13). No holy angel will lend his influence to make us mediocre, haphazard, lacking diligence and floundering in the sea of carnality. Every one of them has been sent forth to “*minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation*” (Heb 1:13-14).

*confirming the churches*” (Acts 15:36,41). Later he “. . . went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, **strengthening all the disciples**” (Acts 18:23). Again, it is written, “*And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece*” (Acts 20:2). When Paul instructed the brethren in Rome he said of his ministry to them, “*For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office*” (Rom 11:13). And again he said of his anticipated ministry to the church in Rome, “*That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost*” (Rom 15:16). Who can forget how he spoke of his burden for the churches in Colossae and Laodicea. “*For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to*

*strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*” (Col 1:9-12).

**Paul’s care for the churches was accentuated by the intrusion of false teachers who were leading the brethren into forbidden territory and erroneous ideas.** Some had “*bewitched*” the Galatians, sending them back to the Law, from which Jesus had delivered them (Gal 3:1-3). High sounding philosophers had invaded the Colossian assembly, bringing in philosophy and vain deceit, and subjecting them to “*rudiments,*” and lifeless “*ordinances*” (Col 2:8, 20-23). Corrupt teachers had caused confusion in Thessalonica concerning the coming of the Lord (2 Thess 2:2-3). Philippi was being exposed to “*Christian*” teachers who were nothing more than frauds, “*enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, who mind earthly things*” (Phil 3:18-19). Paul had to warm

When God put us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30), he also placed us where He had deposited “*all spiritual blessings*” (Eph 1:3; 2:6). By means of our acquaintance and communion with Him, He has given us everything that pertains to “*life and godliness*” (2 Pet 1:3). He has also provided us with “*exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*” (2 Pet 1:4).

**How is it, then, that there can possibly be a deficient church?** How can there be churches that have left their “*first love*” (Rev 2:4)? What is the cause

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

of a church being “*dead*,” even though it boasts of being alive (Rev 3:1)? What moves a church to tolerate a false teacher within, or embrace an seriously false doctrine (Rev 2:14-15, 20-23)? How is it possible for there to be a constituency within the church who affirms “*there is no resurrection of the dead*” (1 Cor 15:12)? How can any leader “*love to have the preeminence*” among the saints, and even exclude the apostle John from their assembly (3 John 1:9)? How could some within the church actually say Paul was teaching, “*Let us do evil, that good may come*” (Rom 3:8).

What is the cause of immorality in the church (1 Cor 5:1)? Division and strife (1 Cor 3:3)? Slothfulness (2 Thess 3:11)? Stealing (Eph 4:28)? What is there about God, Jesus, the Spirit, holy angels, the Gospel, the Scriptures, or the newness of life that promotes such things?

All of these, and more, are evidences of the work of the devil, demons, and wicked men! They are the trail of “*false apostles and deceitful workers*.” The acceptance of such men set the church in a backward stance, where it was drawing back to perdition. It is not simply that there were mistakes, weaknesses, and innocent errors of judgment among them. This is emphatically not the case! **These things had shut down the grace of God for those receiving them.** The grace of God effectively teaches us that “*that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:12-13). When, therefore, men are NOT rejecting ungodliness and

worldly lusts, it is because the grace of God is **not** teaching them to do so. If they are NOT living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, they are **not** being taught by God’s grace. If they are NOT looking for blessed hope of Christ’s glorious return, grace is **not** tutoring them!

All such conditions moved Paul to have this deep daily concern for all the churches. **He could not acclimate to their carnality, and he could not accommodate their corrupt teachers.**

Paul nowhere said he had a daily concern for Rome, or Athens, or Alexandria, or the Islands, or some other

Suffice it to say, you will be hard pressed to find a single person who carries this kind of burden “*for the churches*.” Men have learned to live with fundamentally flawed and careless churches. They have accommodated themselves to carnality, toned down the Word of God, and tailored the church’s activities so that conviction and a compelling quest to lay hold on eternal life is not apt to be experienced (1 Tim 6:12).

**There is no way that such a posture is acceptable before God!** Jesus did not die and raise again in order that He might have a dead church! He did not destroy the works of the devil in order

**There is no way that such a posture is acceptable before God! Jesus did not die and raise again in order that He might have a dead church! He did not destroy the works of the devil in order that men might continue living unto themselves (1 John 3:8; 2 Cor 5:15). He did not “spoil principalities and powers” in order that His church might give heed to “seducing spirits and doctrines of demons**

quadrant of the unsaved world. That certainly does not mean that he had no concern for them, or desire that “*all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:4). However, just as surely as Christ’s mission involved more than His death, so salvation involves more that the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus had to take up His life again, and live it in another place. We likewise must do the same, walking “*in the newness of life*” (Rom 6:4). **It was the absence of this posture among the churches that brought daily weight of concern upon Paul.**

that men might continue living unto themselves (1 John 3:8; 2 Cor 5:15). He did not “*spoil principalities and powers*” in order that His church might give heed to “*seducing spirits and doctrines of demons*” (Col 2:15; 1 Tim 4:1).

“*False apostles and deceitful workers*” do not have a “*care for all the churches*” – much less, a “*daily*” and compelling concern. However, **Paul did have this kind of concern, and it served to further distinguish him from the pretenders.**

## WHAT EXPERIENCE HAVE I NOT HAD?

**“<sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?”**

How involved was Paul with those he had taught, and to whom he had preached and written? Here he confirms that the minister of Christ cannot divorce

himself from the people of Christ.

### WHO IS WEAK?

“*Who is weak, and I am not weak?*” Other versions read, “*Who is weak, and I am not weak?*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*Who is weak without my being weak?*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*Who*

*is weak, and I do not feel weak?*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*Who is feeble and I am not feeble?*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*If anyone weakens, I am weakened as well.*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*Who is weak without my feeling that weakness?*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*Who makes a mistake and I do not feel his sadness?*”<sup>LIVING</sup> “*When someone is weak, I feel weak*

too,<sup>IE</sup> “and *“Do you think anyone’s weak without my feeling his weakness?”*”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Just as surely as Jesus is a High Priest that can be “*touched with the feeling of our infirmities*” (Heb 4:15), so those ministers whom He sends forth are impacted when those to whom they minister are “*weakened*.”

Here, Paul is commenting on the “*care*,” or concern, that he has for all of the churches. He is testifying as to what is involved in that consistent concern. He cannot blot them from his mind. In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul acknowledged, “*To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*” (1 Cor 9:22). Those who are “*weak*” include:

- ☛ Those oppressed by persecution.
- ☛ Those with a weak and untutored

to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*Who is led into sin without my intense concern?*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*who is in danger of falling, and I am not angry?*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?*”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “*when anyone is made to fall, I burn in agony myself.*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger?*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*who is led into sin, and I am not incensed?*”<sup>RWB</sup> “*Who is spiritually hurt without my fury rising against the one who hurt him?*”<sup>LIVING</sup> “*When someone falls into sin, it really upsets me.*”<sup>IE</sup> “*Who is led astray into sin, and I am not aflame with indignation?*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “*Who is made to stumble and fall and have his faith hurt, and I am not on fire [with sorrow or indignation]?*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*Does anyone have his faith upset without my longing to restore him?*”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The word “*offended*” means, “to put a stumbling-block or impediment in the way, upon which

denying the resurrection of the dead, being confused about marriage, forgetting the brethren, disrespecting the saints, tolerating immorality and other such things. **Their teaching had thrown stumbling-blocks in the paths of the saints, so that they tripped and fell into sin – sometimes very grievous sin.**

And how did such conduct effect Paul? It caused him to “*burn*” with “*anger*” and “*indignation*” – not toward the people who “*stumbled*,” but toward those who **caused** them to stumble. He reacted to them like Jesus reacted to the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Lawyers (Matt 22:34; 23:13-29; Mk 12:18-24; Lk 11:33,42-44,46,52). On another occasion, when confronting those who placed stumbling-blocks before people, Jesus looked “*round upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts*” (Mk 3:5).

This is the kind of anger that is not only permissible, but is mandatory for the servants of the Lord: “***Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath***” (Eph 4:26). When anger leaves the realm of the Spirit and enters into the domain of flesh, it has gone too far. Even when legitimate “*anger*” is expressed, it added that must be “*slow to wrath*” (James 1:19).

When it comes to the matter of offending the people of God, causing them to stumble, a tolerant spirit is out of order. Those who push the saints into paths laden with stumbling-blocks and offenses are not suitable objects of kindness and mercy. Such people are to be vigorously opposed, and their mouths “*stopped*” (Tit 1:11). God has not sent them, and they are not doing His work! It is impossible to prove otherwise, for that would represent God in a reproachful way, and would demean Jesus.

Thus Paul did not hesitate to tell the people how these false teachers aroused his indignation. It is most unfortunate that this kind of attitude is so exceedingly rare in our time.

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conscience.

- ☛ Those who are “*weak in the faith*,” and are therefore more easily turned out of the way.

In such cases, Paul treated the people with tenderness, lest he cause them to offend, stumble, and even fall away. The manner in which he has dealt with the Corinthians in both of his epistles is a sterling example of this.

**WHO IS OFFENDED?**

“... *who is offended, and I burn not?*” Other versions read, “*Who is made*

another may trip and fall . . . to entice to sin . . . to cause a person to distrust or desert one whom he ought to trust and obey, to cause to fall away,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “to cause to do wrong,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “cause someone to give up his faith,”<sup>UBS</sup> and “make someone no longer believe.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

As used in this text, the word “*burn*” means, “to be incensed, indignant,”<sup>THAYER</sup> and “active indignation rising from great concern, i.e. be very worried and distressed.”<sup>FRIBERG</sup>

In the case at Corinth, “*false apostles and deceitful workers*” had declared a message that resulted in division, carnality, despising Paul,

**I WILL GLORY IN MY INFIRMITIES**

<sup>80</sup> *If I must needs glory, I will glory | of the things which concern mine | infirmities.* <sup>81</sup> *The God and Father of our*

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

**Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not."**

Paul will briefly elaborate on why he is glorying, or boasting, and why he has chosen to do so in this manner.

**IF I NEED TO GLORY, IT WILL BE INFIRMITIES**

*"If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities."* Other versions read, *"If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"If I have to take credit to myself, I will do so in the things in which I am feeble,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"If it is needful to boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity,"*<sup>DARBY</sup> *"If I must needs rejoice, I will rejoice of mine infirmities,"*<sup>GENEVA</sup> *"But if I must brag, I would rather brag about the things that show how weak I am,"*<sup>LIVING</sup> *"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that [show] my infirmity [of the things by which I am made weak and contemptible in the eyes of my opponents],"*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *"Oh, if I am going to boast, let me boast of the things which have shown up my weakness!"*  
PHILLIPS

**If I Must Boast**

Paul is not compelled by his own nature to boast about himself. That simply is not his manner. That is why he says he is speaking like a fool (verses 16 and 23). **It is rather because of the posture of the Corinthians that he is speaking this way.** They had come to rather enjoy people who spoke frequently and glowingly of themselves – commending themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves (2 Cor 10:12). Thus Paul joins in the bragging-fest, but does so in such a manner as to expose the real nature of the *"false apostles and deceitful workers"* among the Corinthians.

**Glorying Concerning His Infirmities**

Rather than boasting of carnal achievements, Paul will glory in **what he was not able to escape through his own strength or ingenuity:** beatings, being stoned, shipwrecks, isolation, long and

tedious journeys, constant perils and dangers, being weary, in pain, suffering through long vigils, being without food and drink, being cold and being naked. Oh, these were not enviable experiences. They were, in fact, difficult to bear. Yet, during them all, Paul received such marvelous grace that he was not only able to endure them, but to continue fulfilling the Divine commission delivered to him. In fact, he not only did this, but maintained a constant and indefatigable concern for all of the churches. **There can be only one answer for such marvelous fortitude. He was being upheld by the Lord who had Himself commissioned**

In order to be very specific concerning the Person of God, he identifies these two characteristics.

☛ **"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."** He is not merely "one true God," unnamed, and without specific distinction. He is not primarily an *"unknown God,"* even though multitudes do not know Him. This is the God that has revealed Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ, His *"only begotten Son"* (John 1:18). He is not the god of the philosophers, but the One who sent, sustained, delivered up, raised,

**Rather than boasting of carnal achievements, Paul will glory in what he was not able to escape through his own strength or ingenuity: beatings, being stoned, shipwrecks, isolation, long and tedious journeys, constant perils and dangers, being weary, in pain, suffering through long vigils, being without food and drink, being cold and being naked.**

him. Later Paul will confess that Divine strength is, in fact, dispensed to men only when they are weak (2 Cor 12:10)..

**GOD KNOWS I DO NOT LIE**

*"<sup>31</sup> The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not."* Other versions read, *"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise for ever, is witness that the things which I say are true,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ knows, He Who is blessed and to be praised forevermore, that I do not lie,"*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I speak the simple truth."*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Because Paul lived close to the Lord, maintaining a lively awareness of His presence and power, he could speak in this manner. **He knew that Divine scrutiny, even in a most detailed manner, would fully confirm that what he was saying was the truth, and thus he feared not to appeal to it.**

exalted, and invested Jesus Christ within *"all power in heaven and earth"* (Matt 28:18). This is the God to whom Paul now appeals – the God before whom both *"small and great"* will ultimately stand (Rev 20:12).

☛ **"Who is blessed for evermore."** This is the God who is now being praised by insightful souls, and who will ultimately be seen to have been the Origin of *"all things"* (2 Cor 5:18). It is absolutely true that *"of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen"* (Rom 11:36).

This God will attest that Paul is not lying in what he says. Men may doubt him, but the time will come when Christ will, as with the brethren in Philadelphia, make Paul's *critics "come and worship"* before his *"feet, and to know that He has loved"* Paul (Rev 3:9). Eternity will confirm what he has said, and he will be vindicated before the judgment seat of Christ.

**I WAS ALSO DELIVERED**

**“<sup>32</sup> In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:<sup>33</sup> And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”**

Paul now hearkens back to his beginning, when he first set out to do the will of Christ. He does this in order to show that bearing reproach for Christ, and being “weak” in natural strength, marked his labors from very beginning. He did not begin his ministry with great

*Damascenes shut up, wishing to take me,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“I laid watch in the city of the Damascenes and would have caught me,”*<sup>TNT</sup> *“For instance, in Damascus, the governor under king Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch me,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“his men were trying to arrest me,”*<sup>IE</sup> and *“In Damascus, the town governor, acting by King Aretas’ order had men out to arrest me.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

This event is recorded in the ninth chapter of Acts, although the governor and king are not mentioned

*synagogues, that he is the Son of God”* (Acts 9:19-20). It is written that during his brief stay in Damascus, he *“increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ”* (Acts 9:22). This did not set well with the Jews, and they therefore *“took counsel to kill him”* (Acts 9:23). Paul became aware of their plot, even though they *“watched the gates day and night to kill him”* (Acts 9:24).

In our Corinthian text Paul informs us that this watching was done under the auspices of the governor, who *“had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me.”*<sup>NIV</sup> Here, as in the case of Jesus, the unbelieving Jews joined with the government in their opposition of Paul.

**LET DOWN BY THE WALL**

*“<sup>33</sup> And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”* Other versions read, *“but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and that was how I escaped from his hands,”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“But I was lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall, and that’s how I got away!”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“and through a window in a rope basket I was let down, through the wall, and fled out of his hands,”*<sup>YLT</sup> *“but I was let down by rope and basket from a hole in the city wall, and so I got away [What popularity!]”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“And I was [actually] let down in a [rope] basket or hamper through a window (a small door) in the wall, and I escaped through his fingers,”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *“I escaped by climbing through a window and being let down the wall in a basket. That’s the sort of dignified exit I can boast about.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The whole plot was thwarted when *“the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket”* (Acts 9:25). Here Paul adds that he escaped through a “window,” or opening, that was in the wall, assisted by the brethren in that area. A most unusual escape, indeed.

**Paul now hearkens back to his beginning, when he first set out to do the will of Christ. He does this in order to show that bearing reproach for Christ, and being “weak” in natural strength, marked his labors from very beginning. He did not begin his ministry with great acceptance everywhere, only to become disappointed in becoming rejected at a later time.**

acceptance everywhere, only to become disappointed in becoming rejected at a later time. The vassals of Satan knew Paul was their opponent from the very beginning. Many of Paul’s later trials were actually associated with his tenure in Corinth, his departure from there, and his intention to return there. However, here was an initial trial that had nothing at all to do with Corinth. His prodigious ministry did not center around Corinth, and he was not interested in them because he had spent more time there than anywhere else.

**THEY WERE DESIROUS TO APPREHEND ME**

*“In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:”* Other versions read, *“. . . was guarding the city . . . desiring to arrest me,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“in order to seize me,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“in order to arrest me,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“in order to take me,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“kept the city of the*

there. This chronicles the beginning of Paul’s ministry, and it was in the city which at the first he had targeted for capturing and putting to death followers of Christ – Damascus.

Luke’s account is as follows. *“And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: but their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket”* (Acts 9:23-25). Our Corinthian text specified that this was during the time of the governor who had been placed over that region by *“Aretas the king.”*

Luke identifies the time as immediately following Paul’s conversion and commissioning: *“And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the*

*Paul’s personal experiences confirmed that both he and his teaching were detached from this world– by Given O. Blakely*

It was often the custom for certain privileged people to build their houses in the massive walls surrounding their city. You may recall that the Shunanmite women who had a chamber built for Elisha the prophet, had it built “on the wall” (2 Kgs 4:10). In Nehemiah’s time there were also houses built within the wall of Jerusalem (Neh 3:20,24).

Here, in the beginning of Paul’s ministry, was an escape over the wall in a basket. It was occasioned by the hatred and opposition of the Jews, which were also happening among certain at Corinth. Other escapes included surviving beatings, floggings, shipwrecks, isolation at sea, perils, and all manner of adverse circumstances. These continued down to the final days of Paul’s ministry.

The point Paul is making in these last two verses is this – His labors for the

**His labors for the Lord had consistently aroused the animosity of unbelieving Jews, and had always carried him into jeopardy. He had also, by the grace of God, been delivered from all of those circumstances. This was a Divine attestation that the message Paul was delivering was from God. It resulted not only in the opposition of the wicked, but in the salvation of believers.**

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circumstances. This was a Divine attestation that the message Paul was delivering was from God. It resulted not only in the opposition of the wicked, but in the salvation of believers.

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## CONCLUSION

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This passage of Scripture is filled with holy sarcasm. It is much like outbursts of ridicule that take place in the heavenly chambers. “*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion*” (Psa 2:1-6). **The point is that men cannot stop the work of the Lord. They cannot break the binding cords of truth they experience when the truth is delivered to them.**

At the time of the writing of Second Corinthians, Paul had been ministering for twenty years. Throughout that duration, the devil had hurled all kinds of obstacles against him. They ranged from bitter and painful

experiences, to perils, threats, and fears. In one of his last letters, Paul provided an overview of his prodigious ministry. “*But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra: what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me*” (2 Tim 3:11). Again he testified to Corinth, “*But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us*” (2 Cor 1:9-10).

This is precisely why he could glory in his infirmities! Under any other circumstances, infirmity would hinder a man’s work, or possibly thwart it altogether – particularly weaknesses of the magnitude that Paul has mentioned. In the very presence of those weaknesses and unspeakable restraints, Paul had

received strength that made him equal to every occasion. Now, he is informing the Corinthians that in the case of the “*false teachers and deceitful workers*” who are opposing him in that city, it will be no different. This time, however, he is going to come against them with “*the weapons of our warfare.*”

He will employ these weapons because they are corrupting from within the church, and therefore are in the place where war will be launched against them. This is because of a certain principle that is operative in the Spirit. “*For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*” (1 Cor 5:12-13). In obedience to Paul’s directive, the church in Corinth had thrust out the fornicator that was among them. Paul is declaring that he will now expel the false teachers who have also entered among them, employing Divine weaponry to do so..

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/17/2006. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. Because we inadvertently skipped 9:11-15, we will cover it in this lesson: **"GLORIFYING GOD IN LIBERALITY.** When God gave richly to us through Christ Jesus, it brought unparalleled glory to His name. To the degree that we participate in the Divine nature, we also become liberal givers, therefore bringing much glory to Him. This will be Lesson #39. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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