

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 #49

COMMENTARY ON: 13:1-6

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

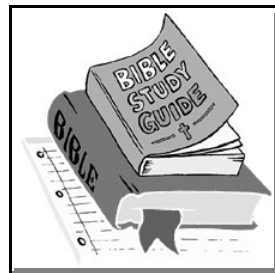
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

THE THIRD TIME

Paul continues to confirm that he is coming to Corinth, and will surely deal with those who insist on remaining in their sin, and even sitting in judgement upon the apostle who had begotten them. He will extend his labor with the Corinthians, striving to bring them to their right minds. This will be done, among other things, by urging self examination and introspection. This is necessary because all carnality is traced to the preference of self over all others, and even over God Himself. This is why fleshly mindedness is completely intolerable, for it makes no room for the Lord. The "flesh" sees God and the things of God as an intrusion and an imposition. The mind controlled by the flesh is therefore not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be (Rom 8:7). No peace can be made between the carnal mind and God, or a carnal church and the people of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

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



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The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 49

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

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



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

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

THE THIRD TIME

“2 Cor 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. ² I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: ³ Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. ⁴ For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. ⁵ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? ⁶ But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.” (2 Corinthians 13:1-6)

INTRODUCTION

Paul continues to confirm that he is coming to Corinth, and will surely deal with those who insist on remaining in their sin, and even sitting in judgement upon the apostle who had begotten them. He will extend his labor with the Corinthians, striving to bring them to their right minds. This will be done, among other things, by urging self examination and introspection. **This is necessary because all carnality is traced to the preference of self over all others,**

and even over God Himself. This is why fleshly mindedness is completely intolerable, for it makes no room for the Lord. The *“flesh”* sees God and the things of God as an unwanted intrusion and an unneeded and unjustified imposition upon the thought processes. It has no appetite for the things of God, and vehemently objects when they are placed before it. The mind controlled by the flesh is therefore **not** subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be (Rom 8:7).

“The carnal mind” considers itself free from any obligation to hear the truth, and feels that it is an encroachment upon that freedom if it is forced, as it were, to hear it. Some feel as though this is a legitimate feeling, and thus will not speak the truth to those who have no appetite for it. However, this is not altogether true.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Jesus spoke truth to those who

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had no appetite for it, and frankly objected to it's sound. To some of His avowed enemies He said, *"Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear **My word**. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because **I tell you the truth**, ye believe Me not"* (John 8:43-45). Others responded to what they heard from Jesus with these words, *"Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . . From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him"* (John 6:60,66). It is true that Jesus did not continue speaking to such

objecting souls, but the truth was not altogether withheld from them.

THE EXAMPLE OF STEPHEN

When Stephen faced a Jewish council that cared nothing for the word of the Lord, he did not turn from them refusing to declare their condition to them. With boldness he spoke out, *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it"* (Acts 7:51-53).

THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL

Paul followed the same procedure, speaking the truth to those who cared nothing for it, then departing from them when their lack of desire was confirmed. *"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"* (Acts 13:46).

No peace can be made between the carnal mind and the spiritual mind, or the carnal person and the spiritual person. As it is written, *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God: for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so:*

THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL

Many a compromising preacher has failed to deliver the truth to recalcitrant spirits. In so doing, such have betrayed the sacred trust of the truth. Those whose hearts are bent in the wrong direction must be confronted with their condition. That is precisely why the Lord said to wayward Israel, *"To hearken to the words of My servants the prophets, whom **I sent unto you**, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened"* (Jer 26:5). And again, *"Because they have not hearkened to My words, saith the LORD, which **I sent unto them by My servants the prophets**, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD"* (Jer 29:19).

On the other hand, when Israel's prophets failed to point out their sins, the Lord exposed their failure to do so. *"Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and **they have not discovered thine iniquity**, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment"* (Lam 2:14). He had told the prophets, *"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and **show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins"**" (Isa 58:1). With a most severe word He said of these prophets, *"But if they had stood in My counsel, and **had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings"**" (Jer 23:22). Thus, in these texts, the condition of Israel was credited to their prophets. They did not stand in the counsel of the Lord, and therefore did not cause the people to hear the words God wanted them to hear. They were words**

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and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him"^{NASB} (Rom 8:7-9).

that could have turned the people, because God works through His Word.

JESUS TO THE CHURCHES IN ASIA

This is how Jesus spoke to five drifting churches in Asia through the

When once carnality grips a church, it becomes exceedingly difficult to recover them – by Given O. Blakely

apostle John. *"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee [Ephesus], because thou hast left thy first love . . . But I have a few things against thee [Pergamos], because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication . . . Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee [Thyatira], because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols . . . Be watchful, and*

may have maintained the shell of religiosity, and been very overt in certain aspects of that religion. However, whatever they possessed, it was **not** enough to unite them (1 Cor 3:3; 11:18). It was **not** enough to inhibit the rise of immorality or empower them to be pure (1 Cor 5:7-8; 2 Cor 7:1). It was **not** enough to move them to edify one another (1 Cor 14:5,26), or be considerate of one another (1 Cor 6:6; 8:11-13). It was **not** enough to constrain them to receive

of Moses, the prophets, John the Baptist, the Apostles, holy preachers and teachers, God Himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, **what has moved men to be forbearing of iniquity in the church?** What is there about the religious organization and pride that has allowed popes to authorize the slaughter of believers, crusaders to launch bloody evangelistic initiatives, and Protestants and Catholics to engage in bloody wars against each other? How is it that national media ministers, while supposedly speaking for Jesus, could be caught in immorality, build financial empires, and engage in generally uncomely conduct? What is there in organized religion that cannot seem to stop preachers and elders from falling into sin, single woman from bearing children, and youth leaders from immorality? How is it that churches can become deeply divided, nurturing pride, and engaging in all manner of unchristlike conduct?

Just how much value is there to a religion that stops spiritual growth and allows for the outbreak of sin? Is there some kind of institutional success that can make up for a lack of conformity to the image of God's Son? Are there certain public activities that can make up for a deficiency in spiritual understanding and the presence of blatant iniquity among the people?

strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy [Sardis] works perfect before God . . . I know thy works, that thou [Laodicea] art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev 2:4,14,20; 3:2, 15-17).

THE RELEVANCE OF THESE THINGS

In dealing extensively with the sins of the Corinthians, Paul is conducting himself in perfect harmony with the Divine nature and God's eternal purpose. From the very beginning, God has not overlooked man's sin. In the garden of Eden, He confronted man with his sin, refusing to ignore it. Sin – any sin – is never excusable or ignorable. It is never to be thrust into the background as though it never did occur. This is because sin has alienating and separating powers. As it is written, **"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear"** (Isa 59:2). Paul knew that sin still leaves these things in its wake. The Corinthians

and love Paul (2 Cor 6:12-13; 12:15). It **could not** keep them out of the civil courts where they sought to sue one another (1 Cor 6:6). It **could not** keep God from judging them with both sickness and death because of their conduct at the Lord's table (1 Cor 11:30). It **could not** move them to complete the offering they had pledged for their suffering brethren in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:11). It **could not** stop some of them from denying that there was a resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12-13).

Just how much value is there to a religion that stops spiritual growth and allows for the outbreak of sin? Is there some kind of institutional success that can make up for a lack of conformity to the image of God's Son? Are there certain public activities that can make up for a deficiency in spiritual understanding and the presence of blatant iniquity among the people? Is there something about salvation that allows for sin to arise and remain among the people? Is there some seeming virtue that moves the godly to be tolerant of what God condemns and pretend as though sin does not exist?

In view of the consistent conduct

Have we grown so accustomed to such atrocities that we can feel comfortable with the explanations of psychiatrists? **If there now a place for religious analyses that accounts for sin by calling upon us to consider generational curses, hereditary tendencies, and physiological weaknesses?** What is there about modern Christianity that has rendered obsolete such terms as "sin," "iniquity," "transgression," "hell," and "damnation?"

Mind you, I am not advocating a judgmental spirit, and a flood-tide of words of condemnation. **I am rather asking what is to be done when sin is found in the church?** What is to be our response when professed believers never leave a state of spiritual juvenility, and growing up into Christ is virtually unknown? How are we to react when "Christians" are abysmally ignorant of the Word of God itself, are dull of hearing, and slow of heart to believe? Is the church of the living God really to be noted for being hardhearted, rebellious, and stiff-necked like the Israelites? How are people who are reluctant to meet together, ingest the Word of God, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord to be treated? How are they to be viewed?

The answer to all of these

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questions, and more, is contained in the book of Second Corinthians. This is **how** you speak to a people who have been subverted by men who preach “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another gospel” (2 Cor 11:9). Paul knew they had

been subjected to “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another gospel,” **because of the fruit that was being produced in Corinth.** The details of the spurious Jesus, spirit, and gospel did not need to be known. **What they had**

produced was enough. Human attitudes and conduct are always the result what the heart has embraced. There are no exceptions to this. **You cannot embrace the truth, then, while maintaining that embrace, live a lie.**

THE THIRD TIME

“2 Cor 13:1a **This is the third time I am coming to you . . .**” Other versions read, “This will be my third visit with you,”^{NIV} “This will be the third time I have confronted you,”^{NJB} “This is the third time I am coming to visit you,”^{NLT} “This intended visit of mine is my third visit with you,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “This third time I am really coming to you in person.”^{PHILLIPS}

Paul referred to “the third time” in the previous chapter: “Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you” (2 Cor 12:14). Once again, he does not mean he had bodily visited the Corinthians the second time, and was now ready to visit them the third time. He had **purposed** to visit them the second time, yet the visit did not actually materialize. He wrote of that second intended visit in First Corinthians: “Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia” (1 Cor 16:5). In the Second epistle, he also referred to this second intended visit: “And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit: and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea” (2 Cor 1:16). **In place of actually coming to them, he wrote them instead, determined not to come to them in a state of heaviness that would require treating them harshly.** Of this Paul said, “Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you **I came not as yet unto Corinth . . .** But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness” (2 Cor 1:23; 2:1).

Circumstances had prohibited Paul from coming to the Corinthians the second time. When arriving in

Macedonia, he encountered an unusual amount of difficulty. He said of that occasion, “For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears” (2 Cor 7:5). It was at that point that Titus returned from Corinth, bringing the news of their measured progress (2 Cor 7:6-9). **Their progress, however, was not satisfactory.** Of it Paul wrote, “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a

We are living in spiritually decadent times when dealing with sin with any measure of determination is exceedingly rare. **The modern church, for the most part, does not have a valid notion about the alienating effects of sin, and of the downward pull that it exerts upon the soul.** When sin is found in the church in any form, it is to be rooted out at all cost, and no effort is to be spared.

Sinful Inclinations and Expressions

- ☛ “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate

Had their repentance been more permanent and far-reaching, it would not have been necessary for Paul to make a third determination to come to them. But, alas, carnality had gripped many of that assembly, and Paul was now prepared to face the situation more directly.

season,” or “**only for a little while**”^{NIV} (2 Cor 7:8). Under the influence of their miserable teachers they had apparently reverted to their old ways – at least some among them had done so.

Had their repentance been more permanent and far-reaching, it would not have been necessary for Paul to make a third determination to come to them. But, alas, carnality had gripped many of that assembly, and Paul was now prepared to face the situation more directly. He had been gentle, which was his preference. Now, however, a more confrontational approach is required.

DEALING WITH SIN

affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

- ☛ “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11).
- ☛ “But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth” (Col 3:8).
- ☛ “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph 4:22).

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Purging sin from the church is not a mere procedure or routine. Some speak of “church discipline” as though it was an end of itself. It is not. Sin has contaminating effects, and will defile an entire assembly if it is not dealt with forthrightly and with godly intention.

- ☛ *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”*(2 Cor 7:1).
- ☛ *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”*(James 4:8).
- ☛ *“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks”*(Eph 5:3-4).

Sinners Within the Assembly

- ☛ *“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not*

good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”(1 Cor 5:4-7).

- ☛ *“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat”*(1 Cor 5:11).
- ☛ *“But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person”*(1 Cor 5:13).
- ☛ *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”*(Rom 16:17).
- ☛ *“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us”(2 Thess 3:6).

This Is Not A Mere Procedure

Purging sin from the church is not a mere procedure or routine. Some speak of “church discipline” as though it was an end of itself. It is not. **Sin has contaminating effects, and will defile an entire assembly if it is not dealt with forthrightly and with godly intention.** It is no wonder we are warned, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby **many be defiled**” (Heb 12:15). It is very true, and we do well to ponder it with great sobriety, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”(1 Cor 5:6).

Sin had already done a significant work among the Corinthians – even though they were taught properly at the first, and had a noble beginning. Now, even after Paul had written to them, and some measured progress had been realized (2 Cor 7:11), he is still laboring to purify this church. He knows what sin will do among the people, and how God will deal with sin if He is forced, so to speak, to confront it.

This is the “third time” Paul is considering coming to them directly and in person to deal with these uncomely matters. He has been longsuffering, but that is about to end.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORD

“^{1b} . . . **In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.**” Other versions read, “Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses,”^{NASB} “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses,”^{NIV} “Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses,”^{NRSV} “From the mouth of two or three witnesses will every word be made certain.”^{BBE} “Whatever the misdemeanor, the evidence of two or three witnesses is

required to sustain a charge.”^{NJB} “The Scriptures tell us that if two or three have seen a wrong, it must be punished. [Well, this is my third warning, as I come now for this visit,”^{LIVING} and “Every accusation must be verified by two or three witnesses.”^{ISV}

Because the Law had “a form of knowledge and of the truth”(Rom 2:20), many of its principles are still applied to those in Christ. Of course, this would not be possible if the entirety of the “the

Law” was nailed to the cross, or rendered obsolete when Jesus died. Those who altogether remove the writings of Moses from their consideration are thinking too simplistically. They are in the same class as those who seek to bind all of Moses’ writings upon the church. Both kinds of people fall into the category of teachers described by Paul: “Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm”(1 Tim 1:7). Paul goes on to say, “But we know that the law is good, if a

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man use it lawfully”(1 Tim 1:8). We have before us a text that is an excellent example of using the law “lawfully.”

IT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW

The phrase, “*In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established,*” is taken from the book of Deuteronomy. “*One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established*” (Deut19:15). Another text affirming this law is: “*At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death*” (Deut 17:6).

This rule particularly had to do with the punishment of evildoers. A murderer, for example, was to be put to death – but **not** by the mouth of a single witness. “*Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die*” (Num 35:30). Knowing the nature of men, the Lord instituted this rule to reduce the possibility of people being falsely charged.

This law has to do with addressing iniquity and administering punishment.

JESUS EMPLOYED THE RULE

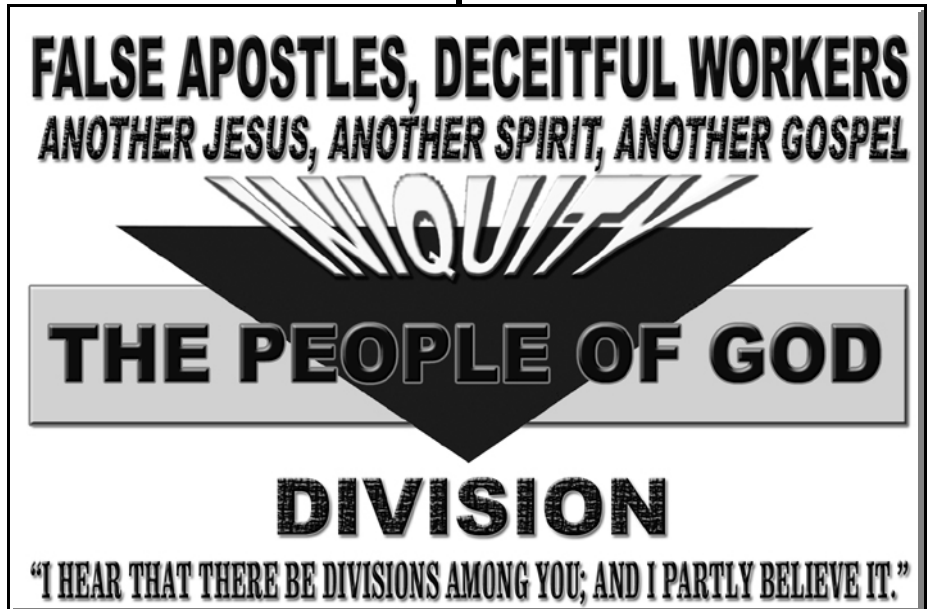
Jesus himself appealed to this principle when addressing the matter of dealing with the wrongdoers. “*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established*” (Matt 18:15-16). He also appealed to this principle when dealing with the sins of His hearers. “*It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of Me*” (John 8:17-18).

PAUL EMPLOYS THE RULE

When addressing the matter of rebuking an elder, Paul cautioned

Timothy, “*Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear*” (1 Tim 5:19-20).

among the Corinthians. In addressing this matter, however, he will not be moved along by raw emotion, or the indignation that the knowledge of sin produces in the heart of the righteous. **He**



THE REVELATION USES THE RULE

When being shown the rise of evil religious influences and the consequent decline of the church, John was also shown **two witnesses** who testified to the conditions that existed. “*But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not: for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth*” (Rev 11:2-3). Rather than laboring to identify these faithful witnesses, they should be seen as the Divine manner of dealing with corruption among those who wear His name.

This confirms that God is not looking for an opportunity to destroy, but to save. If the destruction of men is what God desired, a single witness would suffice. However, there are two witnesses to give the advantage to the innocent, and to confirm the truth of valid charges to those who judge.

IN OUR TEXT

Paul is dealing with iniquity

will come to the Corinthians in a manner that encourages repentance, as well as the promotion of the truth itself.

Paul has already addressed the sins of the Corinthians two times – in his first epistle (1 Cor 3:1-3; 5:1-5; 6:1-2, 18-20; 8:10-12; 11:18, 29-30), and now in this epistle (2 Cor 10:2; 11:4; 12:15,21). Now, for the third time, he is intending to come to them again. This time he will actually deal with the sinners. There will be no more admonitions, but he will “*punish every act of disobedience*”^{NIV} (2 Cor 10:6).

Paul is following the same rule that he delivered to Titus. “*A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject: knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself*” (Titus 3:10-11). Other versions read, “*Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,*”^{NKJV} “*Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,*”^{NASB} “*Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him,*”^{NIV} “*A man whose opinions are not those of the church, after a first and second protest, is to be kept out of your society,*”^{BEBE} and “[As for] a man who is factious [a

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heretical sectarian and cause of divisions], after admonishing him a first and second time, reject [him from your fellowship and have nothing more to do with him].”^{AMPLIFIED}

WHY SIN HAS TO BE DEALT WITH

There is a reason why sin cannot be ignored: **it spreads, defiling the whole of the environment into which it enters.** As it is written, “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Cor 5:6). And again, “This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Gal 5:8-9). With both the Corinthians and the

Galatians, false teaching had been introduced (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:8-9; 3:1). The result in both churches was the unavoidable gravitation into the flesh (1 Cor 6:8-10; Gal 5:19-21).

It is not possible to experience the freedom that comes by means of the truth (John 8:32), while subjecting oneself to an erroneous message – i.e. “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another gospel.” This is why those under the grip of Babylonish religion must have all manner of routines, procedures, counselors, and the likes. **The message to which they are being subjected does not, and cannot, make men free.** A system of

law presumes recalcitrance.

As long as these false teachers remained with the Corinthians, the tide of iniquity would continue to rise, **for sin cannot be conquered by false means.** It is quite true that they had righteously judged the fornicator who was living with his father’s wife. He had sorrowed unto repentance, and so had those who had allowed him to remain in the assembly while he was living in sin. However, the culprits who introduced the leaven were still among them, casting aspersions at Paul and continuing to preach “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another gospel.” Now Paul will deal with them.

I TOLD YOU BEFORE

“^{2a} **I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time . . .**” Other versions read, “I have previously said when present the second time,”^{NASB} “I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time,”^{NIV} “I warned those who sinned previously

already warned those who sinned formerly and all the rest also.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul confirms that what he is saying now is not the first time he has dealt with the matter of sin among the Corinthians. Nor, indeed, is this the first

matters, and delivered a sure word to them concerning what was to be done. Here is how he wrote to them: “*For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed*” (1 Cor 5:3). In fact, there was a very real sense in which he was spiritually with them. Thus he wrote, “*In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (1 Cor 5:4-5).

Here Paul means that he had spoken to them about this matter previously, just as though he was personally with them. He had judged the matters, and delivered a sure word to them concerning what was to be done.

This is how a man with spiritual understanding speaks. He is not speaking upon the basis of mere hearsay – although certain from the household of Chloe had alerted him to the Corinthian situation (1 Cor 1:11). However, Paul, through the Spirit, has now thoroughly grasped the situation in Corinth, and he is writing from that illuminated point of view. He is also confirming that he is allowing for two or more witnesses.

and all the others,”^{NRSV} “I said before, and still say it before I come, as being present for the second time,”^{BBE} “I warned those who sinned earlier and all the others,”^{NAB} “I have previously said when present the second time,”^{NAU} “I gave you notice once,”^{NJB} “I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time,”^{WEB} and “I have

time he has said he will, in fact, deal with these sinners – **sinners who have not yet repented, even though they have been confronted with their transgression.**

Here Paul means that he had spoken to them about this matter previously, just as though he was personally with them. He had judged the

TO THEM WHO HAVE SINNED

“^{2b} . . . and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have

sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare.”

Paul now addresses the sinners directly, giving them another witness to

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their condition. He has been longsuffering, and has allowed ample time for them to consider their deeds and repent. Their sin has gone long enough.

I WRITE TO THOSE WHO HAVE SINNED

“... and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other...” Other versions read, “and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as,”^{NASB} “I now repeat it while absent;”^{NIV} “and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit,”^{NRSV} “though I am still away from you, to those who have done wrong before, and to all the others,”^{BBE} “though I am not with you, I give notice again, just as when I was with you for a second time, to those who sinned before, and to all others,”^{NJB} and “I repeat it now as though I were present... for those who had sinned before that visit and those who have sinned since.”^{PHILLIPS}

I Write

Even though Paul is bodily detached from the Corinthians, it is as though he was actually in their very presence. **That is, his words will lose none of their power because they are written rather than being spoken audibly in their ears.** It is not possible for a generation that insists that the priority is vision, to profit from such writings. A “media-conscious” generation would throw Paul’s letters in the garbage can – and with that action their hope of recovery would also go. Throughout history, great spiritual awakenings have also been accompanied by an abundance of good writing. The power of the pen certainly has not become outdated with the advent of all kinds of visual media. The power is in the truth itself, not in a worldly-wise manner of presentation.

Those Who Have Sinned

These are those who have sinned, and have not yet repented, and those who started sinning since his last warning. Sin will not be glossed or ignored. Its nature demands that it be confronted and judged. **No person should be allowed to teach or traffic among the people of God who is dull about sin, or who can easily countenance it.** If sin excludes people from the presence of God, who is the fool who will sanction its presence?

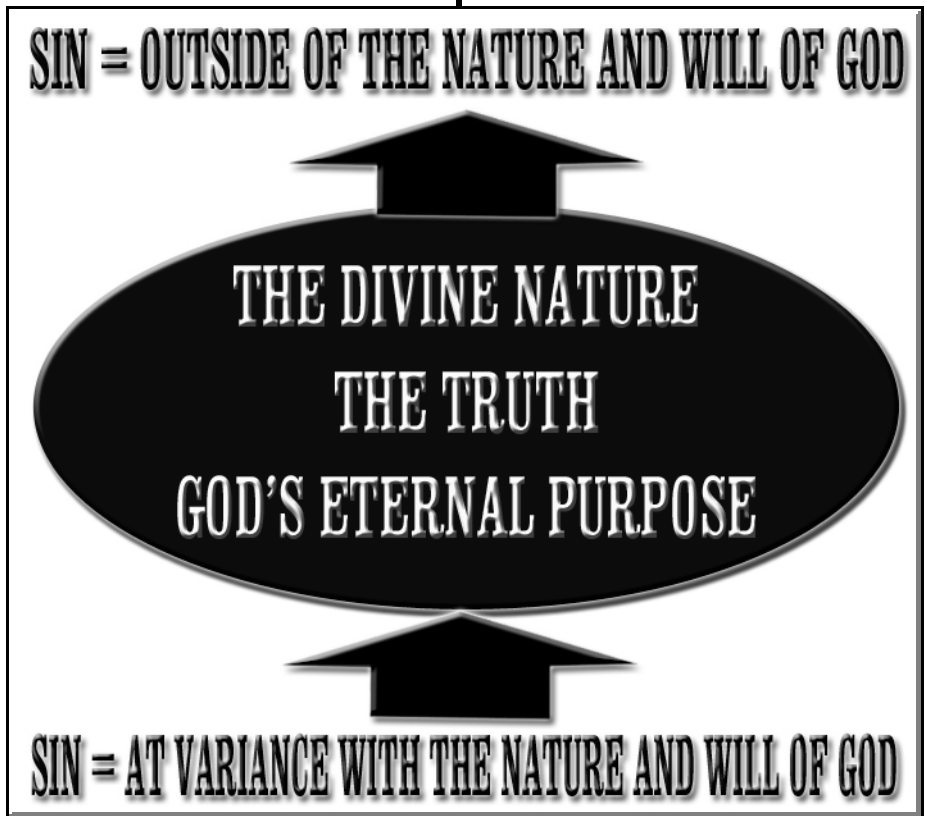
It ought to be noted that this is “sin” by **Divine definition, not by the traditions of men.** God has no interest in how men define sin, and neither should we. Lest we be unduly influenced by “this present evil world,” it will be well to briefly define sin.

- **The thought of foolishness.** “*The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men*” (Prov 24:9).
- **Whatever is not done out of faith toward God, and in accord with the conscience.** “*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith:*

the transgression of the law”(1 John 3:4).

- **All unrighteousness, or expressions that are unlike God.** “*All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death*”(1 John 5:17).

In summary, sin is any willing expression (thought, word, or deed) that is outside of the nature and will of God. **That is, it is done without regard to the Lord, His will, or the cognizance that the individual will ultimately stand before the Lord to give an account of himself.** From another perspective, sin is anything that is at variance with the



for *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” (Rom 14:23).

- **Failing to do what is known to be good.** “*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*”(James 4:17).
- **The transgression of God’s law.** “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is*

nature and will of God – something that competes with Him, or is in conflict with what He has revealed of Himself and His purpose. I have defined sin as something that is **willingly** expressed. This has particular regard to thoughts, and the awareness that **there are unwanted thoughts** that are hurled at us by the devil (“fiery darts,” Eph 6:16). Words and deeds do not fall into this category, for they reveal the **failure** of the individual

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to “*crucify the flesh*” (Gal 5:24) and “*quench*” the devil’s fiery darts with the shield of faith (Eph 6:16b).

The kind of sins of which our text speaks are those that were outwardly expressed by professing believers. Paul mentions some of them (1 Cor 5:11) – apparently those that were gaining prominence in Corinth, for sin is never dealt with theoretically.

- **Fornicator.** This includes all manner of immorality: adultery, sodomy, prostitution, bestiality, etc.
- **Covetous.** This depicts an aggressive desire for wealth, and to obtain illicit gain – greedy of gain. It would include abandoning spiritual pursuits in preference for temporal gain, and assigning a greater value to the things of this world than to a treasure in heaven.

seemingly lawful means (as men count lawfulness), extortion is even more aggressive. This sin includes things like defrauding and stealing.

These are not sins for which recovery programs are in order. They are to be abruptly terminated in the lives of those who name the name of Jesus. They are always sins of deliberation and intention. They are never mistakes or mere errors in judgment, and they must not be treated as though they were. **If men do not repent from such sins, and cease their involvement in them, they are to be excluded from the assembly and from personal affiliation.** This is in order that the person may be cast wholly upon the Lord, and the assembly freed from unnecessary liability.

I understand that this is exceedingly difficult for some to accept – particularly those who have been subverted by the psychological nonsense

that when I do come next time, I shall have no mercy,”^{NJB} and “*my coming will not mean leniency.*”^{PHILLIPS}

When Paul sees these people face-to-face, he will **not** be gentle. His gentility has been in his letters – two of them. **Those who insist on continuing in sin will not be greeted by a friendly Paul!** Why would anyone think that such a posture would be proper? **Salvation is all about extricating people from “this present evil world”** (Gal 1:4). It is about “*destroying the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8), turning men “*from darkness to light,*” and “*from the power of Satan unto God*” (Acts 26:18). It is about resisting the devil (1 Pet 5:8-9), crucifying the flesh (Gal 5:24), and walking in the newness of life (Rom 6:4). Spiritual life has to do with walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16,25), walking in the light (1 John 1:7), and fellowshiping with Jesus (1 Cor 1:9). Those in Christ are to “*flee fornication*” (1 Cor 6:18), “*perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord*” (2 Cor 7:1), and deny “*ungodliness and worldly lust,*” living “*soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*” (Tit 2:12). All believers are to learn how to possess their bodies “*in sanctification and honor*” (1 Thess 4:4). Candidly they are told, “*sin not*” (1 Cor 15:34), “*steal no more*” (Eph 4:28), “*abstain from all appearance of evil*” (1 Thess 5:22), “*abstain from fleshly lusts*” (1 Pet 2:11), and “*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints*” (Eph 5:3).

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- **Idolater.** This is a worshiper of images – someone who gives the physical obeisance to an image that is to be given to God alone.
- **Railer.** This is speaking abusively and derisively against someone. It includes reviling, vilifying, and cursing,
- **Drunkard.** This includes all forms of intoxication, including inebriation with liquor, drugs, hypnotism, self-induced traces, and other forms depriving one of a sound mind.
- **Extortioner.** This is closely related to covetousness. However, while covetousness can be pursued by

of the times. Paul, however, is giving us a proper perspective of these things, and we do well to give heed to what he writes. He has been longsuffering, and has extended himself to recover these sinners. He has summoned them to repent, and has provided them with a Gospel that encourages and empowers men to turn from darkness to light.

I WILL NOT SPARE

“... that, if I come again, I will not spare.” Other versions read, “*that if I come again, I will not spare anyone.*”^{NASB} “*On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others,*”^{NIV} “*that if I come again, I will not be lenient*”^{NRSV} “*that if I come again I will not have pity.*”^{BBE} “*and it is to this effect,*

In a context like that, what would lead anyone professing the name of Jesus to be lenient with sin? How could anyone who receives such words be tolerant of those who insist on living in sin? Who is it that will assign noble motives to such ignoble deeds? Such responses to sin only reveal corrupt hearts and insincerity of the worst order. That is why Paul says “*I will not spare!*” “*I will punish those people who have already sinned and all others!*”^{1E}

The gravity of this saying is accented by the meaning of the word “*spare.*” It means “*to abstain, or forbear*” from dealing with a matter,^{THAYER} “*free someone from something, refrain from, avoid doing something,*”^{FRIBERG} “*Keep oneself from doing,*”^{UBS} “*to cause someone not to be troubled, to prevent trouble from*

happening to someone," ^{LOUW-NIDA} and "to be merciful . . . to draw back from," ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

You can see that Paul's spirit has been greatly agitated by the insistence of some in Corinth to continue I sin. What appeared to be tolerance at the first was really not tolerance at all. Paul was writing to the whole assembly, and addressed them in such a way as to include everyone – especially those who

had demonstrated their sincerity in changing their aberrant ways. Now, however, he is talking directly to the offenders, with whom he has never had any real tolerance at all, for they were neither honest nor good.

When sin is in the camp, there does come a time when generalities must come to an end. The dreadful infection of sin must be rooted out, and that cannot

be done by gentility, inference, and a docile spirit. Why is this so? It is because sin so dulls the conscience that it cannot hear general statements of truth, nor does it recognize kindness. The deeper a person is ensconced in sin, the more to the point the speech must be. That is why Jesus spoke as He did to the scribes and Pharisees, the lawyers and the Sadducees. They were deeper in the mire, and thus more dull of hearing.

SINCE YOU SEEK PROOF

"³ Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you."

Keep in mind, Paul is now speaking directly to his critics. Up to this point, they may have excused themselves from Paul's reproofs, saying that he was speaking to everyone in general. However, Paul does not class them with everyone else. They are a unique group to themselves. That is why they have sought special evidences, unique proofs, and the likes. Do not miss how Paul speaks to such people. He is not tolerant of doubters who seek their own.

SEEKING PROOF

"Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me . . ." Other versions read, *"since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me,"* ^{NIV} *"Seeing that you are looking for a sign of Christ giving out his word in me,"* ^{BBE} *"I will give you all the proof you want that Christ speaks through me,"* ^{NLT} *"Since you desire and seek [perceptible] proof of the Christ Who speaks in and through me,"* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *"It will in fact be a proof that I speak by the power of Christ."* ^{PHILLIPS}

Do not miss the point here. Paul's critics had called his apostleship into question and demanded further proof of it – even though Paul had wrought "the signs of an apostle" among them (2 Cor 12:12). These were the people who were examining him – putting him under the microscope of human opinion to determine if he was legitimate or not (1 Cor 9:3). These were the ones who said, "For his letters . . . are weighty and

powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor 10:10). Thus they called for more evidence that Paul was who he said he was – "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (2 Cor 1:1).

Was all of this nothing more than an honest inquiry into the genuineness of Paul? **Indeed, it was not!** This was nothing less than a challenge of the Lord Jesus Himself – the One who had sent and empowered Paul. They were not simply asking if what Paul said was the

acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor 14:37).

- Also, they had **not** received "the love of the truth," or God would have confirmed to their hearts the truth of what Paul had declared. *"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"* (2 Thess 2:10).

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truth, but sought proof "that **Christ** was speaking in" him.

Let me be clear about what is involved here. To seek proof that Christ was really speaking through Paul revealed several things.

- Among other things, this confirmed his critics did **not** have "the mind of Christ." (1 Cor 2:16), else they would have **recognized** the truth of what Paul said. *"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him*

- Additionally, they were **not** willing to do the will of God, else God would have shown the truth of the doctrine to them. *"If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority"* ^{NKJV} (John 7:17).

- Their reluctance to receive what Paul said confirmed they were **not** of God. *"He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God"* (John 8:47).

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Now the Christ with whom they are dealing will subject them to public shame through the apostle against whom they have railed, whose gospel they have rejected, and whose reputation they have sought to tarnish. Jesus cares for His sheep (John 10:13-14), defending them.

• Unlike the noble Berean's, Paul's critics had **not** searched the Scriptures, which would have confirmed that what Paul said was true. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Those who doubt the authenticity of Scripture, like those who doubted that Christ was speaking through Paul, have revealed a lot about themselves. Such people are not to be taken seriously, or imagined to be sincere in their attitude.

NOT WEAK, BUT MIGHTY

"... which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you." Other versions read, "He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you,"^{NIV}

"who is not feeble in relation to you, but is strong in you,"^{BBE} "Christ is not weak in his dealings with you; he is a mighty power among you,"^{NLT} "[For He] is not weak and feeble in dealing with you, but is a mighty power within you,"^{AMPLIFIED} and "The Christ you have to deal with is not a weak person outside you, but a tremendous power inside you."^{PHILLIPS}

Paul is informing his critics that they are not dealing with him, but with Jesus Himself – and Jesus will not ignore them. Already the Corinthians had experienced judgment among them for their sloppy manner at the table of the Lord – a table that had to do with a proper perception of Him. As it is written, "For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died"^{NRSV} (1 Cor 11:30). The situation was similar to the Israel to whom Amos testified. "You only have I known of all the families of

the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). Jesus can be "mighty to save," to be sure (Isa 63:1). But if His salvation is rejected, and His messengers maligned, He will not always quietly leave.

Now, should there be no repentance among these benighted teachers, Jesus will administer judgment upon them through His servant Paul. That, it seems to me, is what the apostle is saying. They have sought "proof" that Jesus was speaking through Paul – at least that is what they claimed. They have unjustly subjected Paul to public shame. **Now the Christ with whom they are dealing will subject them to public shame through the apostle against whom they have railed, whose gospel they have rejected, and whose reputation they have sought to tarnish.** Jesus cares for His sheep (John 10:13-14), defending them.

The principle revealed here parallels a statement spoken through Zechariah. "For thus saith the LORD of hosts: After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me" (Zech 2:8-9). The profound love God has for His people will inevitably be confirmed to their enemies (Rev 3:9).

CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED THROUGH WEAKNESS

"^{4a} For though He was crucified through weakness . . ."

Now Paul injects some of the Gospel, which is God's "power unto salvation." He does this for at least two reasons.

• **First**, his enemies are, in reality, crucifying the Son of God "afresh," and putting to "an open shame" (Heb 6:6). By rejecting His messenger and the Gospel that he preached, these "false apostles and deceitful workers" have taken their place along side the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees,

lawyers, Jewish council, Pontius Pilate, and Herod. They have joined with Satan and the powers of darkness in their opposition to the Christ. Just as surely as that motely conglomeration of evil spirits and wicked men opposed Jesus at His weakest moment, so these vile men have opposed Paul in what appeared to them to be his weakness.

• **Second**, by introducing the Gospel into his message, he is opening the door for repentance and renewal, for the Gospel alone is "the power of God salvation" (Rom 1:16). **The power of**

God is brought within the range of men on the wings of the Gospel – a Gospel that calls upon men to consider both their own ways and the ways of the living God.

Now, let us consider this marvelous condensation of the Gospel: Christ was "crucified through weakness."

CRUCIFIED

"For though He was crucified . . ."
Other versions read, "For indeed He was crucified,"^{NASB} "For to be sure, He was crucified,"^{NIV} "For . . . he was put to death on the cross,"^{BBE} "for even if he was

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crucified,”^{YLT} “died on the cross,”^{LIVING} and “*Though Christ was nailed to the cross.*”^{IE}

While Christ’s death was appointed by God (Rev 13:8), it was carried out through the instrumentality of “wicked hands.” This is one of the first things Peter declared on the day of Pentecost. “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, **ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain**” (Acts 2:23).

Before Jesus died, He announced to His disciples that He would be crucified. “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified” (Matt 26:2). It was the people who aggressively cried out, “Let Him be crucified” (Matt 27:22-23). Pilate, after having Jesus scourged, “delivered Him to be crucified” (Matt 27:26). It is written that “they crucified Him” (Matt 17:35). Following His resurrection, an angel referred to “Jesus, which was crucified” (Matt 28:5). It is written that “they crucified Him” at the “third hour” (Mk 15:25). It is even written that the Jews “required” that He be “crucified” (Lk 23:23). Following His resurrection, Cleopas and a traveling companion said, “chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him” (Luke 24:20). On the day of Pentecost Peter twice told his listeners they had “crucified” the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:23,36). At a later time, he charged the Jews with that sin again. “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, **whom ye crucified**, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole” (Acts 4:10).

Paul said he preached “Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1:23). Among the Corinthians, he was determined not to know anything “save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). How is it that Paul preached in this way, and had such a determination while among the Corinthians? Is not Jesus “risen” to be preached (Rom 8:34)? Or Jesus “glorified” (Acts 3:13; Phil 2:9-10)? Or Jesus interceding (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), mediating (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), and ruling in the midst of His

enemies (Psa 110:2; Acts 2:36; 1 Pet 3:22)? Or Jesus “coming again” (2 Thess 1:10; Heb 10:37)?

Of course, the Jesus who is risen, glorified, reigning, mediating, and coming again, is the very same Jesus who “was crucified.” His crucifixion was the visible confirmation of the world’s rejection of Him. From the standpoint of the people, this was their judgment, even

something men did!

Crucifixion was also a sign of the curse of God being upon Jesus, else the people could not have laid a hand upon Him. Thus it is written, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*” (Gal 3:13). Jesus was, therefore, at His lowest point when He

His crucifixion was the visible confirmation of the world’s rejection of Him. From the standpoint of the people, this was their judgment, even though it was carried out according to “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23), with the people doing what the Divine “counsel determined before to be done

though it was carried out according to “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23), with the people doing what the Divine “counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:28). However, the judgment of men against Jesus was not the final chapter. It was not the end of the matter.

The Scriptures refer to Christ being “crucified” twenty-eight times (Matt 26:2; 27:22,23,26,35; 28:5; Mk 15:15,24,25; 16:6; Lk 23:23,33; 24:7,20; John 19:16,18, 20,23,41; Acts 2:23,36; 4:10; 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2,8; 13:4; Gal 3:1; Rev 11:8). All of them have to do with what MEN did to Jesus!

Concerning Christ’s death, there are at least three perspectives delivered to us in the Scriptures.

- Christ was “delivered for our offences” (Rom 4:25) – that is something God did.
- Jesus “died” (Rom 5:6), “laid down” His life (1 John 3:16; John 10:17-18), and “gave Himself” (Gal 1:4; 2:20; 1 Tim 2:6; Tit 2:14) – that is something He did.
- Christ was also “crucified” – that is

was upon the cross. That is where He bore our sins in His body. As it is written, “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet 2:24). That is where He was “made sin” (2 Cor 5:21). The blood that was shed upon the cross is the blood through which He “made peace.” As it is written, “And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col 1:20).

A Thought On the Blood of His Cross

Precisely what is meant by “the blood of His cross” – the blood associated with Christ’s crucifixion. Among other things, it was the blood shed while He was on the cross, when He was bearing our sins in His body, and being made a curse for us. It was not the blood that dropped to the ground in Gethsemane (Lk 22:44). It was not the blood associated with the “crown of thorns” that they placed upon His head in mockery in Pilate’s hall of judgment (Matt 27:29; Mk 15:19; John 19:2,5). It was not the blood received when He was scourged in Pilate’s hall (Matt 27:26; Mk 15:15; John 19:1). It was not the possible

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blood caused when they pummeled him, striking Him on the face in Herod's judgment hall (Lk 22:64). It was **not** the possible blood caused when they "plucked off the hair" from His "cheeks" (Isa 50:6). None of that blood, copious though it may have been, had redemptive qualities, for it was not shed while on the cross, when under the judging hand of the Almighty!

The cross is the pivotal point when it comes to the blood of Christ – when He was "crucified!" Thus we read of "the cross of Christ" (1 Cor 1:17; Gal 6:12; Phil 3:18), "the cross" (1 Cor 1:18; Gal 5:11; Eph 2:16; Heb 12:2), "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14), "the death of the cross" (Phil 2:8), "the blood of

When Jesus was crucified, His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. Thus, when appearing to His disciples following His resurrection He said, "Behold **My hands and My feet**, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, **He showed them His hands and His feet**" (Luke 24:39-40). The fact that He was nailed to the cross is confirmed by the words of Thomas, who heard the testimony of the other disciples who had seen Jesus: "Except I shall see in his hands **the print of the nails**, and put my finger into **the print of the nails**, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Paul refers to this

been made of this text. Some have said that this confirms Jesus died of a broken heart, which, they aver, causes the mingling of water and blood within the cavity of the chest. Others say Jesus was not already dead, and that the spear pierced through the sack of water around the heart, as well as the heart itself, thus causing blood and water to gush from the wound. Still others say that this was a miracle, testifying to the nature of redemption which included remission of sin (blood) and newness of life (water).

It seems to me that when we are considering the death of Christ, the cross of Christ, or the blood of Christ, we must be extraordinarily careful to avoid human conjecture. The salvation of men cannot be wedded to the wisdom of men, who were the culprits that needed to be saved. Is it in any sense proper to have the persons who required redemption to be the final commentators on the accomplishment of the means by which that redemption was accomplished? I leave it to you to decide whether such an approach is acceptable.

John makes a special point of the matter of Jesus' side being pierced and water and blood gushing from the wound. "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they **pierced**" (John 19:35-37). The legs of Jesus were not broken, as were the legs of the thieves (John 19:32), because "they saw that He was already dead"^{NASB} (John 19:33).

First John

John appears to refer to this phenomenon in the epistle of First John. "This is He that came **by water and blood**, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but **by water and blood**. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth . . . And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and **the water, and the blood**: and these three agree in one" (1 John 5:6,8).

I understand that there are a variety of views of this text – such as Jesus coming by water referring to His

Let me be clear about this. When it is written that we "shall be saved by His life" (Rom 5:10), the Spirit is not speaking of Christ's life during His earthly ministry. We are saved by His post-resurrection life that is being lived at "the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3) – the life that followed the death of Christ upon the cross, where He was crucified.

His cross" (Col 1:20), and "His cross" (Col 2:14).

Let me be clear about this. When it is written that we "shall be saved by His life" (Rom 5:10), the Spirit is **not** speaking of Christ's life during His earthly ministry. **We are saved by His post-resurrection life that is being lived at "the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3) – the life that followed the death of Christ upon the cross, where He was crucified.** That is the place where the blood was shed, and heaven is the place where it was offered, or presented. As it is written, "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, **not without blood**, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people . . . Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but **by His own blood he entered in once into the holy place**, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb 9:7,12).

in a most cryptic way equating it to the blotting out of the testimony of the Law against us: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, **nailing it to His cross**" (Col 2:14).

The Solitary Reference

Yet, in Scripture, the "blood of Christ" is never associated with the nailing of Jesus to the cross. In the Gospels, there is only one single reference to Christ's blood being shed upon the cross – **a solitary reference**. It has to do with the piercing of His side AFTER the soldiers "found that He had died already."^{NIV} "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came **there out blood and water**" (John 19:33-34).

Through the years, much has

baptism, and coming by blood referring to His death. The witness on earth can also refer to our baptism (water), and partaking of the Lord's Supper (blood). However, this point is not made in Scripture. Whatever may be said of the validity of these views, it is not possible that they are the fundamental point being made, **for fundamental points are not left to be determined by the ones to whom they are presented.** It does not appear to require a lot of spiritual understanding to discern this. Faith does not come by taking hold of a human conclusion, but by embracing a Divine affirmation (Rom 10:17). This is elementary in the school of Divine wisdom.

In the piercing of the side of Jesus, and the consequent flow of blood and water from the wound, we have a sure confirmation of the death of Christ, and a most vivid reality that sheds light on all valid conclusions. This is why Jesus not only showed His hands and feet to His disciples, but His side as well. *"And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord"* (John 20:20). And again, Jesus said to Thomas, *"Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither Thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing"* (John 20:27).

I am going to wax bold and affirm that this is the particular *"blood of His cross"* by which peace was made, and men are reconciled unto God. **Without the witness of this blood, the death of the cross would not have been valid.** It seems to me that this is why John makes such a point of it, as compared with providing details about blood flowing from his head, hands, and feet.

This is not something concerning which I am contentious. **The particular point that I am making is that "Christ crucified" refers to the completion of the deed – not to its commencement.** Crucifixion, whether that of Christ in the body, or of us in the spirit, is of no consequence unless a very real death results from it. Thus it is written that Jesus *"poured out His soul UNTO death"* (Isa 53:12). And again, *"And being found in fashion as a man, He Humbled*

Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:8).

THROUGH WEAKNESS

"... through weakness..." ^{"in weakness," NKJV} *"because of weakness," NASB* *"For He was feeble," BBE* *"And verily though it came of weakness," TNT* *"from infirmity," YLT* *"His weak, human body," LIVING* *"when He was weak," IE* and *"He was "weak" enough... yes," PHILLIPS*

When approaching the matter of the death of Christ, the greatest sobriety and spiritual alertness must characterize our inquiry. **This is like holy ground that requires the removal of the shoes of human wisdom and natural curiosity.**

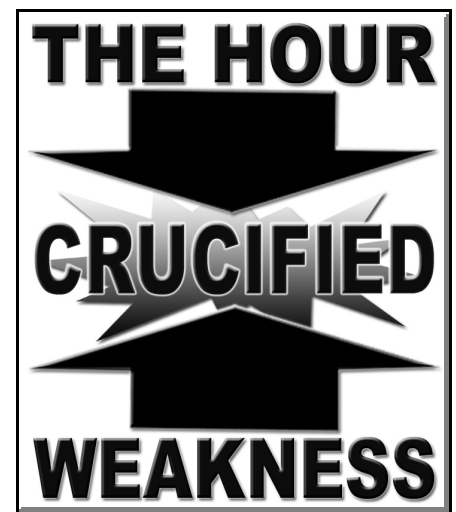
The word *"weakness"* is translated from the Greek word *ἀσθενεία*, (as-then-I-as). Its lexical meaning is, *"want of strength, weakness, infirmity, frailty, feebleness," THAYER* *"a state of incapacity... incapacity," FRIEBERG* and *"limitation," LOUW-NIDA* This particular trait – *"weakness"* – characterized Jesus when He first entered into the world as an infant. It was then that such despots as Herod were a threat to His life. As it is written, *"And when they [the wise men] were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him"* (Matt 2:13). Yet, that is **not** the kind of *"weakness"* that is meant by this text, nor could that kind of weakness qualify Jesus to be a sacrifice for sin.

The *"weakness"* of this text was a **voluntary one.** He *"made Himself of no reputation,"* or *"emptied Himself," NASB* or *"made Himself nothing" NIV* (Phil 2:7). Thus He Himself caused Himself to become vulnerable to men, so that they could crucify Him, as God had determined. Fully knowing what was involved, Jesus **purposefully** divested Himself of all Divine strength like Samson was unwittingly shorn of his strength when his hair was cut (Judges 16:20).

When Pilate boasted to the seemingly helpless Jesus that he had *"power to crucify"* Him or *"release"* Him.

Jesus replied, *"Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin"* (John 19:11). In our text, the matter is taken even further. The Father determined the condition in which Jesus would be when He atoned for sin. **Jesus, however, fully submitted to the condition, thus making Himself weak.** Thus it is written, *"Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me... Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God... By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Heb 10:5-10).

The point is that Jesus **could not** possibly have been arrested, tried, and crucified if He was **not** in a willing weakened condition. That is precisely why He said to those who arrested Him, *"When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness"* (Luke 22:53).



Two things had to combine in order for Jesus to be *"crucified."* First, there had to be an appointed *"hour"* during which men could, in fact, successfully arrest and crucify Jesus. This had to occur precisely when the Almighty God *"determined"* (Acts 2:23; 4:28), for **there is no agenda of either man or spirit that can be executed outside of the circumference of His will and power.** Second, Jesus Himself had to

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humble Himself to become weak for a season. He had to sheath the sword of omnipotence as one who ties his own hands behind his back. Apart from these two factors there was no possibility that Jesus could have been arrested, tried, beaten, and finally crucified. He could not have died if He did not “lay down” His own life – and He would not have done that if the Father had not commanded Him to do so. As He Himself said, “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father” (John 10:17-18).

Whatever men may think about Christ’s love for them personally, or for the collective church God has given to Him, **it is the will of God that was the greater incentive to Christ.** It is quite true, as Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20). And again, “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph 5:25). However, if the Father had not given the bride to Christ (John 3:29; Rev 21:9), or, from another point of view, given His children to Him (Heb 2:13) – **if it was not the Father who Himself established the need and the**

means to fulfill it – Christ’s love for either the individual or the church would not have existed. That is why He made Himself weak. That is why He drank the bitter cup!

The Particular Point

The particular point that Paul is developing is simply this: **that the weakness through which Jesus was crucified was a willing weakness, not an inherent one. The only reason His enemies could crucify Him was that He allowed them to do so.** Had He not submitted Himself to them, they would never have been able to get to their feet after they fell backward in the garden, doing so at a soft answer (John 18:6).

CHRIST LIVES BY THE POWER OF GOD

^{4b} . . . **yet He liveth by the power of God.** Other versions read, “yet He lives because of the power of God.”^{NASB} “but He is living by the power of God,”^{BBE} “He is alive now with the power of God,”^{NJB} “He now lives by the mighty power of God,”^{NLT} and “yet by the power of God He goes on living.”^{WILLIAMS}

The devil, his hosts, and the world could not so much as touch Jesus until He prepared to “lay down His life” (John 15:13). **Not a single member of the hosts of Satan ever attacked Jesus, or so such as spoke a word against Him.** Some men, who were less discerning than the hosts of darkness, “sought to kill” Jesus during His ministry, but were unable to do so (John 5:16-18; 7:1,25). Once, when the Jews were determined to push Him over the brow of a hill, He simply passed through them and “went His way” (Luke 4:29).

However, when the time came,

the powers of darkness and all of the hosts they had marshaled were permitted to do their worst. The time was called their “hour,” or the time they were allotted to do their work. I do not doubt that all of the forces of evil rallied to Jerusalem, with the best and the strongest of their forces poised to once and for all rid themselves of the One who had been spoiling their empire. Never was their such an assault against a single individual, be it angel or man. The prophets described it in these words, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered . . .” (Zech 13:7).

Not only were the powers of darkness given leave to assault the Lord Jesus, but angelic hosts had to stand back, not coming to His aid. Indeed, He was also “made a curse” because God Himself “made Him to be sin” (Gal 3:13;

2 Cor 5:21). Thus the wrath of God, the wrath of the devil and his hosts, and the wrath of man was leveled at the Lord Jesus. Surely this will be His total undoing – at least that is what His enemies thought!

Now comes the grand announcement! **After** He was crucified through weakness; **after** He was cursed by God; **after** he was judged and condemned by men – **after** all of that it is affirmed, **“HE LIVETH BY THE POWER OF GOD!”** Nor, indeed, does He live in a debilitated or diminished state. Rather, He lives in great power and glory, while His enemies have all passed away, themselves being overcome. Jesus went from the depth of cursing and seeming defeat to the height of power and great glory. Men debased Him, but God exalted Him. Men rejected Him but God accepted Him.

Thus we see that neither Satan nor man could successfully oppose the Lord. All opposition to the Lord was but a puff of temporal smoke, soon to vanish in the glow of eternal glory. In fact, Jesus recovered from the curse of the Almighty, and from Divine wrath that, in Him, was “revealed against all ungodliness” (Rom 1:18). He did so because sin was not found in Him personally: “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1

Thus the wrath of God, the wrath of the devil and his hosts, and the wrath of man was leveled at the Lord Jesus. Surely this will be His total undoing – at least that is what His enemies thought!

Pet 2:22). Having recovered from the stroke of Divine indignation, it was but

an **exceedingly small thing** that He come back from the worst that was done to

Him by feeble and mortal men and their adversary the devil.

WE ARE WEAK, BUT WE WILL LIVE

“^{4c} For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.”

Now, Paul is going to affirm that when it comes to suffering at the hands of men, particularly the “false apostles and deceitful workers” in Corinth, **his seeming weakness is also voluntary**. He has access to spiritual weaponry that makes him vastly superior in every way to those wicked men. They have only been apparently successful in their opposition of him because he has, so to speak, sheathed his sword in order to labor for their souls.

WE ARE WEAK IN HIM

“For we also are weak in him . . .

Other versions read, “Likewise, we are weak in Him,”^{NIV} “And we are feeble in Him,”^{BBE} “for, indeed, we’ are weak in Him,”^{DARBY} “And we no doubt are weak in Him,”^{GENEVA} “We, too, are weak in Him,”^{NJB} “We, too, are weak in our bodies, as He was,”^{LIVING} “We also are weak, sharing His weakness,”^{WEYMOUTH} “We are weak with Him,”^{ISV} “We too, indeed, show weakness through our union with Him,”^{WILLIAMS} “And though we too are weak in Him [as He was humanly weak],”^{AMPLIFIED} and “I am weak as He was weak.”^{PHILLIPS}

From one point of view, and in the eyes of the world, union with Christ causes one to appear weak. Thus, even though the apostles were princes in the kingdom of God, they appeared on earth to be “weak.” Paul confessed to the Corinthians, “Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as **the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things** unto this day” (1 Cor 4:13). Again he wrote, “For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles **last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men**” (1 Cor 4:9). In this respect, he was like the Lord Himself, of whom it was prophesied, “He hath no form nor comeliness; and

when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men . . . He was despised, and we esteemed Him not” (Isa 53:2-3).

An Aspect of Life in Christ

This is an aspect of life in Christ that is purposely shunned by many professed Christian leaders. There are those who point to great men of faith in the past, suggesting that their external circumstances were a pattern for those who believe in Christ. For example, it is said of Isaac, “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an

nor did the scribes, Sadducees, lawyers, chief priests, or rulers of the synagogue. They made no effort to obtain what He had, and He certainly was making no effort to gain what they possessed. To them, He appeared so weak, they thought they could rid themselves of Him. They felt no compunctions about opposing Him, contradicting Him, blaspheming Him, and seeking to catch Him in His words.

Those who are in Christ Jesus are slated to “inherit the earth” (Psa 37:9,11,22; Matt 5:5). The time will come when they will “take the kingdom” in all

Now, Paul is going to affirm that when it comes to suffering at the hands of men, particularly the “false apostles and deceitful workers” in Corinth, his seeming weakness is also voluntary. He has access to spiritual weaponry that makes him vastly superior in every way to those wicked men.

hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him” (Gen 26:12-14). Thus, these modern merchants of prosperity say that this is the manner in which God deals with those in Christ Jesus. He will cause them to prosper, and be the envy of the wicked. **Such men, however, fail to see the nature of life in Christ Jesus and the New Covenant.** It is not a covenant of worldly prosperity, and those who imagine that it is have only revealed their fundamental ignorance of life in Christ Jesus.

The Pharisees did not envy Jesus,

of its splendor and glory, and “reign with” Christ Himself (Dan 7:18,22,27; 2 Tim 2:12).

The saints of God have been promised an “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Knowing this, they gladly confess that they are “strangers and pilgrims in the world” (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11). **As such, worldly prosperity and acceptance is not even an objective for them.** They presently have superior advantages of which the world knows nothing: “**all spiritual blessings in heavenly places**” (Eph 1:3).

However, all of this appears to be nothing more than “weakness” to those who are excluded from the kingdom. Paul

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makes no effort to deny that this is the case: that is, that He is, from an earthly point of view, “*weak in Him*” [Christ]. He is not **really** weak, but only **seemingly** weak. That is, the condition in which the Corinthian intruders have thought him to be will dramatically change when he comes before them face-to-face. His weakness is like Christ’s weakness when He was crucified: **it will not last**. It is also a voluntary weakness, where Paul sheathed the weapons of his warfare, not employing them for self-promotion. In humility he submitted to their abuse like David did to that of Shimei (2 Sam 16:5-11), and Jesus did to the Jews, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod.

WE SHALL LIVE

“... *but we shall live with him by*

with you,”^{LIVING} “*we will live with Christ for you by the power of God,*”^{IE} “*but with Him we shall be full of life to deal with you through the power of God,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*yet by the power of God we too shall live toward you through fellowship with Him,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*yet in dealing with you [we shall show ourselves] alive and strong in [fellowship with] Him by the power of God,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*but I am strong enough to deal with you for I share his life by the power of God.*”^{PHILLIPS}

Some of the versions of Scripture miss the point of this text, leaving the reader thinking that Paul is speaking of **blessing** the people: “*we will live with Christ for you by the power of God,*”^{IE} *yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you,*”^{NIV} **Howe ver, this is wholly a**

forsaken. We may be cast down, but we are not destroyed” (2 Cor 4:9).

This kind of reaction is not always appropriate. There are times when John the Baptist **will** be beheaded (Matt 14:10), Stephen **will** be stoned (Acts 7:59), James the apostle killed with the sword (Acts 12:2), and Antipas slain as a faithful martyr (Rev 2:13). For that matter, there will come a time when Paul himself will be offered in a martyrs death (2 Tim 4:6).

But this was not such a time! This was a matter of Paul’s own work being jeopardized by the intrusion of “*false apostles and deceitful workers.*” This was not merely men opposing what Paul had declared, but involved the introduction of “*another Jesus,*” “*another spirit,*” and “*another gospel*” (2 Cor 11:4). **Some may imagine that it is all right to simply sit back and allow such men to speak freely among the redeemed – but it is not.** Pointedly Paul told Titus, “*For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake*” (Titus 1:10-11). Capable teachers are to “*be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayer*” (Tit 1:9). Heretics are to be confronted (Tit 3:10).

This work cannot be *done* “*in the flesh,*” or by meeting the false teachers on their own ground – and that is not what Paul is going to do. **He affirms in this text that God has empowered him to deal with this situation, and he fully intends to do so.** He had been longsuffering and lenient with the people – not because he was weak, but because he seeks to gain them for the Lord. He is defending the flock as a true shepherd (John 10:12-13).

It may appear as though his opponents have won a round in their battle against him, but the war is not over, nor will Paul allow them to continue their corrupting work among the Corinthians.

the power of God toward you.” Other versions read, “*yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you,*”^{NASB} “*yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you,*”^{NIV} “*but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God,*”^{NRSV} “*but we will be living with him through the power of God in relation to you,*”^{BBE} “*but with regard to you we shall live with him by the power of God,*”^{NJB} “*but we live in him and have God's power – the power we use in dealing with you,*”^{NLT} “*but we will live with the might of God among you,*”^{TNT} “*but now we live and are strong, as He is, and have all of God's power in dealing*

misrepresentation of what Paul is saying. This is his commentary on “*if I come again, I will not spare*” (2 Cor 13:2). It may appear as though his opponents have won a round in their battle against him, but the war is not over, nor will Paul allow them to continue their corrupting work among the Corinthians. Also, those who have continued sinning, even after Paul has spoken to them so candidly about the matter, will regret their foolishness.

Paul is saying, “We may be troubled, but we are not distressed. We may be perplexed, but we are not in despair. We may be persecuted, but we are not

EXAMINE YOURSELVES

Here is the situation: some in Corinth had been examining Paul – putting him to the test to determine whether or not he was a legitimate apostle (1 Cor 9:3). **Significantly, they**

had not apparently done this in regard to the “false apostles” who were among them. Now Paul turns the tables on them, calling upon them to engage in some **self** examination.

EXAMINE YOURSELVES

“^{5a} **Examine yourselves . . .**” Other versions read, “*Test yourselves,*” “*Try your own selves,*”^{ASV} “*Make a test of yourselves*”^{BBE} “*Put yourselves to the*

test^{NJB} "Check up on yourselves,"^{LIVING} "Keep examining yourselves,"^{ISV} "You yourselves must continue testing yourselves,"^{WILLIAMS} "Examine and test and evaluate your own selves,"^{AMPLIFIED} and "You should be looking at yourselves."^{PHILLIPS}

The word "examine" comes from a word meaning "to try, make a trial of, test,"^{THAYER} "to put to the test, examine, try,"^{FRIBERG} "to try and learn the nature or character of someone or something by submitting such to thorough and extensive testing,"^{LOUW-NIDA} and "to make proof or trial of."^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} Here is a test of legitimacy – to see if a certain professed condition **really** exists, or is spurious. **The thing that is being tested is not to be assumed.** It takes more than a mere profession to make the matter true. Further, it is not something that is true by default, or is possibly even unimportant, requiring no proof at all.

This is a self-examination – evaluating and proving something about one's own person. David described this kind of examination when he said, "I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (Psa 77:6). The admonition is also given, "commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah" (Psa 4:4). Once David said he adjusted his conduct because he examined his ways: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies" (Psa 119:59). He was so aggressive in this search that he was not satisfied with his own efforts. He implored the Lord to assist him in examining himself. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa 139:236-24).

Jeremiah urged the people, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD" (Lam 3:40). Ezekiel traced the extension of a wicked man's life to the examination of his ways and the consequent abandonment of wickedness: "Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. **Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die**"

(Ezek 18:27-28). Haggai spoke to a wayward nation, telling them that God required them to deliberate upon their ways: "Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways" (Hag 1:5).

There are things within us that can only be confirmed by means of a diligent search, or examining ourselves. Goodness can be assumed to be within, yet really be *absent*. Wickedness can be lurking in the heart and ready to consume us, and yet it **not** be known.

Is the matter for which the person is searching even there? If it is there, is it there to the degree that one professes? God will not settle for us assuming that right things are within, and the wrong things expelled. We are in a moral arena, where we have to do with competing influences, both within and without. The

your faith and showing the proper fruits of it,^{AMPLIFIED} and "to make sure that you are really Christ's."^{PHILLIPS}

Here is the matter that is to be proved, or confirmed: **that you are "in the faith."** That is, whether they are living by faith or just saying they do; whether they are really believers, or merely making a profession of being believers. Is their faith genuine or spurious? Are they still believing, or did they believe only "for a while" (Lk 8:13)? Are they really "in Christ," or are they among those who "profess that they know God, but in works deny Him" (Tit 1:16).

You will rarely, if ever, hear a challenge like this. **For the most part, faith is being assumed in the professed church.** It is supposed that identity with a church, movement, or theological position is sufficient to confirm that one

Here is the matter that is to be proved, or confirmed: that you are "in the faith." That is, whether they are living by faith or just saying they do; whether they are really believers, or merely making a profession of being believers. Is their faith genuine or spurious?

situation requires us to examine ourselves seriously and extensively.

WHETHER YE BE IN THE FAITH
 "... whether ye be in the faith..."

Other versions read, "to whether you are in the faith,"^{NKJV} "to see if you are in the faith,"^{NASB} "to see whether you are in the faith,"^{NIV} "to see whether you are living in the faith,"^{NRSV} "to see whether you are holding to your faith,"^{RSV} "whether ye are in the faith,"^{ASV} "if you are in the faith,"^{BBE} "to make sure you are in the faith,"^{NJB} "to see if your faith is really genuine,"^{NLT} "you really Christians?"^{LIVING} "to discover whether you are true believers,"^{WEYMOUTH} "to see whether you are continuing in the faith,"^{ISV} "to see whether you are continuing in the faith,"^{WILLIAMS} "to see whether you are holding to

is "in the faith." This, however, is **not** an adequate confirmation of one's spiritual legitimacy. There were some, John affirmed, who went out from that early company of believers, but were really not of them: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, **but they were not of us:** for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that **they were not all of us**" (1 John 2:18-19).

You can, therefore, be with the right people outwardly, yet **not** really be part of them inwardly. You can feign spiritual identity externally.

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The Truth of the Matter

When Moses presented himself to the Israelites and to Pharaoh, he provided certain **signs that substantiated his claim** to have been sent from the God of heaven (Ex 4:6-9,17,30; 7:3). There are confirming proofs that Jesus Christ is the Son of God with power (Isa 7:14; Lk 2:12; John 20:30). His resurrection is one of them (Rom 1:4). The pouring forth of the Holy Spirit is another (Acts 2:33). The effective teaching of the saints is yet another (1 John 5:20). There are also signs of an apostle – certain proofs that he is a messenger sent from God, and

*devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: **whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother**" (1 John 3:7-10).*

☛ *"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God:*

*and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and **His commandments are not grievous**" (1 John 5:2-3).*

☛ *"And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, **if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God**" (1 John 3:19-21).*

☛ *"And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24).*

☛ *"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24).*

☛ *"I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am **known of Mine**. . . My sheep **hear My voice**, and I know them, and **they follow Me**" (John 10:14,27).*

☛ *"And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: **for all shall know Me**, from the least to the greatest" (Heb 8:11).*

We cannot depend upon conjecture or assumption to confirm that we are really believers, or are "in the faith." If, in fact, we are living by faith – as ALL those who are justified do (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38) – **it will be confirmed when we examine ourselves**. If such a life cannot be confirmed, it is foolish to imagine that it exists, for how it exist where there us no evidence of it?.

There are also signs of being "in the faith" – indications that a person really does believe. There really is no such thing as a genuine believer who does not bear the characteristics of a believer! Both the children of the wicked one and the children of God are confirmed by what they do.

that his message is true, and therefore to be heeded. Paul affirmed he had worked "the signs of an apostle" among the Corinthians (2 Cor 12:12).

There are also signs of being "in the faith" – indications that a person really does believe. **There really is no such thing as a genuine believer who does not bear the characteristics of a believer!** Both the children of the wicked one and the children of God are confirmed by what they do.

☛ *"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness **is righteous**, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin **is of the***

*Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh **is of God**. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh **is not of God**: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1 John 4:2-3).*

☛ *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth **is born of God, and knoweth God**. He that loveth not **knoweth not God**; for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).*

☛ *"By this we know that we love the children of God, **when we love God,***

PROVE YOUR OWN SELVES

"^{5b} . . . **prove your own selves.**" Other versions read, "Test yourselves," NKJV "examine yourselves," NASB "make certain of yourselves," BBE "your own selves prove ye," YLT "DO you pass the

test?" LIVING "Prove it to yourselves," IE "put you own selves under examination," WEYMOUTH "You must continue standing the test," WILLIAMS "put your own selves to the proof," MONTGOMERY "Test and prove

yourselves [not Christ]," AMPLIFIED and "It is yourselves that you should be testing, not me." PHILLIPS

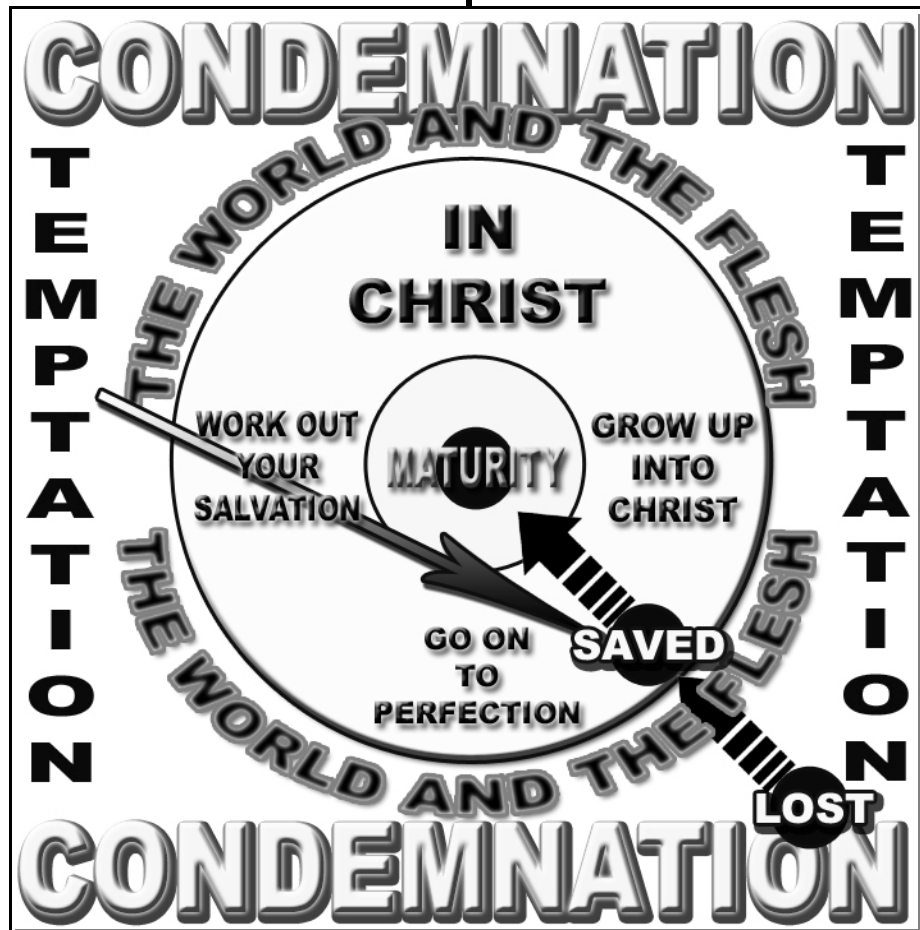
If in the estimation of the

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individual, he was justified (Rom 5:1), added to the church (Acts 2:47), and "baptized into Christ" (Gal 3:27), his destiny was sealed upon the basis of what he did, **there would be no need for such a word as this.**

promised land – **at the border.** The dividing line between Canaan and the rest of the world was the Jordan River. The wilderness journey of the Israelites took place on "the other side of Jordan" (Josh 2:10; 7:7). Jericho was the point at

tells us that, to some degree, we are **accessible to the wicked one.** That is why we are told to "resist" him (1 Pet 5:8-9; James 4:7). We also engage in fierce hand-to-hand combat "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12).



In addition to this external conflict, there is a war that rages within the believer. The informed know to confess, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom 7:18). Additionally those who perceive the real situation acknowledge, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:23).

The answer to this dilemma involves more than fighting relentlessly. **The believer must move toward the center, or heart, of the kingdom.** There is where several needy things are realized in productive measures.

- Fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:30; 1 John 1:3).
- Stabilized affections and desires (Col 3:1-2).
- Realizing the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil 3:10b).
- Participating in the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10a).
- Being steadfast and unmoveable (1 Cor 15:58).
- Being rooted and grounded in love, and thus perceiving the magnificent greatness of the salvation of God (Eph 3:17-18).
- Knowing the love of Christ that passes all knowledge (Eph 3:19).
- Growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15).
- Being filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col 1:9).

The beginning, nature, and objective of spiritual life must be perceived if men are to conduct their lives properly. We are, indeed, delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col 1:13). However, we are not initially made inaccessible to the powers of darkness, nor are we moved into the very center of Christ's kingdom. When we are born again, we are not born mature, any more than we are in the realm of nature. Nor, indeed, are we free from all danger, any more than an infant is free from all peril or risk.

LIKE ISRAEL

Like Israel, we enter the spiritual promised land as they did the earthly

which Israel entered Canaan, and it was "by" the Jordan River (Num 22:1; Josh 16:1). **At this point of entry, Israel was close to the land in which they journeyed for forty years, even though they were altogether out of it.**

IN CHRIST

In Christ, we begin just over the border, so to speak. From one point of view we are, indeed, out of darkness and into light – free from Satan, and joined to Christ Jesus. But we are not in heaven yet, and we still live within range of the enemy. In fact, we are so close that we have been provided with the shield of faith, which is able to "quench all of the fiery darts of the wicked one" (Eph 6:16). **The fact that we require such a shield**

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- Being strengthened with all might in order to all perseverance and longsuffering with joyfulness (Col 1:11).
- Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1).

These are representative of a number of things that are realized in maturity, or going *“on to perfection”* (Heb 6:1-2). **Those who ignore such things, imagining that they are although safe while they remain infantile could not possible be more wrong.**

This is why Paul calls upon the

people to *“prove”* their own selves – **not him**, but themselves. Their readiness to stand in judgment of him only revealed how immature they were – unable to recognize a man sent and empowered by the Head of the church Himself.

A Flaw in the Legalistic Mind

As I am using the term, a *“legalistic”* mind is one like that of the scribes and Pharisees, who had a penchant for the outward, but gave no thought to the inward. It was quick to judge the Lord Jesus Himself, and the apostles that He sent forth. These men assumed they were right, even though they were full of spiritual deadness and

depravity (Matt 23:25-28).

A mindset like this refuses to engage in self-examination. It moves those so dominated to assume their own acceptance, while engaging in the condemnation of those unlike themselves.

No person is free from the mandate to prove themselves, putting themselves to the test to confirm that they are really in Christ. For those who are living by faith, this is a most joyful and productive assignment, for those who are *“in the faith”* will find that marvelous condition being verified in the proving of themselves.

SOMETHING YOU MUST KNOW

“^{5c} . . . **Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you . . .**” Other versions read, *“Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you,”*^{NASB} *“Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you,”*^{NIV} *“or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?”*^{ASV} *“Or are you not conscious in yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you,”*^{BBE} *“Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?”*^{ESV} *“Do you not recognize yourselves as people in whom Jesus Christ is present?”*^{NJB} *“If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you,”*^{NLT} *“Do you feel Christ’s presence and power more and more within you?”*^{LIVING} *“surely you know Christ Jesus is among you,”*^{IE} *“Do you not know by a growing experience that Jesus Christ is in you?”*^{WILLIAMS} *“Do you not yourselves realize and know [thoroughly by an ever increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“You ought to know by this time that Christ is in you.”*^{PHILLIPS}

Language like this has a strange sound in an institutional environment. It almost appears as though the modern church deliberately avoids talking like this. When what is set forth as a priority in Scripture is ignored by the professing church, we have most serious situation on our hands.

Just what is Paul asking here –

even though this is a rhetorical question. This is something that really OUGHT to be known. **The nature of spiritual life demands such knowledge.** Yet, it is apparent to Paul that certain in Corinth had skirted this whole matter, choosing rather to indulge themselves in philosophical prattling about Paul himself. Whatever one may think of their approach to life in Christ, it certainly did

written, *“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness”* (Rom 8:10). Judge for yourself if that suggests Christ **can** be *“in you”* without the Holy Spirit being dominant. From this particular point of view – Christ being *“in you”* – **spiritual growth is actually Christ being “formed in you”** (Gal 4:19). For that matter, the hope of being glorified

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not do anything for them. It did not stop divisions, immorality, inconsideration, thoughtlessness, and confusion from rising among them. Judging from what was happening among them, one would never guess that salvation was *“from sin”* and *“unto righteousness.”*

Christ being *“in you”* – that is a very critical matter. Elsewhere it is

together with Christ is wholly contingent upon Christ being *“in you”* (Col 1:27).

What are the evidences of Christ being *“in you?”* You are obliged to find them. **Things peculiarly associated with Christ Himself will be found in the person in whom Christ dwells.**

- **HIS MIND.** *“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may*

instruct him? But we have **the mind of Christ**" (1 Cor 2:16).

- ☛ **HIS SUFFERINGS.** "For as **the sufferings of Christ** abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor 1:5).
- ☛ **HIS DEATH.** "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that **the life also of Jesus** might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor 4:10).
- ☛ **HIS MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS.** "Now I Paul myself beseech you by **the meekness and gentleness of Christ**, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Cor 10:1).
- ☛ **HIS TRUTH.** "As **the truth of Christ** is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia" (2 Cor 11:10).
- ☛ **HIS POWER.** "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in

weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that **the power of Christ** may rest upon me" (2 Cor 12:9).

- ☛ **HIS KNOWLEDGE.** "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of **the knowledge of Christ** Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil 3:8).
- ☛ **HIS WORD.** "Let **the word of Christ** dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col 3:16).
- ☛ **CONFIDENCE.** "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold **the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end**" (Heb 3:14).

If Christ is really "in you," then it will be confirmed in your self-examination. That inspection is not an analysis of one's outward works alone, but is discovered in one's spiritual

attainments, preferences, and longings. The examination includes the assessment of affections, loves, and hates.

When, for example, the church was required to choose out men for certain responsibilities in the body, some testing had to take place to confirm they were suited for the work. The first deacons, for instance, were to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). **This was evidence of Christ being in them.** An elder had character qualifications of blamelessness, vigilance, sobriety, good behavior, not greedy of money, not covetous, holy, and just. There were also other areas of domestic responsibility and teaching aptitude that were to be found (1 Tim 3:2-7; Tit 1:7-8). **Christ had to be "in" them.**

The text before us, however, does not have to do with evaluating others. It rather speaks of **self-examination**. Paul assures the people that, if Christ is there, it will be confirmed to them. He will site only one exception, and it is a most fearful one to ponder. This should compel us to engage in the activity admonished.

THE DREAD OF REPROBACY

^{5d} "... **except ye be reprobates?**"

Other versions read, "unless indeed you are disqualified,"^{NKJV} "unless indeed you fail the test,"^{NASB} "unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test,"^{NRSV} "except ye be castaways,"^{TNT} "if ye be not in some respect disapproved of,"^{YLT} "Or are you

just pretending to be Christians when actually you aren't at all?"^{LIVING} "unless you are insincere,"^{WEYMOUTH} "unless indeed you fail to abide the proof?"^{MONTGOMERY} "unless you are [counterfeits] disapproved on trial and rejected?"^{AMPLIFIED} and "unless you are not real

Christians at all."^{PHILLIPS}

Here is a word that one might imagine has been rendered obsolete. In some circles, the mere mention of the word will cause men to hurl the word "Calvinist" at the speaker. But this is a "spiritual word," and it ought not be excluded from our vocabulary: **"REPROBATE."**

Some of the versions are totally unacceptable, placing the emphasis on testing rather than on the condition that is discovered by the testing.

The word "reprobate" comes from the Greek word ἀδόκιμοι (ad-ok-ee-moi). Lexically, the word means "not standing the test, not approved,"^{THAYER} "worthless, unqualified,"^{FRIBERG} "failing to meet the test, disqualified, worth|ess, corrupted,"^{UBS} "pertaining to not being in accordance with what is right, appropriate, or fitting,"^{LOUW-NIDA} "spurious, rejected as false, disreputable,

| | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|-------|
| ACCEPTED | | | |
| PURE | GENUINE | PRECIOUS | |
| GOLD | SILVER | GEMS | COINS |
| DEFILED | SPURIOUS | WORTHLESS | |
| REJECTED | | | |

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reprobate" LIDDELL-SCOTT

Reprobacy has to do with discovering that something or someone is not what they profess to be. This is not testing something that is in the proper category, but is rejected because it is flawed – like a rotten apple, a decayed board, or a house that is dilapidated. This does **not** describe someone who is a “Christian,” but is perceived as a “bad” one instead of a “good” one – but nevertheless is a Christian.

Reprobate Gold

In the case of reprobate gold, we are not talking about inferior gold, but of something looking like gold, but does not have a single property of real gold – “FOOL’S GOLD.” It is shiny, but has no worth, and cannot possibly be used as though it was genuine. Such a mineral does not pass the “gold test” because it is inferior, but because it is **not gold at all.**

Reprobate Gems

Diamonds are also subject to tests to establish their genuineness. There are tests that discover inferiority in diamonds, even though they really are diamonds. That is not, however, the kind of test under consideration. Spurious diamonds look like the real thing, but cannot stand the stress tests of an authentic diamond.

Reprobate Money

In the area of money, there are also tests of legitimacy in both coinage and paper. It is possible to have a very real piece of metal or paper money, yet it is deemed unacceptable because of damage, or perhaps even obsolescence. But this again is not the kind of test being considered. In the case of money, counterfeit currency would be considered “reprobate.” It is really not money at all.

Reprobate Silver

The Scriptures speak of “reprobate silver,” using it as a type of people that God rejects. “*Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them*” (Jer 6:30). It isn’t that they were really God’s people, but just came short in this or that area. They were not His people at all, even though they pretended to be. That is why He rejected them. Once God said of Israel, “*They have corrupted themselves, their*

spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation” (Deut 32:5). They were “reprobate.”

Reprobate Minds

Scripture informs us that the Gentile world was turned over “*to a reprobate mind*” by God Himself. “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient*” (Rom 1:28). **A reprobate mind is one from which nothing good can proceed.** It is a totally worthless mind in God’s eyes. He does not receive that kind of mind, and thus rejects everything that comes from it.

Reprobate Men

Paul singled out certain professed Christian teachers who were totally

eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them” (John 12:40).

Jesus spoke of the day of judgment, when “*reprobates*” will be fully known – **those who pretended to belong to Christ, but who really did not.** “*Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity*” (Mat 7:2-23). **The words “I never knew you” uncovered their reprobacy.** They represented themselves as working for Christ: “*in Thy name.*” But they were really like fool’s gold and fake diamonds are to the jeweler.

Why has Paul spoken with such candor? It is because they have lingered too long in this state. Now the issue is whether or not they have even been accepted by God. More and more evidences of Divine rejection have surfaced and remained. Now Paul is urging them to look within, and put themselves to the test.

spurious, having no role whatsoever in the work of the Lord. He likened them to Jannes and Jambres, the magicians who withstood Moses when he confronted Pharaoh (Ex 7:11,22; 8:7,18). “*For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith*” (2 Tim 3:6-8). The phrase “*reprobate concerning the faith*” means they and their faith were rejected because they were not real. They were like some of the Israelites of old, and like some who were exposed to the Lord Jesus Himself: “*Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their*

There are people who wear the name of Christ, professing that “*they know God.*” **Yet, such really are not His at all, but are only pretenders.** Paul says of such souls, “. . . *unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*” (Titus 1:15-16). **These are people who cannot do the works of God, for they themselves have been rejected.**

Consider the Text

There are only two alternatives here. Either Christ is in these Corinthian offenders, or they are rejected by God because they are none of His.

Why has Paul spoken with such candor? **It is because they have lingered**

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too long in this state. Now the issue is whether or not they have even been accepted by God. More and more evidences of Divine rejection have surfaced and remained. Now Paul is urging them to look within, and put themselves to the test. **He knows that such activity will awaken the new nature which thrives on being examined and confirmed.** He also knows those who are reprobate will **not** see any value in this

matter. The issue is now “cast into” their “lap,” and they must engage themselves in the work (Prov 16:33). For “the elect” (Mk 13:22; Col 3:12), the examining and proving will be an arena in which the Lord will work, “both to will and do of His own good pleasure” (Phil 2:13).

Conclusion

When sin erupts in the church, and repeated exhortations fail, the time

has come for a strong, straightforward, and uncompromising exhortation to self-examination and proving. **Now the issue is no longer human conduct, but whether or not the ones at fault are even legitimate.** Whether or not Christ is in them and has accepted them must now be established, and there is a distinct possibility that they are not Christians at all, but are rather those who cannot believe, or do good works.

SURELY YOU KNOW WE ARE NOT REPROBATES

“*6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.*” Other versions read, “*But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.*”^{NKJV} “*But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.*”^{NASB} “*And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.*”^{NIV} “*I hope you will find out that we have not failed.*”^{NRSV} “*But it is my hope that you will have no doubt that we are truly Christ’s.*”^{BBE} “*I hope you recognize that we have passed the test and are approved by God.*”^{NLT} “*I trust that ye shall know that we are not castaways.*”^{TNT} “*and I hope that ye shall know that we – we are not disapproved of.*”^{YLT} “*I hope you can agree that I have stood the test and truly belong to God.*”^{LIVING} “*But I hope you will recognize and know that we are not disapproved on trial and rejected.*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*And*

when you have applied your test, I am confident that you will soon find that I myself am a genuine Christian.”^{PHILLIPS}

It may sound peculiar that Paul would associate the perception of his own legitimacy with the Corinthians examining themselves. How is it that examining to see if Christ was, in fact, “in” them had any bearing upon Paul’s acceptance by God?

The answer is rather simple. **The real believers in Corinth were the product of Paul’s own ministry.** Therefore he wrote to them, “*Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?*” (1 Cor 9:1). That is, the genuineness of their conversion confirmed the authenticity of Paul’s

message and the legitimacy of his apostleship. Therefore he also wrote, “*Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart*” (2 Cor 3:3). **Paul knows that once their own faith is confirmed, they will be assured of his condition as well, for their faith came by means of his message.**

Therefore, having confidence in them through the Lord (Gal 5:10; 2 Thess 3:4), Paul knows that an honest examination of themselves will yield a refreshing confirmation of the faith that justifies all who believe, as well as substantiating his approval by Christ.

CONCLUSION

Paul has dealt gently, but firmly, with the troublemakers at Corinth, as well as those who had been taken in by them. **His words confirm that when professing believers insist on continuing in sin, the matter must be confronted, else those who have expended labor on them will have labored in vain.** The fear of this happening is quite real, as reflected in Paul’s words to the Corinthians. “*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*” (2 Cor 11:3). And again,

“*For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: and lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed*” (2 Cor 12:20-21). He wrote in a similar manner in a letter to the Galatians. “*I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain*”

(Gal 4:11). And again, “*I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you*” (Gal 4:20).

It is possible for those who had a legitimate beginning in Christ to degenerate into a hopeless state that costs them their own souls, and removes meaningful rewards from those who labored among them. The very thought jars the souls of sensitive men, for they well know the truth of it. Sin did not enter into this world through the devil, or a demon, of some fallen evil principality.

When once carnality grips a church, it becomes exceedingly difficult to recover them – by Given O. Blakely

It entered **through a man** – a morally perfect and innocent man. As it is written, “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . . For as **by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous***” (Rom 5:12,19)! Adam was created in the image of God, put into a prepared place, and given dominion over all. So far as cognizant

powers are concerned, he was humanity at its best and highest level. So far as advantages were concerned, he had them all. In the beginning he had no known enemies, and no conflicting peers. The only word he knew was that of His Maker.

I do not doubt that on the day of judgment, Adam will be a primary exhibit of the folly of those false prophets who taught you could not fall from Divine

favor, and a staggering rebuke who lived as though they could not do so.

The conditions that existed at Corinth were very real, and the concerns they caused in Paul were very real. Let no one submit to the delusion that they have been insulated against the subtlety of the devil, or that human wisdom is sufficient to repeal his devious attacks. Arm yourselves with a mind that leads to the successful resistance of the devil!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 4/14/2006. In this session, we will conclude our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. Our final text will be verses seven through fourteen of chapter thirteen: “**A FITTING CONCLUSION.**” Paul pleads with the Corinthians to do what is right, for that alone will bring pleasure and comfort to his heart. He does not want to use sharpness with them, and is doing everything in his power to avoid doing so. He has been given power to edify, and earnestly desires to be able to use that power freely among them. 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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A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

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

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

Refreshing Waters Website: <http://wotruth.com/renewal.htm>

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