

# 2 CORINTHIANS BOOK OF TREASURES



**2 CORINTHIANS 5:11 - 2 CORINTHIANS 8:24**

**PART 2**

**TEXT, EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL  
HELPS**

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## Chapter 12.

### The Grip of a Great God

#### 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

<sup>12</sup> We are not again commending ourselves to you but *are* giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.

<sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.

<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

<sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

<sup>18</sup> Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

<sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

<sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

When I was in high school, we would wrestle in our P.E. classes in the winter time. Our football coach and wrestling coaches were also our P.E. teachers. They would divide our class into weight classifications.

I was in the 145 to 155 pound weight class and wrestled guys that were my weight. I was able to beat those in my weight range, so the coach decided to make the matches more interesting. He matched me against Kenny Schmidt who happened to be in the 155 to 165 pound weight range.

He was not only heavier and bigger than me, he was also the school pole vaulter, which means this guy was extremely flexible and very strong. The first time I wrestled him, I didn't know what hit me. I was able to survive the first round of three 3 minute rounds. He pinned me to the mat in the second round.

Evidently, the coach liked the entertainment he got from our match so he put me with Kenny again on another day. Oh, great! This time I lasted close to the end of the second round, but he still pinned me to the mat.

Several days later, the coach matched us up again. This time I was ticked. I was tired of losing to this guy, even though we were friends. I gave him a run for his money. I stayed with him the first two rounds. In the third round, however, I was getting tired.

The guy was too strong and heavy. He finally pinned me with about a minute to go in the third round. He got a grip on me like a vice. No matter how or where I turned, I couldn't get loose. I couldn't shake him off. (If you have claustrophobia, I would not recommend wrestling) The grip he had, left him in control and I was out of control. The only way I could end the struggle was to yield.

Paul found himself in the same type of situation in a way. He was in the grip of a great God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He had ceased to struggle against God and was struggling for the Lord because he had yielded to the Lord's control of his life.

The grip of God had a drastic impact upon him that changed his life in many ways. That same grip changes us too. This portion of [2 Corinthians](#) reveals the impact that God's grip has on our life when we stop wrestling with the Lord and are truly, genuinely, yielded to Him and completely surrendered to His control.

We will find that the grip of a great God:

1. *Makes us Mindful of our responsibility to the Lord.*
2. *Motivates us to glorify God and reach others.*
3. *Moves us to live our lives for the Lord and not ourselves.*
4. *Molds us into new creations in Christ.*
5. *Mollified our Relationship with God the Father*
6. *Mandated us with the Ministry of Reconciliation*
7. *Make us Ambassadors of Christ*

Notice verse number eleven as we see first of all the *Persuasion of Men*.

## I. THE PERSUASION OF MEN—[2 Corinthians 5:11](#)

### [2 Corinthians 5:11 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, knowing the **fear** of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

Paul says he persuades men, knowing the “**fear**” of the Lord. What does he mean by this? Was he terrified of Jesus Christ? Was he terrified of God's grip on his life? No. This type of fear would not result in *peace, comfort, and joy*. The word “**fear**” is from the Greek word *phobos* {*fob'-os*}. It forms our English word “**phobia**.”

It means “**fear, dread, apprehension, and also reverence.**” Paul is referring to a deep *reverence* and *respect* for the Lord which results in *worship, adoration, submission to Him, and service.*

The apostle had a holy fear that relates to the Judgment Seat of Christ ([v. 10](#)). He is not speaking about overwhelming dread but rather a *reverent, sobering fear of divine judgment and accountability.*

He was awed by the thought of standing before a person so holy, so morally superior, so removed from evil, that in His majestic presence, all human boasting, pride, and arrogance would vanish like mist as he stands in speechless humility before the Lord, and with trembling lips gives a full account of himself.

We too, are to have the same type of reverence for the Lord and a sober attitude about the accounting of our life at the Judgment Seat of Christ. When you are gripped by a great God, you will have this kind of attitude.

Knowing the reverence for the Lord, Paul persuaded men. In the Greek, it reads, “**we continue to persuade men.**” Persuading men is a task that is not complete until we are *dead or raptured.* What did Paul want to persuade men about? He wanted to persuade men of the truth of the Gospel and to trust Christ as their Savior.

He also wanted to persuade his hearers of his integrity of ministry. He tells them that they should have no qualms about his honesty. The apostle sought a favorable judgment from the Corinthians on his integrity since it was under attack.

If Paul’s character was discredited, his enemies could then discredit his message. His knowledge that his life was an open book to God led him to voice the hope that it would be transparent to all the Corinthians too. At all times he demonstrated his *integrity* and *responsibility* as God’s servant.

His conscience was clear with God and it was his hope that his *integrity* and *sincerity* were obvious or manifested to the Corinthians. Having integrity as a Christian and a right relationship with God and men was a priority of Paul and will be a priority of a person who has been gripped by a great God.

#### **2 Corinthians 1:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> **For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.**

#### **Acts 23:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> **Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."**

**Acts 24:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> **In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men.**

Like Paul, we are to persuade men that what the Lord has done in our life is genuine and real. The grip of a great God *makes us mindful of our responsibility to the Lord*. By our *conduct, conversations, and character*, our life should prove that Jesus Christ lives within us and that we have been gripped by a great God. Our *testimony* and *example* should be important to us and carefully guarded against temptations and sin that will hurt our testimony.

If we can establish credibility in our behavior, then it will give our beliefs credibility to a *skeptical, pessimistic* world that tends to *doubt* or *disbelieve* what the Bible has to say because of *inconsistency* and *hypocrisy* in the lives of people claiming to be Christians. A clear conscience will give you more power in persuading men because it will show you have been truly gripped by a great God.

**II. THE PURPOSE OF OUR LIVES—[2 Corinthians 5:12-13](#)**

**2 Corinthians 5:12-13 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> **We are not again commending ourselves to you but *are* giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.**

<sup>13</sup> **For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.**

Paul reveals the purpose of our lives here. He states that he was not trying to glory in his *credentials* or *commend* himself to the Corinthians. What he was trying to do was to give them a reason to have confidence and even pride in what he was doing for the Lord and also what the Lord was doing in their own lives.

They had no reason to be ashamed for what the Lord had done for them and through Paul. The same holds true for you. You have no reason to be ashamed for being a Christian or for living a godly life. When you have been gripped by a great God, you won't be ashamed. The grip of a great God *motivates us to glorify God and reach others*.

**Romans 10:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> **For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED (ASHAMED)."**

The problem in Corinth was the fact that the Corinthians were having to deal with people that placed great emphasis on outward appearances or spectacular results instead of spiritual matters of the heart that involved *holiness, honesty, integrity, love, and compassion*. Outward appearances were more important than spiritual character and purity.

We find that same type of philosophy today among people. They base their opinion of a preacher by the size of his church, the car he drives, the house he lives in, the beauty of his wife, or how handsome he looks. A church is judged by its size. If it is big, it must be good. The standard of acceptance in these matters is based on outward appearances.

**Beloved, God's standard for success is based on a different standard.** He is looking at our hearts. No matter what size the church, if the people love God and have a pure, surrendered heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and are doing their best to put Him first and serve Him, that's a good church.

If the pastor looks like the Hunch-Back of Notre Dame but is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is a good man. God is looking at your heart. Do you recall the words of the Lord when Samuel was seeking to anoint the next king of Israel? Samuel looked at David's brother Eliab and thought, "He must be the one." The Lord had a different opinion.

**1 Samuel 16:6-7 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before Him."**

**<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God *sees* not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."**

When the Lord looks at your heart, what does He see? Does the Lord have a grip on you?

**2 Corinthians 5:12-13 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup> We are not again commending ourselves to you but *are* giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.**

**<sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.**

Paul said, "***For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God.***" The words "**beside ourselves**" are from the word *existemi* {*ex-is'-tay-mee*} which means "**to stand outside of oneself; to be beside oneself in the sense of being out of one's mind or crazy; to displace or throw out of position.**" Some people may think Christians are crazy. Their reasons may be valid.

**A. W. Tozer** put it this way in his book *The Root of the Righteous*: A real Christian is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen, talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see, expects to go to Heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself in order to be full, admits he is wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, and happiest when he feels worst.

He dies so that he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and knows that which passeth knowledge. Perhaps, you can understand why this world thinks we are nuts. They just don't understand, do they?

If those around you think you might be a little crazy, realize you are in good company. They thought the Lord was nuts too.

**Mark 3:21-22 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> **When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."**

<sup>22</sup> **The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."**

**John 10:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"**

**Acts 26:24 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> **While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad."**

No matter what people thought about Paul, whether they thought he was a nut or crazy or of a sound mind, his purpose was to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and reach others for Him. He was gripped by a great God. The way Paul lived was for their benefit.

People today think it is crazy to live for Christ and serve Him. Some may think it is foolish to believe the *inerrancy* and *verbal inspiration* of the *Scriptures*, the *virgin birth*, the *resurrection*, the *return of Christ*. They may think that going to church on Sunday and on Wednesday, giving to the Lord, and living a godly life instead of living it up is crazy. Go ahead and serve the Lord anyway and honor Him with your life. Allow the Lord to grip your heart and life.

Have you ever heard of a guy named **D.L. Moody**? Did you know that the people of Chicago had a nickname for him? When Dwight L. Moody was ministering at his large Sunday School and church in Chicago, people often called him "**Crazy Moody**."

In the eyes of the unsaved world, Moody was "**crazy**" to have given up a successful business career to become a Sunday School worker and evangelist, but time has proved his decision to be a wise one. Today, we don't know the names of the people who laughed at him and called him names, but we do know—and honor—the name of D.L. Moody.

Beloved, realize that if you are a Christian, no matter what you do, this world is not going to look favorably upon you. The Lord and Paul made this very clear. It ain't gonna happen.

**John 15:18-21 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated you.*

<sup>19</sup> "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

<sup>20</sup> "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

<sup>21</sup> "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

**1 Corinthians 4:10-13 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

<sup>11</sup> To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless;

<sup>12</sup> and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

<sup>13</sup> when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the **dregs** of all things, *even until now.*

What does Paul mean by this word “dregs”? The word “dregs” is from the Greek word *peripsema* {*per-ip'-say-mah*} which means “what is wiped off, scrapings, dust from the floor.” It was the garbage that was collected from cleansing.

In Greek history, this word was used to describe a *worthless person who was sacrificed as an offering for the people*. It was the custom in Athens during a plague to throw to the sea some wretch in the hope of appeasing the gods. The Athenians, in order to prevent public calamities, yearly threw a criminal, someone they considered worthless, into the sea as an offering to Poseidon, a Greek god of the sea.

Later on, this word *peripsema* came to have a complimentary sense for the Christians, who in a plague, gave their lives in treating the sick. It was used of a man who in behalf of religion undergoes dire trials for the salvation of others. This is what Paul did. He endured suffering so that others could be reached for Christ.

The world also looks upon Christians as “fools.” In fact, the word “*Cretin*” or fool, is derived from the **French word for Christian**.

**1 Corinthians 1:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,



**1 Corinthians 2:14 (NASB)**

**<sup>14</sup> But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**

No matter what the opinion of others may be about you and the Lord, go ahead and serve Him anyway. His opinion is the most important. Make Him your master. You can only serve one.

**Matthew 6:24 (NASB)**

**<sup>24</sup> No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

**Henry David Thoreau** said, “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.”

You will find that if you are gripped by a great God and if the purpose of your life is to live for Him, He will guide and direct your life as you march to the drum beat of a different drummer. He will watch over you and care for you until the day you die.

On **January 8, 2008**, a 55-year-old college instructor and part-time paramedic, who was used to saving the lives of others, found himself in the fight of his life. **Ken Hildebrand** of Fort McMurray was riding his all-terrain vehicle as he collected his animal traps about 80 miles southwest of Calgary.

Suddenly, the ATV rolled after hitting a rock and trapped him underneath in the Canadian wilderness. Hildebrand, who has a weak leg due to polio, ended up face down on the snowy ground with his machine pinning his strong leg. He had food, water and a first aid kit, but it was out of his reach.

**Troy Linderman**, director of Crowsnest Pass emergency medical services said, ‘He was stuck there for four days and three nights—almost 96 hours straight. ‘ Hildebrand’s injuries aren’t described as life-threatening, but there is a chance his right foot might have to be amputated.

Hildebrand said he kept himself alive by eating the rotting meat of the dead animals he had collected in his traps. He would chew it, but it made him sick. He said he faced constant harassment from coyotes who were growling and fighting each other a few feet away, but was able to keep them at bay by constantly blowing a whistle he had with him.

He kept himself warm by using the carcasses of the beavers he had trapped to cover parts of his body. With no water or food with him, no snow close by and nothing but dirt around him, he quickly became dehydrated.

He pulled some surveyor's tape through his teeth to get a little bit of the dew that dropped onto it. He sucked on dirt that he dug from the ground to get the moisture from the frost that was in it.

As Hildebrand was entering his fourth day of being trapped, he began to accept the fact he might not be found before the cold, malnourishment, or coyotes claimed him. His saving grace came when a hiker and a dog from Pincher Creek found him. Hildebrand said. "This man was hiking and he came where I was trapped because he told me he had felt the Lord directing him to go hiking in this area even though he'd never been there before."

While trapped for four days, Hildebrand, who is a devoted Christian, said from his hospital bed, "I thought of my family and my God and that was it." With a Bible at his side, Hildebrand appeared nervous as he contemplated the operation on his foot. He had polio as a child, leaving him with a weak left leg. Amputating the foot on his right leg could mean life in a wheelchair. He knew he had a long way to go and was thankful to the Lord to be alive.

Praise the Lord for His *provision, protection*, and the *direction* he gave to the hiker to look in the area where Hildebrand was trapped. Beloved, no matter what circumstances you face, the Lord can care for you. Our main concern should be yielding our life to the Lord and making sure that God has a grip on us. The question is, "**Does He?**"

**In looking at the Grip of a Great God, we have examined two areas.**

1. *The Persuasion of Men*
2. *The Purpose of our Lives*
3. *Next, the Power of Christ's Love*

### **III. THE POWER OF CHRIST'S LOVE—[2 Corinthians 5:14-15](#)**

#### **2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;**

<sup>15</sup> **and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.**

Paul was gripped by a great God. God's grip *moves us to live our lives for the Lord and not ourselves*. Paul said the love of God constrained him. "**Controls us**" is a phrase that has been misunderstood.

The thought has been that the love of Christ restricts us or straps us down. That is not the meaning of the word that Paul is using here. This word "**controls**" is from the Greek word *sunecho* {*soon-ekh'-o*} which means "**to hold together with constraint, to control, to overwhelm, to press on every side.**"

It was used to describe cattle being pushed on each side into a position where they can be medicated or a strait of water that forces a ship into a narrow channel.

The love of the Lord Jesus Christ *dominated, motivated, and controlled* Paul's life to share with others the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The overpowering love of Christ, demonstrated when He died on the cross for us, controls us and calls forth a mighty response. This is what so mightily drove Paul in his epic missionary endeavors. Paul was gripped by a great God. Are you? What is your measure of love for Christ? Is it cool, lukewarm, or hot?

Beloved, our love for Him should move us to live for Him and let the Lord live His life through us. We're not *hemmed in* or *controlled by* His love so that we can do nothing at all, but so we can do things that are more worthwhile. We are kept from doing evil things so that we might do good things. We are kept from doing things that bring death so that we might do things that bring life as Christ lives through us.

**Galatians 2:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**

In 1864, when William Featherstone was 16 years old, he penned the passion for the Prince of Peace in his soul. The words of the hymn that he wrote have echoed off the walls of our church through the years. They reflect the heart of a teenager that was gripped by a great God.

*My Jesus, I love Thee,  
I know Thou art mine;  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer,  
My Savior art Thou;  
If ever I loved Thee,  
My Jesus, 'tis now.*

**2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;**

<sup>15</sup> **and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.**

What does Paul mean, “**that one died for all, therefore all died**”. The statement speaks of mankind's sinfulness. Christ died for us all because we are all sinners. We are all dead in trespasses of sin and needed someone to pay the price for our sins.

**Romans 5:12 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.**

The Lord died for the sins of the entire world so that man could have eternal life by putting his faith in Christ. The payment is not enough, the payment must be accepted by faith.

When the death angel went through Egypt, knowing about the protection of the blood on the doorposts was not enough. The blood had to be applied to the post indicating obedience and faith in God's instructions.

Those who put their faith in Christ are to live their lives not for themselves, but for the one who died and rose again. When you are gripped by a great God that is what you will do.

**Romans 14:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup>For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.**

**Philippians 1:21 (NASB)**

**<sup>21</sup>For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.**

**Philippians 3:14 (NASB)**

**<sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

#### **IV. THE PERCEPTION OF MEN—2 Corinthians 5:16-17**

**2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (NASB)**

**<sup>16</sup>Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer.**

**<sup>17</sup>Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.**

These two verses define when Paul's burden for the lost began. God's grip on Paul changed his outlook on life and his view of men. The word "**therefore**" points back to [verses 14](#) and [15](#), which describe salvation. Paul did not know men after the flesh.

#### **What does he mean?**

After his conversion, the way Paul viewed people changed radically. He no longer evaluated people based on external, worldly standards, and human distinctions. The proud Pharisee, who once scorned Gentiles, and even those Jews outside of his group, now looked beyond mere outward appearances. His prejudice and hatred gave way to a love for all, whether they were Jew or Gentile, slaves, freemen, or barbarians.

Christians are not to evaluate men according to their racial background, their social background, or their color. We know that according to the old nature, all men without Christ are lost in sin, but Christ died for all of them. Whether the person is a *princess* or a *prostitute*, a *Wall Street Tycoon* or a *man in the gutter*, a *grandchild* or a *grandparent*, Jesus died for them all.

At one time, Paul looked upon Christ merely from a human point of view. Because of what the Lord did in his life, he looked upon Christ in a different way. He was no longer the man from Nazareth. He no longer looked at Christ as a false messiah or a rebel against Judaism that was worthy of death. He looked at Christ as the Savior of men.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> **Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.***

Therefore... because of what Christ has done for mankind, dying on the cross and rising from the grave, if any man puts his faith in Christ, he is a new creature or creation. The word “new” is *kainos {kahee-nos}* which means “**new in quality, not in sequence.**” We are truly a new person in Christ. The grip of a great God *molds us into new creations in Christ.*

**Ephesians 4:22-24 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> **That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,**  
<sup>23</sup> **and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,**  
<sup>24</sup> **and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.**

The transformation that is brought about by the new birth is not only an instantaneous miracle but also a lifelong process of sanctification. For those so transformed, everything changes; the old things have passed away. All things “**become**” new. The word “**become**” is in the perfect tense indicating a past act with continuing results. God is continually working in our lives.

When we are gripped by a great God, old values, ideas, plans, loves, desires, and beliefs vanish, replaced by the new things that accompany salvation. So what is new in our life?

## **New Things for Christians**

### **1. A New Birth**

**John 3:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> **Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

We have been spiritually changed.

## 2. A New Heart and Spirit

**Ezekiel 36:26 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

## 3. A New Man

**Ephesians 4:24 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> And put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

## 4. A New Song

**Psalms 40:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD.

## 5. A New Name

**Isaiah 62:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name Which the mouth of the LORD will designate.

**Revelation 2:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give *some* of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

## 6. A New Home

**John 14:1-2 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

<sup>2</sup> "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to **prepare** a place for you.

The word “prepare” is from the Greek word *hetoimazo* {*het-oy-mad'-zo*} which means “to make ready, to prepare.” It is drawn from the oriental custom of sending on before kings on their journeys persons to level the roads and make them passable. The Lord is preparing our homes for us.

## 7. A New Body

### **2 Corinthians 5:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup> For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

Yes, the Lord makes us new creations in Christ. Former heavyweight champion **George Foreman** gave his testimony at the Garden Grove Community Church in California. Here is part of what he said concerning his conversion to Christ in the San Juan dressing room after the Jimmy Young fight: “I felt my head and, when I brought my hands down, I saw there was blood on the palms of both hands,” he said. “Then I looked down and saw there was blood on my feet.”

“I was reminded that this was where Jesus bled—on His palms, on His feet, and on His head. At that moment, I died. I died for God. Then I got life as a new creature. I became like a small trusting baby.” Forman put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in that locker room. He said, “I had never read the Bible before, now I read it all the time. I understand it. I want to explain to other people so that they, like me, can know the truth.”

Beloved, that is what happens when God gets a grip on your life.

## V. OUR POSITION IN CHRIST—**2 Corinthians 5:18-20**

### **2 Corinthians 5:18-20 (NASB)**

**<sup>18</sup> Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,**

**<sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

**<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

All the blessings and new things that the Christian enjoys are from the Lord. Because of the Lord Jesus Christ we are reconciled to God the Father by His son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a new position in our standing or our relationship with God when we are saved. The grip of a great God *changed* or *mollified our relationship with God the Father*. We become His children because we have been reconciled to Him.

### **John 1:12 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,**

The key idea in this verse is the truth of *reconciliation*. Both the verb *katallassō* {*kat-al-las'-so*} (**reconciled**) and the noun *katallagē* {*kat-al-lag-ay*} (**reconciliation**) appear in the New Testament only in Paul's writings.

The terms always portray *God as the reconciler*, and *sinner as the ones reconciled*, since it was human sin that *ruptured the relationship* between God and man. Because of his *rebellion* and *sin*, man became the enemy of a holy God and was out of fellowship with Him.

The basic meanings of the word *reconcile* are “**to remove enmity between two enemy parties**” or “**to change thoroughly.**” Reconciliation is more than having our sins forgiven and divine justice being satisfied. It means to change something *inside out, upside down, and right side up*.

It refers to a changed relationship between God and the lost world.

1. **Reconciliation** is not something man does, but what he receives. It is not what he accomplishes, but what he embraces.
2. **Reconciliation** is a divine provision by which God's holy displeasure against alienated sinners is appeased. His hostility against men is removed. A harmonious relationship between the Lord and the saved sinner is established.
3. **Reconciliation** occurs because God in His grace was willing to design a way to have all the sins of those who have put their faith in Christ covered by His blood.

Through the work of the Cross, Jesus Christ has brought man and God together again by paying the price for man's sins. Men, however, must accept what Christ has done on Calvary. Multitudes, however, think they have a better way. “**Religion**” or “**good works**” are man's feeble efforts to be reconciled to God, but those efforts are destined to fail.

Those who have trusted in Christ have a ministry of reconciliation. The grip of a great God *mandated us with the ministry of reconciliation*. It is our responsibility to share with others what Christ has done for them so they can be reconciled to God. When God grips your life, you will be concerned about the souls of people. **This is our ministry.**

When people put their faith in Christ, their sins are not “**imputed**” to them. This is written in the present tense which means continual action. God's imputation never fails.

### **What is this all about?**

**Imputation** is a word borrowed from banking. It simply means “**to put to one's account.**” When you deposit money in the bank, the computer puts that amount to your account, or to your credit. When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sins were imputed to Him—put to His account. He was treated by God as though He had actually committed those sins. He became sin for us, taking the sins of the world upon Himself. All of our sins have been paid for and God no longer holds them against us, because we have trusted Christ as our Savior.



Because the Lord has saved us, we have a new position not only in our standing, but also a new position in our service to Him. The grip of a great God *make us ambassadors for Christ*. We are ambassadors for Christ that are to be pleading with men and sharing the message of reconciliation with the lost. We are to be pointing men to the Lord.

In **1936**, a radio broadcast was transmitted to America from England. Just before the voice of **King Edward VIII** was to be heard, someone stumbled over a wire in the control room of **WJZ (now WABC, New York)** and snapped the only line of communication between the two great countries.

The engineers were frantic. Then, with only a few moments remaining before air time a quick-thinking apprentice grasped the two broken ends of the wire and bridged the gap. Seconds later the King addressed the nation. In a real sense, his words were being transmitted through the body of that man! **The words of Christ are to be transmitted through us as His ambassadors.**

**Now what does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ?** A look at the history of a Roman ambassador will shed some wonderful insights. In the Roman Empire, there were **two kinds of provinces: senatorial provinces and imperial provinces.**

The *senatorial provinces* were made up of people who were peaceful and not at war with Rome. They had surrendered and submitted.

On the other hand, the *imperial provinces* were not peaceful at all. These provinces were dangerous because they would rebel against Rome if they could. It was necessary for Rome to send ambassadors to the imperial provinces to make sure that rebellion did not break out.

Since Christians in this world are the ambassadors of Christ, this means that the world is in rebellion against God. This world is an **“imperial province”** as far as God is concerned. He has sent His ambassadors into the world to declare peace, not war.

Our message as ambassadors is, **“Be ye reconciled to God!”** We represent the Lord Jesus Christ. If sinners *reject us* and *our message*, it is Jesus Christ who is actually rejected. What a great privilege it is to be Heaven’s ambassadors to the rebellious sinners of this world!

Being an ambassador in ancient times was an important and highly regarded duty. An ambassador was **both** a *messenger* for and a *representative* of the one who sent him, and believers are messengers and representatives of the court of Heaven.

Just as an ambassador lives in a foreign land, so do believers. Though citizens of Heaven, they represent their King in this world, where they live **“as strangers and pilgrims.”**

**Philippians 3:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;**

**1 Peter 2:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> **Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.**

An ambassador of the United States is an American in a foreign land. His life is spent among people who usually speak a *different language*, who have a *different tradition* and who follow a *different way* of life. The Christian is always like that. He lives in the world; he takes part in all the life and work of the world; but he is still a citizen of Heaven. In those terms, he is a stranger in this world.

When one government sends an ambassador to another government, it means they are on friendly relations. God is still friendly with this world. He has sent us as His ambassadors. Ancient ambassadors gave the specific message of those who sent them.

This is what we are to do also. But, one day He will call His ambassadors home, at the Rapture, just as a nation pulls out its ambassadors on the verge of war with another nation. Then judgment will begin.

**Until** we are called home in *death* or at the *Rapture*, we are to consider our position as ambassadors for Christ seriously. The honor of a country is in its ambassador's hands. His country is judged by him. His words are listened to, his deeds are watched and people say, "That is the way such-and-such a country speaks and behaves."

As Christians, we represent the Lord Jesus Christ and need to act like it. When we don't behave, we become a hindrance to the Lord's work.

**Romans 14:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> **Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.**

**1 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> **But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.**

The Christian who is gripped by a great God will do his best to be a godly ambassador for Christ. What kind of ambassador are you?

## VI. THE PAYMENT FOR OUR PURITY—[2 Corinthians 5:21](#)

### [2 Corinthians 5:21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

Christ took the sins of the world upon Himself so that we could be *saved* and be *reconciled* to the Lord. He was able to be our Savior because He was absolutely sinless. He made the payment for our purity.

In the process of God's imputation, our sins *are not imputed* or *credited* to our spiritual account, they are put on Christ. The righteousness of Christ is *imputed* or *credited* to us. When God looks at the Christian, He sees the righteousness of His Son.

This is why we have eternal life. Have you been gripped by a great God? Have you put your faith in Christ? If so, have you yielded your life to Him to do His will? Have you ever heard of the term "**posthaste**"? This term goes back to the time of **Henry VIII**.

Postmasters were given relays of horses to carry messages for the king to important cities in England. Because some couriers were *irresponsible* and *wasted time* in taverns and inns on the way, a drastic law was put into effect demanding that every dispatch carrier should "**ride for his life.**" The king's edict meant that anyone caught delaying his messages would be publicly hanged.

Often there was drawn upon important letters the figure of a man suspended from a gallows. Beneath was this ominous warning: "**Haste, post, haste! Haste for thy life!**" A number of men did suffer death because of their inefficiency, but in the 19th century the practice was discontinued.

However, the old expression still remains as a reminder that the *utmost speed* and *urgency* is required when the king's business is involved! The business of the King of kings is an urgent matter. May we not forget it!

## Chapter 13. A Concern for Consistency

### 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—

<sup>2</sup> for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"—

<sup>3</sup> giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,

<sup>4</sup> but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,

<sup>5</sup> in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,

<sup>6</sup> in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,

<sup>7</sup> in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,

<sup>8</sup> by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and yet true;

<sup>9</sup> as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,

<sup>10</sup> as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

In May, 1982, Leonid Brezhnev was president of a country that no longer exists -- the Soviet Union. In Baltimore, a lanky shortstop named **Cal Ripken** played the first game of what became known as "**the streak.**" The 6' 4" fielder was considered too tall for the position. Yet, he just kept plugging away. In 1998, 2632 games later, he set the all-time record for consecutive games played by a major league baseball player. Greatness comes not just from *ability*, but also from *consistency*.

One of the key conflicts that most, if not all Christians face, is the issue of being a *consistent* Christian day after day. The reason *consistency* is a *conflict* is because we continue to have to deal with our flesh which pulls us in a different direction than the Holy Spirit.

The reason for the conflicts is because the natural inclinations of our flesh toward godly matters tend to be *indifferent in attitude, immoral in actions or aspirations, inundated with avarice, influenced by our arrogance, impetuous to anger, irrational in arguments*, and *ignorant about the actuality of God's power, presence, and promises*. Paul was frustrated about this conflict because he was concerned about being consistent as a Christian.

**Romans 7:18-25 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.

<sup>19</sup> For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

<sup>20</sup> But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

<sup>21</sup> I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

<sup>22</sup> For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

<sup>23</sup> but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

<sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

<sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

In this portion, Paul emphasizes with his life his *concern* for *consistency* in Christ-likeness. He reveals to us that no matter what circumstances he faced, he remained a consistent, godly Christian that brought honor to Christ instead of being a *hindrance* or *stumbling block* to others watching his life. His example and attitude are a challenge for us to follow in his steps.

**1 Corinthians 11:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

Notice verse one.

**I. THE CAUTION ABOUT GOD'S GRACE—[2 Corinthians 6:1](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

Paul was a worker for Christ. With the Lord's help, he worked with other believers to reach people for Christ.

**1 Corinthians 3:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Serving the Lord is a team effort. We need each other's help and encouragement as we endeavor to live for Christ and reach others for Him.

There are so many things that can discourage us. Yet, the *love, prayers, and encouragement* we get from other Christians helps us to keep going for the Lord.

I think about **David Livingstone** when he climbed into the pulpit of a little church in Scotland. He'd honed his sermon. He'd prepared it so very well. David wanted to be a great preacher. This man wanted to go give his life on the mission field. And when he got up to preach that night, he flapped his wings, but he couldn't get off the runway. He tried, but finally he forgot his sermon altogether; so he apologized to the people and left in great shame.

But **Robert Moffat**, the famous missionary, was there that night. Moffat came up to him after the service and said, "You can be a great and wonderful servant of God. Why don't you go to medical school?" Today you can't mention Africa without thinking about David Livingstone, but what would have happened to David Livingstone without the encouragement of Robert Moffat? **Never underestimate the power of your encouragement and love for others.**

Through his labors of love, the apostle Paul was able to share the Gospel with a lot of people and reach many for Christ in Corinth. He now cautions and begs these folks to not make the mistake of receiving God's grace in vain, a caution which we can apply to our own lives today.

There is a **twofold aspect** of this caution. **First** of all, he did not want those who were perhaps religious, but lost, to reject God's grace in salvation. There were folks like this in the Corinth church as well as in many churches today. They heard the truth of how to have eternal life through Jesus Christ, but the head knowledge of this truth would be irrelevant if they did not act upon it.

Salvation must be embraced by faith in Jesus Christ if they wanted to go to Heaven. If they rejected God's grace of salvation, and died without Christ, their opportunity would end up being in vain. This is what Paul did not want to happen and pleaded with them to not reject God's grace. If you do not know the Lord as your Savior, don't waste your opportunity to be saved. God's grace is being extended to you.

A **second** application is seen in this caution. Paul did not want the Corinthian Christians to waste what God had done in their lives. They received God's grace and were saved, but this was their starting point of spiritual growth. The same holds for us too. He wanted to see these Christians become consistent in Christ-likeness.

Beloved, it is God's grace that enables us to live the Christian life and serve Him. His grace is our *rope of redemption*. It helps us to *cope* with conflicts, *hope* for Heaven, *lope* or walk with God, *scope* our sights on the Savior's will, to say "**Nope**" to temptation, and not *grope* through life, wondering if we will go to Heaven when we die. We can know with certainty we are saved.

**1 John 5:13 (NASB)**

**<sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.**

When we become spiritually *apathetic* and *unconcerned* about the Lord and His work, then in essence we have received His grace in vain. God wants us to walk with Him and grow in Christ, not float around like dead leaves on a flowing stream. Our purpose in life is to bring *honor* and *glory* to Him and serve Him in some way.

**Missionary George Atley** believed this with all his heart. George was killed while serving with the **Central African Mission**. There were no witnesses, but the evidence indicates that Atley was confronted by a band of hostile tribesmen. He was carrying a fully loaded, 10-chamber Winchester rifle, and had to choose either to shoot his attackers and run the risk of negating the work of the mission in that area, or not to defend himself and be killed.

When his body was later found in a stream, it was evident that he had chosen the latter. Nearby lay his rifle with all 10 chambers still loaded. He had made the *supreme sacrifice*, motivated by his burden for lost souls and his answering devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the apostle Paul, he wanted Christ to be magnified in his body, “**whether by life or by death.**”

**Matthew 5:16 (NASB)**

**<sup>16</sup> Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

Let me ask, “Have you received God’s grace in vain? Are you growing spiritually and making your life count for Christ? Are you concerned about having Christ-like consistency?”

**II. THE CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES—2 Corinthians 6:2**

**2 Corinthians 6:2 (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup> For He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION".**

This verse is a very special one to me. The very first sermon that I ever preached at the age of 28 was from this text. I entitled it “*The Tick of Time.*” We find here that Paul has appealed to the Corinthians to not receive the grace of God in vain. If they had not put their faith in Christ, then the time to make that decision was immediately.

The Messiah had come, *the sin debt had been paid*, and all that was left was for men to accept the payment of Christ by putting their faith in Him. If you have never been saved, now is the time to make that decision. The matter of salvation is an urgent matter because you never know when death will strike your life. The opportunity to be saved is today. **Now is the accepted time.**

At some future period the time *will NOT be acceptable*. **Isaiah** stressed this truth too.

**Isaiah 55:6-7 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.**

**<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.**

If men *grieve away* the Holy Spirit; if they *continue to reject* the Gospel and become hard hearted; if they go *unprepared* into eternity, the day of salvation for them will be gone forever and no mercy will be found.

God does not design to pardon men beyond the grave. There is no forgiveness for your sins after you are dead. Those who are *not pardoned* in this life must be *unpardoned* for ever in an eternal Hell. Along the same lines, if you are a Christian, the opportunity to serve Christ and tell others is now. Don't throw your opportunities away. **Now is the acceptable time to serve the Lord.** Make your time count for Christ.

**Ephesians 5:15-16 (NASB)**

**<sup>15</sup> Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,**

**<sup>16</sup> making the most of your time, because the days are evil.**

**Dwight L. Moody**, by his own admission, made a mistake on the **eighth of October, 1871**. It was a mistake he determined never to repeat again. He had been preaching in the city of Chicago. That particular night drew his largest audience yet. His message was *“What will you do then with Jesus who is called the Christ?”* By the end of the service, he was tired. He concluded his message with a presentation of the gospel and a concluding statement: **“Now I give you a week to think that over. And when we come together again, you will have opportunity to respond.”**

A soloist began to sing, but before the final note, the music was drowned out by clanging bells and wailing sirens screaming through the streets of Chicago. The great Chicago Fire was blazing.

In the ashen aftermath, hundreds were dead and over a hundred thousand people were homeless. Without a doubt, some who heard Moody's message had died in the scorching flames of the fire. He reflected remorsefully that he would have given his right arm before he would ever give an audience another week to think over the message of the Gospel. **Beloved, now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation.**



In the *concern for consistency*, we have examined the caution about God’s *grace* and the *current opportunities*. Next, we will look at the concern for our testimony.

### III. THE CONCERN FOR OUR TESTIMONY—[2 Corinthians 6:3](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 6:3 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> **giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,**

Paul was concerned about consistency as a Christian. His caution was that we live in such a way that no one will stumble or be offended by our inconsistency, carnality, or hypocrisy. Notice what he said in the letter to the Christians at Rome.

#### [Romans 2:21-24 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> **you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?**

<sup>22</sup> **You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?**

<sup>23</sup> **You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?**

<sup>24</sup> **For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written.**

Beloved, we all need to be concerned about our *testimony* and *example*. We are to give “**no offense**” in anything we do. The negative adjective “**NO**” is from the word *mēdemian* {*may-di-may-n*}. It is a strong term and could be translated “**no, not at all.**” It is followed by another strong negative term, *mēdeni* {*may-di-ni*}, which means, “**not anything.**” Those two terms leave no room at all for an offense.

This word “**offense**” is from the Greek word *proskope* {*pros-kop-ay*} which means “**to do something which causes others to stumble or leads them into error or sin; a stumbling block.**” Here it means any *transgression* or *scandal* that might take place among Christians, whereby either Jews or Gentiles might take occasion of offense, and vilify the Gospel of Christ.

#### [Romans 14:13 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> **Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.**

Paul was extremely careful to give no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry would not be discredited. He was very *concerned* about being *consistent*. He was determined never to allow any stain on his virtue that would undermine the integrity of the Gospel that he was preaching. He did not want to ruin his credibility.

**1 Corinthians 9:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> **But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.**

The Apostle Paul would avoid anything that would bring *disgrace* on Christ or *cause someone to find fault* with the *truth* and *purity* of the Gospel. His own integrity was crucial in protecting *his credibility* and *the credibility of his message*.

Beloved, we need to be *concerned* about *consistency* because our actions can influence someone to either *accept* or *reject* Christ. Some Christians have difficulty in reaching people for Christ because of the bad example of other Christians. A skeptical world will focus on the faults of foolish believers and group all believers into the same barrel. They will say, “All Christians are a bunch of fakes!” That is not true, but some people do believe it is true because of the example of inconsistent Christians.

When **David Brainerd** was among the American Indians, he stopped at a place where he offered to share the Gospel and instruct them in Christianity. He was met by the firm retort, “Why should you desire the Indians to become Christians, seeing that the Christians are so much worse than the Indians? The Christians lie, steal, and drink worse than the Indians. They first taught the Indians to be drunk. They steal to so great a degree that their rulers are obliged to hang them for it; and even that is not enough to deter others from the practice. We will not consent, therefore, to become Christians, lest we should be as bad as they. We will live as our fathers lived, and go where our fathers are, when we die.” **By no influence could he change their decision.**

Beloved, your testimony does affect other people. May the Lord help us to realize how serious and concerned we should be about being consistent, Christ-like Christians.

## IV. A CHECKLIST OF CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER— 2 Corinthians 6:4-10

### 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup> but in everything **commending** ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,  
<sup>5</sup> in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,  
<sup>6</sup> in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,  
<sup>7</sup> in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,  
<sup>8</sup> by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and yet true;  
<sup>9</sup> as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,  
<sup>10</sup> as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

Paul was *concerned* about *Christ-like consistency*. He admonished us that no matter what we do, our actions should not create an *obstacle* or *stumbling block*. He continues here and states that in all things that we do, we should demonstrate by our lives that we are genuine servants of the Lord. We are to “**approve**” ourselves as ministers of God. The word “**commending**” is from the Greek word *sunistemi* {soon-is'-tay-mee} which means “**to prove to be, demonstrate, display, to be solid or firm.**” Our lives are to be proof that the Lord lives within us. Is this important to you? **Are you concerned about consistency?**

Paul proceeds to provide a checklist of all the areas and circumstances where he consistently lived a Christ-like life and how he did this. The check list is a challenge for us to follow his example in the same circumstances and to live the same way. Paul listed nine trials (2 Corinthians 6:4-5). Then he mentioned a group of inner qualities (2 Corinthians 6:6-7), followed by pairs of paradoxes (2 Corinthians 6:8-10) where he remained consistent. Let's look at his checklist of consistency.

### *A Checklist of Consistency*

#### A. Consistent in Diligence: “*in much endurance*”—v. 4

### 2 Corinthians 6:4 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup> But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, **in much endurance**, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,

Paul begins his checklist with a powerful and triumphant word.... **endurance**. What does he mean by this? This powerful word is from the Greek word *hupomone* {hoop-om-on-ay'} which means “**steadfastness, endurance, diligence or triumphant patience.**”

It describes the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to *faith* and *piety* by even the greatest *trials* and *sufferings*. It does not describe the frame of mind which can sit down with folded hands and bowed head and let a torrent of troubles sweep over it in passive resignation. It describes the ability to bear things in such a triumphant way that it transfigures them.

*Hypomone* is the *courageous* and *triumphant* ability to pass the **breaking-point** and **not to break**, and always to greet the unseen with a cheer. It helps one *to endure* the shock of battle and *remain steadfast* in the face of death. It changes tribulation into *strength* and *glory*.

The Lord often places Christians in circumstances of peculiar trial, among other reasons, in order that they may illustrate the power of Christ by their example and show others with what *temper* and *spirit* they may be able to endure suffering.

Christians often do a great deal more good by their example in suffering than they do in their witnessing.

*It is easy* to speak to others; *it is not so easy* to manifest just the right spirit in time of persecution and trial. Men and women can resist our witness to them, but they find it difficult to resist the *effect* and *power* of a good example in times of suffering. When we are consistent in Christ-likeness while going through trials, Christ is glorified.

Endurance is the *supreme quality*, the *very backbone* of consistency. Unless a man endures, he will never be consistent, not in a *corruptible* and *sinful* world. A *corrupt* and *sinful* world presents *obstacle* after *obstacle* and *sin* after *sin* that have to be *endured* and *overcome* if a person is to live a consistent Christ-like life. *Steadfast, patient endurance* is the basic *ingredient* and *force* that a person must have to live a consistent life for the Lord Jesus. Earlier in this letter, Paul expressed his triumphant endurance.

#### **2 Corinthians 4:8-11 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> **We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;**

<sup>9</sup> **persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;**

<sup>10</sup> **always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.**

<sup>11</sup> **For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.**

Beloved we need to be Timex Christians. The old motto of this wrist watch was **“Takes a licking and keeps on ticking!”** We need to keep on ticking too. Consistency for Christ is an outgrowth of being diligent.

**John Killinger** retells this story from “**Atlantic Monthly**” about the days of the great western cattle ranches: “A little burro sometimes would be harnessed to a wild steed. Bucking and raging, convulsing like drunken sailors, the two would be turned loose like Laurel and Hardy to proceed out onto the desert range. They could be seen disappearing over the horizon, the great steed dragging that little burro along and throwing him about like a bag of cream puffs.

They might be gone for days, but eventually they would come back. The little burro would be seen first, trotting back across the horizon, leading the submissive steed in tow. Somewhere out there on the rim of the world that steed would become exhausted from trying to get rid of the burro, and in that moment, the burro would take mastery and become the leader.”

And that’s the way it is with the kingdom and it’s heroes, isn’t it? The battle **is to the diligent** and the **determined**, not to the outraged; **to the committed**, not to those who are merely dramatic. Paul was consistent in diligence.

## 2. Consistent in Detrimental and Damaging Treatment: “... *in afflictions*” —[v. 4](#)

### 2 Corinthians 6:4 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup>But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, **in afflictions**, in hardships, in distresses,

Paul was consistent for Christ, even though he faced “**afflictions.**” This word is from the Greek word *thlipsis* {*thlip'-sis*} which originally expressed “**oppression, distress, tribulation, or sheer, physical pressure on a man.**”

It described the process of *crushing* or *pressing* something together. There are things which weigh down a man’s spirit like the sorrows which are a burden on his heart and the disappointments which are likely to crush the life out of him. We all face pressure, strain, and tension that come both from within and without.

In spite of all the terrible treatment that Paul faced on his journeys, he remained a consistent Christian. This brings us to some good questions, “What does it take to stop you or make you quit? How high is your endurance level? Are you facing crushing circumstances or oppressive treatment from others, even other Christians? **Realize the source of our consistency comes from our relationship with and reliance upon Jesus Christ.**

### Philippians 4:13 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup>I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

### 3. Consistent in Difficulties: “...in hardships”—[v. 4](#)

#### 2 Corinthians 6:4 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup>But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, **in hardships**, in distresses,

What does Paul mean by this word “hardships?” It is from the word *anagke* {*an-ang-kay*} which means “distress, calamity, great needs.” This is a stronger term than afflictions, and **denotes** the difficulties which arose from want of the necessities of life.

He everywhere *endured adversity, hardships, and unavoidable difficulties and calamity*. Whether life for us is *up or down, in or out, back or forth, rich or poor, have or have not*s, God wants us to be consistent for Christ in serving Him.

This is what Paul did in his own life because he relied upon the Lord and was truly concerned about being consistent. He learned to be happy no matter what circumstances he faced.

#### Philippians 4:11 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup>Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

Many preachers have dropped out of the ministry because of “hardships.” Let me ask, “Have you learned to be content with what God has given to you or are your eyes focused on what you don’t have instead of the blessings that God has already given to you?”

Once upon a time, there was a man who lived with his wife, two small children, and his elderly parents in a tiny hut. He tried to be *patient* and *gracious*, but the noise and crowded conditions wore him down. In desperation, he consulted the village wise man. “Do you have a rooster?” asked the wise man. “Yes,” he replied. “Keep the rooster in the hut with your family, and come see me again next week.”

The next week, the man returned and told the wise elder that living conditions were worse than ever, with the rooster crowing and making a mess of the hut. “Do you have a cow?” asked the wise elder. The man nodded fearfully. “Take your cow into the hut as well, and come see me in a week.”

Over the next several weeks, the man -- on the advice of the wise elder—made room also for a goat, two dogs, and all of his brother’s children. Finally, he could take no more, and in a fit of anger, kicked out all the animals and guests, leaving only his wife, his children, and his parents. The home suddenly became spacious and quiet, and everyone lived happily ever after. The man learned to be content with what he had. His difficulties no longer looked that bad. **Is this a lesson that you need to learn?**

#### 4. Consistent in Distresses: “... *in distresses*”—[v. 4](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 6:4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, **in distresses**,

What is Paul talking about when he speaks of “**distresses?**” It is a stronger word than either of those which he had before used. This word is from the word *stenochoria* {*sten-okh-o-ree'-ah*} which means “**narrowness of place; extreme affliction; cornered or confined to a narrow place; hemmed in on every side, as the Israelites were at the Red Sea. The sea was before them, and Pharaoh and his host behind them.**”

It describes *trials* and *difficulties* from which there is no escape. It might be used of an army caught in a narrow, rocky ridge with space neither to **maneuver** nor to **escape**. This word might also be used of a ship caught in a storm with no room either *to ride it* or *to run before it*. It has the idea of being trapped.

There are moments when a man seems to be in a situation in which the walls of life are closing round him. Paul faced those times when he was surrounded and there was nothing he could do. He was *out of control*, but God was *still in control*.

Though *cornered* and *surrounded* by problems, he remained consistent for Christ. He did not let his circumstances overwhelm or control him. They don't have to overwhelm us either.

What was one of Paul's secrets in facing distress and staying close to the Lord? He believed he was a conqueror and that nothing could defeat him because of the Lord's help. He was dependent upon the Lord. We need to have the same attitude too.

##### [Romans 8:35-39 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

<sup>36</sup> Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

<sup>37</sup> But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

<sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## 5. Consistent in Drubbings and Damage to the Body: “... *in beatings*” [v. 5](#)

### [2 Corinthians 6:5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> **In beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,**

Paul was concerned about consistency even in the face of being *tortured, stoned, beaten up, drubbed, or whipped*. These are the meanings behind the word “beatings.” This was a savage, excruciating punishment. The whip was made of leather straps with two small balls attached to the end of each strap. The balls were made of rough lead or sharp bones or spikes, so that they would cut deeply into the flesh.

Paul’s hands were tied to a post above his head and he was scourged. It was the custom for the prisoner to be lashed until he was judged near death by the presiding centurion (Jewish trials allowed only forty lashes.) The criminal’s back was nothing more than an unrecognizable mass of shredded tissue and flesh.

In [2 Corinthians 11:23-25](#), Paul says that he had been scourged five times by the Jews, and had been beaten with rods three times. He was beaten on eight different occasions. One time would be traumatic for most of us. His concern for Christ-like consistency helped him to endure.

### [2 Corinthians 11:23-25 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>23</sup> **Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.**

<sup>24</sup> **Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.**

<sup>25</sup> **Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.**

The shadows of Christian history reveal the *courage* and *consistency* of Christians who were willing to be martyred for Christ rather than deny Him. It is the simple fact that if there had not been those who were ready and able to bear the torture of the fire and the wild beasts, we might not be Christians today.

The blood of martyr’s is the seed of the church. There are still some for whom it is physical agony to be a Christian. In fact, **160,000** Christians are put to death every year right now across the world.

**Thomas Hauker** was a **sixteenth-century English martyr** who proved that Jesus supplies the strength needed by Christians who trust in Him. Mr. Hauker was sentenced to be burned to death in **1555**, because of his belief in the gospel of Christ.



His friend in the cell next to him asked Mr. Hauker to give him a sign if God's grace was sufficient during the fire. Perhaps, he feared that he too, might be called upon to suffer for Jesus someday.

He said, "Thomas, I have to ask you a favor. I need to know if what others say about the grace of God is true. Tomorrow, when they burn you at the stake, if the pain is tolerable and your mind is still at peace, lift your hands above your head. Do it right before you die. Thomas, I have to know."

The next day, Thomas Hauker was tied to a stake and pieces of wood around him were set on fire. He prayed for a while, but fell silent as he grew weaker. The fire burned a long time, but Hauker remained motionless. His skin was burnt to a crisp and his fingers were gone. Everyone watching supposed he was dead.

But suddenly, Thomas Hauker, who was still on fire, raised his fingerless hands over his head to the Lord of Heaven and joyfully clapped them three times, signifying to all that Jesus had given him the strength to suffer for His name. The people there broke into shouts of praise and applause. Hauker's friend had his answer. God's grace is sufficient for any need or circumstance.

#### **2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup> And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.**

**<sup>10</sup> Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Paul was concerned about being consistent for Christ. We have seen so far that he was consistent in *diligence, detrimental and damaging treatment, difficulties, distresses, in drubbings and damage to the body.*

Next, we will see he was consistent during *detentions in prison.*

#### **6. Consistent in Detentions in Prison: "...in imprisonments" [v. 5](#)**

#### **2 Corinthians 6:5 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup> In beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,**

Paul was arrested and imprisoned several times: in Philippi ([Acts 16](#)), Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome. The early church Christian, Clement of Rome (A.D. 96), says that Paul was imprisoned seven times throughout the whole span of his ministry. The cells of jails and prisons have been homes for Christians for hundreds of years because they *refused to renounce* their faith in Christ.

Paul remained consistent for Christ in spite of his imprisonments. That is not easy to do if you think about it. He could have been tempted to say, “What’s the use. The Lord doesn’t care about me. He doesn’t know what He is doing. I’m wasting my time. Ok, I’ll compromise and do what you want.”

The pressure from officials and from other prisoners can cause one to renounce Christ. Such was not the case with Paul. He continued to worship and serve the Lord behind the iron bars of a Roman cell. His mattress was straw and dirt and his companions were the *rats, roaches, fleas, and spiders* that frequented his cell. Several of the epistles were written from prison including Philippians which has a theme of joy. From his prison cell, Paul wrote these verses.

**Philippians 4:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

**Philippians 4:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

## 7. Consistent in Disarray, Disorder, and Disturbances from Angry Mobs: “...*in tumults*”—[v. 5](#)

**2 Corinthians 6:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> In beatings, in imprisonments, **in tumults**, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,

Paul was consistent for Christ when he faced **tumults**. This word is from the Greek word *akatastasia* {*ak-at-as-tah-see'-ah*} which means “**instability, confusion, a state of disorder, commotion, or disturbances.**” *Akatastasia* is used here in connection with the preaching of the Gospel.

Such tumults were excited at **Corinth**, ([Acts 18:6](#)); at **Philippi**, ([Acts 16:19-20](#)); at **Lystra and Derbe**, ([Acts 14:19](#)); at **Ephesus**, ([Acts 19](#);) and in various other places.

**Acts 18:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

**Acts 16:19-20 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,

<sup>20</sup> and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,

**Acts 14:19 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

Preaching does get people stirred up sometimes. People do get angry at Bible preaching. Truth does sting, especially when you expose a *teaching* or *tradition* that is *unscriptural, unbiblical, and historically inaccurate*.

**John Wesley** tells us of what happened to him in **Wednesbury** when the mob came “pouring down like a flood.” “To attempt speaking was vain; for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along until we came to the town; when, seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in; but a man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the crowd. They made no more stops till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other.”

**George Foxe** tells us of what happened to him at a place called **Tickhill**. “I found the priest and most of the chief of the parish together in the chancel. So I went up to them and began to speak, but immediately they fell upon me; the clerk took up the Bible as I was speaking, and struck me on the face with it, so that it gushed out with blood, and I bled exceedingly in the steeple-house.

Then the people cried, 'Let us have him out of the Church.' When they had got me out they beat me exceedingly, and threw me down, over a hedge. Afterwards they dragged me through a house into the street, stoning and beating me as they drew me along, so that I was besmeared all over with blood and dirt. Yet, when I was got upon my legs again I declared to them the Word of Life and showed them the fruits of their teachers, how they dishonored Christianity."

Mob uprisings present one of the most *difficult* and *frightening* situations imaginable for a believer, for a mob cannot be controlled by reason. The believer is unable to be heard, so speech is useless. Believers often face the *abuse* and *ridicule* of crowds because of the righteous lives they live and because they refuse to join in the *worldly pleasures* and *indulgences* of life. At such times the believer must be consistent in his testimony—no matter the temptation to go along with the crowd.

We don't face as much violence today as in years gone by. The intimidation tactics that are used today in this country are *contempt, derision, threats, and mockery*. In the face of these darts, we are to be resolved in following Christ and consistent in our Christ-likeness.

The tendency is to take *revenge* and *fight back* because we are *hurt, misrepresented, or unfairly treated*, but God urges restraint and tells us that revenge is His responsibility. He warns us that if we live godly lives, we will suffer persecution.

**Romans 12:19 (NASB)**

**<sup>19</sup> Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath**

*of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.*

**Matthew 5:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> **Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.**

**2 Timothy 3:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> **Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**

You may not be facing *disarray, disorder, or disturbances* from an angry mob, but you may be facing these responses from *unsaved* or *carnal* family members or friends. Don't be discouraged and give up on the Lord. Do your best to remain consistent for Christ as you face your conflicts. Do not be ashamed of the Lord, of the Bible, or the fact that you want to live a godly life. *Righteousness* does not cause shame, but *wickedness* does.

**Proverbs 13:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> **A righteous man hates falsehood, But a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.**

The life of a wicked man stinks. His lifestyle brings shame and embarrassment.

#### **8. Consistent in Debilitation: "...in labors." [v. 5](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> **in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,**

Paul was consistent for Christ even in those times when he was *debilitated, weak, or exhausted* from his work. The word "labors" is from the word *kopos {kop'-os}* and describes "toil to the point of sheer exhaustion, the kind of toil which takes everything of body, mind and spirit that a man has to give." Paul was not lazy at all and we too, are not to be slothful in serving the Lord or our boss. Our time to serve Christ is limited. Be consistent in working hard for Him.

For those men that are working a secular job and also pastoring a church, keep up the good work. At one time in my ministry, I had to work a secular job along with my pastoring responsibilities at the church. It was not easy, but God gave me strength. Be careful about your health. Take time for your family. When you are exhausted or discouraged, don't forget whom you are serving. It will be worth it all one day. Be consistent in your labors for Him.

**Romans 12:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> **Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;**

## 9. Consistent in Deficiency of Sleep: “...*in sleeplessness*”—[v. 5](#)

### 2 Corinthians 6:5 (NASB)

<sup>5</sup> in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, **in sleeplessness**, in hunger,

This word “**sleeplessness**” is from the Greek word *agrupnia* {*ag-roop-nee'-ah*} which means “**to keep watch, night guard duty, keep awake all night long, sleeplessness.**” Paul was consistent even though he lost sleep. Some of his nights were spent in prayer, in peril, or in pain from persecution or imprisonment.

There will be times in your life that your service for Christ or your burden for people will rob the rest from your eyes. I still vividly remember my years in college. Many of us worked through the night hours and got about two hours of sleep before we headed to class the next morning. In the afternoons, we got a couple of more hours of sleep, studied, and then were off to work.

My typical work week now is about 65 to 70 hours... sometimes more and sometimes less. Paul knew what it was like to be exhausted too. Beloved, be faithful in serving Him. An old **German proverb** says, “**If you would have your lamp burn, you must pour oil into it.**” If we are going to burn for Christ, then we need the oil of the Holy Spirit empowering our lives.

One of the major components of men who accomplished great works of knowledge seems to be hard work and going without sleep sometimes. **Noah Webster** worked 36 years on his Dictionary, while **Gibbon** labored 26 years on his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

When **Milton** was writing *Paradise Lost*, he rose at 4:00 a.m. every morning to begin work. Men who have accomplished great goals knew how to work hard and do without rest. Are you willing to lose some rest in order to serve the Lord? Paul was such a man.

We have seen so far that Paul was concerned about being consistent in Christ-likeness. He demonstrated the balance that he had in his life by all the areas or circumstances where he was consistent. The first nine were areas where he was consistent in trials.

1. *Consistent in Diligence: “in endurance”* [v. 4](#)
2. *Consistent in Detrimental and Damaging Treatment: “...in afflictions”* [v. 4](#)
3. *Consistent in Difficulties: “...in hardships”* [v. 4](#)
4. *Consistent in Distresses: “... in distresses”* [v. 4](#)
5. *Consistent in Drubbings and Damage to the Body: “... in beatings”* [v. 5](#)
6. *Consistent in Detentions in Prison: “...in imprisonments”* [v. 5](#)
7. *Consistent in Disarray and Disturbances from Angry Mobs: “...in tumults”* [v. 5](#)

8. *Consistent in Debilitation: “...in labors.” v. 5*

9. *Consistent in Deficiency of Sleep: “...in sleeplessness” v. 5*

Paul continues his checklist of consistency by listing inner qualities where he remained consistent for Christ.

10. *Consistent in Deprivation of Food: “...in hunger”—v. 5*

**2 Corinthians 6:5 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup> in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,**

The apostle was consistent for Christ, even in those times when food was sparse or there was none at all. The term “**hunger**” is referring probably not only to the somewhat frequent fasts to which he voluntarily submitted as acts of devotion, but also to the fact that in his travels, when abroad and among strangers, he was often destitute of food. So this was an inner quality, but also a dire circumstance.

11. *Consistent in Decorum, Deportment, or Demeanor: “...in purity”—v. 6*

**2 Corinthians 6:6 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,**

Paul was consistent in purity. The word “**in**” can also be translated “**by**.” He proved his integrity and consistency by being pure under all circumstances. The word “**purity**” is from the word *hagnotes* {*hag-not'-ace*} which means “**purity, chastity, or uprightness of life.**”

This word was defined by the Greeks as “**the careful avoidance of all sins which are against the gods; the service of the honor of God as nature demands**”, as “**prudence at its highest tension**” and as “**freedom from every stain of flesh and spirit.**”

It is in fact the quality which enables a man to enter into the very presence of God. This is the meaning the Greeks gave to this word and how they applied it in their relationship with their Greek gods.

In the forests of **Northern Europe** lives the *ermine*, a small animal known best for its snow-white fur. Instinctively, this animal protects its glossy coat of fur with great care lest it become soiled.

Hunters often capitalize on this trait. Instead of setting a mechanical trap to catch the *ermine*, they find its home in a cleft of a rock or a hollow tree and daub the entrance and the interior with tar. Then their dogs start the chase, and the frightened ermine flees toward its home. But finding it covered with dirt, he spurns his place of safety. Rather

than soil his white fur, he courageously faces the yelping dogs who hold him at bay until the hunters capture him.

To the *ermine*, purity is dearer than life! We too, should have this same kind of attitude. The Lord wants us to be a people who will keep ourselves “**unspotted from the world.**”

Passion for purity will go a long way in your quest to be consistent for Christ. The exhortation of Scripture is to be pure.

**Philippians 2:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> **So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,**

**2 Peter 3:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,**

In his earlier life, **Dannecker, the sculptor**, gained for himself a wonderful reputation for his statues of **Ariadne** and the **Greek goddesses**. Approaching his prime he felt he ought to devote all his strength and time to the creation of a masterpiece, so he set about to carve a figure of the Jesus Christ. Twice he failed in his purpose, but finally he carved an image of Christ so perfect, so exquisitely beautiful that when people gazed upon it, they could only love and adore.

Later **Napoleon** sent for him. “Come to Paris,” he said, “and make for me a statue of Venus for the Louvre.” But no such offer could tempt the heart of Dannecker. His reply was simple. “Sir, the hands that carved the Christ can never again carve a heathen goddess.”

Beloved, may we use our lives for the cause of Christ and shun using it for carnal, evil purposes.

**12. Consistent in Discernment: “in knowledge”....—[v. 6](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> **in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,**

Paul was consistent in knowledge. This kind of knowledge has been defined as “**knowledge of the things that must be done.**” It was the knowledge which led to actions. Paul proclaimed that which was true, and which was real knowledge, in opposition to the false science of the Greeks. He opposed those who would substitute the mere ornaments of rhetoric for truth.

The idea here is that the Christian should not be ignorant. **Believers ought to be well-informed about issues of the day and have common sense. We also should be knowledgeable about the Word.**

This is an important point because in some Christian circles, getting an education or training in the study of the Word of God has been mocked and belittled. It is from these same circles that *bizarre* or *unscriptural* doctrines have been *birthed* or *promoted*. From these folks, the phrase “**getting deep into the Word**” is scoffed. I guess that makes me an idiot because I love digging deep into the wonderful truths of Scripture and I am not ashamed for doing so. That’s where I find many of its treasures.

The purpose of *learning* or *digging* deep into the Word is for *maturing in Christ* and *reaching others* for the Savior. It is not for the purpose of saying, “Look how great I am. Look how much I know!” When I look at the book of Proverbs, I find that the pursuit of knowledge is a good thing to do, not a foolish one. The philosophy that some preachers have promoted that getting an education or training is not necessary or stupid goes contrary to Scripture. If you can get training, get it.

**Proverbs 10:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **Wise men store up knowledge, But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.**

**Proverbs 14:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **Leave the presence of a fool, Or you will not discern words of knowledge.**

Stay away from fools. You won’t find knowledge on their lips and you won’t understand wise counsel when you do hear it. The influence of fools will hurt you.

**Proverbs 14:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> **The naive inherit foolishness, But the sensible are crowned with knowledge.**

**Proverbs 15:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **The lips of the wise spread knowledge, But the hearts of fools are not so.**

**Proverbs 15:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, But the mouth of fools feeds on folly.**

**Proverbs 18:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> **The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.**

The most important area of knowledge is your walk with God. If you do not have a close relationship with him, you really have nothing no matter how much education or training you get.



**Proverbs 1:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**13. Consistent in Durability and Determination: “...in patience”—v. 6**

**2 Corinthians 6:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> in purity, in knowledge, **in patience**, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,

What does Paul mean by this word “**patience?**” The word is derived from the Greek word *makrothumia* {*mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah*} which means “**forbearance, endurance, perseverance, durability, determination, or patience.**” It denotes patience with people, the ability to bear with them, even when they are wrong or when they are cruel and insulting.

People with long-suffering or patience are slow in avenging wrongs. **Chrysostom** said “**that it is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and does not, the man who is slow to wrath.**”

It describes a person who remains *calm* and *tranquil* while awaiting the *outcome of a matter* or is *being provoked*. This word describes the spirit which *never grows irritated*, *never despairs* and *never regards* any man as beyond salvation. The Christian patiently *believes in men* because he unconquerably *believes in the changing power of Christ*.

Paul was consistent in his *durability* and *determination* to reach men and be patient with them even though they persecuted him. He knew what was at stake if they did not trust in Christ. This is why he was patient.

All I can say is, “Wow!” This is not easy to do, especially when people are *vicious* or *attacking* you and you are trying to help them. Have you been in that boat? Paul knew what it was like to be *long-bothered* and was *long suffering*. This is a trait we are to have in our life. It is a trait of the Holy Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Colossians 3:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience**;

Known as the “**Bishop of the South Pacific,**” **John Selwyn** had at one time been recognized for his boxing skill. Touched by the Holy Spirit’s convicting power, however, he later became an outstanding missionary. A magazine reports that one day this saintly leader reluctantly gave a stern but loving rebuke to a man who regularly attended the

local church. The disorderly one resented the advice and angrily struck Brother Selwyn a violent blow in the face with his clenched fist.

In return the missionary merely folded his arms and humbly looked into the man's blazing eyes. With his *boxing skill* and *powerful rippling muscles*, he could easily have knocked out his antagonist. Instead, he turned the other cheek and waited calmly to be hit a second time. This was too much for the assailant, who became greatly ashamed and fled into the jungle.

Years afterward, the man accepted the Lord as his Savior and gave his testimony before the church. It was customary at that time for a believer to choose a Christian name for himself after he was saved. When asked if he wished to follow this practice, he replied without hesitation, **“Yes, call me John Selwyn! He's the one who taught me what Jesus Christ is really like!”**

This brought real joy to the missionary's heart, for he saw that heeding the Savior's admonition to suffer wrongfully for His sake had resulted in making his witness effective for the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **14. Consistent in Dignity and Decency: “...in kindness”—[v. 6](#)**

##### **2 Corinthians 6:6 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,**

Paul was consistent in “**kindness.**” This word is from the Greek word *chrestotes* {*kh-ray-stot'-ace*}. It has the idea of “**moral goodness, integrity, gentleness, decency, dignity, and kindness.**”

This word is the very opposite of severity. It is the *sympathetic kindliness* or *sweetness of temper* which puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain. The great example is in [Genesis 26](#) which tells how Isaac would not *fight* or *strive* with the men that were filling the wells that he dug in the desert.

Kindness is the quality which thinks far more of others than of itself. When Paul was ill treated, he was not only longsuffering, but remained kind to those who abused him.

“Ouch!” That is not easy to do either, but it is what we are supposed to do. As you can see up to this point, you are not going to be able to live the Christian life without the help of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 12:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;**

Kindness goes a long way. Never underestimate its power.

**Miss Thompson** was a schoolteacher who every year would say to her students, “Boys and girls, I love you all the same. I have no favorites.” Of course, she wasn’t being completely truthful. Teachers do have favorites and, what’s worse, most teachers have students that they simply don’t like, especially when they cause trouble in the class.

**Teddy Stallard** was a boy that Miss Thompson simply didn’t like, and for good reason. He didn’t seem interested in school. He wore a deadpan, blank expression on his face, and his eyes were glassy and unfocused. When she spoke to Teddy, he merely shrugged his shoulders in an uncaring fashion. His clothes were mused and his hair unkept. He wasn’t an attractive boy, and he certainly wasn’t likable.

Whenever she marked Teddy's papers, she got a certain perverse pleasure out of putting X's next to the wrong answers. When she put the F's at the top of the papers, she did it with a flair. She should have known better; she had Teddy's records, and she knew more about him than she wanted to admit.

The records read:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade: Teddy shows promise with his work and attitude, but poor home situation.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Teddy could do better. Mother is seriously ill. He receives little help at home.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: Teddy is a good boy, but too serious. He is a slow learner. His mother died this year.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade: Teddy is very slow, but well behaved. His father shows no interest.

At Christmas, the boys and girls in Miss Thompson’s class brought her presents, piled them on her desk, and crowded around to watch her open them. Among the presents was one from Teddy Stallard. She was surprised that he had brought her a gift.

Teddy’s gift was wrapped in brown paper and held together with Scotch tape. On the paper were written the simple words, “For Miss Thompson. From Teddy.” When she opened Teddy’s present, out fell a gaudy rhinestone bracelet, with half the stones missing, and a bottle of cheap perfume.

The other boys and girls began to giggle and smirk over Teddy’s gifts, but Miss Thompson at least had enough sense to silence them by immediately putting on the bracelet and dotting some of the perfume on her wrist. Holding her wrist up for the other children to smell, she said, “Doesn’t it smell lovely?” The other children, taking their cue from the teacher, readily agreed with “oohs” and “ahs.”

When school was over and the other children had left, Teddy lingered behind. He slowly came over to her desk and said softly, “Miss Thompson? Miss Thompson, you smell just like my mother... and her bracelet looks real pretty on you too. I’m glad you liked my presents.” When Teddy left, Miss Thompson got down on her knees and asked God to forgive her for her rotten attitude.

The next day when the children came to school, they were welcomed by a new teacher. Miss Thompson had become a different person. She was no longer just a teacher; she had become an agent of God, committed to loving her children and doing things for them that would live on after her. She helped all the children, but especially the slow ones, and especially Teddy Stallard. By the end of that school year, Teddy showed dramatic improvement. He caught up with most of the students and was even ahead of some.

Once the school year ended, Miss Thompson didn’t hear from Teddy for a long time. Then one day she received a note that read: Dear Miss Thompson, I wanted you to be the first to know. I will be graduating second in my class. Love, Teddy Stallard

Four years later, another note came: Dear Miss Thompson, they just told me I will be graduating first in my class. I wanted you to be the first to know. The university has not been easy, but I have had a good four years. Love, Teddy Stallard

Four years later: Dear Miss Thompson, as of today, I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that? I wanted you to be the first to know. I am getting married next month, the twenty-seventh to be exact. I want you to come and sit where my mother would sit if she were alive. You are the only family I have now. Dad died last year. Love, Teddy Stallard.

Miss Thompson went to that wedding and sat where Teddy’s mother would have sat. She deserved to be there; she had done something for Teddy that he could never forget. **Beloved, never underestimate the power of your kindness.**

## 15. Consistent in the Dwelling of the Holy Spirit: “...*in the Holy Spirit*”—[v. 6](#)

### **2 Corinthians 6:6 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit,  
in genuine love,**

Paul demonstrated his consistency by showing that the Holy Spirit was living within him and in control of his life. It is the doctrine of the Scriptures, and especially of Paul’s writings, that the Spirit of God lives in all believers, and that besides those manifestations of His presence which are common to every believer, there is a special gift given to every Christian, whether it be an *ordinary* or an *extraordinary* gift which is for the purpose of *servicing Christ* and *reaching others* for Him.

Our lives are to be evidence that demands a verdict that Jesus Christ lives within us by *our attitudes, our actions, our appetites, our activities, and our attire*. The spirit of holiness evident in Paul's life helped him to be a consistent, Christ-like Christian. Is the Spirit of God in control of you? Are you yielded to Him? This is what we are commanded to do and when we fail to yield, we grieve the Lord.

**Ephesians 5:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> **And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,**

**Ephesians 4:30 (NASB)**

<sup>30</sup> **Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

It is said that a certain guide lived in the deserts of Arabia who never lost his way. He carried with him a homing pigeon with a very fine cord attached to one of its legs. When in doubt as to which path to take, he threw the bird into the air. The pigeon quickly strained at the cord to fly in the direction of home, and thus led the guide accurately to his goal.

Because of this unique practice he was known as “**the dove man.**” So, too, the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Dove, is willing and able to direct us in the narrow way that leads to the more abundant life if in humble self-denial *we submit* to His *unerring supervision, guidance, and direction*.

**16. Consistent in Deep Devotion or Love: “...in genuine love”—[v. 6](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> **in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,**

Paul was consistent in his love for others. In fact, that is what love is all about. True love does not fail. This is what Paul expressed in [1 Corinthians 13](#) when he spoke about charity or love.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> **Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,**

<sup>5</sup> **does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,**

<sup>6</sup> **does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;**

<sup>7</sup> **bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

<sup>8</sup> **Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away.**

Paul uses the same word for love in [2 Corinthians 6:6](#) as he did in [1 Corinthians 13](#). It is the word *agape*. Let's pull over for a second here. In Greek there are four words for love.

- (a) *Eros* means the love of a man for a maid; it is the love which has passion in it. It is never used in the New Testament at all.
- (b) *Philia* is the warm love which we feel for our nearest and our dearest; it is a thing of the heart.
- (c) *Storge* rather means affection and is specially used of the love of parents and children.
- (d) *Agape*, the Christian word, means unconquerable benevolence and good will.

Agape love does not mean a feeling of the heart, which we cannot help, and which comes unbidden and unsought.

1. It means that no matter what a person may do to us by way of insult, injury, or humiliation, we will never seek anything else but highest good of that person.
2. It is therefore a feeling or determination of the mind as much as of the heart; it concerns the will of the person as much as the emotions.
3. It describes the deliberate effort, which we can make only with the help of God, never to seek anything but the best even for those who seek the worst for us.

With this kind of love, the person does not seek revenge, but instead, will meet all *injuries* and *rebuffs* with **undefeatable good will**. Ouch! This is not easy to do is it? In point of fact we can only have *agape* when Jesus Christ enables us to conquer our natural tendency to *anger* and to *bitterness*, and to achieve this invincible goodwill to all men. Paul had this kind of love and it was sincere and real. It was not hypocritical. This kind of deep devotion or love for others can have a drastic impact upon their lives.

Some years ago, **Dr. Karl Menninger**, noted doctor and psychologist, was seeking the cause of many of his patients' ills. One day he called in his clinical staff and proceeded to unfold a plan for developing, in his clinic, an atmosphere of creative love.

All patients were to be given large quantities of love; no unloving attitudes were to be displayed in the presence of the patients, and all nurses and doctors were to go about their work in and out of the various rooms with a loving attitude.

At the end of six months, the time spent by patients in the institution was cut in half. The love that was expressed for their patients gave them encouragement to get well.

17. Consistent in the Deliverance of a Truthful Message: “...*in the word of truth*”—[v. 7](#)

[2 Corinthians 6:7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> **in the word of truth**, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,

In spite of what he faced, Paul was consistent in sharing the truth of God’s Word with others. He was not *intimidated* into silence, *inflated* with his own ego or **pride**, *inactivated by* imprisonment, *infuriated* with bitterness, or *incapacitated* by difficulties and distress.

Paul knew that Jesus had not only given him a gospel to proclaim but the *strength* and the *ability* to proclaim it. To God he owed both the word and the door of utterance that had been opened for it. Are you consistent in speaking to others about the Lord? Do you share with people what the Lord has done for you? Do you share the Gospel with those who have not trusted in Christ?

18. Consistent in the Dominance or Power of God: “...*in the power of God*”—[v. 7](#)

[2 Corinthians 6:7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> in the word of truth, **in the power of God**; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,

Being consistent in the power of God was vital to being an effective witness for Christ. It was the only power that he really had in his life. Paul would never have said in pride, “I did this,” but always in humility, “God enabled me to do it.”

Beloved, if we are going to be effective in our service for Christ, we need His power. It takes God’s power just to live the Christian life and conquer our *flesh* and *selfish* will. Paul was an outstanding Christian because he was consistent in having God’s power in his life.

[1 Corinthians 2:4-5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,  
<sup>5</sup> so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

[Ephesians 3:16 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

[Ephesians 3:20 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

One day during his great mission in London, **Mr. Moody** was holding a meeting in a theater packed with a most select audience. Noblemen and noblewomen were there in large numbers, and a prominent member of the royal family was in the royal box. Mr. Moody arose to read the Scripture lesson.

He attempted to read [Luke 4:27](#): “**And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet.**” When he came to the name of Elisha he stammered and stuttered over it. He went back to the beginning of the verse and began to read again, but when he reached the word “**Elisha**” he could not get over it. He went back the third time, but again the word was too much for him.

He closed the Bible with deep emotion and looked up and said, “Oh, God, use this stammering tongue to preach Christ crucified to these people.” The power of God came upon him, and one who heard him then, and had heard him often at other times, said that he had never heard Mr. Moody pour out his soul in such a torrent of eloquence as he did then. The whole audience was melted by the power of God in that service.

In 1882, **Moody, at the age of 45**, conducted a campaign through England. On September 26<sup>th</sup>, he preached from [Genesis 3:9](#), “*Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, Where are you?*”

In that service was a 14 year-old teenager, Tommy Bewes, youngest of 12 children in a lawyer’s family. He was glued to his seat and hanging on Moody’s every word. Three days later, he wrote his sister Evie and told her that he went to Moody’s revival meeting and trusted Christ as his Savior. He told her that Moody spoke from [Genesis 3:9](#)—... “**Where are you?**” He told his sister that this was the first question God ever asked man in the Bible and that is the first question that people ought to be asking themselves.

Tommy’s life was changed and he later became a prominent preacher. He had a son, Cecil, who eventually became a missionary for twenty years in Kenya before he returned to lead England’s largest missionary society. Cecil had four kids. One became a missionary surgeon in Africa, one was a Christian business man in London, one became a pastor’s wife, and the fourth, Richard Bewes, in 1983, became the Sr. Pastor or Rector at All Soul’s Church in London until November, 2004, when he retired from that position.

Altogether, over 100 children, grandchildren, and great grand children have flowed from Tommy Bewes’ life, and almost all of them are involved in some aspect of Christian service. Richard made a powerful analysis, “Our family today, several generations on, is still feeling the reverberations of a single sermon. To God be all the glory; the credit must be His!” Beloved, never underestimate the power of preaching and the power of God’s Word.

**[Isaiah 55:11 \(NASB\)](#)**

**<sup>11</sup> So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.**



Paul has given us a checklist of consistency that reveals the balance he had in his life in a wide variety of situations that he faced.

1. *Consistent in Diligence: “in endurance”* [v. 4](#)
  2. *Consistent in Detrimental and Damaging Treatment: “... in afflictions”* [v. 4](#)
  3. *Consistent in Difficulties: “...in hardships”* [v. 4](#)
  4. *Consistent in Distresses: “... in distresses”* [v. 4](#)
  5. *Consistent in Drubbings and Damage to the Body: “... in beatings”* [v. 5](#)
  6. *Consistent in Detentions in Prison: “...in imprisonments”* [v. 5](#)
  7. *Consistent in Disarray & Disturbances from Angry Mobs: “...in tumults”* [v. 5](#)
  8. *Consistent in Debilitation: “...in labors.”* [v. 5](#)
  9. *Consistent in Deficiency of Sleep: “...in sleeplessness”* [v. 5](#)
  10. *Consistent in Deprivation of Food: “...in hunger”* [v. 5](#)
  11. *Consistent in Decorum, Deportment, or Demeanor: “...in purity”* [v. 6](#)
  12. *Consistent in Discernment: “in knowledge”.....* [v. 6](#)
  13. *Consistent in Durability & Determination: “... in patience”* [v. 6](#)
  14. *Consistent in Dignity and Decency: “... in kindness”* [v. 6](#)
  15. *Consistent in the Dwelling of the Holy Spirit: “... in the Holy Spirit”* [v. 6](#)
  16. *Consistent in Deep Devotion or Love: “... in genuine love”* [v. 6](#)
  17. *Consistent in the Deliverance of a Truthful Message: “in the word of truth”* [v. 7](#)
  18. *Consistent in the Dominance or Power of God: “... in the power of God”* [v. 7](#)
19. **Consistent in the Defensive and Offensive Weapons of Truth: “... by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left”—**[v. 7](#)

#### **2 Corinthians 6:7 (NASB)**

**<sup>7</sup>In the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,**

Interpreters have varied much in the exposition of these words. **Grotius** says that it refers to the manner in which the ancient soldiers were armed. They bore a spear in their right hand, and a shield in the left. With the right hand they attacked their foes with the latter they made their defense.

Some have supposed that it refers to the fact that they were taught to use the sword with the left hand as well as with the right. The simple idea is that they were completely armed. To be armed on the right hand and on the left, is to be well armed, or entirely equipped. Soldiers went forth to the conflict ready for battle.

Paul met his persecution, opposition, and slander because he was fully and spiritually armed. As the soldier went well armed to battle, so did Paul. The armor with which he met his foes was a holy life and the armor listed in **[Ephesians 6](#): truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Spirit of God, the Word of God and prayer.** These things encompassed Paul’s defense and were consistently predominant in his life. Beloved, our source for solutions to problems are found in the Bible. Our defense for good decisions are found in the Scriptures. Let me give you an interesting example.

In the days before anesthesia, patients were strapped down while the doctor used a scalpel or saw to cut through tissue or bone. The pain for the patient was excruciating. One Christian doctor determined to do something about this. **Sir James Young Simpson (1811-1870)** practiced medicine in Scotland. He became senior president of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh in 1835, when he was 24 years old.

He received virtually every possible honor and position in time. Sir James dreamed of finding a way of putting patients to sleep during surgery. On Monday evenings, Sir James periodically invited small groups of doctors to his home to experiment with chemicals, crystals, and powders, which were placed over a burning brazier while the doctors inhaled the fumes. Nothing worked until **November 4, 1847**. One of the men had purchased a crystal called *chloroform* in the city of Paris. As the doctors sniffed the burning substance, they fell to the floor unconscious.

Sir James had his answer, but he soon encountered another problem. He was attacked by fellow Christians who claimed that pain was a God-ordained part of life. They said that freedom from pain comes only from Heaven, and it is immoral to devise dangerous ways of escaping it while on earth.

**Sir James** went to the Bible, seeking answers to their charges. He did not have to go very far in his quest for an answer. He found it in the second chapter of Genesis.

**Genesis 2:21 (NASB)**

**<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.**

Sir James wrote an article answering the objections of his critics and used the Bible as his defense. He ended his paper stating, “We may rest fully assured that whatever is true on point of fact or humane and merciful in point of practice, we will find no condemnation in the Word of God.” His critics were silenced, and thank God, a new day dawned in medical science.

Beloved, God has supplied us with His armor for daily living. By the armor of righteousness, Paul hoped and expected to achieve victory for Christ in his own personal life and in reaching the lost for the Lord. Let me ask, “Are you using the armor that God has provided for you to live a consistent, Christ-like life?”

**Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

## 20. Consistent in Dignity and Dishonor: “...by glory and dishonor”—v. 8

### 2 Corinthians 6:8 (NASB)

<sup>8</sup> **By glory and dishonor**, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;

Paul closes out the last section of his checklist with a series of contrasts. He begins by telling us that he was consistent for Christ in times of *honor* or *dishonor*. It did not make any difference. He was going to live for the Lord. It is sad that some folks will not serve Christ unless they get some kind of recognition or honor. They lack understanding of what the Christian life is all about.

### 1 Corinthians 1:31 (NASB)

<sup>31</sup> **So that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS [Glories], BOAST [Glories], IN THE LORD."**

Paul did not need recognition in order to serve the Lord. He did receive honor from the churches where he ministered, but it did not go to his head. He knew the purpose of his life and it wasn't to glorify himself, but Christ.

Paul was dishonored too. The word “dishonor” is from the word *atimia* {*at-ee-mee'-ah*} which means “dishonor, ignominy, or disgrace.” This word was normally used in Greek culture for the loss of rights as a citizen. Paul says, “I may have lost all the rights and privileges which the world can confer but I am still a citizen of the Kingdom of God.”

In spite of the *garbage, grief, and gloom* that the enemies of the Gospel hurled at Paul, he was consistent for Christ and still was reaching out to those who did not know the Lord.

### 1 Corinthians 4:13 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup> **When we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.**

This word “conciliate” is from the word *parakaleo* {*par-ak-al-eh'-o*} which means “to call to one's side, to speak to, to comfort, beg, or entreat.” He treated his oppressors this way. No matter how you are treated, *good or bad, popular or unpopular*, are you willing to keep serving the Lord no matter what happens to you? You can if Christ is your master. If He is not, you will struggle.

### Matthew 6:24 (NASB)

<sup>24</sup> **No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

The early years of **David Brainerd's** ministry were not filled with *glamour* and the *lauds* of crowds. Describing his early weeks as a missionary to Native Americans at the beginning of the 1700's, he wrote, "My heart is sunk... It seemed to me I should never have any success among the Indians. My soul was weary of my life; I longed for death, beyond measure."

Things didn't improve much for the first two years, in fact. He felt his prospects of winning converts "**as dark as midnight.**" After three years into the work, he finally witnessed a revival among the **Indians of Crossweesung in New England.**

After another year and a half, the number of converts numbered 150 which is not much by today's mass evangelistic standards, but profoundly significant in his day. Unfortunately, Brainerd died after only five years on the mission field, at the young age of 29. The man who felt he was a failure, ended up bringing great honor to Christ and to his own life by being faithful.

After Brainerd's death, **Jonathan Edwards**—whom some consider America's greatest theologian—published David Brainerd's journals. These were read widely in America and Europe. In fact, **William Carey**, the "**father of modern missions,**" the man who ignited the modern Protestant missionary movement, which has been responsible for millions upon millions of conversions worldwide, pointed to Brainerd's journals as a key source of his inspiration to take up the missionary life.

Who, then, can judge whether our work is worthwhile? Certainly we cannot when we're in the midst of discouragement. Our responsibility is to just be faithful to Christ whether we are honored or dishonored.

## 21. Consistent in Defaming and Decent Reports: "...by evil report and good report"—[v. 8](#)

### 2 Corinthians 6:8 (NASB)

<sup>8</sup>By glory and dishonor, **by evil report and good report**; regarded as deceivers and yet true;

Paul was consistent for Christ, whether he was *honored* or *despised*, whether he was *slandered* or *praised* by men. When it came to serving the Lord, the opinions of men were not going to thwart his dedication for the Lord.

The phrase "**evil report**" is from the word *dusphemia* {*doos-fay-mee'-ah*} which means "*disgraceful language; reproach, slander, or defame.*" Paul knew what it was like to have his motives called into question and to have mud thrown on his name and character.

When thus *assailed* and *reproached*, Paul and the early Christians endeavored to commend themselves as the ministers of God. Evidently they endeavored to do this by not *slandering* or *reviling* in return.

Instead, they maintained a Christian spirit, they proved the accusations **were wrong by the way they lived**, and **demonstrated patience and love** to their attackers. Paul's consistency when he was slandered demonstrated that he had one master and it was the Lord. He was not living for the *accolades, applause, and admiration* of this world.

**Matthew 6:24 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> **No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

**Romans 12:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

When praised by men with good reports, Paul was still focused on Christ. Folks don't realize that when you are applauded by people, you face entirely different forms of *testings* and *temptations*.

Your guard must be shifted from *outward attackers* who slander you to guarding against *inward pride* and an inflated ego which can weaken you just as effectively as the slander of men. Pride can cause you to become independent of God and have an **"I don't need the Lord's Help"** or a **"Look at me!"** mentality. This kind of thinking will lead to *foolish decisions* and *stupid behavior*. We are warned of our need for Christ and the destructiveness of our pride.

**John 15:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> **I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.**

**Proverbs 16:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> **Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.**

**Proverbs 29:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> **A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.**

Satan often attempts to *bribe men by praise*, and to *neutralize the influence of ministers by flattery*. Beloved, it is for this reason we should be on our guard against the influence of flattery.

**Proverbs 26:28 (NASB)**

<sup>28</sup> **A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin.**

**Proverbs 29:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> **A man who flatters his neighbor Is spreading a net for his steps.**

Should we *praise* and *encourage* others who have been a blessing to us? **Yes**. We all need all the encouragement we can get. If you receive praise and encouragement, what should you do? **The answer is *praise the Lord***, thank the praiser, and don't let it go to your head. Just keep your focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Paul did. He was consistent for Christ when men plastered him or praised him.

**22. Consistent when Denounced as Deceivers, yet Dependable or truthful: “...as deceivers, and yet true;” v. 8**

**2 Corinthians 6:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup>By glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;**

Paul was faithful and consistent for Christ even though people accused him of being a deceiver. This word “**deceiver**” is from the word *planos {plan'-os}* which forms our English word “**planet.**” Planets wander the universe. This word means “**a wandering quack or imposter.**” They claimed he was a fraud and his message was fraudulent.

Paul, however, knew his message was the truth and he was an ambassador of the Lord, sharing the truth with a lost world that needed to hear what he had to say. In spite of these taunts, he patiently continued to preach the truth and reach people for Christ.

We know that our message today is true because it comes from the Word of God. The standard for our beliefs are not to be based on *traditions* or *opinions*, but on what the Scriptures say. Why? Because the Scriptures are the standard for truth. They define the boundaries for what is *right* and *wrong*. For this reason, we are to study them. *Never* underestimate the power of the truth of God's Word and *never* undervalue your service and giving for Christ.

It was at a missionary committee meeting in England that the chairperson startled the people by claiming he had founded a growing Christian group in India. They knew he had never been outside of England. He explained that when he was five years old, he had been impressed by a story of missions in India. He didn't want to just put his penny in the box.

The pastor had a friend who was a missionary. The little boy bought a Bible, put his own name on the flyleaf, and mailed it to India. The missionary gave it to a poor man who had walked miles to ask for a Bible. Twenty years passed, and a visitor to a remote Indian village found the people there were Christians. No missionary had ever visited them, but they showed him a well-used New Testament with a boy's name on the flyleaf. Beloved, God's Word is powerful.

23. Consistent though Disregarded, yet Distinguished: “...as unknown, and yet well known”—[v. 9](#)

**2 Corinthians 6:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup> as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,**

Even though Paul was well-known by many, he was *ignored* or *disregarded* by men. Have you ever been *ignored* or *rejected* by people because of your faith in Christ? Many of the young people who have graduated from our Christian Academy have faced this in the public college many times in their Sociology class. They debate a number of issues of the day in that classroom. It was good training for them.

The situation they would face was moans and groans when they would offer a Biblical position on an issue. Many of the most popular kids in that class were in that classroom and they did not like what they had to say. In other words, their position did not matter or count since it was based on the Bible. After this happened several times, they began to expect the resistance when issues were debated. It wasn't easy, but they kept speaking up.

Nothing has changed. Society continues to try to squelch the voice of Christians, especially in the political arena. Don't be intimidated. Go ahead and wisely speak up for what is right, write letters, and vote. Don't let the rejection of men muffle your voice for Christ or dampen your enthusiasm in serving Him.

Even if people reject the Gospel, we still must love them. A good example of this was reported by **Ralph Neighbour**, pastor of **Houston's West Memorial Baptist Church** (in “*Death and the Caring Community*,” by **Larry Richards and Paul Johnson**): Jack had been president of a large corporation, and when he got cancer, they ruthlessly dumped him. He went through his insurance, used his life savings, and had practically nothing left. I visited him with one of my deacons, who said, “Jack, you speak so openly about the brief life you have left. I wonder if you've prepared for your life after death?”

Jack stood up, livid with rage. “You \_\_\_\_\_ Christians!! All you ever think about is what's going to happen to me after I die. If your God is so great, why doesn't He do something about the real problems of life?” He went on to tell us he was leaving his wife penniless and his daughter without money for college. Then he ordered us out.

Later my deacon insisted we go back. We did. “Jack, I know I offended you,” he said. “I humbly apologize. But I want you to know I've been working since then. Your first problem is where your family will live after you die. A realtor in our church has agreed to sell your house and give your wife his commission. I guarantee you that, if you'll permit us, some other men and I will make the house payments until it's sold. Then, I've contacted the owner of an apartment house down the street. He's offered your wife a three-bedroom apartment plus free utilities and an \$850 a month salary in return for her collecting rents and supervising plumbing and electrical repairs. The income from your house should pay for your daughter's college.

I just want you to know your family will be cared for.” Jack cried like a baby. He died shortly thereafter, so wrapped in pain he never accepted Christ. But he experienced God’s love even while rejecting Him. And his widow, touched by caring Christians, responded to the Gospel message and trusted Christ as her Savior.

**24. Consistent in Dying, yet Dynamic: “...as dying, yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death”—v. 9**

**2 Corinthians 6:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup>As unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,**

Paul was faced with continual *dangers, fatigue, and persecutions*. Danger was his companion, and the prospect of death his comrade. He formed a path walking through the valley of the shadow of death. He was faced with it so many times, yet remained consistent for Christ. Paul was chastened but not killed.

Yet, by the grace of God, he was triumphantly alive with a life that death could never kill. Things happened to him that might have chastened any man’s spirit, but they could not kill the spirit of Paul. He remained consistent for Christ. Beloved, we are preserved by the mighty power of God in the greatest dangers and deaths. **Nothing happens to us unless it is cleared by the Lord.**

**Titus 2:14 (NASB)**

**<sup>14</sup>Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a [peculiar] people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.**

Notice the word “**peculiar**” in **Titus 2:14KJV**. Christians are the peculiar people of God. We use the word sometimes when we speak of something odd or strange, but that is not its use here. The word is translated from a Greek word which is made up of two words, one which means “**around,**” as a circle, and the other which means “**to be.**” It can be charted by a dot within a circle. This will help us to understand the meaning of the combined word.

As the circle is around the dot, so God is around each one of His saints. The circle monopolizes the dot and has the dot all to itself. So God has His own all to Himself. They are His own private unique possession. He has reserved them for Himself.

The expression in **1 Thessalonians 1:1**, “**.....To the church of the Thessalonians in God,.....**” has in it the same idea, for the Greek case is locative of sphere which means it is in the sphere of God, circumscribed by God, surrounded by Him. We are under God’s care and He will bring us home to Glory when it is our time. Until then we are under His care. Paul rested in this truth.



**Psalms 17:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me in the shadow of Your wings**

On **August 19, 1991**, Communist hardliners and the **KGB in Moscow**, angry with their loss of Eastern Europe, seized control of the Soviet government while **Mikhail Gorbachev** was in the Crimea on vacation. He was confined there during the attempted coup. The **KGB** said that **Gorbachev** was ill and was no longer president. Boris Yeltsin and the Russian parliament were trapped in the parliament building as thousands of brave citizens gathered outside of the building, forming a human barricade to protect their officials. Tanks and troops surrounded the building and the world held its breath.

Here is what the newspapers and media did not report. According to **Barbara Von Der Heydt** in her book ***Candles Behind the Wall***, when the news of this coup broke, **Iven Kharlanov** and **Anatoly Rudenko** of the **Bible Society in Moscow** discussed how to persuade the troops not to fire on the people that were protecting the Russian officials and protesting this attempted coup. They called the Bible societies around the world asking for prayer then plotted a bold scheme.

Just as the storming of the parliament appeared imminent, the Christians showed up with a truck loaded with New Testaments. These brave Christians went from soldier to soldier and from tank to tank, handing out the Scriptures and quoted **Exodus 20:13**, **“Thou shall not kill.”**

One woman, **Shirinai Dossova**, walked over to one of the tanks and knocked loudly on its side with her knuckles. She continued until the baffled driver opened the hatch and appeared. She told him, “It says in this book that you should not kill,” thrusting the Bible at him. Then she asked, “Are you going to kill us?” The young soldier looked confused. He took the Bible and said, “We’re not intending to kill anybody.”

Almost all the soldiers accepted the New Testaments that were offered to them. Some of them tucked them into their pockets while others began reading them at once. Many had always wanted a Bible, but had never seen one. With each Bible that was given, the soldiers were asked, “You’re not going to kill us, are you?” This book says, “Thou shall not kill.”

The coup collapsed. A planned assault on the building by **Alpha Group, the KGB’s special forces was aborted when the troops unanimously refused the order**. A tank unit defected to the government’s side and surrounded parliament, guns pointing outward, protecting the people and the parliament officials. The Communist empire in Russia crashed, and historians are still trying to figure out why the attack on the parliament building never materialized. God protected and used His people in this dramatic hour. **They were as dying, yet they lived because of God’s sheltering wings. We too, are under His loving care.**

25. Consistent when Distressed or Devastated, yet Delighting: “*As sorrowful yet always rejoicing*”—[v. 10](#)

**2 Corinthians 6:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> **As sorrowful yet always rejoicing**, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

Like all other Christians, Paul faced times when he was *sorrowful, grieving, sad, or troubled*. Paul knew what it was like to have his heart broken. He knew what it was like to taste bitter disappointment.

**2 Timothy 4:10-11 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> **For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.**

<sup>11</sup> **Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.**

**2 Timothy 4:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> **At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.**

**2 Timothy 1:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> **You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom**

In spite of his hurt, he was always rejoicing. The comfort that he received from the Holy Spirit enabled him to be consistent, to have joy, and to keep going forward for Christ in spite of a broken heart.

If the Lord will do this for Paul, He will do this for you too. Faith or joy on a full stomach may be simply contentment -- but if you have it when you're hungry, it's genuine. Can you rejoice when your heart is broken? If you can, your joy will enable you to be consistent for Christ, just like Paul.

**Philippians 4:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!**

In December 1666, Hugh MacHale, the youngest and most gallant of the Covenanters who were Protestant reformers in Scotland was brought to his trial in Edinburgh for his faith in Jesus Christ. He was given four days to live and then marched back to the prison. In the crowds on the streets, many were weeping that one so young and so gallant should have only four days more to see the sun shine.

But there were no tears in the eyes of this young Gallahad of the faith. “**Trust in God!**” he cried to the crowd as he marched past. “**Trust in God.**” And then suddenly he saw a friend of his own standing on the edge of the crowd, and he shouted to him, “**Good news; wonderful good news! I am within four days of enjoying the sight of Jesus, my Savior!**”

**Hugh MacHale** saw the future so powerfully that it was more real to him than death. When we look to the future we have in Christ, it will allow us to live faithfully for Christ today, even if it costs us. It will help us to be consistent when distressed or devastated.

**26. Consistent when Destitute and in Distributing to Others: “...as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.”—[vs. 10](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> **As sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.**

No matter what his financial status was, Paul was consistent in serving the Lord and helping other people. He might seem to be penniless but he brought with him that which would enrich the souls of men. He might seem to have *nothing*, but, having Christ, he had *everything* that mattered in this world and the next.

By dispensing to the lost, the treasures of salvation, he made them rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Those who put their faith in Christ were enriched with a treasure that **could not be stolen by thieves, or corrupted by moths or rust**. They were heirs of the inheritance of Christ. Nothing is more valuable than eternal life.

The people that Paul ministered to were enriched in another way. When the Gospel is faithfully *preached* and *accepted*, it improves the condition of those who are poor. It changes their lives and makes them sober. Money that would be spent on sinful living and substances such as *illegal drugs, alcohol, gambling, or prostitutes, is now saved*.

Christ makes a man more *responsible* and *diligent*, causing him to use his time for constructive purposes instead of wasting away his life. Wise use of time enriches anyone. If you are a Christian, *you may own little*, but *you possess much*. You are enjoying now and will continue to enjoy throughout eternity the wonderful riches and blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Knowing* and *enjoying* these blessings will help you to remain consistent for Christ.

One of America’s greatest orators was a man named **John Jasper**, a former slave. While preaching a funeral sermon, he took the audience on a tour of Heaven. Here are his own words: “I loves to go down the old muddy James River, mighty red and muddy, but it goes along so grand and quite like it was tending to business. But that ain’t nothing to the river which flows by the throne of God. I longs for its crystal waves, and the trees on the banks, and all manners of fruits. This old head of mine often gets hot with fever and rolls on the pillow, and I has many times desired to cool it in that blessed stream as it kisses the banks of that upper Canaan. The thought of seeing that river, drinking its water, and resting under those trees.... Oh, to be there!”

“After that, I’d stroll up them avenues where the children of God dwell, and view their mansions. Father Abraham, I’m sure he got a great palace. And David, and Paul, the mighty scholar, who got struck down on the Damascus Road, I want to see his mansion.

Then I cuts around to the back streets and looks for the little home where my Savior set up my mother to housekeeping. I expect to know the house by the roses in the yard and the vine on the porch.”

At that point, Jasper dramatically sprang back, clapped his hands, and shouted. “Look there! See that one! Hallelujah, it’s John Jasper’s! Said He was going to prepare a place for me. There it is! Too good for a poor sinner like me, but He built it for me, a turn-key job, and mine forever!” Jasper went on like this for an hour and a half, but to the listeners he held spell-bound that day, it was like a moment. On that day, those people got a glimpse of Glory.

Beloved, our glimpse of Glory helps us to be consistent and to keep going forward for Christ.

**John 14:1-3 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup> "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.**

**<sup>2</sup> "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.**

**<sup>3</sup> "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.**

Are you concerned about being a consistent Christian?

## Chapter 14.

### Some Rudiments for the Relationships of Christians

#### **2 Corinthians 6:11-18 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.

<sup>12</sup> You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.

<sup>13</sup> Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide *to us* also.

<sup>14</sup> Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

<sup>15</sup> Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

<sup>16</sup> Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

<sup>17</sup> "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.

<sup>18</sup> "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

Paul has presented his case that he has been consistent for Christ in a host of circumstances. He has defended himself against the slander of false teachers that had tried to influence the Corinthians against Paul and his ministry.

As he continues this letter, he continues to express his love for these people. In so doing, he reveals some important *principles* or *rudiments* for the relationships of Christians. The principles he reveals here in this section, address our relationships with other Christians, with unbelievers, and with God.

Notice verse eleven.

#### I. THE REALITY OF PAUL'S SINCERITY AND CONCERN—

##### **2 Corinthians 6:11**

#### **2 Corinthians 6:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.

Paul is still reaching out to those who are *cool* or *indifferent* toward him. He tells them his *mouth is open* to them and *his heart is enlarged*. What does this mean?

It means that he has spoken without *hesitation, freely, and honestly* with these people and his heart was like arms that are open to embrace someone in loving affection. He had *great affection* for these folks and *sincerely cared* about them.

**Chrysostom** said that heat makes all things expand and the warmth of love will always expand a man's heart. In spite of all the *problems, conflicts, and heartaches* this church had caused him, Paul still loved the believers at Corinth very much. His *concern, love, and sincerity* were the foundations for his appeal which enabled him to reach out to these people with **boldness** and **confidence**.

**2 Corinthians 1:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> **For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.**

**2 Corinthians 1:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> **Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?**

**Titus 2:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified,**

If you are going to build any kind of solid relationship with anyone, it is vital that you are *honest, open, and truthful* with that person. Your heart needs to be *open and trusting*, instead of *guarded and skeptical*.

If skepticism has crept into your marriage, then as a married couple, you should discuss what is creating the rift, *seek* forgiveness for offenses, and *endeavor* to correct the mistakes and not make them again. If you are unable to do this on your own, then go ahead and bring in a *pastor or marriage counselor* to get the issues on the table.

There is a **scientific law** called the **Second Law of Thermodynamics**. This law states that any closed system left to itself tends toward greater randomness; that is, it breaks down.

It takes an ordered input of energy to keep anything together. Although it is a law designed to describe material systems, the **Second Law of Thermodynamics** seems to describe other systems also.

For example, consider the marriage relationship. It must have a daily, monthly, and yearly investment of time and energy so that it is enjoyable to live in. If no energy is expended, eventually the relationship needs a complete overhaul, or else it is knocked down.

It is a wise couple who will build, invest, and nurture their marriage continually—rather than waiting passively for a complete overhaul in the counselor's office or a knockdown, drag-out fight in the courtroom. Now that you are married, **don't stop dating**. *Love notes, gifts, and dates* with your husband or wife nurture the relationship.

## II. THE RESTRAINT OF AFFECTION—[2 Corinthians 6:12](#)

### [2 Corinthians 6:12 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> You are not **restrained** by us, but you are restrained in your own **affections**.

Paul addresses the strain on the relationship with this church. He says, “**You are not restrained in us.**” **What does this mean?** The word “**restrained**” is from the Greek word *stenochoreo* {*sten-okh-o-reh'-o*} which means “**to be cramped in a narrow place, restricted, to lack room, pressed, or distressed.**”

Paul says there was no lack of room in his heart for the church; no restriction or lack of love against them. He held no grudges toward these folks. His heart was wide open in affection to receive them. His love was not *narrow, confined, or pent up*, but was *full, ample, and free*.

On the other hand, the attitudes of these believers were different. They were self-restrained in their own affections toward him. Paul said they were restrained in their own affections. This word “**affections**” is from the word *splagchnon* {*splangkhn'-non*} and means “**the upper viscera, the heart, the liver and the lungs.**” The Hebrews believed that in these organs the seat of the emotions was supposed to lie. The seat of *tenderness, kindness, compassion, and love* came from here.

The form of expression sounds weird, but it is not really any more curious than our own English form. We speak of a man being melancholy which literally means that he has a black liver. We put the seat of love in the heart, which, after all, is a physical organ. It is more natural for us to say, “**I love you with all my heart**” instead of “**I love you with all my bowels.**”

The hearts of the Corinthians were closed toward Paul. They had little room for any kind of love for him. A number of them had squeezed the apostle *out of their lives* and *closed their hearts* to him. Their hearts were divided by false teachers. They had believed lies about Paul and turned away from him to follow false teachers.

As a result, they had left their affection for him. Just think how *painful* and *discouraging* that must have been for Paul. He love and cared for them. He invested his life into them and they responded like **The Church of the Deep Freeze pastored by Jack Frost**.

In spite of their coldness, Paul never lost his love for them. **Those who deserve love the least need it the most.** What an example to us to love others even though they may be *cool* or *unkind* to us. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to do this. Speaking about love, Paul says in

**1 Corinthians 13:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**Matthew 5:44 (NASB)**

<sup>44</sup> **But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**

A little girl had the right idea about this verse. She wrote: Dear Preacher, I heard you say to love our enemies. I am only six and do not have any yet. I hope to have some when I am seven. Your friend, Love, Amy

Facing arrest as an **Anabaptist**, **Dirck Willems** fled for his life across a frozen lake. When his pursuer broke through the ice, Willems gave up his chance to escape by turning to save his persecutor. He was then *captured, imprisoned and burned* at the stake in **1569**. He died *loving* the *unlovely* as commanded by the Lord.

**1 Thessalonians 5:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> **See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.**

There is another important lesson we will address here. Be careful about forming opinions about others without checking all the facts. In this day and age, there are so many character assassinations made on *television* and in the *newspapers* that are *unfounded* or are *inaccurate*.

Even in everyday life, you may hear something that is told to you by someone about another individual. If you are going to form an opinion about a person or an issue, then research the matter for accuracy of the facts. This will help you in preventing damage in relationships with others and will also help you to not put your foot in your mouth.

**Proverbs 18:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> **He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.**

Spouting off before *listening* or *finding out* the facts is *foolish*, and also *disgraceful, shameful* and *confusing*.



### III. THE REQUEST FOR RECIPROCITY—[2 Corinthians 6:13](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 6:13 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide *to us* also.

Paul makes an appeal for reciprocity which means “**to be treated in the same way.**” He was asking them to respond to him as if they were his own kids and open and broaden their hearts to him just as he had opened his heart toward them. He was asking for their love as he loved them.

*Reciprocity* is *essential* for nurturing any relationship. If you are going to have a strong friendship with a friend or a healthy marriage, then there needs to be an *exchange of kindness and openness* with the other person. In marriage, there needs to be an interchange of affection. It won’t work if it is one sided.

God asks for *reciprocity* in our attitude toward Him. He has demonstrated His love for us and wants *love* and *faithfulness* from us.

#### [Mark 12:30 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>30</sup> AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

#### [Joshua 23:11 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God.

If we fail to truly love the Lord, we will not grow close to Him. It ain’t gonna happen. We will *flop* and *flounder* in our *faithfulness* to Christ without a *fervecy* for Christ. Our love and devotion for God are the catalysts to walk with God, to obey His Word, and to make our lives count for Christ.

#### [2 Corinthians 5:14 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

The love for Christ constrained **Dr. Thomas Lambie (1885-1954)**. Dr. Thomas Lambie went to **Ethiopia** as a medical missionary and was a very godly man. He was the first American missionary to go this country. After some time he wanted to buy land for a mission station.

An Ethiopian law said that no land could be sold to foreigners. Because Dr. Lambie had great love for Christ and the Ethiopians, he gave up his American citizenship and became an Ethiopian citizen. Then he bought the properties needed for his work. The United States, glad to honor him because of his great work in Ethiopia, restored Dr. Lambie’s American citizenship.

According to *Wikipedia Encyclopedia*, there is the legend of a dream Dr. Lambie once had. He had returned to Philadelphia from his first term as a medical missionary in Ethiopia, and received a lucrative offer to join a successful medical practice. Dr. Lambie had decided to accept the offer, when one night he had a dream.

In it, a foul leprous hand arose out of the heart of Africa: "Take that hand!" he was ordered. Nauseated, even in his dream, he reluctantly took the hand. And as he did, it became the pierced hand of Jesus, leading him back to his calling to Ethiopia.

#### IV. THE REVIEW OF AN OLD PRINCIPLE—[2 Corinthians 6:14-16](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 6:14-16 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> **Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?**

<sup>15</sup> **Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?**

<sup>16</sup> **Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."**

The Corinthians had a rotten attitude about Paul because they were hanging around the wrong kind of people. The influence of false teachers soured their attitudes toward God's Word and God's man.

He reviews an old principle with these believers. He tells them to separate from the ungodly. Paul knows the influence of friends. Bad friends can lead to a bad attitude and actions. We see this repeatedly in the Bible.

##### [1 Corinthians 15:33 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>33</sup> **Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."**

Bad *companions* can *corrupt* your *character*.

#### 1. Solomon's character and choices were corrupted by carnal wives.

##### [1 Kings 11:4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> **For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*.**

## 2. Samson's taste for Philistine women led to his *demise and destruction*.

They brought out the worst in Samson. His last woman, Delilah, plotted to find the *secret* of his *strength* to *satisfy* her lust for *silver*. She succeeded and Samson was *bound, blinded, mocked, imprisoned, and destroyed*.

### **Judges 16:20-21 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

<sup>21</sup> Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison.

## 3. Lot jumped into the life of the city of Sodom with both feet.

In fact, he became a leader in the city. Why did he do this? His greed for money. He put up with the *garbage* and *filth* of this wicked city to gain money, in spite of the toll it was taking on his family. God commanded him to get out of the city!

### **2 Peter 2:7-8 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, **oppressed** by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

<sup>8</sup> (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

**Verse seven** says Lot was “**oppressed**” with the filthy lifestyle of the wicked. This word “**oppressed**” is from the word *kataponeo* {*kat-ap-on-eh'-o*} which means “**to tire or exhaust; to afflict; to trouble or treat roughly.**”

He was afflicted by the sin of the city. Peter continues in **verse eight** and says his righteous soul was “**tormented**” daily. This word for “**tormented**” is a different word. It is from the word *basanizo* {*bas-an-id'-zo*} and it means “**to torture, torment, harass, or distress.**”

Living in this city was torture for Lot and it led to the death of his wife and the moral destruction of his daughters. They got out of Sodom before it was destroyed, but Sodom did not get out of them. After Sodom's destruction, they got their father drunk and had sex with him.

**Genesis 19:32-35 (NASB)**

<sup>32</sup> "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father."

<sup>33</sup> So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

<sup>34</sup> On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."

<sup>35</sup> So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

The influence of evil is destructive. It is for this reason we are to separate from those who are wicked. God's command of separation is found throughout Scripture.

He warned Israel not to mingle with the pagan nations in the land of Canaan ([Numbers 33:50-56](#)); yet they repeatedly disobeyed His Word and were punished because of it.

**Numbers 33:50-56 (NASB)**

<sup>50</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho, saying,

<sup>51</sup> "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

<sup>52</sup> then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places;

<sup>53</sup> and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it.

<sup>54</sup> You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the larger you shall give more inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give less inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to anyone, that shall be his. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers.

<sup>55</sup> But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them *will become* as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live.

<sup>56</sup> And as I plan to do to them, so I will do to you.'"

The prophets repeatedly pled with the people to *forsake their heathen idols* and *devote themselves* wholly to the Lord. They failed to heed the warnings and God had to send Israel into Assyrian captivity and Judah into Babylonian Captivity. The apostles in their letters to the churches also emphasized *doctrinal* and *personal purity*. The believer was in the world, but he must be careful not to become like the world.

**Romans 12:1-2 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.*

<sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

**1 Timothy 6:10-11 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

<sup>11</sup> But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and gentleness.*

In this section, Paul stresses the importance of *separation* from the *ungodly*. He is *not teaching isolation* from *unsaved people*. In the first letter to the Corinthians, he clarified this issue.

**1 Corinthians 5:9-10 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;

<sup>10</sup> I *did not at all mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.

Paul says that if we are not to associate with *immoral, greedy, deceitful, cheating, idolatrous people*, then we would have to leave this world. There were, however, people who claimed to be believers who were living in immorality. **Fellowship with these folks was to be terminated.**

We are all acquainted with people who do not know the Lord. In fact, we should use our acquaintance with the unsaved to try to reach them for Christ. **How else are we going to reach the lost?**

What Paul is stressing here is a challenge for all believers to keep themselves *unspotted* from this world.

We may be acquainted with unbelievers, but we do not have to live the same kind of lifestyle as they do. We do not have to live in sin.

We are to be careful not to put ourselves into situations where we might compromise with sin and hurt our testimony for Christ.

Christians are not to allow themselves to be influenced by the ungodly.

The basis of Paul's **challenge is five-fold**.

**A. Saintliness demands Separation: “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness?”—v. 14**

**2 Corinthians 6:14 (NASB)**

**<sup>14</sup> Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?**

We are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers? **What is this all about?** The reference to the unequal yoke comes from **Deuteronomy 22:10**.

**Deuteronomy 22:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup> You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.**

The **ox** was a clean animal to the Jews, but the **donkey** was not. It would be wrong to yoke them together. The animals would be blistered by an uneven harness. They would be out of step and their plowing would tend to be crooked.

Furthermore, they have two opposite natures and would not even work well together. It would be cruel to bind them to each other. In the same way, it is wrong for **believers** to be yoked together with **unbelievers**.

The Christian possesses a divine nature (**2 Peter 1:4**), and therefore he should want to associate himself only with that which pleases the Lord.

**2 Peter 1:4 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup> For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.**

**2 Corinthians 6:14 (NASB)**

**<sup>14</sup> Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?**

The phrase “unequally yoked together” or “do not be bound together” is from the Greek word ***heterozugeo*** {*het-er-od-zoog-eh'-o*}. It is from the Greek word ***heteros*** which means “**another of a different kind.**” We are not to be yoked with another of a different kind.

This word ***heterozugeo*** is a military term. The word signifies to leave one's own rank, place, or order, and go into another. Here, it must signify not only that these Christians should not associate with the unbelievers in their idolatrous feasts, but that they should not apostatize from Christianity.

The questions which follow show that there was a sort of fellowship that some of the Christians had formed with the heathen, which was both wicked and absurd, and if not speedily checked, would infallibly lead to final apostasy.

The principle of “**unequal yoke**” or “**do not be bound together**” applies to marriage and business partnerships. Believers are not to *date, court, or marry unbelievers*. If you want a Christian spouse, then date one. Don’t use your dating to evangelize someone who is lost. Wait until they are already saved before you court them.

Multitudes of Christians have gotten away from the Lord or out of church because they violated this principle.

**Time magazine** reported (1/22/95) that the earthquake in **Kobe, Japan**, occurred when two plates on a fault line fifteen miles offshore suddenly shifted against each other, violently lurching six to ten feet in opposite directions. The result was the worst Japanese earthquake since **1923**. Thousands died. More than **46,000** buildings lay in ruins.

One-fifth of the city’s population was left instantly homeless. The destruction unleashed by those *two tectonic plates depicts* what happens when a *Christian bonds unequally with a non-Christian*.

Two people committed to each other *but going in different directions* can only lead to *trouble* and *instability*.

Some have spouses that are unsaved now because they did not know this truth, they rejected this truth, or were saved after they were married. If this is the case, stay with your spouse and endeavor to win them to Christ. Love them and live a godly life. Paul and Peter addressed this issue.

**1 Corinthians 7:12-13 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> **But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.**

<sup>13</sup> **And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.**

**1 Peter 3:1-4 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> **In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,**

<sup>2</sup> **as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.**

<sup>3</sup> **Your adornment must not be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;**

<sup>4</sup> **but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.**

Christians are not to form *business partnerships* with *unsaved people*. We should not join in *ungodly clubs, fellowships, agreements, or organizations* which may lead to compromising our Christian testimony and jeopardize our walk with God.

We are not to be bound to people in *bondage*, in *lifestyles we can't condone*, in *philosophies with which* we are not in agreement, or in *values* we stand against. Christians are not to develop *intimate friendships* with unsaved people because the *tendency of the intimacy* leads to iniquity.

The carnal nature of unbelievers many times leads to a demand in compromise with something that is *wrong* or *questionable* in order to maintain the relationship. If there is no compromise, the relationship is terminated or severely cooled.

So the Christian is pressured to make a *choice to compromise* with *carnality* in some way or the other or to *terminate* the relationship, which God is talking about here. This may not happen in all relationships with unsaved people, but it does occur in a majority of situations. The stories are endless.

Every Christian that I know who has violated the principle of being *unequally yoked* in business partnerships **has regretted their decision**. Those who I know and didn't heed this warning, formed business partnerships, and had to dissolve those partnerships within a year because of the compromises the other business partner was asking them to make.

God knows what he is doing. When He tells us to not yoke up with unbelievers, He means it. He knows what He is talking about! *Righteousness* does not have anything in common with *unrighteousness*. *Saintliness* is contrary to *sinfulness*.

**B. Substantiality demands Separation: “or what fellowship has light with darkness?”—[v. 14](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?**

**Can light and darkness coexist? No.** This is a substantial fact of life. There is no getting away from this fact. *Substantiality, truth, or reality* says that *believers* and *unbelievers* are not to be yoked together either.

We have no fellowship with unbelievers. This word “**fellowship**” is from the word *koinonia* {*koy-nohn-ee'-ah*} which means “**fellowship or intimacy; partnership and participation.**” It means to be so closely bound together that there is open and mutual sharing: what one has belongs to the other.



The point is clear. There is *no such fellowship* or *union* between *light* and *darkness*. On the contrary, light and darkness are mutually exclusive, of different natures entirely. They cannot coexist.

The same fact holds true between the *believer* and *unbeliever*. The unbeliever will not share or enjoy the blessings that God has for the Christian. The unbeliever will not share in eternal life, the inheritance of Jesus Christ, and the joys of Heaven and the Christian will not share in the torments of Hell that the unbeliever will face for eternity. There is no *communion* or *fellowship* between *light* and *darkness*.

Amos addressed this issue in the Old Testament.

**Amos 3:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> **Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?**

**C. The Sacrifice of Redemption demands Separation: “Or what harmony has Christ with Belial?”—v. 15**

**2 Corinthians 6:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> **Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?**

The word “*harmony*” is from the Greek word *sumphonesis* {*soom-fo'-nay-sis*}. It forms our English word “*symphony*.” This word means “**agreement or unison**” and it refers, properly, to the unison or harmony produced by musical instruments as in a symphony, where there is a harmonious chord.

**Belial** means “**worthless**” and is a term that refers to Satan and those who are under his control. So Paul is asking, “What harmony is there between Christ and Satan?” There is none. There is as much that is discordant between Christ and Belial as there is between instruments of music that produce only *discordant* and *jarring sounds*.

The redemption of Jesus Christ changes an individual. Because of God’s saving grace we are new creatures in Christ and thus, we are no longer in harmony with the direction the world is heading, its *anti-God sentiment*, or its *ungodly lifestyle*.

**A Haitian pastor** illustrated to his congregation the need for total commitment to Christ and the importance of total separation by telling them this parable: “A certain man wanted to sell his house for **\$2,000**. Another man wanted very badly to buy it, but because he was poor, he couldn’t afford the full price. After much bargaining, the owner agreed to sell the house for half the original price with just one stipulation: he would retain ownership of one small nail protruding from just over the door. The man agreed.

After several years, the original owner wanted the house back, but the new owner was unwilling to sell the home. So the first owner went out and found the carcass of a dead dog, and hung it from the nail he still owned on the front door.

Soon the house became unlivable and the family was forced to sell the house to the owner of the nail. The Haitian pastor's conclusion to the story was this: "If we leave the Devil with even one small peg in our life, he will return to hang his rotting garbage on it, making it unfit for Christ's habitation."

Beloved, there is no room for Satan and his garbage in our lives.

**D. Sense demands Separation: "or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"—[v. 15](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> **Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?**

Common sense says that a believer has no part or share with an infidel. An infidel was a person who was without faith. He was an unbeliever whether he was an *idolater, scoffer, philosopher, or a moral person*. If he did not have faith in the Lord he was an infidel.

**E. Spiritual Truth demands Separation: "Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?"—[v. 16a](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:16a (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> **Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

The word "agreement" is from the word *sugkatathesis* {*soong-kat-ath'-es-is*} which means "to deposit together with another person; to vote together with someone or to consent." There is no agreement or unity between the *temple of God* and *idols*. Idols were considered an abomination in Bible days. When an idol was erected in the temple under **Antiochus Epihanes** and a pig was sacrificed on the altar, it was referred to as an abomination.

As idolatry conflicts with the temple of God, *unbelievers* have no unison with *Christians* over spiritual matters and many times in the way they live. Paul is trying to make it clear that we are not on the same wave length with unbelievers. The desire to serve Christ and live a holy life will lead to separation in close friendships with unsaved people.

The *Christian will become uncomfortable* with the unbeliever or the *unbeliever will become uncomfortable with the Christian*. The principle of separation is an important factor in developing relationships with other people.

## V. A REMINDER OF AN IMPORTANT TRUTH— 2 Corinthians 6:16b

**2 Corinthians 6:16b (NASB)** <sup>16</sup> Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? **For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

After speaking about the clash between the temple of God and idolatry, Paul reminds us of an important truth about our relationship with God. The believer is God's temple. The Spirit of God indwells every Christian and will continue to dwell in them. The Lord is our God and we belong to Him.

**1 Corinthians 3:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

<sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Because the Lord indwells us and lives within us, He guides our way if we will let Him. He watches over us and cares for our needs. For example, **Solomon Ginsburg** seemed destined to follow in his father's footsteps as a rabbi to the oppressed community of Polish Jews.

But during his early manhood, to his father's horror, Solomon put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and became a Christian. His conversion brought him intense persecution. On one occasion he was *beaten unmercifully, kicked till unconscious, and left for dead in a garbage box, bones broken, clothing soaked with blood*. "Oh, but those were glorious times," he later said.

Solomon became a fiery Bible evangelist across both Europe and South America. In **1911**, needing rest, he decided to head to America on furlough. His route took him to Lisbon where he planned to cross the Bay of Biscay to London, then on to the United States.

Arriving in Lisbon, Ginsburg found the bulletin boards plastered with weather telegrams warning of terrific storms raging on the Bay of Biscay. It was dangerous sailing, and he was advised to delay his trip a week. His ticket allowed him to do that, and he prayed about it earnestly.

But as he prayed, he turned to his prayer calendar and found the text for that day was in the **second chapter of Deuteronomy**.

**Deuteronomy 2:7 (NASB)**

**<sup>7</sup>"For the LORD your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing."**

The Lord seemed to assure him that his long, worldwide travels were under divine protection. Ginsburg boarded the ship at once, crossed without incident, and caught the ship *Majestic* in London. His transatlantic voyage was *smooth, peaceful, and restful*.

Only after arriving in the United States did Solomon learn that had he delayed his trip in Lisbon, he would have arrived in London just in time to board a big ship known as..... the Titanic which sank on its maiden voyage.

Beloved, we should all thank the Lord for *His care, protection, and direction*.

**Psalms 37:23 (NASB)**

**<sup>23</sup>The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way.**

**VI. REMOVAL FROM EVIL INFLUENCES—[2 Corinthians 6:17](#)**

**2 Corinthians 6:17 (NASB)**

**<sup>17</sup>"Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.**

The word “**Therefore**” is a reference to what has just been said. Since we are the temple of the Lord, we are to come out from idolaters and unbelievers and be separated in the way we live. We are to avoid the path of the ungodly.

**Proverbs 1:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup>My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.**

**Proverbs 4:14-15 (NASB)**

**<sup>14</sup>Do not enter the path of the wicked And do not proceed in the way of evil men.**

**<sup>15</sup>Avoid it, do not pass by it; Turn away from it and pass on.**

**Proverbs 13:20 (NASB)**

**<sup>20</sup>He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.**

**Psalms 1:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!**

**Psalms 26:4-5 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup>I do not sit with deceitful men, Nor will I go with pretenders.**

**<sup>5</sup>I hate the assembly of evildoers, And I will not sit with the wicked.**

Time and time again in the early church the choice came to a man between the *security of his job* and *his loyalty to Jesus Christ*. It is told that a man came to **Tertullian** about this issue of separation and taking a stand. He told him his problem and then he said, “But after all I must live.” **Tertullian’s** reply was, “Must you?”

Christians also gave up social occasions in New Testament times. They would pass on attending feasts that were held in the temple of a pagan god and refrained from eating food that was dedicated to these gods. Some folks did not understand why they did this and became *angry, annoyed, or offended* by the lack of the participation of the Christians.

Many Christians paid a price for following Christ by being *banned, shunned, rejected, or disowned* by their unbelieving family members or friends. They may have been rejected by *family, friends, or society*, but the Lord said, “I will receive you.” Paul continues this thought in [verse 18](#) as he focuses on the Lord’s relationship with us.

Beloved, these Christians went through terrible times, yet the Lord encouraged and enabled them to endure their suffering and He will help you to do this too.

Several years ago a group of fledgling students sat around the old oak table in Ruth Bell Graham’s kitchen, listening to her stories. They were lonely and homesick. College life had been rougher than expected. Ruth’s eyes glowed as she told of her own bouts with *loneliness* and *discouragement* while a boarding student in Korea, and again during her husband’s extended absences while preaching. But the joy of God’s presence during Bible study helped ease the pain.

She showed them her little notebook, one she had worn out several times. “Here I jot journal entries, stories I hear, and spiritual lessons God teaches me. As you record your Bible studies, over the years you’ll actually be compiling your own personal Bible commentary.”

The next day, one of the students opened his heart to her in private, admitting defeat in his Christian life. The depth of her wisdom was veiled only by the simplicity of her response. She told him of the twelve spies in [Numbers 13](#). They were sent by Moses to scrutinize the Promised Land. It was theirs for the taking, for God had assured them of *his presence* and of *His conquering power*.

But ten of the spies lost their nerve, *seeing only giants, walled cities, and strong defenses*. *Joshua* and *Caleb*, on the other hand, were undaunted and full of faith. “**Let us go up at once and possess the land,**” they said, “**for the Lord our God is with us.**”

“Now,” asked Ruth, “what was the difference between the two sets of spies? Just this...” She paused for effect. **“The ten compared themselves to their problems, but the two compared their problems with God!”**

Beloved, compare your problems to the Lord when you are facing difficulties and discouragement.

## VII. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD—[2 Corinthians 6:18](#)

### [2 Corinthians 6:18 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>18</sup>“And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.**

The Lord is the Heavenly Father of the Christian. Those who know Christ as their Savior are referred to as the sons of God.

### [John 1:12 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>12</sup>But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,**

The question at this point is, **“Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ?”**

### [2 Corinthians 6:2 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>2</sup>For He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"—**

### [Romans 10:13 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>13</sup>For "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."**

During the **Battle of Murfreesboro, D.L. Moody** visited the bedside of a dying soldier. Moody shared the gospel, but the man shook his head saying, “He can’t save me. I’ve sinned all my life.” Moody tried verse after verse, but nothing worked until he read from the third chapter of John.

He said, “As I read on, his eyes became riveted upon me, and he seemed to drink every syllable. When I came to the words, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life,' he stopped me and asked, “Is that in there?” Moody replied, “Yes it is!” The soldier said, “Well, I never knew that was in the Bible. Read it again.” Moody read it over and over, explaining how the brass snake in [Numbers 13](#) foreshadowed the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

The next morning, Moody came to the cot where the soldier was but it was empty. The attendant told Moody the young man had died peacefully, repeating to himself that glorious proclamation: **“Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”**

Have you put your faith in Christ for salvation? If not, put your faith in Him today. What you do with Christ matters more than any other decision you will make in your entire life.

## Chapter 15. Fighting, Fear, and Friends

### 2 Corinthians 7:1-7 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

<sup>2</sup> Make room for us *in your hearts*; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.

<sup>3</sup> I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.

<sup>4</sup> Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

<sup>5</sup> For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.

<sup>6</sup> But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

<sup>7</sup> and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

Being falsely accused of wrong doing is very frustrating and can be very *discouraging* and *depressing*. Such was the case with one of the greatest Christians in the history of Christendom... the Apostle Paul.

He addresses here the conflicts he faced *externally* and also *internally*. He knew what it was like to be *depressed* and *disillusioned*. Yet, he also enjoyed comfort in the face of his discouragement. **How did this happen?**

**When Paul was cast down, how did he get back up?** We find some answers here. This portion of Scripture will provide some practical answers for us on the ways that Lord comforts us when we are *down* in the *dumps* and how to spiritually cope with depressing circumstances. God has a way of bringing friends into our lives when we are *facing fightings* and *fears*.

This chapter begins with a challenge for us to get the garbage out of our lives.

**Notice verse one.**



## I. THE CHALLENGE TO CLEANLINESS—[2 Corinthians 7:1](#)

### [2 Corinthians 7:1 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

What promises is Paul talking about here? He is talking about the promises that were discussed at the end of the sixth chapter. Notice them again.

### [2 Corinthians 6:16-18 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup>Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

<sup>17</sup>"Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.

<sup>18</sup>"And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

These promises refer to God's assurances of His *presence, friendship, and fellowship* to those who obey Him. The Lord said that if we will obey Him, He will be a real Father to us, we will be real sons and daughters to Him, and He can deal with us in that relationship. This does not say that if we don't come out and be separate, we will lose our salvation.

It does mean that if we do not lead a godly, clean life, God can't treat us as a Father would want to treat His child. As a father it would be difficult for me to be tender and joyous with my kids if they were not obeying me and doing that which was wrong. The Lord is no different. He wants us to get rid of our filth.

### [Proverbs 15:9 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>9</sup>The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves one who pursues righteousness.

### [Isaiah 55:7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>7</sup>Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

### [2 Timothy 2:9 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>9</sup>For which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.

**Did you know that the Lord wants to be in sweet, close fellowship with you?**

This kind of relationship, however, is hindered by *corruption* or *disobedience* in your life. It is essential then that we all clean up ourselves and remove from our life that which is offensive to the Lord. The promises of God are meant to lead us to purity of life, but they do not do so automatically.

We have to appropriate them and access their power by choosing to use them as God intended. **We must make the choice** to do what is *right* or *wrong*. The Christian who expects to be made pure without any effort of his own, will struggle with impurity and his flesh.

The person who lives a holy life *will do so in consequence of deliberate efforts* to resist the evil of his own heart, and to become like Christ. The promises of God aid us in our quest to be Christ-like. God wants us to be holy and has given us His power to live this way if we will use this power and yield to the Spirit of God.

**1 Peter 1:15-16 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> **But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;**

<sup>16</sup> **Because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."**

We must make the choice to put the principles of God's Word into practice. *Obedience, holiness, and godliness* are not automatic because we continue to struggle with our flesh. This is why we are challenged to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the *flesh* and *spirit*.

We are the ones that have to throw out the garbage. If we don't, our sin will rob us of our joy. This is why so many Christians have a chip on their shoulder today and gripe and complain about nothing. They have lost their joy.

When the *Emperor* arrested *Chrysostom* and tried to make him recant, he shook his head. The Emperor said to his guards, "Throw him into prison." "No," said one of them, "he will be glad to go, for he delights in the presence of his God in quiet!" "Well, execute him," said the Emperor. "He will be glad to die," said the soldier, "for he wants to go to Heaven.

I heard him say so the other day. "There is only one thing that can give Chrysostom pain," said the guard. "That is, to make him sin; he said he was afraid of nothing but sin. If you can make him sin, you will make him unhappy." The guard was right on target. Sin will rob us of our joy.

**The filthiness of the flesh is the sin which we commit in the body.** This has to do with *unholy lusts, unbridled appetites, drunkenness, gluttony, licentiousness, inordinate affection*, etc.

You and I need to be aware of the fact that we are living in a world today that is giving respectability to the sins of the flesh. ***Drunkenness, immorality, homosexuality, and drugs*** are glorified by many segments of society today, even by liberal churches. The challenge remains to get the garbage out of our lives. **How do we do this? How do we clean up our lives as we have been commanded?**

We cannot cleanse our own conscience from the guilt of sin. I am unable to wash out the stain of a guilty conscience, but God has done that through the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood.

**1 John 1:7 (NASB)**

**<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

As a father came home from his work, he saw his little daughter who had been playing in the mud. He said to her, “My, you’re pretty dirty.” In her childish way she replied, “Yes, I know daddy, but I’m prettier when I’m clean.” We are prettier too, when we are spiritually clean.

After we have been cleansed from our sins by the blood of Christ, our hearts still need a daily ***cleansing*** from the ***contamination*** of each day and the defeats we have suffered from yielding to temptation.

The question is, “**How?**” The Bible provides some steps for daily cleansing.

### **Some Steps for Daily Cleansing**

#### **1. Confession and Clearing our Conscience lead to cleansing.**

**1 John 1:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

**Acts 24:16 (NASB)**

**<sup>16</sup> In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men.**

When you clear your conscience and seek forgiveness for your offenses from God or others, you remove a weight upon your soul and a hindrance to your testimony.

#### **2. The Concepts of the Word of God have a cleansing effect on us.**

Just reading the Bible has a cleansing effect upon us, especially when we have had a rough day or had to endure the “***junk***” ***behavior*** and ***language*** of the world. The best bar of soap in the world is the Word of God. It will really clean us up. The Holy Spirit enables us to deal with the sin in our lives.

**Ephesians 5:26 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

**John 15:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

**John 17:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

**Psalms 119:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word.

In the **Old Testament** we read of the **Laver in the Tabernacle and Temple** area for the purpose of cleansing the hands and feet of the priest. This is where the priests washed themselves. The Laver is a picture of the Word of God. No dimensions were given for the Laver reminding us that it was limitless in its applications. In the same manner, God has the power to *cleanse* and *change* any sinner. There are no limits to His power.

The *laver* stood between the *brazen altar* and the entrance into the *Holy Place*. The Holy Place was the place of *service, prayer, worship, and fellowship* with the Lord. The laver teaches us that God wants our service to be done with clean hands and feet. Hands speak of service and feet speak of our walk and conduct. We are priests (**1 Peter 2:15**) and need to be clean and consecrated to the Lord just like the Old Testament priest. The Bible helps us to be clean.

**1 Peter 2:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

It is interesting to note that the laver at the Tabernacle was made from the brazen mirrors that were brought out of Egypt. The mirrors were symbols of *pride, vanity, and glorification* of the flesh. The laver, the place of cleansing for service, reminds us to put away our *pride, vanity, and love of self* if we are going to serve the Lord. Mirrors in the Bible are also a type of the Word of God. The Bible is like a mirror, **revealing** our *weaknesses* and *faults* and **revealing** us as we really are.

**James 1:23-24 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;

<sup>24</sup> for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

The Word of God cleanses us, just like the laver.

### 3. Compliance to the Word of God has a purifying effect on us.

#### **1 Peter 1:22 (NASB)**

**<sup>22</sup> Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,**

If we are going to be what God wants us to be, we must make the choice to obey the Lord, get rid of our sin, and do what is right. **It is not enough to just read the Word, it needs to be put into practice.**

In **Mexico** and the tropical zones of **South America** a “**strangler**” fig grows in abundance. The Spanish-speaking people refer to it as the “**matapalo**” which means “**the tree killer.**”

The fruit is not edible except to the cattle and birds. After birds eat it, they must clean their beaks of the sticky residue. They do this by rubbing them on nearby trees. The seeds have a natural glue which enables them to stick to the branches. When the rainy season comes, germination begins. Tiny roots begin to make their way down into the heart of the wood.

Within a few years, beautiful trees become entangled with this parasitic vine. Unless the tree is freed from these vines, it eventually dies. The only way to stop the killing process is to cut away the vine. We must take the same action when it comes to sinful habits in our life. They must be removed or else they will choke out the desire to obey the Lord's will in our life.

#### **Matthew 13:22 (NASB)**

**<sup>22</sup> And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**

#### **Matthew 24:12 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup> Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.**

### 4. Cherishing and a reverential fear of the Lord has a cleansing effect on us.

#### **Psalms 19:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.**

A *reverence* and *respect* for the Lord will help us stay right with the Lord and reject that which is wrong. When reverence for Christ wanes then so does godly living. The *change in attitude* of our country toward the Lord has brought about a *change in behavior* through the history of our country.

**John Kilbourn** pointed out that the state of Pennsylvania once had a law that reads: “If any person shall willfully, premeditatedly and despitefully blaspheme, or speak loosely or profanely of Almighty God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the Scriptures of Truth, such a person, on conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to pay a fine, not exceeding \$100, and undergo an imprisonment, not exceeding three months, or either, at the discretion of the court.”

A lot has changed in America.

#### 5. Chastening has a cleansing effect on a child and upon us.

**Proverbs 20:30 (NASB)**

<sup>30</sup> Stripes that wound scour away evil, And strokes *reach* the innermost parts.

**Hebrews 12:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

#### 6. The Second Coming of Christ should motivate us to keep ourselves pure.

**1 John 3:2-3 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

<sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Knowing that the Lord could come today is a motivation for all of us to keep our lives clean before the Lord. **Do you want to be ashamed when He returns?**

**2 Corinthians 7:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, **perfecting** holiness in the fear of God.

Paul says we are to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh. Then he says we are to perfect holiness in our life. The word “**perfecting**” is from the word *epiteleo* {*ep-ee-tel-eh'-o*} which means “**to bring to an end, to finish, complete.**”

**Cleansing ourselves is a twofold action: *turning away*** from sinful habits or bringing them to an end, and ***turning toward*** God. They were to make a clean break with their past and give themselves to God alone. We are supposed to do this too. In giving ourselves to the Lord, we are to bring to maturity what God had started in our lives in every area. All closets of our heart are to be open to His inspection.

**1 Peter 5:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.

**1 Thessalonians 4:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

Most people in this country do not know that the instructive motto of the State of Hawaii is a result of the influence of the **Protestant missionaries who first came to Hawaii in 1820.**

It expresses a great truth in the Hawaiian language: ***Ua mau ke ia o ka aina i ka pono***, which means, “**The life of the land is preserved in righteousness.**” May we too, adopt the principle of this motto and respond to the challenge of Paul to live clean and holy lives.

We have seen the *challenge to cleanliness, now we will look at the claim of character.*

## II. THE CLAIM OF CHARACTER—**2 Corinthians 7:2**

**2 Corinthians 7:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> **Make room** for us *in your hearts*; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.

After challenging the Corinthians to cleanse themselves of sin and improper relationships with pagans, he calls out to them to receive him and his fellow workers. The phrase “**Make room us**” is from the word *choreo* {*kho-reh'-o*} which means “**to make room or yield.**” Paul was asking them to make room for them in their affections. He wanted the Corinthians to receive them as friends, as their teachers, and to love them as much as they were loved.

**This is the struggle that every pastor or teacher faces.** If people do not receive you, if they do not make room for you in their hearts, they won’t *grow* or *learn*. I have never been able to help any Christian who did not want to be helped, who did not think he or she needed help, or did not give me the time of day.

One of the difficulties of being in any kind of leadership position are the false accusations that you may face from people who *don’t like you* or *are backslidden*. Paul faced this and alludes to this here. Evidently he was accused of wronging others, *corrupting* and *defrauding* other people. Paul defends his ministry among the Corinthians by using phrases his adversaries might have employed.

**2 Corinthians 7:2 (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup>Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.**

**Wronged no one**—The word “wrong” is from the word *adikeo* {ad-ee-keh'-o}. It refers to an injustice, as in a financial agreement or physical harm inflicted upon someone by creatures or fellow human beings. Paul says we have not hurt anyone or swindled them. Can you say this?

**Corrupted no one**—The word “corrupt” is from the Greek word *phtheiro* {fthi'-ro}. It means “to corrupt or destroy; to bring into a worst state or condition; to lead a Christian away from the Lord.” Paul did not corrupt any person in their morals either by his example or his preaching. In fact, they were spiritually much better off listening and obeying what he had to say.

**Let me ask, “Are you a good example to others?”** Does your life point people to Christ or away from Christ by the way you live and act? Never underestimate the power of your example.

This truth is amply seen in the life of **Samuel Wesley**. All three of the Wesley brothers started life curiously. **John Wesley** was rescued from a blazing house, a “brand plucked from the fire.” **Charles Wesley**, born prematurely, was tightly bound for days in swaddling clothes. **Samuel Wesley** was born **February 10, 1690**. He worried his parents from the beginning by refusing to utter sounds.

As he grew, no amount of coaxing would draw from him even one word. Friends feared he was dumb. But one day when five, Samuel hid under a table. His mother, Susanna, became alarmed when she couldn't find him, and that prompted Samuel to speak his first sentence: “Here I am, Mother!” After that, there was no stopping him. Susanna soon realized Samuel was a precocious child. She taught him the alphabet in a snap then she proceeded to teach him to read. **What textbook did she choose? Genesis.**

In short order, Samuel read all of **Genesis 1:1** by himself. Then he read the first ten verses. Then he memorized the whole chapter, ending with the last verse: “**Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.**” It was a firm foundation.

Samuel became a *preacher, poet, and educator* who exerted a **lasting, powerful impact** on many—including his younger well-known brothers **Charles**, who wrote **5500 hymns, and the famous preacher John** (though he objected to their Methodism). Samuel's life was cut short. He went to bed in apparent health on November 5, 1739, age 49, only to awaken at three in the morning, ill. By seven o'clock, he was dead.



His influence, however, outlived him and on his tombstone are these words:

*Here lye interred  
the remains of Rev. Mr. Samuel Wesley, A. M.  
A man, for his uncommon wit and learning, esteemed by all  
An excellent preacher:  
But whose best sermon  
was the constant example of an edifying life.*

**2 Corinthians 7:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup>Make room for us *in your hearts*; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.

**We took advantage of no one** —The word “**advantage**” is from the word *pleonekteo* {*pleh-on-cek-teh'-o*} which means “**to gain or take advantage of another person or to deceive them.**”

Paul took no man’s property, *by cunning, by trick, or by deception*. The idea is that Paul had taken advantage of no circumstances to extort money from them, to overreach them, or to cheat them. Paul was bold and confident in his defense because he was blameless.

We are to live our lives in such a way that if any person falsely accuses us, people will not believe their accusations and the accuser will be put to shame.

**1 Peter 3:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup>And keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

**III. CONDEMNATION IS NOT THE ISSUE—2 Corinthians 7:3**

**2 Corinthians 7:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup>I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.

Paul did not blame the Corinthians for their *vacillation* or *lack of love* and *acceptance* toward him. His *rivals* or *enemies* were very impressive, much more so than he. Even though these Christians restrained their love for Paul, their actions did not smother his *concern* and *compassion* for them. His confidence in them was unimpaired. He felt strongly the Lord was working in their lives as Titus will confirm in a moment.

The attitude he demonstrates show us that the Spirit of God can help you to not become bitter toward those who may be *cold, indifferent, or bitter* toward you. He guarded his heart against *hate* and *revenge* which are definite compassion killers. Paul knew the real enemy was not these deceived believers, it was Satan himself.

He warned us in the Ephesian letter to not give Satan ground in our heart ([Ephesians 4:27](#)). This was important in guarding against bitterness which he addressed four verses later.

[Ephesians 4:27 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>27</sup> **And do not give the devil an opportunity.**

[Ephesians 4:31 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>31</sup> **Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.**

[Colossians 3:8 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> **But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.**

[Colossians 3:19 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> **Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.**

[James 3:14-15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> **But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.**

<sup>15</sup> **This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic {*sensual: or, natural*}.**

**Author Ken Sande** gives an example of how loving actions can communicate forgiveness: Loving actions can do much more than change your feelings; they can also communicate in unmistakable terms the reality of your forgiveness and your commitment to reconciliation.

**Thomas Edison** apparently understood this principle. When he and his staff were developing the incandescent light bulb, it took hundreds of hours to manufacture a single bulb. One day, after finishing a bulb, he handed it to a young errand boy and asked him to take it upstairs to the testing room.

As the boy turned and started up the stairs, he stumbled and fell, and the bulb shattered on the steps. Instead of rebuking the boy, Edison reassured him and then turned to his staff and told them to start working on another bulb.

When it was completed several days later, Edison demonstrated the reality of his forgiveness in the most powerful way possible. He walked over to the same boy, handed him the bulb, and said, "Please take this up to the testing room." Imagine how that boy must have felt. He knew that he didn't deserve to be trusted with this responsibility again. Yet, here it was, being offered to him again as though nothing had ever happened.

Nothing could have restored this boy to the team more clearly, more quickly, or more fully. May we learn from Edison's example of patience and forgiveness.

We have seen the *challenge to cleanliness, the claim of character, condemnation is not the issue*, and now we will examine *confidence in conflicts*.

#### IV. CONFIDENCE IN CONFLICTS—[2 Corinthians 7:4](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 7:4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Great is my confidence in you; **great is my boasting** on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

Paul's had great "great is my boasting" toward these Christians. This phrase "great is my boasting" is from the word *parrhesia* {par-rhay-see'-ah} which means "freedom in speaking; unreserved, open, frank discussion; fearless confidence in someone or something."

So in spite of the trouble or conflicts in the past, Paul had great confidence in these folks and took great pride in them and what the Lord had done in their lives. This is quite a statement considering all the *turmoil* and *trouble* that had taken place in the Corinthian church. These folks had come a long way.

##### [2 Corinthians 7:4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am **overflowing** with joy in all our affliction.

In spite of conflicts, Paul was *comforted* or *encouraged*. In fact, he was exceeding joyful in all of his tribulations. The word "overflowing" is from the word *hyperperisseuo* {hoop-er-per-is-syoo'-o}. This word is used only here and in [Romans 5:20](#) in the New Testament.

##### [Romans 5:20 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, **grace abounded** all the more,

It means "to super-abound." It is a word which would be used only when the heart was full, and when it would be difficult to find words to express its conceptions. Paul's heart was full of joy and he pours forth his feelings in the most fervid and glowing language. He was saying that he had joy which could not be expressed. What an example to us!

Let me ask, "In spite of your trials and troubles, do you have joy and confidence in the midst of your conflicts?" It is not easy, but Paul shows us that you can! The Lord can give you *comfort, confidence, calm, and courage* when you are facing circumstances that are stressful. In fact, He can take our sorrows and turn them around for His glory. The Lord can take burdens and turn them into powerful blessings.

##### [2 Corinthians 4:17 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

**Job 23:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> **But He knows the way I take; *When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.***

**Carey Falwell** grew up running bootleg whiskey during Prohibition, aided by his beloved younger brother Garland, a likable person with a grin that could melt an iceberg.

But the brothers were star-crossed. Garland was wild and careless, flying along mountain roads in a black roadster, drinking heavily, causing trouble. One day Garland armed himself with two pistols and aimed them at Carey in a drunken rage. A dangerous cat-and-mouse game ensued, but Carey finally fired a shotgun in self-defense, instantly killing his little brother.

Carey never reconciled himself with the tragedy. Morning after morning, he visited Garland's grave, staring down, hat gripped in hand. Night after night, unable to sleep, he brooded at the table or in the barn, nursing a whiskey bottle, trying to forget what he had done. Dark moods seized him and his drinking increased. Time passed, and he grew embittered. He eventually succumbed to cirrhosis of the liver and died.

Against all odds, **Carey** had a son that grew up to be a preacher whose name was Jerry. It was **Jerry Falwell** who led his **Thomas Road Baptist Church** to purchase a farm and establish there a treatment center for alcoholics. The first man to enroll was **Earl Thompson**, who had once helped Carey Falwell smuggle his booze. But what should the new center be called?

As Jerry studied [Exodus 15](#), he read of the Israelites going from the Red Sea to the waters of **Marah** to the wells of **Elim**. There were lessons at every stop, and along the way the Lord replaced *bitterness* with *blessings*. So the center for alcoholics was named Elim House, a place of blessing. Soon other Elim Houses popped up around the nation, modeled after the one in Lynchburg, Virginia.

One day, when Jerry Falwell took his mother to see Elim House, she laid her hand on his arm, and from her eyes a gentle trickle of tears flowed like a broken necklace of pearls. She said to her son, "Jerry, do you know that if your father hadn't died you might not have cared enough about the others to build this place."

Beloved, God took Jerry Falwell's burden and turned it into a blessing. He can do the same for you. He can give you confidence and cheer in the midst of conflicts because of His empowering grace.

**Romans 5:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,**

We have seen so far four key areas.

1. **THE CHALLENGE TO CLEANLINESS**—[7:1](#)
2. **THE CLAIM OF CHARACTER**—[7:2](#)
3. **CONDEMNATION IS NOT THE ISSUE**—[7:3](#)
4. **CONFIDENCE IN CONFLICTS**—[7:4](#)
5. *Next, COMFORT IN THE TIME OF NEED*—[7:5-7](#)

## V. COMFORT IN THE TIME OF NEED—[2 Corinthians 7:5-7](#)

### [2 Corinthians 7:5-7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.

<sup>6</sup> But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

<sup>7</sup> and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

### A. The Afflictions Paul Faced—[7:5](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 7:5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.

Paul was a very busy man. When he arrived in Macedonia there was little time for rest or relaxation. In fact, he was surrounded by “**afflicted**” which is from the Greek word *thlibo* {*thlee'-bo*} which means “**to press hard or compress; to be cramped in a narrow place; to be afflicted, troubled, or distressed.**” This was created by *fighting, strife, and contention* from outward opposition. Meanwhile, emotionally he was facing *fear, dread, or terror*.

Can you relate to what he faced? Have you ever been in this boat? Satan had launched an all-out attack against God’s man. He was endeavoring to smother the apostle with *stress, strain, sorrow, and scary* circumstances. God was aware of what was happening and sent his man a breath of fresh air.

Notice verse six.

### B. The Arrival of an Encouraging Friend—[2 Corinthians 7:6](#)

#### [2 Corinthians 7:6 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> **But God**, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

The apostle states his dilemma but adds a big word.... “**But God!**” This is a great word. It is from the word *alla* {*al-lah'*} which means “**to form a transition to the cardinal, vital matter at hand.**”

Paul said, “We may have had problems, but God comforts those that are cast down.” Paul’s focus was on the Lord, not the problems. Message received! This is what we are to do, too.

**Hebrews 12:2a (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> **Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,** who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**2 Corinthians 7:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> But God, who **comforts** the **depressed**, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

The Lord comforts those that are cast down. This word “**comforts**” is from the Greek word *parakaleo* {*par-ak-al-eh'-o*} which means “**to call to one’s side and speak to; to encourage, strengthen, instruct, and comfort.**”

God comforts those that are “**depressed.**” This word has the idea of being *discouraged* or *depressed*. **Do Christians get depressed?** You bet! In fact, some of the most well known Christians throughout history faced times of depression. Satan’s goal is to get God’s people so discouraged and depressed that he can whisper into the heart of a lost sinner and say, “There is a Christian! Do you want to be like that?”

**Charles Spurgeon** suffered black periods of anguishing depression. On a notable **Sunday morning in 1866**, the famous Victorian preacher C. H. Spurgeon shocked his five thousand listeners when from the pulpit of **London’s Metropolitan Tabernacle** he announced, “I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever gets to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to.”

For some of his audience it was incomprehensible that the world’s greatest preacher could know the valley of despair. Yet, it was a regular part of his life because twenty-one years later in **1887**, he said from the same pulpit, “Personally I have often passed through this dark valley.”

Spurgeon also said, “There are dungeons beneath the castles of despair.” His church family at Metropolitan Tabernacle was once amazed to hear Spurgeon begin a sermon from **Isaiah 41:14** with these words in his introduction: *I have to speak today to myself and whilst I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and downhearted, I shall be preaching, I trust to myself for I need something which shall cheer my heart—why I cannot tell, wherefore I do not know, but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; my soul is cast down within me; I feel as if I had rather die than live; all that God hath done by me seems to be forgotten, and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down. I need your prayers.*

**Isaiah 41:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> “Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,” declares the LORD, “and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

**John Henry Jowett**, the renowned pastor of **Fifth Avenue Presbyterian in New York City**, and later **Westminster Chapel in London**, wrote to a friend in **1920**, “You seem to imagine I have no ups and downs but just a level and lofty stretch of spiritual attainment with unbroken joy and equanimity. By no means! I am often perfectly wretched and everything appears most murky.”

Writing of **Alexander Whyte**, perhaps **Scotland’s greatest preacher since John Knox**, **G. F. Barbour** said, “Resolute as was Dr. Whyte’s character, he had seasons of deep depression regarding the results of his work in the pulpit or among his people.” John Knox said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and put an end to this miserable life.”

**Adoniram Judson**, the first foreign missionary from America, suffered from deep depression after the death of his wife Nancy. He said, “God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in Him, but I find Him not.”

**William Cowper**, the author of the song *There is a Fountain Filled With Blood* suffered from severe depression all of his life. In fact, he spent eighteen months in an insane asylum and tried several times to take his own life.

**Martin Luther** was subject to such fits of darkness that he would hide himself away for days, and his family would remove all dangerous implements from the house for fear he would harm himself. In the midst of one of these times, his indomitable wife, Katharina, entered his room dressed in mourning clothes. Startled, Luther asked who had died. She replied that no one had, but from the way he was acting, she thought God had died!

**Depression is no respecter of persons.** The reality is that godly believers sometimes get depressed. Those who have set their minds on “**the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God**” ([Colossians 3:1](#)) have not been exempted from down times.

Those who have gone for it all, who have scaled heights we may never attain, sometimes were subject to *depression* and *despair*. If you are down in the dumps, you are not alone. Many great Christians faced the same predicament. Thank God, however, we can find comfort when we are discouraged.

**The question is how? How does the Lord comfort us? Again, the Bible provides the answer.**

**How Does the Lord Comfort Us when we are Depressed?**

**1. He uses PEOPLE to be an Encouragement and Blessing**

Paul says here that he was comforted by the coming of Titus.

**2 Corinthians 7:6 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;**

The arrival of Titus was not only a relief, but also a shot in the arm for Paul. He did not feel out on the limb any more.

Beloved, God uses people to lift us up when we are down. *David had Jonathan, Elijah had Elisha, Moses had Joshua, Paul had Silas, Barnabas, Timothy, and Titus.* The list is endless.

In the same manner, our Lord wants to use you to encourage others that need it. You can, if you will be alert to the needs of others and concerned enough to get involved. You won't be a blessing if you are *gripping, complaining, critical, and walking around* with a chip on your shoulder. It ain't gonna happen!

**Does your presence encourage other people? Do you bring them up or down?**

**Proverbs 27:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup> Oil and perfume make the heart glad, So a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.**

**Proverbs 27:17 (NASB)**

**<sup>17</sup> Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.**

**Job 4:3 (NASB)**

**<sup>3</sup> Behold you have admonished many, And you have strengthened weak hands.**

**The Protestant Reformation**, which began in **1517**, produced virtually no church-sent missionaries until **two Moravians, Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann**, left the warmth of their community of **Herrnhut** and ventured to **St. Croix in 1732**. It was Herrnhut's leader, **Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf**, who spurred their going. Zinzendorf had visited Copenhagen the previous year on political business.

While there, he had met a black man from **St. Thomas**, who pleaded with him to send someone to share the gospel with his enslaved family members in the Danish West Indies.

Back at **Herrnhut**, **Zinzendorf** shared this burden, and it took root. A year later, on **August 18, 1732**, two young men were commissioned as missionaries in an unforgettable service in which a hundred hymns were sung. **Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann** soon left Herrnhut for Copenhagen, seeking passage to the islands, but Copenhagen proved unfriendly, and the two men were pelted with obstacles.

One disappointment followed another, and much opposition arose to their mission. No one would help them. No ship would take them. Their hearts sank.

At that critical moment, **Numbers 23:19b** turned up in their daily devotional book: **“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”**



Inspired by these words, Dober and Nitschmann determined to persevere, believing that God would fulfill what he had started through them.

A handful of people in Copenhagen began helping them, and the tide of public opinion turned. Two royal chaplains lent their support, and even the **Queen of Denmark** encouraged them. **Princess Charlotte** contributed financially. A court official secured passage for them on a Dutch ship, and on **October 8, 1732**, they sailed for the West Indies, opening the modern era of missions. The Lord had spoken to them, and He had made it good. He provided the people they needed to encourage and strengthen them on their way.

## **2. God's PEACE is Given in the Midst of Instability and Unrest.**

**Psalms 119:165 (NASB)**

<sup>165</sup> **Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble.**

**Isaiah 26:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> **The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.**

## **3. He PRIES Us from Bondage and Sinful Habits.**

**Romans 6:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> **But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.**

## **4. The Lord PROVIDES Healing and Strength for Our Weakness and Sickness.**

**Hosea 6:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> **Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.**

**Luke 4:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> **THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,**

## **5. PROBLEMS and Trials are Countered by God's Provision of Grace.**

**2 Corinthians 12:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> **And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.**

**6. God PROMOTES Courage When We are Afraid.**

**Psalms 27:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> **The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?**

**Matthew 17:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> **And Jesus came to *them* and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid."**

**7. He PARDONS when we Fail and Seek Forgiveness.**

**1 John 1:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

**8. The Lord PROTECTS from Danger When it's His will for Us.**

**Proverbs 19:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> **The fear of the LORD *leads* to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.**

**Psalms 91:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> **He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.**

**9. God PULLS us up when we are down.**

**Psalms 27:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.**

**Isaiah 41:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> **For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.'**

Praise the Lord, we serve the God of all comfort!

**10. Jesus PLEDGES to Reward those Who are Faithful.**

**Matthew 16:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> **For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.**

**Revelation 22:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> **Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.**

The message of the vine is also a message of cleansing.

## 11. He PROMISED to Care For Us and Give Us Rest.

**1 Peter 5:7 (NASB)**

**<sup>7</sup> Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.**

**Matthew 11:28 (NASB)**

**<sup>28</sup> Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.**

The **Ridderhof family** had little money, but they were rich in *singing, worshipping,* and **love**. Their daughter, Joy, knew the Gospel from infancy, and at age 13, she gave her heart to the Lord Jesus. She went on to study at the University of Los Angeles, preparing to be a teacher. At the same time, Joy kept busy leading Bible clubs, witnessing to neighbors, and singing in a quartet.

Little did her friends realize that Joy secretly battled *worry* and *anxiety*. Exams, public speaking, and the uncertainty of the future kept her spinning from one state of worry to the next, all of it concealed and well-hidden, but inwardly was crippling her with discouragement.

Joy's life was changed, however, when she attended a Victorious Christian Life Conference at her church. The speaker, **Robert C. McQuilkin**, declared, "Worry is a sin. It amounts to a grievous lack of faith in the Father's care." That week changed Joy's attitude, and soon she found herself enrolling in McQuilkin's Bible School in South Carolina. She made the decision to rest in God's promises of His care for her.

Four years later, she was back in Los Angeles, well-trained for missionary service, but unsure of her next step. She prayed, "Lord, whatever door you open, I'll go there." Soon a mission board approached her about **Honduras**.

Joy, wanting to serve God in Africa, was hesitant, but while lunching at a friend's house, she picked a card at random from a little box of Bible verses. It was **Deuteronomy 28:8**,

**Deuteronomy 28:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you.**

This promise spoke directly to her in an undeniable way, and Joy sensed God's directing her to Honduras. As it turned out, Honduras became but the first stop on a lifelong, worldwide ministry for **Joy Ridderhof**. The Lord did more than she ever expected.

Joy was the founder of **Gospel Recordings, Inc.**, an enterprise that has blanketed the earth with recordings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in nearly 5,000 languages. Joy was greatly used of God because she learned to rest in God's promises for her own life. I like what is written in **Isaiah 41**.

**Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Paul found comfort in a time of need. We have examined two elements that surrounded this comfort:

1. *The Afflictions that Paul Faced* [vs. 5](#)
2. *The Arrival of an Encouraging Friend* [vs. 6](#)
3. *Next, the Account of the Attitude of the Corinthians* [vs. 7](#)

**C. The Account of the Attitude of the Corinthians—[7:7](#)**

**2 Corinthians 7:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> And not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

**Not only did** the arrival of *Titus encourage Paul, but the news or report of the attitude of the Corinthians* was such a blessing. Titus reported to Paul that there had been a change in attitude among the Christians in Corinth. He informed the apostle that *they longed* or had *an earnest desire* to see Paul again and shared with Paul that the Corinthians were sorry or mourning for what they did.

The Corinthian Christians had a “**your zeal**” toward the apostle. This phrase is from the Greek word *zelos* {*dzay'-los*} which means “**zeal, excitement of mind, concern, or loyalty.**” There was a total change for the good toward Paul. The apostle could not change their hearts, but God could and He did.

**Are you having difficulty with someone in your life?** Ask the Lord to work in their heart and change them. A good friend of mine shared with me recently that he deals with difficult Christians by asking the Lord to fill them with the Holy Spirit. He told me that since he has started doing this time after time God transforms the lives of these people within a short period. He said, “It is amazing and exciting to watch this happen.”

Are you facing discouragement and depression in your life? You can overcome it. In fact, the Bible gives us some insights that we can apply in dealing with depression. It tells us what to do when we are “Cast Down or Depressed.”

## What Can you Do When You Are “Cast Down or Depressed?”

### 1. Rely on the Lord to help you face the Depression.

#### **Psalms 42:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> Why are you in despair, O my soul? And *why* have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him *For* the help of His presence.

The Lord is close to those who are *brokenhearted* and *discouraged*.

#### **Psalms 34:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

He heals the pain of *discouragement* and a *broken heart*.

#### **Psalms 147:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds.

The Lord revives us in our *trouble* and *depression*.

#### **Psalms 138:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me.

### 2. Rest in God's faithfulness when you are Discouraged.

The Lord will not allow you to go through more than you can bear. He knows your weakness and limitations. Rest in His care for you!

#### **1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

#### **Psalms 29:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.

### 3. Read Bible stories and biographies of great Christians.

#### **Romans 15:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

When you read about the lives of other Christians, you will find out about their trials and how God met their needs. You will *read of their victories* and the *results of their trials*. This may help you to see your problems from a bigger perspective and may help you discover God's *direction* and *purpose* in your life. That which may be depressing you may be the tool which God uses to help others. **Your trial may be the school room for future ministry in your life.**

**2 Corinthians 1:4 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup>Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

**Dwight L. Moody** never imagined the chain reaction produced by his sermon as described on the previous page. In this life, Christian workers seldom see more than a splinter of their success. Many preachers thrash about in apparent failure, not realizing that some *word or verse* or *sermon or deed*, like a well-buried seed, will eventually bring forth a mighty harvest. Even Moody himself occasionally *succumbed to discouragement*.

According to his son, **William Moody**, he once said: "One Sunday I had preached and there did not seem to be any result. On Monday I was very much cast down. I was sitting in my study, brooding over my want of success, when a young man who conducted a Bible class called upon me. As he came in I could see he was away up on the mountain top, while I was down in the valley. Said he: "What kind of day did you have yesterday?" "Very poor; I had no success, and I feel quite cast down. How did you get on?" "Oh, grandly! I never had a better day." "What was your subject?" "I had the life and character of Noah. Did you ever preach on Noah? Did you ever study his life? You had better do it now. It will do you good."

When the young man went away, I got out my Bible and some other books and read all I could find about Noah. I had not been reading long before the thought came stealing over me: Here is a man who toiled on for 120 years and never had a single convert outside his own family. Yet he did not get discouraged. "I closed my Bible," said Moody. "The cloud had gone; I have never hung my harp on the willows since that day."

**4. Realize discouraging trials can bring glory to God if you respond the right way.**

**1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,  
<sup>7</sup>so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

*Sickness* and even *death* can bring *honor* and *glory* to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

**5. Remove any possible guilt by Repenting of the sin that could be causing your depression.**

**1 John 1:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Satan uses our past failures to keep us from removing guilt and dealing with discouragement.

**6. Remove yourself from depressing, angry, fearful people.**

Folks who struggle with these kinds of traits will spread fear, bitterness, and anger among others and make them the same way.

**Proverbs 22:24-25 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man,

<sup>25</sup> Or you will learn his ways And find a snare for yourself.

**Hebrews 12:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

Depression is fed by brooding, resentment, gripe sessions, excessive eating, refusal to eat, and procrastination.

**7. Recall God's blessings from the past and present, and praise Him for them.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

There is power in praising God. God defeated an army because another army praised God.

**2 Chronicles 20:21-22 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> When he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised *Him* in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the LORD, for

**His lovingkindness is everlasting."**

**<sup>22</sup> When they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed.**

**8. Reluctance in sharing with authorities, family, or friends, that we are depressed should be mastered.**

Pride keeps us from sharing our hurt. When we get depressed, we tend to avoid people, but as we humble ourselves, and seek help, God gives us grace and the encouragement we need from people who care about us.

**James 4:6 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."**

**9. Resist making major decisions during times of depression.**

Wait until your head is clear.

**Galatians 6:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup> Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.**

**10. Release your offenders from your bitterness. Forgive them.**

Many times depression is created by bitterness. People deplete their strength by using emotional energy to focus their anger upon other people, leaving them exhausted and down. This is why it is so important to forgive your offenders.

**Ephesians 4:31-32 (NASB)**

**<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.**

**<sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.**

**11. A Reclusive place needs to be established in order to get alone with God.**

**Luke 6:12 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup> It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.**

It is important that you have personal times with the Lord, away from distractions. You need time to focus on Him.



**Isaiah 26:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.

**12. Remove any clutter from your life.**

God is not the author of confusion. When your life is disorganized or in chaos, it leaves a sense of "Where do I begin? How am I going to get control of my situation?"

This feeling of helplessness creates depression. Get organized and start cleaning up your junk. Throw away that which is not needed. Take on the task one day at a time. Break up your task into little goals.

**1 Corinthians 14:33 (NASB)**

<sup>33</sup> For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

**13. Rescue or reach out to others who are having trials.**

**Philippians 2:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> Do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Helping someone else will help you get your mind off your problems and will encourage you.

**14. Research the Scriptures for solutions to your problems.**

**Psalms 19:8 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

**Psalms 119:47 (NASB)**

<sup>47</sup> I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love.

**Psalms 119:165 (NASB)**

<sup>165</sup> Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble.

**Jeremiah 15:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.

**Psalms 119:105 (NASB)**

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

**Psalms 119:130 (NASB)**

<sup>130</sup> The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

## 15. Relegate your worries and cares to the Lord.

Give what is depressing you, to the Lord. Trust Him with your worries.

**1 Peter 5:7 (NASB)**

**<sup>7</sup> Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.**

## 16. Realize that God will Use You for His glory if you are Willing to Serve Him.

For over 200 years Sunday schools have gathered people together, millions of men, women, and children, hearing, learning, and observing God's Word.

**Did you know that much of the credit for the Sunday School movement does not go to a preacher, missionary, or evangelist?** The birth of Sunday School goes to **Robert Raikes**, an eighteenth-century newspaper publisher in **Gloucester, England**.

Mr. Raikes was a *prosperous* and *pompous* man with a soft spot for ragamuffins. He determined to begin a school for them in the slums of Gloucester. Since children worked Mondays through Saturdays, he selected Sundays, and in 1780, his first Sunday school began in Mrs. Meredith's kitchen on Sooty Alley.

The children learned reading and writing, using the Bible as a textbook. After several years, Raikes's experiment was working well enough to publicize in his newspaper.

Then he had another idea. An annual festival was held near Gloucester, and it was always packed with wild, hard-drinking, rabble—rousing crowds. Raikes distributed curious leaflets inviting the people to the festival to witness "a novel sight."

On **Sunday, September 24, 1786**, the crowds flocked in. There, standing before the church, were 331 clean, well-dressed Sunday school children. Many in the crowd had never before seen a clean, well-dressed child.

Mr. Raikes had persuaded his friend, Dr. Samuel Glasse, to prepare a special sermon. Glasse rose, looked at the throng of people, and preached a sermon from **Deuteronomy 31**.

**Deuteronomy 31:12-13 (NASB)**

**<sup>12</sup> "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law.**

**<sup>13</sup> "Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."**

Dr. Glasse's sermon swept across England in printed form under the title, "The Piety, Wisdom, and Policy of Promoting Sunday Schools." And the Sunday school movement was soon established. God used an ordinary Christian newspaper publisher to start something that would reach millions for Christ and disciple them in the Word of God. What a blessing to be used of God.

Let me ask, "What does the Lord want you to do?" Beloved, when you serve the Lord and see God using YOU, it will help you to deal with depression. It's when we get focused on our problems or failures, instead of focusing on God, we get down in the dumps. Keep your eyes on the Lord and He will *revive* and *sustain* your *heart, mind, and soul*.

## Chapter 16.

### The Stress and Sweetness of Spiritual Surgery

#### 2 Corinthians 7:8-16 (NASB)

<sup>8</sup> For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—

<sup>9</sup> I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

<sup>10</sup> For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

<sup>12</sup> So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.

<sup>13</sup> For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

<sup>14</sup> For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the truth*.

<sup>15</sup> His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

<sup>16</sup> I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.

Have you ever had an operation or surgery in your life? I have had several. The most memorable one was at the age of fifteen when I had surgery for bone cancer. That did not go well because I woke up in the middle of the surgery screaming bloody murder.

There are times that surgery may be necessary for you. In order for the surgeon to repair or remove a dangerously infected part from the human body, it is necessary for him to cut deep into the flesh. This can be *painful* and *stressful*.

The doctor does not rejoice in causing *pain* to the *patient*. He is not a mad man with a foot-long knife, drooling to cut into somebody's guts. No, the surgeon cuts the body and removes or fixes a problem because he knows it must be done if the patient is to regain his *health* and *strength*.

This is especially true if the patient is a close friend. The surgeon is keenly aware of the suffering that will be necessary, but he realizes that this suffering is only temporary, and he is willing that it should be so in order that the final outcome might be the healing of the person.

**The same application holds true for any preacher that loves his people.** There are times that you have to perform spiritual surgery either on the *church as a whole* or on a *wayward Christian*. The surgery takes the form of a stern rebuke from the Scriptures and denouncing sin. Such times are not only stressful for those *who are receiving* the rebuke, but also the *ones that are giving* the rebuke.

It is painful for any man of God to *rebuke* or *be stern* with his people. It is a lot more fun to preach messages of encouragement, love, and Heaven, than to reprove or deal firmly with sins like *drinking, smoking, adultery, immorality, immodesty, divorce, homosexuality, abortion, gossip, gambling, spouse or child abuse, swearing, and stealing from God, etc.*

Yet, it is very necessary to *reprove* in order to *restore* or maintain the health of the church or the wayward Christian. The goal of spiritual surgery is the sweetness of *recovery, repentance, revival* and the *restoration* of the joy of the Lord.

These sentiments are what Paul is expressing in the final half of [2 Corinthians chapter seven](#). This section reveals the stress that Paul felt in doing spiritual surgery on the Corinthian church and the sweetness he enjoyed when they *repented* and *corrected* the problems in the church. The changes they made in their lives *reveal* elements of *revival* for any Christian. Let's dig in!

## **I. The Concern of Paul and the Contrition of the Corinthians— [2 Corinthians 7:8](#)**

### **2 Corinthians 7:8 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> For though **I caused you sorrow by my letter**, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while.

Paul said, “**I made you sorry with my letter.**” What does he mean by the word “sorry?” It comes from the word *lupeo* {loo-peh'-o} which means “**to cause grief or sorrow, to affect with sadness, to make someone uneasy.**”

The sorrow was caused by a letter that was written by Paul after his second visit to Corinth. As you recall, when Paul found out about the immorality that existed in the Corinthian church, he wrote the letter to them that we know as [1 Corinthians](#) to deal with problems in this church. When Paul found out that the problem of immorality was not dealt with in the church, Paul made a second visit to Corinth to deal with the problem.

On this second visit, matters evidently got pretty heated. This is when Paul came to them in *sorrow* or *heaviness* as mentioned in [2 Corinthians 2:1](#). Paul had instructed the church to remove this man from the church, and this man, and possibly his friends heatedly opposed Paul when he arrived.

When Paul arrived, there was evidently a confrontation with this man who *insulted, verbally attacked* Paul, and challenged his apostolic authority to have him disciplined in the church. The fact that the man had not been dealt with reveals he may have been very influential in the church or in the city of Corinth.

Paul left Corinth and returned to Ephesus where he wrote a *severe, stern* letter to the church to deal with this problem. Evidently, nothing had been resolved. This letter was delivered by Titus to the Corinthians. **As far as we know, this stern letter has been lost and is unavailable now.**

As we saw in the first half of chapter seven, it was from Titus that Paul learned that these people were longing for Paul's *fellowship* and *expressed deep sorrow* for what had happened.

This severe letter of rebuke was painful for Paul and the Corinthians, but it was also necessary. **Paul said he did not repent that he wrote it, but he did repent. That seems confusing so what is he saying here?**

The word “**repent**” is from the Greek word *metamellomai* {*met-am-el'-lom-ahee*}. It means “**to have regret about something, to be very sorry; to have second thoughts or change one's mind.**”

The word here does not denote repentance in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, as if any wrong had been done. It is not the language of remorse. Paul did not do anything wrong.

This word “**repent**” denotes nothing more than the uneasiness which a good man feels, not from the consciousness of having done wrong, but from tenderness for others.

The apostle did not regret writing the letter, because it was necessary for the health of the church. He did at first have *second thoughts* or *regrets* about the pain the letter would create in these believers for a little while. He did not relish inflicting pain upon people. He wasn't like this at all. Like a father that disciplines his children because it is necessary, Paul knew the discipline of this church was for their own good, even though it was painful for him to do the surgery.

**There are times when rebuke is necessary.** It often happens that the man who avoids confrontation and seeks an easy peace finds in the end nothing but trouble because problems have a way of *festering* and *growing*. Trouble is like disease. If it is dealt with at the right time, it can often easily be eradicated; if not, it can become an incurable growth or cancer. This is true in **school, business, the family, or in the church.**

Paul's purpose was to help these believers to be the best Christians they could be. His purpose was *not to discourage them, but to encourage them* to do the will of God and mature in Christ.

Let me say this here, if your parents discipline you because you have disobeyed them or you have done something wrong, don't hate them and conclude they don't care about you or are trying to control your every move. They correct you because they are trying to teach you proper boundaries of behavior that will enable you to pursue good goals and dreams and protect you from doing something that will damage, scar, or destroy your life.

The same truth holds for a pastor or church that has to discipline one of its members for sinful behavior. The purpose of the discipline is to bring the believer to repentance and help restore him or her to spiritual growth and usefulness for Christ. Don't get mad at the pastor or church for obeying what God has instructed them to do in His Word and for trying to help the Christian out of sinful bondage. Spiritual surgery is not fun for anyone.

## II. THE CHEER OVER THE CHANGE IN THE CORINTHIANS— 2 Corinthians 7:9

### 2 Corinthians 7:9 (NASB)

**<sup>9</sup>I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.**

Paul rejoiced, not because these believers were *grieved, hurt*, or made *sad*, but because their grief led to a change in *behavior* and *attitudes* that were godly and Christ-honoring. They sorrowed to “**repentance.**” This word is a different Greek word than the one used in verse eight. It is the word *metanoia* {*met-an'-oy-ah*} which means “**a different state of mind or a change of mind or purpose.**” This word denotes *a change for the better; a change of mind* that is *durable* and *productive* in its *consequences*; a change which amounts to a *permanent reformation*.

The stress of their spiritual surgery led to sweetness. The Corinthians were not harmed in any way by Paul's letter of rebuke. It had the intended effect in their lives because they responded the right way to God's leading and Spirit. **The change in their behavior indicated their repentance was genuine.**

There was a cartoon several years ago in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in which little George Washington was standing with an axe in his hand. Before him, lying on the ground was the famous cherry tree. He has already made his smug admission that he did it—after all, he “cannot tell a lie.” But his father was standing there exasperated saying, “All right, so you admit it! You always admit it! The question is, when are you going to stop doing it.” **This is the message of genuine repentance. Beloved, when you repent, you stop doing what is wrong.**

### III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GODLY SORROW— 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

#### 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 (NASB)

<sup>10</sup> For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation*, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

The kind of sorrow that the Lord wants us to have is the kind that causes us to turn away from our sins, and results in our salvation and deliverance from that sin. **Godly sorrow produces a change that shall be permanent.** It is not mere regret; it does not soon pass away in its effects, but it *produces permanent* and *abiding changes*.

A man who mourns over sin as committed against God, and who seeks the Lord for pardon, *will reform his life and truly repent*. This is why God's men preached "repentance" all throughout the Old and New Testaments.

1. Noah's message from the steps going up to the Ark was not, "Something good is going to happen to you!" No, that wasn't his sermon.
2. Jeremiah was not put into the pit for preaching, "I'm O.K., you're O.K.!"
3. Daniel was not put into the lion's den for telling people, "Possibility thinking will move mountains!"
4. John the Baptist was not forced to preach in the wilderness and eventually beheaded because he preached, "Smile, God loves you today!"
5. The two prophets of the Tribulation will not be killed for preaching, "God is in his Heaven and all is right with the world!"
6. Instead, what was the message of all those men of God? Simple, one word: "Repent!" Godly sorrow produces repentance in our lives without regret.

**Not all sorrow is the same.** There is another kind of sorrow which results in *destruction* and *spiritual death*. It is the sorrow of this world. There is a very distinct difference between "godly" sorrow and "worldly" sorrow. Let take a look at both of them. We will start with a story to illustrate a point.

When Michigan played Wisconsin in basketball early in the season in 1989, Michigan's Rumeal Robinson stepped to the foul line for two shots late in the fourth quarter. His team trailed by one point, so Rumeal could regain the lead for Michigan. He missed both shots, allowing Wisconsin to upset favored Michigan.



Rumeal felt awful about costing his team the game, but his sorrow didn't stop at the emotional level. After each practice for the rest of the season, Rumeal shot one hundred extra foul shots. Thus, Rumeal was ready when he stepped to the foul line to shoot two shots with three seconds left in overtime in the national-championship game.

Swish went the first shot, and swish went the second, nothing but net. Those shots won Michigan the N.C.A.A. national basketball championship. **Rumeal's repentance had been genuine, and his grief and sorrow motivated him to work so that he would never make the mistake of missing crucial, game-winning free-throw shots again.**

**Beloved, in the same manner, sorrow that is godly is conviction and grief that lead to a change in the behavior and attitudes of a person.** It is confirmed by the actions and deeds of the individual. The person realizes that their actions displease the Lord and they endeavor to stop doing what is wrong and correct their mistakes, wrongs, or failures.

**God commends this kind of sorrow in the second Beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn";** that is, they mourn over their sins before God. Such grief is "blessed" because it *drives us to God* and *to repentance*.

Sorrow is not enough for a changed life. It has no healing benefit by itself. We are to let the grief over our sins motivate us to change our behavior. *Good grief* is *godly grief* that leads to good behavior and the effort to never do what is wrong again. **It sees the sin as an offense toward the Lord.**

When we look at the lives of *Peter* and *Judas*, we find that both men were *grieved* and *sorry* for their sinful choices. The difference we find between the two was the fact that they responded differently to their sorrow. *Peter repented* and he drew closer to the Lord. He went forward for Christ and was greatly used by God. **Judas, on the other hand,** was overwhelmed by what he had done and committed suicide. *He had remorse for his atrocity, but not repentance.*

**Worldly sorrow is not really sorrow at all in one sense.** It is not sorrow for its sin or for the hurt it may have caused others. If it got the chance to do the same thing again and thought it could escape the consequences, it would do it.

The *Pharaoh of Egypt* is a classic example of *worldly sorrow that was insincere*. He was reaping the consequences of his rebellion and confessed his sinfulness. Moses, however, questioned the sincerity of his sorrow. He was right to do so.

**Exodus 9:27 (NASB)**

**27 Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones.**

**Exodus 9:30 (NASB)**

<sup>30</sup> "But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God."

**Exodus 9:34 (NASB)**

<sup>34</sup> But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

Looking at Judas, we find that the *sorrow of this world* can be very *bitter* and *intense*. It causes a person to become *resentful* and *rebellious* against the consequences and punishment of sin like that of Esau who grieved with many tears over the loss of his birthright but found no place for repentance. He had no chance to get it back.

**Hebrews 12:16-17 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> That *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal.

<sup>17</sup> For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

**At the center of worldly sorrow is selfishness, not grief over our sins against God.** The focus of worldly sorrow is on *your own hurt, your shame, your embarrassment*, and the consequences of *getting caught* and *being punished*. It eats a man up with *guilt* and *remorse, depression* and *despair, defeat* and *inactivity*. It is consumed with *self pity*.

The attention to selfishness shifts the focus of the sorrow off of your offense toward God to yourself. **This is why there is no change in behavior because the Lord has been left out of the equation.** Bitterness over the consequences of sin makes the heart harder, not softer.

*If* the person *does not turn to the Lord*, then the *conviction, guilt, and remorse* work on the soul like acid and drain the sinner of his *strength, joy, peace, and stability*. He does not find the forgiveness he desperately needs because he has not sought it.

Those who are experiencing worldly sorrow will go as far as to turn away from the Lord in their grief and sorrow. Instead of repenting, they look to substitute the Lord with other things. Some seek *worldly companions, pleasure, drugs, or alcohol* to ease their guilt.

This sorrow works death. It produces additional *distress, breaks your spirit, destroys your peace, deepens your gloom, and festers frustration*. After you have died it results in eternal torment.

**Godly sorrow, on the other hand, brings about blessing, cleansing, mercy, pardon, and rejoicing.** It is encouraged by the Lord all throughout the Bible.

If you are experiencing sorrow in your life, then let it be a catalyst to drive you closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. If your sorrow has been created by your sinfulness, then let it motivate you to take action to turn your life around with the Lord's help. Don't put it off. Turn from your sin today before it's too late.

**Sir Thomas Fuller** put it this way, "You cannot repent too soon because you do not know how soon it may be too late." Heed the admonitions of Scripture to have a tender heart.

**Matthew 5:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

**Joel 2:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning;

**2 Chronicles 7:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> And My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

**Psalms 34:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

**Psalms 51:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

**Isaiah 55:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

Paul said in **2 Corinthians 7:11(NASB)**, "For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter."

Listed here are *rudiments of revival*. This is a list of the evidence that the sorrow of the Corinthians *was godly sorrow that led to repentance*. This was the *sweetness* that came from the *stress* of *spiritual surgery*. Notice the effects of godly sorrow in the Corinthian church.

**Eight different things** are listed here. It is interesting to note that the number eight is the number of "**new beginning**" in the Bible. This was a new beginning for the Corinth church.

**A. Diligence: ..... “what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you.....”**

**2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)**

**<sup>11</sup> For behold what **earnestness** this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.**

The word “**earnestness**” is from the Greek word *spoude* {*spoo-day*}. This word means “**diligence, haste, earnestness in accomplishing or striving after anything.**” Their godly sorrow made them serious about their faults and gave them a sense of urgency in getting them corrected. They felt this could be and must be done.

These folks were not going to wait around for the Lord to deal with them again. They did not offer excuses either, saying, “It’s no use, we’re all failures. This is too hard.” No, they dealt with their faults firmly.

When men are thoroughly convinced of their sin, they will set about removing it with the utmost diligence. This is part of the sweetness that comes from spiritual surgery. Let me ask, “Is there something in your life you need to get rid of?” Godly sorrow will motivate you to deal with your sin **decisively** and **urgently**, with no more excuses. No matter what the past may be for you, when you deal **firmly** and **decisively** with your sin, you are back on the path to serving God.

Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. All the **garbage** and **grief** that Paul endured was turned around by the Lord for good. The Lord can do this for you too. He can take the **mistakes, trials**, or the **burdens of your life** and turn them into **powerful, wonderful blessings**.

The story of **Hannah and her son Samuel** has a modern counterpart in the life of **Adjai Samuel Crowther** and his mother. Adjai, eleven years old, was seized in **1820**, by slave masters near his village in West Africa. The terrified boy was thrown into a crowded slave pen then chained aboard a slave ship. He suffered untold **panic** and **pain** until the ship was captured by a British steamer.

Adjai was **rescued** and **placed** under the care of missionaries at Sierra Leone. There, he was enrolled in school and heard of the Lord Jesus Christ. A benevolent preacher, **Samuel Crowther**, financed his education. Adjai was baptized at age 16, and he took the name of his benefactor: Adjai Samuel Crowther.

By and by, Samuel, as he was called, traveled to England to further his studies. His keen mind quickly grasped **languages** and **academics**, as well as practical skills such as carpentry. When he returned as a preacher to Africa, he settled near the Niger River, married, preached the Word of God, began a boarding school for African children, and worked ceaselessly for the Lord Jesus Christ by sharing the Gospel with the lost.

Years passed, and one day Samuel was preaching at Freetown, not far from the spot where he was kidnapped as a child. In the corner of his eye, he saw an old woman, bowed and depressed. She appeared to have borne a heavy sorrow. As he talked with her, she opened her heart, telling him of her *hard life* and of the *loss of all her children*. “But the worst of all,” she wailed, “was losing my little boy Adjai.”

Samuel gazed into her eyes and recognized he was talking with his own mother. Under his tender ministry, she shortly afterward became a Christian herself, and at her baptism she, too, took a Christian name. She chose Hannah—the mother of Samuel, the man of God. Amen!

God can take our burdens and turn them into blessings. All things do work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose.

### **B. Dealing with Past Failures and Faults:...“*what vindication of yourselves.....*”**

#### **2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: **what vindication of yourselves**, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

The sweetness of spiritual surgery is seen secondly in the fact that these Christians dealt with their past *failures* and *faults*. The phrase “*vindication of yourselves*” is from a familiar word *apologia* {*ap-ol-og-ee'-ah*}. It forms our English word “*apology*.” *Apologia* means “**a speech of defense before a tribunal; a claim of extenuating circumstances.**” The word here properly means an *apology* and *explanation* for what had been done wrong to Paul.

These believers sought to clear themselves of that which they were to blame or what they allowed to fester among themselves by not speaking up. Some of the problems may have been unavoidable. These people were *concerned* about *correcting* their sins of *commission* and *omission*.

They dealt with the leader of the opposition against Paul and apparently dealt with and corrected all the wrongs in their midst. It was important to them to *clear* their *conscience* which is a *cardinal element* of Christian growth and maturity. Paul stressed this repeatedly in his epistles.

#### **Acts 24:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men.

#### **1 Timothy 1:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

When people seek forgiveness for their offenses and make restitution for their wrongs, it is a good indication that they have a *truly genuine, repentant spirit*. *Clearing your conscience* of past mistakes and offenses is part of the *sweetness of spiritual surgery*.

Are there any matters in your life where you need to make things right with God or with other people? If so, then get those matters cleared up today. Don't delay it. *Clearing your conscience* will remove the weights that hinder you from serving the Lord Jesus Christ, which ought to be the goal of every believer. Realize that your decision to get matters right with God and others can have a powerful, ripple effect on your *family* and your *friends*.

For example, **in the 1700's**, a young man named **James Taylor** proposed marriage to his girlfriend, and a wedding date was set. Neither of them were Christians. James, in fact, so detested itinerant preachers that he often pelted them with rotten tomatoes or eggs. Shortly before his wedding, one of John Wesley's circuit rider preachers entered town, and James, hearing of it, wanted to disrupt the meeting. But as James listened in the fringes of the crowd, the preacher quoted [Joshua 24:15](#): "*....But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

These words stuck James like an arrow. When the day of his wedding arrived, the verse was still lodged in his thoughts. That morning, James retired to the fields to think. He was about to take a wife, to establish a home, but he wasn't serving the Lord. He didn't even know Him at all. He knelt in the grass and earnestly asked the Lord Jesus Christ to be his Savior. By the time he finished praying, he was alarmed to discover it was time for the wedding.

Rushing to the chapel, he apologized for being late, and the ceremony proceeded. Then he shocked his bride and guests, by announcing he had put his faith in Christ and had become a Christian. He soon began witnessing to his beautiful new wife, but she remained resistant to the Gospel.

Finally, one day James came home so burdened for her that he picked her up and carried her to the bedroom. There, with a forceful hand, he made her kneel beside him. Soon both were weeping, and there she, too, became a Christian.

Eight generations have since passed, each filled with Christian workers serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Included among them is **James Taylor's great-grandson, Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission**, who opened the interior of China to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Beloved, you never know the future, ripple-effects your decisions for the Lord will have upon your family and upon the world. Don't underestimate the importance of your choices, your testimony and example.

### C. Dander:... "indignation"

#### 2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what **indignation**, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

The effect of the godly sorrow of the Corinthians is seen in their dander or indignation. The word “**indignation**” is from the word *aganaktēsis* {*ag-an-ak'-tay-sis*} which means “**indignation, anger, irritation, or vexation.**”

**One effect of true repentance is to produce decided hatred for sin.** The indignation of the Corinthians may refer to their attitude toward the trouble-maker because of the reproach he brought on the name of Christ. I think it more likely refers to their attitude toward themselves for allowing sin to go on for so long without taking action against it. I believe they were angry at themselves for allowing this sin to fester and seep into the church. In fact, there was a renewed anger at sin itself—a renewed commitment to combat sin with all the resources available in the power of God's Spirit.

Let me ask, “Do you get angry at your own faults and failures? Do you get angry with yourself when you do something stupid or wrong?” We all should! Our anger toward our sin should be a catalyst to not indulge in it anymore.

### D. Dread or Distress:...“fear.....”

#### 2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what **fear**, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

This word “**fear**” also means “**dread or terror.**” Their dread may have referred to several areas. **First**, their godly sorrow caused them to have a fear or reverence for the Lord. This is the beginning of wisdom. **Secondly**, they may have also feared that the same problem be repeated again and wanted to take all precautions from letting sin creep into their church as it did before. **Thirdly**, it may possibly mean fear of the displeasure of Paul, and of the punishment which would be inflicted if the evil were not removed from their lives and from the church.

There was also *fear* of the wrath of God and *fear* that great damage had been done to the church, to one of God's great servants, and to the name of Jesus Christ. Godly *fear* or *reverence* will help you to stay dependent upon the Lord and to be careful how you live and act. When you have a *fear* or *reverence* for the Lord, your concern will be to glorify Him no matter what the cost may be to you. Your passion will be to honor God with your life, just like **Eric Liddell** did with his life.

Leaving his young son in boarding school in Great Britain was the hardest thing **Rev. James Dunlop Liddell, Scottish missionary to China**, had ever done. But Eric thrived like a hare in the highlands. He studied hard. He loved sports, particularly rugby. He joined a Bible study, attended church regularly, and became a member of the Crusader Christian Union. He also began his lifelong habit of early morning Bible reading and prayer.

Eric advanced to the university, joined the track team, and won races like a thoroughbred. Every week he brought home more prizes and trophies until he soon ran out of storage space. His legs became a Scottish national treasure and all the world followed him to the 1924 Olympics. All the while, Eric's Christian life continued on the fast track as well, and his newly-found fame gave him opportunities for preaching and witnessing for Christ.

At the Paris Olympics, his faith was put to the test when his chosen venue, the 100-meter race, was scheduled for Sunday. Eric, who didn't believe in competing on the Lord's Day, opted out of this race. He entered the 400 meter run instead as the world watched and wondered what he was doing.

In his dressing room just before the race, Eric unfolded a small bit of paper that had been given to him by the team masseur. It read: "In the old book it says '***He that honors me I will honor.***' Wishing you the best of success always." Eric knew the verse well. It was [1 Samuel 2:30](#).

He smiled and made up his mind that, win or lose, he would honor the Lord with his life. Eric ran his race that day and won it, setting a new world record of **47.6 seconds**. He and the Lord had honored each other that wonderful day. Are you honoring the Lord with your life?

Godly sorrow was evident in the Corinthian Christians.

**We have seen so far.....**

1. ***Their Diligence***
2. ***Their Dealing with Past Failures and Faults***
3. ***Their Dander***
4. ***Their Dread or Distress***
5. **Next, we see their Desire**



## E. Desire:....“what longing”

### **2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, **what longing**, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

The *longing* or *intense desire* of the Corinthian believers was to correct all the wrong they had done. They longed to see the wrong righted and the evil corrected. These believers also desired to *see Paul again* and *renew their relationship* with him. They also had a desire to remove the sin from their church and their own hearts.

What a change that had taken place in their lives. The stress of spiritual surgery was worth the sweetness they were all enjoying now. Let me ask, “Do you desire to walk with God no matter what the cost and live a godly life? Do you long for the Second Coming of Christ and to enjoy the presence of the Lord?”

This was John’s desire as the next to the last verse of the Bible indicates.

### **Revelation 22:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The desire to please the Lord will lead to the surrender of your will to His. This is the conflict that every Christian faces almost every day. The world has been greatly blessed throughout history by the vehement, intense desire of Christians that were sold out to the Lord Jesus Christ. Such was the case of missionary **Robert Moffat**.

**Robert Moffat** was greatly encouraged and helped by [1 Samuel 3:18](#) when he faced bitter disappointment in his life.

### **1 Samuel 3:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "**It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him.**"

Robert had fallen in love with his employer’s daughter, **Mary Smith**. He wanted to propose to her, and she wanted to accept. They loved each other very much. They dreamed of serving the Lord together in **South Africa**, but they lived in the days when missionaries regularly *fell in distant, unmarked graves*.

Robert’s parents, though apprehensive, were willing to let him go to Africa, but Mary’s parents refused. They could not relinquish their daughter nor bring themselves to give consent to the marriage.

Robert's heart was torn in two. Should he marry his beloved and remain in Scotland? Or should he surrender to God's will? He wrote his parents with the answer to his questions: *From the clearest indications of His Providence, He bids me go out alone, and He who appoints crosses and disappointments, also imparts resignation and grace sufficient unto the day. So I am bold to adopt the language of Eli and say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good."*

On **October 18, 1816, Robert and Mary tore themselves apart**, and Robert boarded his ship, alone and grief-stricken, yet determined to do the will of God in his life and be surrendered to the Lord. We look at this and say, "How sad for both of these two young people that deeply loved each other." Others might look at it and say, "Wow, what commitment!"

This story does not end here, thank the Lord. Three years later, Mary's parents surrendered her to the Lord's keeping and allowed her to join Robert in Africa. The two were married at last, and walked hand-in-hand in remarkable missionary service for the next fifty years. Why? They had a *vehement desire* to do the will of God no matter where He led and no matter what the cost would be. **Do you have the same attitude?**

#### **F. Dynamic Devotion:..."what zeal..."**

##### **2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)**

**<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, **what zeal**, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.**

The *zeal* or *devotion* of the Corinthian church demonstrated a huge change in their attitudes. This word "zeal" is from the Greek word *zelos* {dzay'-los} which means "excitement of mind; fervency of spirit; passion in embracing, pursuing, or defending anything." They were excited about the Lord, His work, and their walk with God.

They demonstrated dynamic devotion to do several things.

- 1. To remove their sin**
- 2. To correct their wrongs**
- 3. To restore their relationship with Paul**

*Worldly sorrow* robs us of our enthusiasm and excitement for Christ. *Godly sorrow*, however, will create a new *desire* and *devotion* for the Savior. You don't want to hurt the Lord anymore. We get excited about so many things. Let me ask, "Are you excited about serving and walking with the Lord and learning His Word?"

## G. Discipline: “*what avenging of wrong*”

### 2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, **what avenging of wrong!** In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

What does Paul mean by this word “**avenging?**” It comes from the word *ekdikesis* {*ek-dik'-ay-sis*} which means “**vengeance, punishment, discipline, justice, vindication.**”

The thought here is the church took corrective measures against the offender in their assembly which is a proper and scriptural thing to do. The person was disciplined by the church. The Corinthians realized that if people persist in their sin, if they create division in the church, or attack Christian leaders of the church, they have to be dealt with in a firm manner or else the church is damaged.

Appeasing those who are sinful or divisive does not work. The problems created by people like this only get worse. There was a renewed commitment to allow no more open sin or underhanded divisiveness in this church anymore.

## H. The Demonstration of their Best Effort: “*In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.*”

### 2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, **what avenging of wrong!** **In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.**

Note the words “**in everything.**” What a glorious picture of true repentance and of God’s glorious grace. As *corrupt* and *polluted* as the church was, when they truly repented, God cleared them of all things! They had approved themselves. What does Paul mean?

The word “**demonstrated**” is from the word *sunistano* {*soon-is-tan'-o*}. It was a word that was used to describe the mending of broken bones. It means “**to put or bind together; to unite parts into one whole.**” This is what the Corinthian believers did. They did what was necessary to make matters right with God and Paul, to fix what was broken in their lives, and re-unite the church with Paul.

The church, by its *godly sorrow* and *repentance*, had cleared itself. The apostle does not mean that none of them had been to blame, or that the church had been free from fault, for a large part of his former epistle was occupied in reproofing them for their faults in this business.

He does mean, however, by their zeal and their readiness to take away the cause of complaint, they had removed all necessity of further blame, and had pursued a path that met his approval and praise.

Are there broken relationships that need to be mended in your life? Are they broken because of something you did? If so, then why not seek the forgiveness of those you offended or hurt and try to restore that relationship.

#### IV. THE CAUSE OF THE LETTER—[2 Corinthians 7:12](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 7:12 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> **So although I wrote to you, *it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.***

Paul's purpose in writing his letter of rebuke was not to write about who did wrong or who was offended. He desired harmony between himself and the people in Corinth, and his sorrowful letter was written to make the readers repent and turn to him again.

This purpose is exactly what the letter achieved. Now he wants the readers to see that the effect of their good will toward him strengthens the oneness of the body of Christ.

#### V. The Comfort and Confirmation of the Care of Titus—[2 Corinthians 7:13-15](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 7:13-15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> **For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.**

<sup>14</sup> **For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the truth.***

<sup>15</sup> **His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.**

The revival that occurred in the Corinthian church from the godly sorrow that worked in their lives greatly *encouraged* and *comforted* the apostle. That's what revival does for any dedicated Christian. It is a blessing to see others excited about the Lord.

Paul was encouraged by their change and also by the joy and excitement that Titus conveyed to Paul. The Corinthian believers were a blessing and encouragement to Paul and to Titus. Their attitude refreshed Titus and the welcome they gave him put him at ease. Paul was blessed by the “**Titus Touch**” which is the touch of *joy, encouragement,* and *enthusiasm*. We all need the Titus Touch, don't we?

Paul was also comforted in the fact that the Corinthian Christians proved to Titus that his boasting about them was true. He was not *embarrassed, disappointed, or ashamed* by their treatment of Titus. He loved these people and now Titus loved them. Titus saw for himself and felt the *love* and *respect* of these people. He saw their *submission* and *obedience* to the Lord in dealing with their problems in the church.

Instead of being a *burden* and *source* of grief to Paul and to Titus, the Corinthian Christians became a huge source of *blessing* and *encouragement*. This is what God wants to do with you too. He wants you to give the Titus Touch to others who are hurting or need help. Your encouragement can help other Christians accomplish great things for the Lord that maybe you could not do yourself because you do not have the abilities that others may have.

### **Let me illustrate.**

**Paula** was born into a wealthy family **in Rome in A.D. 347**. She grew up aristocratic and respected, but at age 33 she encountered Jesus Christ in a way that changed her life. She asked the Lord into her heart. She became friends with the great **Bible translator Jerome**, and eventually left her family in Rome to settle near him in Bethlehem.

Jerome was a **genius** and **master** at languages. He was fluent in *Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin*. He was, however, a *crusty* and *impatient* man, but Paula got along with him splendidly and aided him in his work. She established a nearby monastery where she and her co-workers ministered to the poor and hungry. Jerome wrote this about Paula, “What poor man, as he lay dying, was not wrapped in blankets given by Paula? What bedridden person was not supported by money from her purse?” So Paula was a very generous young lady.

Jerome and Paula worked side-by-side together, not as lovers, they did not marry, but they worked as brother and sister in Christ. As Jerome labored to exhaustion, translating the Bible into Latin, Paula *helped* and *encouraged* Jerome to do what he was appointed to do by paying his expenses from her family inheritance and gathering supplies for his work. She copied his manuscripts. She even studied *Greek* and *Hebrew* and critiqued his work. Jerome, who needed *intellectual* and *critical* stimulation, found her conversations absolutely invaluable. She was *strong, astute, kind, and committed*.

**It took Jerome twenty years to translate the Bible into Latin, which had become the predominant language of his time.** When Jerome finished his translations of Job, Isaiah, Samuel, Kings, Esther, Galatians, Philemon, Titus, and the prophets, he dedicated them all to his helper and side-kick, Paula.

**His translation of the Bible is known as the Vulgate translation which was used in the Western Church for one thousand years.** This translation had its weaknesses, but God still used it to speak to the hearts of multitudes of people of their need to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior.

In fact, many do not know that the Vulgate was consulted in translating the King James Version which used the translation of the Vulgate in sixty places\*.

**The first book printed with movable type by Johannes Gutenberg was the Latin Vulgate Bible.** A handful of copies of the complete original Gutenberg Bible (four on parchment and seventeen on paper) exist today.

Beloved, this story confirms the truth of the importance of our encouragement of others and helping them to serve the Lord.

**Note:** If you would like to study the Vulgate's influence on the King James Version, then let me recommend two books that discuss this. Look at the Indexes of both books for the information under Latin Vulgate. **Book 1 is *The Unbound Scriptures: A Review of KJV-only Claims and Publications* by Rick Norris. Book 2 is *The Literary Lineage of the King James Bible* by Charles Butterworth.**

## VI. THE CONFIDENCE OF PAUL—[2 Corinthians 7:16](#)

### [2 Corinthians 7:16 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> **I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.**

Paul rejoiced because he had complete confidence in these believers in all things. They experienced a revival of *unity, humility, morality, honesty, integrity, love, obedience*, and in *doctrinal truth*. The stress of spiritual surgery was worth the sweetness it produced.

In closing, let me ask, “Do other Christians rejoice about the way you are living? Do they have confidence of your Christian testimony and example in all things or do you need spiritual surgery?” Let me encourage you to let the Lord take control of your life and lead you in doing His will.

**Barnabas Shaw**, a colleague of **Robert Moffat in South Africa**, was a missionary from England who journeyed to Capetown, South Africa, to preach the Gospel, only to be forbidden from doing so by the governor. Not knowing how to proceed, Shaw purchased a yoke of oxen and a cart and put his goods in the back. Shaw and his wife, taking their seat, gave the Lord the reins and let Him lead their oxen just as He did when the oxen returned the Ark of the Covenant to Israel after it was confiscated by the Philistines ([1 Samuel 6](#)).

The oxen rambled into the interior of Africa, lowing, trudging ahead day after day, covering 200 miles in just under a month. One evening while camping in the bush, Shaw heard noises nearby. Upon investigation, he found a **tribe of Hottentots** led by its chief, **Little Namaqualand**.

They had left their homes and village to travel to Capetown in search of a missionary to teach them “**the Great Word.**” Had either party started a half-day sooner or later, or veered a half-mile this way or that, they would never have met. Their meeting was a divine appointment.

Shaw returned with them to their village and established a thriving work among them, spending eleven years before returning to England for furlough. All in all, he devoted over forty years to advancing the Gospel in South Africa. Why? He let the Lord take the reins of his life! **Does He have your reins?**

## Chapter 17.

### Begging to Be a Blessing

#### 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,  
<sup>2</sup> that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.  
<sup>3</sup> For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord,  
<sup>4</sup> begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,  
<sup>5</sup> and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

What do you want to do with your life? How do you want to live? What drives you? What is the focus, the priority of your life? Is the quest of each day to serve yourself, live for yourself, cater to your every whim and desire, or have you found a higher purpose for living? Do you want to be a blessing to the Lord and to other people? Is it your desire to touch the lives of people with your love, kindness, concern, and Christ-likeness?

For the Christian, this is what true living is all about and really what matters. You can have an abundance of “*things*” and have nothing. You can accumulate great wealth, and that’s fine and OK, there is nothing wrong with that, but if accumulating things is what you believe life is all about, then my friend, you will find a life characterized by *woe* and *worry*. You are in essence “**flat busted broke.**” That’s what the Lord believes.

Notice His comments to the church at Sardis that had an abundance, but was broke.

**Revelation 3:15-17 NASB (15) 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. (16) 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. (17) 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,**

On the other hand, you may not have much, but if your desire is to be a blessing to the Lord and to other people, and put that desire into action, then you my friend have treasures that cannot be calculated. You have something that cannot be taken away. You have found one of the vital reasons for living which is to be a channel of God’s blessings.

We find in this [eighth chapter](#) some *indispensable* and *powerful* truths about being a channel of blessing to other people. We find that there were Christians in the Macedonian churches that had very little, yet, they were begging to be a blessing to other believers. It was an intense desire of their hearts, so much, that their attitudes have been recorded in the Scriptures to challenge us 2000 years later.



In this section, we will answer the question of how these folks were a blessing to other Christians and to the Lord. We will examine their *circumstances* and the *attitudes* of their hearts that led to their *longing*, their *intense desire*, their *begging* to be a blessing to other people they did not even know.

## **I. THEY HAD ABUNDANT JOY IN THEIR AFFLICTION— [2 Corinthians 8:1-2A](#)**

### **2 Corinthians 8:1-2 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, we *wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,*  
<sup>2</sup> *that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.*

The phrase, “now, brethren, we *wish to make known to you,*” means “we make known to you; we inform you.” Paul is sharing with the Corinthian believers the testimony and example of Christians in Macedonia that had an intense desire to be a blessing to others. He is using their example to be a challenge and example to the Corinthians to have the same desire. Why?

The apostle is about to cover the matter of raising funds for the Christians in the city of Jerusalem. The Corinthians were not in the dark about this issue, so the apostle reminds them of his earlier instructions and gives them further details.

This issue was not only addressed with **Corinth**, but also with the other churches in **Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece**. This concern was brought up with the churches in **Galatia** ([1 Corinthians 16:1](#)) and **Rome** ([Romans 15:25-26](#)).

**1Co 16:1 NASB** Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.  
**Romans 15:25-26 NASB** but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. (26) For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

Why was Paul raising funds for the Jerusalem church? The answer was that this church was suffering extreme poverty for several reasons.

### **1. Pilgrims**

The church was comprised of many pilgrims that were saved on the Day of Pentecost. Three thousand were saved on that day. Many of these Jews lived in Gentile lands and chose to remain in Jerusalem, so they could remain under the teaching of the apostles and fellowship with other believers. Most of these pilgrims could not afford to stay at length in the inns, nor would they want to stay in these inns that were many times characterized by corruption and vice.

The folks that were saved on Pentecost ended up being rejected by their Jewish relatives and had to leave their homes. Their only option was to move in with Jewish Christians. Many of these folks were also poverty stricken.

## 2. Persecution

These new believers lost their jobs or businesses and were ostracized by their families and friends. Just as Jesus had predicted, they became the outcasts of Jewish society.

**John 16:2 NASB** "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

Some Christians were put to death for their faith in Christ and Paul had a part in this before he was saved when he was known as Saul ([Acts 8:1](#)).

**Acts 8:1 NASB** Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Families were economically devastated when husbands or sons that financially supported the entire family, were severely *injured, imprisoned, or put to death*. I believe Paul was trying to do all that he could to care for these folks where he had a part in the economic devastation of their family.

## 3. Poor Economy

The Romans extracted all they could from their conquered territories, seizing their resources and imposing a heavy burden of taxation. The result was rampant poverty in Israel. Adding to the region's economic woes was a worldwide famine. The Jerusalem church gave a noble effort to see to the demands of its poor members. These believers sold their *possession* and *property* to support one another. This worked for some time.

**Acts 2:44-45 NASB** And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; (45) and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

**Acts 4:32 NASB** And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

As the church continued to grow, it became overwhelmed by all the needs and was not able to keep up. Paul recognized the needs of the Jerusalem believers and determined to take up a collection for this church from the churches of Asia Minor and Europe. He also sought by raising these funds, to strengthen the spiritual bond between those largely Gentile congregations and the Jewish church in Jerusalem.

The apostle knew that the love offering would serve to ease the *suspicion, bitterness,* and *hostility* with which Jews and Gentiles generally regarded each other. The financial support would demonstrate the *unity* and *oneness* of Christians, the relationship we have as brothers and sisters in Christ, and that the Lord did break down the wall between Jews and Gentiles.

Paul needed the Corinthians to know how the Macedonian Christians were such a great blessing and how God's grace had transformed their lives. He used their example to challenge and be a model to the Corinthian church. He was trying to show this church at Corinth what God could do through them and how they could be a blessing to the Lord and others.

**Let me ask, "Are you not challenged by the faith and dedication of others?"**

These churches in **Macedonia** were located in **Philippi, Thessalonica,** and **Berea.** They suffered *persecution* and *affliction,* but remained faithful to Christ and did not lose the joy of the Lord. They had a craving to learn the Word of God, especially in Berea where they searched the Scriptures daily and received God's Word with readiness of mind. What a blessing they were to one another!

**Philippians 1:29-30 NASB (29) For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (30) experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 NASB (6) You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, (7) so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.**

**2 Thessalonians 1:4 NASB (4) therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.**

## **2 Corinthians 8:1-2 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,  
<sup>2</sup> that in a great ordeal of **affliction** their **abundance** of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

In their afflictions, these Christians demonstrated abundant joy. The word “**affliction**” is from the Greek word *thlipsis* {*thlip'-sis*} which means “**pressure, oppression, distress, tribulation.**” It was used to describe the pressing of grapes together to extract the juice. The literal idea is that these people were being crushed by life.

Have you ever felt this way? The surrounding culture kept squeezing them harder and harder due to the Macedonians' devotion to Christ. They were under immense pressure! They were poor and pestered. The grinding poverty and the crushing tribulation made ordinary life very difficult, almost impossible by our standards.

In spite of their tribulation, they responded with abundant joy. The word “**abundance**” is from the word *perisseia* {*per-is-si'-ah*} which means “**superabundance, an overflow.**” Paul used it to describe God's saving grace that He pours out on believers through Jesus Christ. (**Romans 5:17**).

**Romans 5:17 NASB** For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

These folks had great joy in spite of difficult times. It's easy to be happy when your tummy is full and your bed is warm and cozy at night. It is the person of faith and spiritual maturity that rejoices even though his tummy growls like a lion and Jack Frost blows his breath on him through the night.

These believers continued to rejoice, and in so doing, they were a huge blessing and encouragement to others who were going through trials and distress. They were reliant upon the Lord for their needs and lived out **Philippians 4:13**.

**Philippians 4:13 NASB** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

These folks teach us to not let our problems get us down and sponge away our joy. We minister, we encourage, and we bless others when we rejoice in spite of the trials we are facing.

Let me ask, “**Are you begging to be a blessing? Is that what you definitely want to be to other people?**” Rejoice! The Holy Spirit of God will enable you to do this. His joy strengthens us.

Notice the second fruit of the Spirit of God.

**Galatians 5:22 NASB** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Nehemiah 8:10 NASB** Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; **for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**"

**Ben Patterson** shared the following story in the **April 13, 2004** edition of **Leadership Journal**. It was entitled "**Resurrection and Pandemonium**." He records the events that took place in the jungles of East Asia. Imagine the mystery and delight of not just hearing, but seeing the story of Jesus for the first time, almost as an eyewitness. That's what happened to a tribe in the jungles of East Asia when missionaries showed them *The Jesus Film*.

Not only had these people never heard of Jesus, they had never seen a motion picture. Then, on one unforgettable evening, they saw it all, the Gospel in their *own language, visible* and *real*. Imagine again how it felt to see this good man, Jesus Christ, who healed the sick and was adored by children, held without a *trial, beaten* and *scourged* without mercy to a bloody pulp by jeering soldiers and mobs.

As they watched this, the people came unglued. They stood up and began to shout at the cruel men on the screen, demanding that this outrage stop. When nothing happened, they attacked the missionary running the projector. Perhaps he was responsible for this injustice!

The missionary was forced to stop the film and explain to these people that the story wasn't over yet. There was more to come. Consequently, they settled back onto the ground, holding their angry emotions in tenuous check.

Then came the Crucifixion, and again, the people could not hold back. They began to *weep* and *wail* with such loud grief that, once again, the film had to be stopped. The missionary again tried to calm them down, explaining that the story still wasn't over. There was more to come. So they composed themselves and sat down to see what happened next with intense attention. It was clear they were very upset about what they were seeing.

Then came the Resurrection, and pandemonium broke out this time, but for a different reason. The gathering had spontaneously erupted into a party. The noise now was of jubilation, and it was absolutely deafening. The people were dancing and slapping each other on the back. **Christ is risen! Christ is risen! He's alive! He's alive!**

Again the missionary had to shut off the projector; this time he didn't tell them to calm down and wait for what was next. All that was supposed to happen—in the story and in their lives—was happening.

They rejoiced in the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is a living Savior and trusted in Him! This is the reason the Macedonian Christians rejoiced in their trials. They had a living Savior living within them.

**Beloved, rejoice!** He lives in you too, if you have put your faith in Him. You and I have a lot to be thankful for and shout about! **He is risen! He is alive!** Your joy will be a blessing to others and help you to face another day!

## II. THEY HAD BENEVOLENCE IN THEIR BARRENNESS—

### 2 Corinthians 8:2B

#### 2 Corinthians 8:2b (NASB)

<sup>2</sup>That in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their **deep** poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

The Macedonian Christians were a great blessing to Paul and other believers because they were benevolent in spite of their barrenness. Two centuries before Paul came to Macedonia, gold mines in that province generously provided a measure of wealth for its population.

However, during the first century of the Christian era, the economy had deteriorated, and the province was brought to the depths of economic ruin. *Wars, barbarian invasions, Roman settlement, high taxes, slavery, persecution*, and the restructuring of the province had contributed to a condition that rivaled the crash of the stock market in America in the early 1900's.

Not only was the countryside affected by poverty, but also the urban centers, including the Romanized cities of **Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea**. In stark contrast, the city of **Corinth** flourished financially due to the volume of trade generated by its two harbors, **Cenchrea** and **Lechaeum**. There was a *distinct difference* between **Macedonia** and **Corinth** in economic terms.

In spite of their financial weakness, the Macedonian believers were begging to be a blessing. They gave to others in spite of their own deep poverty. The picture that Paul is painting here of their financial condition is very dire. The word “**deep**” translates the phrase *kata bathos {ka-ta'-bath'-os}* which literally means “**according to the depth.**” It forms our English word “**bathysphere,**” a ship which is used to probe the depths of the ocean. The corresponding English expression would be “**extremely deep; the pits, or rock-bottom.**”

What was rock bottom? It was their poverty. For most of us, it is a major stretch to relate to deep poverty in an ancient setting. We fancy ourselves poor if we have to think about it before going out to dinner. As to credit cards, the Macedonians always left home without them. They had no cars, no designer wardrobes, no vacations, no TVs.

**2 Corinthians 8:2b (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup>That in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep **poverty** overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.**

These folks were poverty stricken. This word “**poverty**” is from the Greek word *ptocheia* {*po-ke-a*} and describes those with almost nothing, forced to beg to survive. Paul used it in verse nine of this chapter to describe Christ’s poverty when the Lord emptied Himself and took the form of a servant.

**Philippians 2:7 NASB** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

The Macedonian believers were benevolent in their barrenness because they were confident that the Lord would supply all of their needs. That is His promise to us.

**Psalms 37:25 NASB** I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging bread.

**Philippians 4:19 NASB** And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

The Macedonian Christians reveal an important truth about giving and Christian maturity. These believers teach us that giving is not a matter of how much one possesses, but is an expression of an *unselfish* and *loving heart*. They demonstrated to us that devout Christians do not wait until they have more money. They give despite their poverty, just like the poor widow we read about in [Luke 21](#).

**Luke 21:1-4 NASB** And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. (2) And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. (3) And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; (4) for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

These folks were benevolent in their barrenness because they were begging to be a blessing to others. They did not allow their situation to have a negative effect on their giving. They gave because they wanted to, not because they were intimidated into giving or worried about what others thought.

There is a humorous story of a preacher in a small town who was having trouble with his collections. The people were not giving to the Lord. So one Sunday he announced from the pulpit: “Before we pass the offering plate today, I would like to request that the person who stole the chickens from Brother Smith’s henhouse please refrain from giving any money to the Lord. The Lord doesn’t want money from a thief.” The collection plate was passed around, and for the first time in many months, everybody put something in the plate. Amen!

The Macedonians gave willingly. In the midst of their trials, they put the demands of others, whom they had never met, ahead of their own needs. Though their poverty may have limited the amount they could give, it did not diminish their love. Dedicated Christians give no matter what the situation, because even the worst circumstances cannot hinder their devotion to Jesus Christ. When you look at your giving, the attitude you have about giving, how does it measure up to the standard of the Macedonian Christians?

**2 Corinthians 8:2b (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup>That in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.**

Notice also that the Macedonian church had almost nothing, yet, they had great joy. Paul said they had an abundance of joy. This word "**abundance**" is a strong word. It is from the word *perisseia* {*per-is-si'-ah*} which means not only an abundance, but "**superabundance.**" They had a superabundance of joy even though they were financially destitute.

The Lord was looking after their lives and taking care of them. He was giving them the absolute assurance of His care and provision day by day and of eternal life when they departed from this world. They rejoiced in all that God was doing for them and was going to do for them. The great joy they experienced over-flowed into their **generosity** and **giving** to others. This is how joy affects people. It shifts the focus off of you onto others. Joy is something you want to share.

The joy of the Lord caused them to give with **liberality**, **sincerity**, or **simplicity**. This **liberality** is the opposite of **duplicity**, or being **double-minded**. **Double-minded** people find their ability to give is **restrained** or **crippled**, because their concern for themselves and temporal matters conflicts with their **concern for others** and **the kingdom of God**.

The believers of Macedonia were rich in **single-mindedness**, and gave with no thought of themselves or this world. Their selfless generosity was a practical application of Paul's command in [Philippians 2](#).

**Philippians 2:3-4 NASB** **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (4) do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**

These believers also rejoiced at laying up treasures in Heaven, knowing that the greater blessing is to the giver, not the receiver, and that God will give back in greater measure. If you have financial troubles, then give to the Lord.

**Luke 6:38 NASB** **"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."**



It was the day after Christmas and the man parked his car to pick up the morning paper. He noticed a dirty, poorly dressed boy, looking at his car. Seeing the boy eyeing the car, he reminded himself to be quick or he might be missing a hubcap when he returned. He came out of the store with his paper under his arm and just as he opened the door to the car, the boy asked, “Mister, how much would a new car like this cost?” Mr. Greene responded, “I really don’t know. My brother gave me this car as a gift.”

The ragged little boy looked unbelievably at the car and then, with a look of wonder in his eyes, said, “Boy, I wish I could be a brother like that.” How about you? Do you desire to be a blessing to someone else? You can be, by being benevolent in your barrenness, just like the believers in **Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.**

### **III. THE SENTIMENT OF SACRIFICE and SELFLESSNESS—2** **Corinthians 8:3**

#### **2 Corinthians 8:3 (NASB)**

**<sup>3</sup>For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,**

The Macedonians were *begging* to be a *blessing*. They demonstrated this attitude *by their abundant joy* in their affliction, *by their benevolence* in their barrenness, and *by their sentiment* of sacrifice and selflessness. They not only gave what they could afford, but they willingly, and sacrificially gave beyond what they could really afford.

Their giving was beyond what could reasonably be expected of such a poor congregation. Life was very difficult for these folks. They faced extreme *poverty* and *persecution*. Yet, despite their desperate circumstances, they joyfully gave with no regard for themselves, compelled by the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem.

The sacrifice they made was not coerced. It was strictly voluntary. They were *selfless* and *sacrificial*. Their giving was not measured inversely according to their own needs, *but proportionately to the need of others.*

These folks found *satisfaction by giving to others*, whereas, *other people find their satisfaction in accumulating things*. When we look at the Bible, we find that God encourages *selflessness* and *sacrifice* in giving to Him or to others in need.

**Romans 15:1 NASB** Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves.

**Galatians 6:2 NASB** Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

**1 Thessalonians 5:14 NASB (14)** We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

**James 1:27 NASB** Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

The story is told of a Scottish church that was attempting to raise money for a new building. One member of the church was a rich Scot who was known to be worth fifty thousand pounds. He was pretty stingy.

A deacon came to see him and asked, “Brother, how much are you going to give for the new church?” The Scot replied, “Oh, I guess I’ll be able to put in the widow’s mite.” The deacon called out in the next meeting, “Brethren, we have all the money we need. This brother is going to give fifty thousand pounds.” The man was amazed. “I didn’t say I would give fifty thousand pounds. I said I would give the widow’s mite.” The deacon replied, “Well, she gave her all, and I thought that is what you meant to give!”

It is interesting that God notes what you give but also what you keep for yourself. He did this with the widow that gave the mite and the Macedonian believers that gave beyond what could ever be expected of them.

#### IV. THEIR INTENSITY TO INVEST IN OTHERS—[2 Corinthians 8:4](#)

**2 Corinthians 8:4 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup> begging us with much urging** for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

The Macedonian churches were begging to be a blessing. This is the idea of the phrase “**begging us with much urging**” The word “*begging*” is from the word *deomai* {*deh'-om-ah-ee*}. It means “**to beg, to plead or implore, to long for or desire.**” They begged with much “*urging.*” The word “*urging*” is from the Greek word *paraklesis* {*par-ak'-lay-sis*} which means “**powerful, persuasive discourse, a stirring address, an admonition.**”

These Christians were pretty insistent about giving to the Jerusalem Christians. They were *begging* to be a *blessing* and to have the honor of giving their gift to Paul. Paul was not doing the begging here. **The people that were making the sacrifice and investment were doing the begging.**

They were a blessing to Paul and others because **they had an intense desire to invest in the lives of others.** Such is the *grace* of *giving*. It is not dictated by ability. It has nothing to do with being well-off. **It is willing and views giving as a privilege.** It is joyously enthusiastic.

The Macedonian Christians were giving so much that Paul felt it was just beyond their means. However, they insisted, and took note the reason why they wanted to do this. They wanted to share in the fellowship of ministering to the saints. Some fellow believers were in need, and they wanted the privilege of having fellowship with them by giving to them. **Please note how giving is said to be a way of fellowship with others.**

**2 Corinthians 8:4 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup> begging us with much urging for the favor of participation [fellowship] in the support of the saints,**

These Christians had the proper concept of what “**fellowship**” is all about. Fellowship is much more than talking and having fun at an activity or at church. It is more than having lunch after church on Sunday. The word is derived from the Greek word *koinonia* {*koy-nohn-ee'-ah*} which not only means “**fellowship**” but also “**partnership and participation.**” These Christians were partners with the Christians in Jerusalem and wanted to participate in their lives by investing in them with their sacrificial gifts.

Beloved, when we give to our church, to other Christians in need, or when we support our missionaries, we are having fellowship with them. We demonstrate that we are partners with our missionaries *by participating* in their lives with our *prayers*, and *financial support*. We give evidence that we want to be a blessing by investing in their families and ministries.

It is related of **General Gordon**, affectionately known as “**Chinese Gordon**,” that when the English government sought to reward him for his magnificent service in China, he declined all money and titles, but accepted a gold medal on which his name and a record of his thirty-three engagements were inscribed. After his death, the medal could not be found.

Finally it was learned that he had sent it to Manchester during a famine, with a request that it be melted and used to buy bread for the famished poor. In his diary that day he had written these words: “The last and only thing that I had in this world that I valued, I have given over to the Lord Jesus Christ.” It was his desire to be a blessing.

**Are you begging to be a blessing?** Do you have an intense desire to invest in the lives of others? This is a great way to be an encouragement to people, whether it is a struggling widow, an injured or sick father trying to care for his family, a missionary, or a student in Bible College that is preparing for the ministry.

A great way to be a blessing is to invest into the lives of others with your *time*, *attention*, or *financial support*. How can you do this? How do you develop a “**Begging to be a Blessing**” attitude? When it comes to giving or investing in other people’s lives, it is vital that you have a proper, biblical perspective of what **money is** and **is not**.

**How people view money is an effective barometer of their spirituality.** Money is **neither good nor bad** in itself. People who are corrupt can put it to evil uses, while good people can put it to righteous uses. Though it is morally neutral, what people do with their money reflects their internal morality and what is the *focus* and *priority* of their life. Jesus put it this way, **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** ([Luke 12:34](#)).

The Bible does not forbid the possession of money. *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Boaz,* and *Solomon* were all wealthy men. As a matter of fact, it teaches that the Lord gives us the *power* and *ability* to make wealth.

**Deuteronomy 8:18 NASB** "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

While the Bible does not forbid possessing money, it does forbid loving it.

**1 Timothy 6:10 NASB** For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

To love money is to have an unhealthy affection for it and be driven to pursue it at any cost. Such a pursuit is the height of folly. Some folks destroy their *health* and *families* in their pursuit of money. When they set their eyes upon it, it's gone.

**Proverbs 15:27 NASB** He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, But he who hates bribes will live.

**Proverbs 23:4-5 NASB** Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration *of it.* (5) When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings Like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens.

Solomon was one of the wealthiest men that ever lived, yet, he was wise enough to know that money cannot buy happiness or satisfy your heart.

**Ecclesiastes 5:10 NASB** He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance *with its* income. This too is vanity.

The list of Bible characters who destroyed their lives in pursuit of money is very familiar.

1. Achan's love of money brought disaster to himself, his family, and his nation ([Josh. 7:1-25](#)).
2. Balaam's love of money caused him to foolishly attempt to curse God's chosen people ([Numbers 22-24](#)), which resulted in his death ([Numbers 31:8](#)).
3. Delilah's love of money led her to betray Samson ([Judges 16:4-6](#)), which ultimately led to the death of thousands of people ([Judges 16:27-30](#)).

4. Judas' love of money caused him to betray the Lord Jesus Christ ([Matthew 26:14-16](#)).
5. Ananias and Sapphira's love of money led them to hypocritically lie about their giving ([Acts 5:1-2](#)), resulting in God's execution of them ([Acts 5:5, 10](#)).

When people realize that money is a tool for blessing, then God can entrust them with greater funds as they use their possessions to assist others and further the cause of Jesus Christ. They actually become **“channels of blessing.”** God used the Colgate family to further the cause of Christ by their investment in the lives of others and the Lord's work.

**Samuel Colgate (1822-1897), was an American soap manufacturer and philanthropist.** He expanded the business of his father, William Colgate, into one of the largest establishments of its kind in the world. His father was also noted for giving at least a tenth of his net yearly earnings to charities, and organizing both the **American Bible Society** and the **American and Foreign Bible Society**. Samuel Colgate was a benefactor and trustee of **Madison University in Hamilton, N.Y.**, which was renamed in **1890 to Colgate University**.

Being an influential, American manufacturer and philanthropist, Samuel Colgate said: The only spiritual light in the world comes through Jesus Christ and the inspired Book. Redemption and forgiveness of sin alone are through Christ. Without His presence and the teachings of the Bible we would be enshrouded in moral darkness and despair.

The condition of those nations without Christ, contrasted with those nations where Christ is accepted, revealed so marked a difference that no arguments are needed. It is an object-lesson so plain that it can be seen and understood by all. **May “the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”**

## **V. THE PRIORITY OF PRESENTING THEMSELVES TO THE LORD—[2 Corinthians 8:5](#)**

### **2 Corinthians 8:5 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup> And *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.**

Why did the Macedonian believers beg to be a blessing? What caused them to have abundant joy in affliction, benevolence in barrenness, a sentiment of sacrifice and selflessness, and an intensity to invest in others? The root of these attitudes is found here. They gave themselves to the Lord first, and then they gave themselves to others according to the will of God.

The word **“first”** is from the Greek word *protos* {*pro'-tos*} has the meaning here not of **“first in time,”** but of **“first in priority.”** The Macedonians' first priority was to give themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord, and giving financially to the church followed this decision. There is an implicit lesson here: It won't do any good to give our possessions to God unless we have given ourselves.

**The supreme act of dedication and worship is not** giving money, attending church, or singing church hymns, but giving oneself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Romans 12:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.***

It was around the year **200 A.D.** **The Roman emperor Septimus Severus** was cracking down on traitors and he believed those Christians showed a dangerous lack of loyalty. They wouldn't offer incense to the Roman gods—even under threat of death.

A woman named **Perpetua** stunned Roman society when she denied her father's plea that she renounce her faith in Jesus Christ. Young women, especially in noble families, were expected to obey their fathers, but Christianity established a new family, the church. Perpetua's loyalty to the Body of Christ and to her heavenly Father superseded any obligations to her natural family and her human father.

When the fatal day came, **Perpetua** and **Felicitas** left the prison for the Roman arena "joyfully as though they were on their way to Heaven," as the eyewitness account puts it. Before a raging crowd, the Christians were thrown to the wild beasts. A mad heifer charged the women and tossed them, but Perpetua rose and helped Felicitas to her feet. She was ready, even eager, to die for the Lord.

"You must all stand fast in the faith and love one another," she called to the other martyrs, "and do not be weakened by what we have gone through!" When the beasts failed to kill the women, soldiers came to finish them off, but the soldier who came to Perpetua was trembling so much, that she had to grip the tip of his sword, and guide its tip to her throat.

By this act, she was indicating that she was giving her life willingly for the Lord. She had willingly given herself to Christ. **This is what the Macedonian Christians did and is the reason why they were begging to be a blessing.**

**Giving** to the Lord, **without giving** Him your heart can mess you up. Why? Some folks wrongly conclude that giving of their substance will make the Lord happy and pleased with them. Such giving develops a false sense of *security* and *religious pride*. Giving things *instead* of ourselves can easily become our religion, so that we never turn to Christ for salvation or obey His Word. God wants our heart. He wants our obedience to Him.

**1 Samuel 15:22 (NASB)**

**<sup>22</sup>Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams.**

We should give ourselves willingly to the Lord because we belong to Him. Your life belongs to Jesus Christ if you are a Christian. The Bible is emphatically clear about this and provides several important insights about your life as a Christian. These insights deal with *our past, our present, and our future*. They explain why and how we should give ourselves to Christ.

## **Why and How we Should Give Ourselves to Christ**

### **A. The Price of Your Life... the blood of Jesus Christ**

A person gives himself to the Lord first by being saved. Salvation is the beginning. Because of what Christ has done for us in saving us, we are to serve Him.

**1 Corinthians 7:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

**1 Peter 1:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

**2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

<sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

### **B. The Person Within You.... the Holy Spirit**

How do we give ourselves to the Lord? The Holy Spirit plays a vital role. The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian. If you are going to give yourself to the Lord, then it is essential that you yield to the Lord in your life. Don't fight against His Word and will.

**1 Corinthians 6:19 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

**1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

<sup>17</sup> If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

**Ephesians 5:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

When you give yourself to the Lord, you release the control of your life over to Him, just as you would if you gave something to someone else. The gift leaves your possession and control and is given to another.

**2 Chronicles 30:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> Now do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the LORD and enter His sanctuary which He has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God, that His burning anger may turn away from you.**

**C. The Priority of God's Control.... lest we lose our testimony for Christ.**

We should give ourselves to the Lord in order to avoid damaging our Christian testimony for Christ. Yielding to the Holy Spirit's control will help you to have self control and His control of you. The Spirit of God empowers us to keep our flesh in check when we yield to Him and to make the right decisions.

**Romans 6:13 (NASB)**

**<sup>13</sup> And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**

**1 Corinthians 9:27 (NASB)**

**<sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.**

**D. The Purpose of Our Life.... to glorify God.**

If you are going to give yourself to the Lord, then you must make the purpose of your life to glorify Him. His will must become the priority of your life instead of your will. When your purpose is to please the Lord and serve Him, He will use you.

**1 Corinthians 6:20 (NASB)**

**<sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.**

We glorify God by fulfilling God's purpose for our lives. We glorify Him by worshipping Him, loving, obeying, and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. We glorify Him by becoming like Christ and bringing pleasure and joy to the Lord.

**Philippians 1:20 (NASB)**

**<sup>20</sup> According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.**



**2 Corinthians 4:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup> Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.**

**At 5 P.M. on April 12, 1945, Vice President Harry Truman,** wearied by his afternoon in the United States Senate, ducked into Sam Rayburn's private office in the Capitol. Someone mentioned to him that the White House had called. Harry picked up the phone and dialed the number, **National 1414. Press Secretary Steve Early** came on with a tense voice, asking Truman to come to the White House **"quickly and quietly."** He was to enter the main entrance on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Harry exited the room alone, then began racing through the ornate halls of the Capitol, his shoes pounding the marble. He jumped in his old Mercury and sped through the traffic. At 5:25, he pulled under the north portico. Two ushers took his hat and escorted him to the small elevator. Waiting for him upstairs was Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the President. "Harry," she said, "the President is dead." Truman groped for words. "Is there anything I can do for you?" he asked at length.

Eleanor replied, "Is there anything *we* can do for *you*? You are the one in trouble now." That night, Truman took the oath of office as the President of the United States, his hand resting on an inexpensive Gideon Bible grabbed from the desk of the White House's head usher.

The following Monday, Truman addressed a joint session of Congress. His speech lasted but fifteen minutes. Most of it had been written by presidential speech-writers, but the conclusion of the speech he added himself. The Congress was hushed and the nation spellbound by their radios as he said:

***At this moment I have in my heart a prayer. As I have assumed my duties, I humbly pray Almighty God, in the words of King Solomon: "Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?" I ask only to be a good and faithful servant of my Lord and my people.***

It is interesting to note that it was President Truman who made the difficult final decision to use the atomic bombs on Japan to speed up the end of the World War II. His use of the bombs was a way to stop what could have been a bloody fight on the mainland of Japan. Truman's goal was to stop the war quickly avoiding further losses of allied troops.

Japan sued for peace on **August 10th**, and surrendered on **September 2, 1945**. The use of the atom bomb was also to send a message to the communists in the Soviet Union that the United States was not afraid to use the bomb if necessary.

Ending WW2 was extremely significant, but Truman's most significant act, in my opinion, took place in **May of 1948**.

The state of Israel was reborn. For a hundred years before the establishment of the modern state of Israel, Christians worked alongside Jews in advancing Zionism, but nothing created more sympathy for the rebirth of the Jewish nation than reports emerging after World War II of the Holocaust. Still, President Harry Truman, aware of impending Arab-Israeli conflict, was reluctant to recognize Israel.

On **May 12, 1948**, several advisors gathered with President Truman to discuss the issue. **Secretary of State George C. Marshall** was against recognition, warning that the Jews faced war on every side. To Marshall's dismay, Clark Clifford, Truman's political advisor, urged the President to recognize Israel at once. Mr. Clifford made his case calmly and persuasively. He reminded the men of the 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis, and of the survivors with nowhere to go.

A separate Jewish state was inevitable, Clifford said. And then he quoted

**Deuteronomy 1:8 (NASB)**

**<sup>8</sup> See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.'**

George Marshall became so angry he threatened to vote against Truman in the next election, bringing the meeting to an icy close. Two days later, however, the nation of Israel was reborn, the prophecy of [Ezekiel 36](#) was fulfilled, and President Harry Truman became the first head of state in the world to afford the nation of Israel official recognition.

Later, when Israel's **Chief Rabbi, Isaac Herzog**, visited the White House, he told President Truman, **"God put you in your mother's womb so that you would be the instrument to bring the rebirth of Israel after 2000 years."** Upon hearing those words, tears flowed down the face of the President. God used a willing servant to accomplish His will. He gave him wisdom to make the right decision.

*The price of your life, the person within you, the priority of God's control, and the purpose of your life, are reasons why and how you should give yourself to the Lord.* The fifth reason is the powerful change that will take place in your life at the Rapture.

## **E. The Powerful Change that will take Place in us at the Rapture.**

Why should we give ourselves to the Lord? The answer is because of what God has planned for us in the future. His care, His present and future blessings should inspire us to **"want"** to give our lives to Him.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NASB)**

**<sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,**

<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

<sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

## Chapter 18.

### Finish What You Start

#### [2 Corinthians 8:6-15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

<sup>7</sup> But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, *see* that you abound in this gracious work also.

<sup>8</sup> I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.

<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

<sup>10</sup> I give *my* opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*.

<sup>11</sup> But now finish doing it also, so that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability.

<sup>12</sup> For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what *a person* has, not according to what he does not have.

<sup>13</sup> For *this* is not for the ease of others *and* for your affliction, but by way of equality—

<sup>14</sup> at this present time your abundance *being a supply* for their need, so that their abundance also may become *a supply* for your need, that there may be equality;

<sup>15</sup> as it is written, "HE WHO *gathered* MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO *gathered* LITTLE HAD NO LACK."

The idea of finishing what you have started is found in this portion of [2 Corinthians 8](#). We are to finish or complete what we have started. When it comes to what the Lord has started in you or led you to do, you should finish it. **Finish! Finish! Finish, what God has started in you!**

Finish the path or the course He has for your life. Before Christ died on the cross, He cried, "It is finished!" At the end of his life, Paul stated with *confidence* and *conviction*, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" ([2 Timothy 4:7](#)). This should be our goal, too.

Let's see what Paul has to say to the Corinthian church about finishing what they started.

## I. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF TITUS—[2 Corinthians 8:6](#)

### [2 Corinthians 8:6 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

Paul has been sharing with the Corinthians the attitude of the Macedonian believers. He told the Corinthians of the generosity of the Macedonian churches, *how they begged to be a blessing*, and how they had given themselves to the Lord. Titus encouraged the Corinthian Christians to give to the Jerusalem believers.

Paul urged Titus to return to the Corinthians to finish their ministry of grace giving and what they had previously planned to do in their area of sending a love offering to Jerusalem. He was to encourage them to finish what they started or planned.

## II. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE CORINTHIAN'S GROWTH— [2 Corinthians 8:7](#)

### [2 Corinthians 8:7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> But just as you **abound** in everything, **in faith** and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.

The Corinthian believers had great strengths, too, just like the Macedonian believers. Paul proceeds to list their areas of *maturity* and *excellence*, and then he challenges them to a higher level of growth in the area of giving by using the testimony of the churches in Macedonia. **This is the job of any preacher, to challenge Christians to a higher level of spiritual growth.**

Paul said they abounded in every thing. This word “**abound**” is from the Greek word *perisseuo* {*per-is-syoo'-o*} which means “**to exist in abundance; overflow; to be abundantly furnished with something; to excel or be excellent.**” This word was used to describe a flower going from the budding stage to full bloom. What a beautiful picture of what took place in the Corinthian church. Paul listed five important areas where they excelled in Christian growth and bloomed like a rose.

### 1. They Excelled in Conviction and Confidence in God: “*in faith*”

The Corinthians excelled in “**faith.**” This is from the word *pistis* {*pis'-tis*} which means “**conviction of the truth of anything, belief; assurance.**” Faith is mentioned first because faith in the Lord is the root of all Christian growth.

### [Hebrews 11:6 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

If they are going to respond to Paul's challenge to finish what God has started in their lives in the area of giving, then they will need *confidence* and *trust* in the Lord. When you excel in faith, you will have the foundation you need to grow in all other areas of your Christian life. **If you are struggling to trust in the Lord, then it will be difficult for you to finish what you started.**

Jeremy wore coke-bottle glasses and a perfect bowl haircut. He knew the answers to everything and was the teacher's pet. This really ticked everybody off. One day, after an uncharacteristic absence from school, Jeremy showed up in class with a big grin on his face, wearing a goofy-looking Mickey Mouse hat. The teacher asked Jeremy where he got the hat. "I went to Disneyland yesterday!" he said excitedly. "Oh really," said the teacher. "Why don't you tell us about your trip to Disneyland."

"Okay! Well, I got to Disneyland and the first thing I saw was the parking lot," Jeremy said. "That parking lot must hold about a million cars! I got on a tram that carried me around the parking lot until I got to the place where you buy the tickets. So I got off and stood in line. I bought a ticket and I also bought this cool hat!" "And then what did you do?" asked the teacher. "Well, I got back on the tram and rode around the parking lot some more," said Jeremy. "That was really fun! I rode that tram all day!" "All day?" asked the teacher. "Did you go through the turnstiles and under the bridge to *Main Street USA, Adventureland, Fantasyland, Tomorrowland*, and the rest of the park?"

Jeremy thought for a moment and said, "No. Was I supposed to?" Jeremy never experienced the fun of Disneyland because he never went beyond the ticket booth. He had his ticket in his hand and could have gone into the park any time. Instead, he settled for a ride around the parking lot, watching happy people come out of Disneyland with smiles on their faces, but he never found out what they were smiling about.

Have you "bought a ticket to Heaven" by inviting Jesus Christ into your life to be your Savior? Have you gotten past the ticket booth or are you still riding around the parking lot, missing out on all that Christ has for you? Do you hear other Christians talk about the joy they experience as a follower of Jesus and living by faith, but you're clueless to what they are talking about? Don't settle for merely watching other Christians experience their walk with God and living by faith. Experience it for yourself. Trust the Lord with your life.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.**

**<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.**

## 2 Corinthians 8:7 (NASB)

<sup>7</sup> But just as you abounded in everything, in faith and **utterance** and **knowledge** and **in all earnestness** and **in the love we inspired in you**, see that you abound in this gracious work also.

### 2. They Excelled in Communicating with Others: “utterance”

This word “**utterance**” is from the word *logos* {*log'-os*} which means “**speech, a conception of ideas, discussions with others, doctrine.**” Many have faith who want utterance, but these Corinthians excelled most churches in spiritual gifts, and particularly in utterance. **They knew how to share their faith in Christ and explain their doctrinal beliefs.** These believers excelled in communicating the message of salvation as spiritual knowledge. With their mouths they proclaimed the spiritual knowledge that they believed in their hearts. Do you do this?

**Romans 10:10 NASB** for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

### 3. They Excelled in Comprehension and Circumspection: “knowledge”

This word “**knowledge**” is from the word *gnosis* {*gno'-sis*}. It means “**understanding, moral wisdom for right living, and general knowledge of the Christian faith.**” Knowledge is the ability to apply doctrine to the issues of life. They understood the doctrines that Paul taught them and it affected their behavior. **What you believe affects your behavior.** Doctrine affects your deportment. Do you have moral wisdom that influences your conduct and choices? You will need God’s wisdom if you are going to finish what you have started.

### 4. They Excelled in Carefulness and Commitment: “in all earnestness”

The Corinthians had grown in the area of “**diligence or earnestness.**” What does this mean? This word is derived from the Greek word *spoude* {*spooday'*} which means “**haste, carefulness, enthusiasm, energy, earnestness in accomplishing or striving after anything.**” Those who have great knowledge and ready utterance are not always the most diligent Christians. Great talkers are not always the best doers, but these Corinthians were diligent to do, as well as to know and to talk. They **were putting their faith into action.** **If you are going to finish what you** have started or what God has started in your life, then you need put feet to your prayers and your faith.

### 5. They Excelled in Compassion: “in the love we inspired in you”

For a time, these believers were cold toward Paul. They realized the errors of their ways and made this matter right with God and with Paul. They abounded in love toward him. This was the noble love of self-sacrifice. Christ had not only affected **their heads**, but also **their hearts**. Has the Lord affected your heart? Do you abound in love for other people? Jesus put a premium on love.

**John 13:35 NASB** "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

**1 Corinthians 13:1-2 NASB** (1) If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (2) If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Because of Christ's love for mankind, He stayed on the cross and died for the sins of the world. **Love enables us to finish what we have started.**

A story is told about a man who, after twenty years of marriage, decided to divorce his wife. In preparing for the financial settlement, he began to rummage through his old checks. One canceled check after another stirred up the memories of a long-forgotten past. He found the check to the hotel where he and his wife had spent their honeymoon. Then there was the check for their first car, the check for the hospital bill for the birth of their daughter, and the check for the down payment on their first home.

Finally, he could not stand it any longer. All those feelings for his wife came back to him. He pushed the checks aside, reached for the telephone, and called his wife. He told her they had invested too much in each other to throw it all away and asked her if they could start over with a new beginning. His love motivated him to finish what he started.

Our checkbook tells the story of our life too. **In most cases, it reveals our values, lifestyle, and our financial priorities with the Lord because it shows the location of our treasure.** It *reveals* whether we give to the Lord's work. This is where the Corinthians were being challenged. Paul was challenging them **to excel in charitableness and contributing to the needs of others.**

## **6. They Needed to Excel in Charitableness and Contributing to the Needs of Others**

To be totally *complete* and *balanced*, they needed to grow in this area. Their excellence in their *confidence* in God, their *communication* skills, their *comprehension*, *commitment*, and *compassion* were all a great foundation for learning to give to the Lord and others. Despite all their good qualities, they were incomplete, and Paul wanted them to grow in grace giving. God's grace had produced those virtues in them, and the apostle wanted it to flow out through their giving. They had a need to mature in this area.

Perhaps, this is where you need to grow in your relationship with Christ. Beloved, there is no way to grow to spiritual maturity without committing your finances to the Lord. **Jesus can have our money and not have our hearts, but he cannot have our hearts without our money.** We will not be able to finish what God has started in us without surrendering to the Lord in the area of our finances. Whether you like it or not, they belong to Him. We are only stewards of His blessings.



### III. THE EAGERNESS and EXAMPLE OF OTHER CHRISTIANS— 2 Corinthians 8:8

#### 2 Corinthians 8:8 (NASB)

<sup>8</sup>I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.

As Paul challenges the Corinthians to finish what they started about giving to the Jerusalem believers, he makes it very clear that he is not giving them a command about this matter of giving. Grace-giving is to be done voluntarily and with a willing heart, or else it is not grace-giving at all.

He does, however, endeavor to challenge and inspire them with the enthusiasm, concern, and commitment of the Macedonian churches and the supreme example of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the idea behind the word “**forwardness**.” It is from the word *spoude* {*spooday*} which means “**earnestness, carefulness, or diligence**.” This same word is used in these familiar verses where they are translated “**diligence and business**.”

**2 Peter 1:5 NASB** Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,  
**Romans 12:11 NASB** not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

What a “**command**” cannot accomplish, an “**example**” can. **Mark Twain** said, “Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.” What a blessing it was for Paul to be able to point to the example of the Macedonian Christians to *teach*, *challenge*, and *inspire* the Corinthians to a greater level of spiritual maturity.

Beloved, your example is important whether you realize it or not. Your financial status does not determine whether you are more or less important than someone else. The Macedonian’s were dirt poor, yet, greatly used as an object lesson of *faith* and *generosity* to a wealthy church. They continue to be used today!

The Macedonian believers were determined to finish their course for Christ. They wanted to finish what God had started in them. How does this happen? You finish by doing what the Lord leads you to do, one day at a time. **As one task is completed, another opportunity to serve Him will arise.** What kind of example are you? Are other believers challenged by your life? Can they point at you and use your life to challenge not only themselves, but others?

The Corinthians demonstrated great growth in so many areas and now the Apostle Paul wanted them to be leaders in the area of generosity. Giving is a natural response of love. The love of the Macedonian believers for the Lord, and for others, sparked their generosity. They proved their love by their sacrificial giving.

Paul urged the Corinthians to follow their example and prove the *sincerity*, *authenticity*, or *genuineness* of their love, by finishing what they started to do in giving to the believers in Jerusalem. By their giving, they would demonstrate their faith, trust in the Lord, and the sincerity of their love. They would reveal what was really going on in their hearts.

Beloved, when we give, we reap what we sow. Solomon said, “**Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days**” ([Ecclesiastes 11:1](#)). The truth of these principles is seen in a story that took place in France. Some years ago there was a celebrated artist in Paris whose name was **Ary Scheffer**.

On one occasion he wished to introduce a beggar into a certain picture he was painting. **Baron Rothschild**, the famous banker, and one of the richest men in the world, was a particular friend of the artist. He happened to come into his studio at the very time when the artist was needing a beggar to be a model.

“Wait till tomorrow,” said Rothschild, “and I will dress myself up as a beggar, and make you an excellent model.” The artist was pleased with the proposal and said, “Very well.” The next day the rich banker appeared, dressed up as a beggar, and a very sorry looking beggar he was.

While the artist was engaged in painting him, another friend of his came into the studio. He was a kind, generous-hearted man. As he looked on the model beggar, he was touched by his wretched appearance and as he passed by him he slipped a French gold coin into his hand. The pretended beggar took the coin, and put it in his pocket.

Ten years after this, the gentleman who gave this piece of money received a check from the bank of the Rothschilds for ten thousand francs. This was enclosed in a letter which read as follows: “Sir, you one day gave a gold coin to Baron Rothschild in the art studio of Ary Scheffer. He has invested it, and made good use of it. Today, he sends the capital you entrusted to him, together with the interest it has gained.” It was signed, James Rothschild. **Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.**

#### IV. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST—[2 Corinthians 8:9](#)

##### [2 Corinthians 8:9 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.**

The story is told of a **Persian monarch** who reigned in *opulence* and *splendor*, living amid the *wealth* and *comfort* of the royal palace. Yet, his concern for the common people frequently drove him to dress as a poor man, leave the palace, and mingle with the lowliest of his subjects. One day he visited a fireman, whose job was to heat the water in the bathhouse.

Dressed in tattered clothes, the shah descended a long flight of steps down to the tiny cellar where the fireman sat on a pile of ashes, tending the fire. The ruler sat beside him, and the two men began to talk. At lunch time, the fireman shared his humble meal of coarse bread and water with his guest. Eventually, the shah left, but he returned again and again, his heart filled with sympathy for the lonely man. The fireman opened his heart to his kind, compassionate friend, who gave him wise counsel.

Finally, the shah could not bear to keep up the pretense any longer and decided to reveal his true identity to his friend. He then asked the poor fireman to name a gift he could give him. To his surprise, the fireman sat and looked at him with eyes of love and wonder.

Thinking he had not understood him, the shah offered to make the fireman rich, elevate him to nobility, or make him ruler over a city. The fireman replied, “Yes, my lord, I understood you, but leaving your palace to sit here with me, partake of my humble food, and listen to the troubles of my heart—even you could give me no more precious gift than that. You may have given rich gifts to others, but to me you gave yourself. I only ask that you never withdraw your friendship from me.”

This parable illustrates the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, Heaven’s King who left His glorious throne to become the friend of sinners. Paul refers to this here in verse nine.

**2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.**

The Macedonians had not been induced into giving by gimmicks or fear. Rather it was the heavenly example of giving (“**the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**”) that brought about the grace of giving in their lives. The Lord Jesus Christ was and is the great example and motivation for giving.

Paul reaches for the *highest example* and the *ultimate motivation* for giving in order to challenge the Corinthians. The apostle is using the example of the Lord Jesus to teach the importance of *grace-giving* and *being unselfish*. He is also confirming the fact that the Lord finished what He started.

This verse teaches the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. When was the Lord wealthy? Certainly not when He came into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem, and certainly not during His thirty-three years of wandering “**as a stranger in the world His hands had made.**” His family was poor in Bethlehem. He himself never possessed any property among men *from the stable to the cross*. Jesus did not have any thing to bequeath at His death but His peace.

Our Lord was rich in a bygone eternity, dwelling with the Father in the courts of Heaven, but He became poor for us. Paul describes Christ's descent from riches to poverty so that believers might ascend from poverty to riches. It was all for our sakes, that we, through His poverty, might become rich.

**How did Jesus become poor for us?** There is no evidence that Jesus was any poorer than most first-century Palestinians; rather, Jesus became poor by giving up His rights as God and becoming human. In his incarnation, God voluntarily became a man known as Jesus of Nazareth. **As a man, *Jesus was subject to place, time, and other human limitations.*** He did not give up His eternal power when He became human, but He did set aside His glory and His rights. Paul spoke of this in [Philippians 2](#).

**Philippians 2:5-7 NASB** **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.**

Jesus was a man, but He was also God. Wow! Our Creator lived among the creation. The God of the universe put on a robe of human flesh so that we could begin to understand and know Him and His great love for us. By becoming a man, He became the only one who could act as a mediator between God the Father and mankind.

A mediator represents both parties. This is why the Virgin Mary does not qualify for the job. She could not represent God, but Jesus could, for He was God and also man. Paul put it this way:

**1 Timothy 2:5 NASB** **For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,**

At the Cross, our mediator Jesus, *paid the bail, paid the debt, and reconciled man to God.* Jesus represents both God and man. He was God incarnate, God in the flesh, and He was also man. He came from the courts of Heaven, yet, He could represent man for He was clothed in a garment of humanity.

Jesus carried *man's burdens, endured man's agonies, suffered man's sorrows,* and He was tested by *man's trials and temptations.* He lived as a man among men and died a man's death. He was *Infinite* who had become *Intimate.* He was the **Divine Sovereign** who became the **Human Sufferer.** He was the God man.

Though a man, He did not surrender His power as God.

- 1) *As a man, He got tired, but as God He said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."*
- 2) *As a man, He wept at Lazarus' grave. As God, He raised him from the dead.*

- 3) *As a man, Jesus was despised of men. As God, all the angels of Heaven worshiped Him.*
- 4) *As a man, our Savior got hungry. As God, He fed thousands with a little boy's lunch.*
- 5) *As a man a boat carried Him. As God, He walked on a rolling, raging sea.*
- 6) *As a man, our Lord got thirsty, and as God He gave us living water.*
- 7) *As a man, He was tempted in all points as we are. As God, He was without sin.*
- 8) *As a man, Jesus got tired and slept. As God, He arose from His sleep and calmed a raging storm.*
- 9) *As a man, Jesus could die, but as God, He could not remain dead. God had to become man to die for us because God cannot die.*

In response to the Father's will, Jesus limited His power. Christ became "**poor**" when He became human, because He set aside so much for all of us. From His cold welcome into the world on a pallet of straw, until the time when He was cruelly thrust out on the point of a spear, no one has ever found Jesus Christ guilty of sin. His life was a flawless mirror of stainless purity, reflecting the wisdom of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the sun on which all the telescopes of time have failed to find a flaw. The character of our Savior continues to shine as earth's purest diamond. Our Lord is the *verity* of God's truth, the *beauty* of God's holiness, the *purity* of God's nature, the *reality* of God's love, the *surety* of God's promises, the *majesty* of God's power, the *authority* of God's throne, the *pity* of God's heart, the *repository* of God's fullness, and the *legacy* of God's will.

When Christ came to earth, He came down from the *coronations of Heaven* to the *condemnations of this earth*. The excellencies of Heaven were surrendered to experience a Roman execution. He came down from the favor of the Father's face to the fury of an angry mob. Hallelujah's were replaced by hisses. Joy was met by jeers. The tender ears of the Son of God that enjoyed the songs of Heaven, had to listen to the sneers of sinful men on earth.

The love He enjoyed in Heaven's halls was replaced with the lying accusations of religious men. The King of kings left Heaven's throne to fulfill an appointment on the tree of Calvary as our suffering servant because He was determined to finish what He had started before the foundations of the earth were made. By giving Himself, He made us "rich" because we received His salvation and gift of eternal life. He finished what He started.

**Emily Elliot** eloquently penned the self-emptying of Christ in the song, "*Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne.*"

*Thou didst leave Thy throne  
And Thy kingly crown  
When Thou earnest to earth for me;  
But in Bethlehem's home  
Was there found no room  
For Thy holy nativity.*

*Heaven's arches rang  
When the angels sang,  
Proclaiming Thy royal degree;  
But of lowly birth  
Didst Thou come to earth,  
And in greatest humility.*

*The foxes found rest, and the birds their nest  
In the shade of the forest tree;  
But Thy couch was the sod, O Thou Son of God,  
In the deserts of Galilee.*

*Thou earnest, O Lord, with the living Word,  
That should set Thy people free;  
But with mocking scorn and with crown of thorn,  
They bore Thee to Calvary.*

*O come to my heart Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for Thee.*

We have seen so far in this section **four key points**.

1. **The Encouragement of Titus:** [8:6](#)... *Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.*
2. **The Excellence of the Corinthian's Growth:** [8:7](#)... *Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.*
3. **The Eagerness of Other Christians is Compared:** [8:8](#)... *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.*
4. **The Example of Christ:** [8:9](#)... *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

*Next, we will look at the Exhortations to finish what has been started.*

## V. THE EXHORTATION TO FINISH WHAT HAS BEEN STARTED—[2 Corinthians 8:10-11](#)

### [2 Corinthians 8:10-11 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> I give *my* opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, **who were the first to begin** a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*.

<sup>11</sup> But now **finish** doing it also, so that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability.

Paul exhorts the Corinthians to finish what they have started. This is the advice or opinion he gives to them for it was expedient, profitable, or to their advantage to complete what they started a year earlier. The Corinthians had a “**who were the first to begin**” attitude a year earlier which means “**they were willing and had a great desire.**” They were eager to give to the Jerusalem believers.

Paul exhorts them in verse eleven to “**finish**” what they desired to do. This is the only command in Paul’s teaching on giving in chapters eight and nine of this book. The word “**finish**” is from the Greek word *epiteleō* {*epi-tel-e-o*} which means “**to finish, successfully complete what has been begun; to accomplish.**”

They were to finish what they started. The readiness or desire of their will should be translated into action. Beloved, it is one thing to want or talk about doing something, **but it is an entirely different matter to actually do it.** Their eagerness needed to be matched by their giving based on their ability to do so.

A year earlier, the Corinthians’ initial giving to help the Jerusalem church was an encouraging sign to Paul that they had been truly converted. Thus, if again they now went back to taking an offering for the Jerusalem church, it would confirm that they were for real and had truly changed their attitude. However, if the Corinthians refused to complete their commitment, it would demonstrate that their repentance was not genuine and their devotion to the Lord was weak.

**At this point, let me ask, “Have you completed what you have started, whether it is in the area of business, work, school, your marriage, promises to family or friends, or your promises to God?”**

By the grace of God, try to finish what you have started. The life of a Christian can be described in one of **four ways: as a journey, as a battle, as a pilgrimage, and as a race.** Select your own metaphor, but the necessity to finish is always the same.

For if life is a journey, **it must be completed.** If life is a battle, **it must be finished.** If life is a pilgrimage, **it must be concluded,** and if it is a race, **it must be won.**

**Derek Redmond**, a twenty-six-year-old Briton, was favored to win the four-hundred-meter race in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Halfway into his semifinal heat, a fiery pain seared through his right leg. He crumpled to the track with a torn hamstring. As the medical attendants were approaching, Redmond fought to his feet. "It was animal instinct," he would later say. He set out hopping, pushing away the coaches in a crazed attempt to finish the race.

When he reached the stretch, a big man pushed through the crowd. He was wearing a T-shirt that read "*Have you hugged your child today?*" and a hat that challenged, "*Just Do It.*" The man was Jim Redmond, Derek's father. "You don't have to do this," he told his weeping son. "Yes, I do," Derek declared. "Well, then," said Jim, "we're going to finish this together." And they did.

Jim wrapped Derek's arm around his shoulder and helped him hobble to the finish line. Fighting off security men, the son's head sometimes buried in the father's shoulder, they stayed in Derek's lane to the end. The crowd clapped, then stood, then cheered, and then wept as the father and the son finished the race.

What made the father do it? What made the father leave the stands to meet his son on the track? Was it the strength of his child? No, it was the pain of his child. His son was hurt and fighting to finish what he had started. So the father came to help him finish.

Beloved, God does the same for the Christian. Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble sometimes, but the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not the one who says it. However, our prayers, faith, trust, and obedience do make a difference. All you have to do is be humble enough to turn your cares over to the Lord, be surrendered to Him and His will, and He will help you to finish what you have started.



## VI. THE EQUALITY IN PROVISIONS—[2 Corinthians 8:12-15](#)

### [2 Corinthians 8:12-15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what *a person has, not according to what he does not have.*

<sup>13</sup> For *this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality—*

<sup>14</sup> *at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality;*

<sup>15</sup> *as it is written, "HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK."*

Paul tells the Corinthians that whatever they give is acceptable if they give it willingly and eagerly. They were to give, based on their ability to do so. **The gift was to be based on what they had, not what they lacked.**

The apostle did not want them to put themselves in a position of hardship. Their own families were not to be neglected. Sacrificial giving must be responsible. Paul wants believers to give generously, but not to the extent that those who depend on the givers must go without having their basic needs met. **Give until it hurts, but don't give so that it hurts your family and/or relatives who need your financial support.**

It was Paul's desire to ease the burden the believers in Jerusalem were facing. The bounty of the believers in Corinth would help to balance out the burdens and the poverty the Christians in Jerusalem were facing. It would help to ease their trials and the needs they had in their lives.

This is the principle the Jews lived by when they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. If too much manna was gathered by a family, then it was shared with those who did not gather enough on that particular day. The surplus of one family was used to balance out the shallow amount of another.

We are so blessed to live in the United States of America. Even the poorest of us would be considered wealthy in other countries where the people have very little. The reason we have sent some of our bounty to poor churches in countries like Zimbabwe, is to help them with their ministries.

Because of their poverty, it is difficult for them to build and expand their churches or have books to study God's Word. With our bounty, however, we can be a channel of blessing to aid them in meeting their needs. The result is God's abundant blessings and provisions for our church family. **Let me ask, "Are you a channel of blessing?"** If that is your desire, then step out by faith and give to the Lord and watch what He does with you and for you. You'll be glad you did. Finish what God has started in you and leads you to do with your life.

In 1865, when **Hudson Taylor** founded the **China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship)**, he determined to depend on God alone for the needed finances. From that day no direct solicitation of funds has occurred, yet, the mission's needs have been continuously met from unexpected sources at critical times, in answer to prayer.

Several years ago, **Phyllis Thompson** chronicled many stories of God's faithfulness to **CIM** in her little book, *Proving God*. "Through the ninety and more years of its history," she wrote, "although no public or private appeal for funds has ever been authorized, its work and workers have been sustained by an unfailing supply."

For example, Thompson recalls that in December, 1954, when funds were especially low, mission personnel heard of a gift coming their way from a wealthy American lady. Nobody at CIM remembered having met the lady, but she had sometimes sent small donations to the mission's London office. Now she had apparently included CIM in her will to the tune of **\$5,500**.

As it turned out, however, the money was not for the China Inland Mission. It went instead to a Bible school organized by Chinese in the Far East. While the CIM personnel were glad for their Chinese brothers, they naturally felt a bit disappointed, but their attention was soon drawn to [2 Chronicles 25:9](#), and they claimed the verse as their own: "**The Lord is able to give you much more than this.**"

**2 Chronicles 25:9 NASB** Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "The LORD has much more to give you than this."

Within days another communication came from the woman's estate. She had indeed remembered the mission, but not for **\$5,500**. The amount being sent was **\$75,000**, with an additional **\$60,000** coming later!

Mission directors met for prayer with overflowing and humbled hearts. They sang the Doxology and thanked the Lord for his goodness in sending them "***much more than this.***" Thank God, that we serve a Lord that can supply the needs we have in our lives and help us to finish what He has started in us.

## Chapter 19.

### Living Above the Boards

#### [2 Corinthians 8:16-24 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.

<sup>17</sup> For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.

<sup>18</sup> We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things of the gospel has spread* through all the churches;

<sup>19</sup> and not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show* our readiness,

<sup>20</sup> taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;

<sup>21</sup> for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

<sup>22</sup> We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you.

<sup>23</sup> As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

Have you ever heard of the phrase, “**Let everything be above board**” or something similar to it? If so, do you know what it means or where it came from?

The back ground of this phrase has its roots with conjurers who placed their hands under the table when they were preparing their tricks. Their hands would be above the table when they demonstrated their tricks to their audience. “**Let all be above-board**” means “**let there be no under-handed work.**” It was a request for openness, honesty, and a lack of deception.

We are challenged by this very truth in this portion of [2 Corinthians](#). God’s people are to be living above the boards in *honesty, integrity*, and a *lack of deception* in our lives. We will address in this portion of [2 Corinthians](#), the importance of proper *preparation, enthusiasm*, and *integrity* in our lives.

## I. THE PASSION OF TITUS—[2 Corinthians 8:16-17](#)

### [2 Corinthians 8:16-17 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> But thanks be to God who **puts** the **same earnestness** on your behalf in the heart of Titus.

<sup>17</sup> For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.

Paul rejoiced and thanked the Lord for what He was doing in the life of Titus. God “**put**” the same desire in Titus as in Paul. This word “**put**” is from the word *didomi* {*did'-o-mee*} which means “**to give, to bestow a gift, to furnish or supply necessary things.**”

The Spirit of God changes our *desires* and *passions*. As we surrender to the Holy Spirit and let Him work in our hearts, then the Lord has the liberty to change us and make us more like Him. The change that takes place in us helps to *empower* and *motivate* us to do the will of God in our life. A Christian is not going to be *obedient* and *surrendered* to the Lord unless he wants to be this way. If the desire is not there, then obedience to God’s leading will be waning in us.

What did the Lord furnish or give to Titus? It was "earnest care" for the Corinthians. The words “**same earnestness**” are from the word *spoude* {*spooday*} which means “**haste, diligence, carefulness, or earnestness in accomplishing.**”

Titus had a passion to be a blessing to the Corinthians and also the believers in Jerusalem. Titus, who knew them so well and loved them so dearly, was also wholeheartedly committed to the relief effort for the Jerusalem saints. That God had so united the hearts of Paul and Titus, further confirmed that the collection was His will. Nor could the anti-Paul faction accuse Titus of having a Jewish bias, since he was a Gentile.

Titus had the same attitude as Paul, for the Lord had knitted their hearts together. This is what He does with Christians. He knits the hearts of believers together in unity to do the will of God. We are like different pieces of a puzzle that fit together to form a beautiful picture. Paul spoke of this in his letter to Ephesus.

[Ephesians 2:21 NASB](#) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

[Ephesians 4:16 NASB](#) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

The Lord makes the body of Christ fit together perfectly. Each believer does his own special *work* or *ministry*, which in turn, helps others to grow in the Lord. The result is the entire body is *healthy, growing spiritually, and full of love*.

God changes our hearts and works in our lives as we surrender to Him. He knits the hearts of believers together in a cause that will bring honor and glory to Him or will meet the needs of others.

For example, He knits the hearts of people with a pastor. He knits the hearts of a husband and a wife together to serve Him and to love each other. This is why it is so important to be yielded to the Spirit of God, so the knot will not be destroyed and the unity of the church or the home are not damaged.

### **2 Corinthians 8:16-17 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> **But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.**

<sup>17</sup> **For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.**

We continue to see the passion of Titus in the fact that he accepted Paul's appeal. This word "**accepted**" is an interesting word. It is derived from the word *dechomai {dekh'-om-ah-ee}* which means "**to take with the hand; to embrace or make something your own.**" This word was used of a family that would adopt a child into their family to rear and educate.

Titus embraced the burden of Paul and the burden and the needs of the Jerusalem believers as his own burden. The burden fired his passion to do something about the need. The same pattern works for us. When you get concerned about a need, and embrace it as your own, then you are motivated to get involved to meet the need. The burden moves you to action. It does no one any good to be stirred about a problem or cause, but not moved to do anything about it.

Titus accepted the exhortation of Paul. His *forwardness* or his *diligence* and *zeal* caused him to go to Corinth on his own accord and endeavor to collect the gift of the Corinthian Christians and take it to Jerusalem. His voluntary participation, along with Paul, was further evidence of the unanimity between the two men.

The zealotry of Titus is so refreshing. Zeal is one of the great needs in the church today. Many Christians are like *spiritual zombies, walking in deadness*. They have no *passion, excitement, or enthusiasm* for the Lord and His work. Trying to get Christians involved in the ministry of the church is like pulling teeth.

Beloved, it takes people to *teach the classes, sing the songs, play the instruments, watch the nursery, clean the buildings, do the ushering, invite people and bring them to church if they need a ride*.

Sitting in the pew does not necessarily mean you are serving the Lord. God wants us to be zealous in our love and service to Him. The Bible provides a number of specific thoughts about the subject of our enthusiasm or zeal.

## Bible Insights on Enthusiasm or Zeal

### 1. The Dedication or Devotion of Zeal

**Ecclesiastes 9:10 NASB** Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

Zeal gives 100%.

**Colossians 3:23 NASB** Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

Zeal is willing to make extra sacrifices to achieve a goal.

**Romans 9:3 NASB** For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

**1 Corinthians 9:22 NASB (22)** To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

As you look at your life what are you?

- 1) *A wing or a weight?*
- 2) *A power or a problem?*
- 3) *A promoter or a provoker?*
- 4) *A giver or a getter?*
- 5) *A doer or a deadhead?*
- 6) *A booster or a buckler?*
- 7) *A supporter or a sponger?*
- 8) *A soldier or a slacker?*
- 9) *A worker or a worrier?*
- 10) *A helper or a hinderer?*

### 2. The Daring and Determination of Zeal

**Acts 18:25 NASB** This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; **and being fervent in spirit**, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;

**Joshua 24:15 NASB** "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, **we will serve the LORD.**"

### 3. The Deliberations and Disquietude of Zeal

#### A. Godly zeal is concerned about the *Christian growth* of others.

**Colossians 4:12-13 NASB (12)** Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, **that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.** **(13)** For I testify for him that **he has a deep concern for you** and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

**2 Peter 1:13 NASB** I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, **to stir you up by way of reminder,**

I am reminded about the life of missionary **Charles Cowman**. **This missionary to Japan in the early 1900's** had a goal to visit every home in Japan and present the Gospel to those who would listen and leave the Gospel in printed form if they would not give him an ear.

He gave a plan on how the **58 million** people of Japan occupying over **10.3 million homes** could be visited in five years. The mountain areas would be difficult, but he was determined. It was called the *Great Village Campaign* and it started with **\$5**.

**He started with the 3 million people of Tokyo**, taking the Gospel to over a half a million homes and then he worked in the provinces and towns. Multitudes were saved in their homes from **1914 to 1918**. The zeal of the Lord consumed Charles.

In **August of 1918**, the task had finally taken its toll on Charles and he left Japan as an invalid. His heart was worn out. **When he died in 1924, there were about 460 churches started in Japan by the men Charles trained and 80 churches in Korea.** The zeal of the Lord and his burden for souls fueled his energy for serving God and winning the lost. Some may claim it was stupid to do this to his body.

Listen, there is nothing stupid in trying to reach people for Christ. I would rather burn the candle at both ends for the Lord than for Satan or my selfish desires. What are you doing with your life?

## B. Godly zeal is not concerned about the *Clock* & time investment in a project.

It carries a sacrificial attitude of willingness.

**1 Thessalonians 2:9 NASB (9)** For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* **working night and day** so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

## C. Godly zeal is concerned about *Completion* of the task.

**John 4:34 NASB** Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."

Balanced zeal can help you keep your priorities in perspective and help you finish the job at hand.

**John 9:4 NASB** "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work."

The zealous person counters procrastination with a sense of urgency. Someone put it this way, "Wake up, sing up, preach up, pray up, pay up, stay up, and never give up, let up, back up or shut up, until the cause of Christ in the church and the world is built up."

## D. Godly zeal is concerned about *Change in Character*.

**2 Corinthians 7:11 NASB (11)** For behold what earnestness this very thing, **this godly sorrow, has produced in you**: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, **what zeal**, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

Taking the line of least resistance makes rivers and men crooked.

## 4. The Discernment of Zeal

Zeal comprehends the fact that present opportunities may be gone tomorrow.

**John 4:35 NASB** "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest."

**2 Corinthians 6:2 NASB** for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"—



**Mordecai Ham** emerged as an evangelist from Kentucky at the turn of the twentieth century. He had a background in business and the study of law. From the very beginning his approach was zealous and blunt. Rather than sit and talk with Christians at revival sites, Ham insisted on being taken to the worst sinners in the community.

On one occasion an unsaved man hid in a corn field, but Ham tracked him down. The man asked him what his intentions were, and the evangelist said he was going to pray for God to kill him. When the man protested, Ham told him he shouldn't be bothered, since he didn't believe in God anyway.

But if there was a God, then death would be appropriate for a man who poisoned his family's spiritual prospects. The lost man begged him not to pray for his death, so Ham relented and prayed for his salvation.

At the final meeting Ham baptized the man and his family. Ham believed the key to evangelism was a passion for souls and an urgency in reaching the lost. Before you criticize his harsh methods, what have you done to reach someone for Christ?

## 5. The Domination of Zeal

The zeal of the Lord dominates the heart of the righteous and moves them to deal with wickedness. It consumes and harnesses the energy of the person. **Moses** was moved with anger at the idolatry of Israel ([Exodus 32](#)) and **Phineas** was enraged at the immorality of the people ([Numbers 25](#)). Jesus drove the money changers out of the Temple because of their corruption.

**Psalms 119:139 NASB** My zeal has consumed me, Because my adversaries have forgotten Your words.

**Psalms 69:9 NASB** For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

One day a little girl saw a sign in a church meeting hall and was crying. It read "*The zeal of Thy house hath consumed me.*" A deacon asked why the little girl was crying. She said, "I'm afraid of the zeal." He answered, "Don't worry little girl. There is no zeal in this place." Is there zeal in your life? If the people have no zeal for the Lord, then the church has no zeal for the Lord.

Your enthusiasm or zeal has a powerful influence on other people.

**2 Corinthians 9:2 NASB** for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, **and your zeal has stirred up most of them.**

**2 Kings 10:16 NASB** He said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." So he made him ride in his chariot.

Zeal is contagious.

**General Westmoreland** was once visiting a platoon of paratroopers in Vietnam. During the conversation, the general asked this question, “How do you like jumping out of planes?” The first man said, “I love it, sir!” The next man said, “It’s a fantastic experience! I fail to imagine not doing it!” The general asked a third soldier and this man said, “I’m scared to death, sir, and don’t much like it.”

The general asked him, “Why do you jump then?” The third man said, “Because I love being around guys who enjoy doing it!” Enthusiasm and zeal encourage others to do that which is difficult. They give people confidence. Use the influence of your zeal and enthusiasm for God’s glory.

## 6. The Destruction of Zeal

Zeal can be lost if you are not careful.

**Revelation 2:4 NASB** 'But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

Have you lost your love for the Lord? Does it still blaze within you?

## 7. The Dictates or Demands about Zeal

### A. Be Zealous in Getting Right With God

**Revelation 3:19 NASB** 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

The word “zealous” means “to be hot.” God wants us to be on fire for Him.

### B. Be Zealous in Staying Right With God

**Proverbs 23:17 NASB** Do not let your heart envy sinners, **But live in the fear of the LORD always.**

### C. Be Zealous in Living for God and Others

**Titus 2:14 NASB** who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, **zealous for good deeds.**

Beloved, enthusiasm and zeal for Christ will help you to live above the boards.

## II. THE PRAISE FOR THE ASSISTANT TO TITUS— 2 Corinthians 8:18

### 2 Corinthians 8:18 (NASB)

<sup>18</sup> **We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches;***

An unnamed man is chosen to assist Titus in his trip to Corinth because of his testimony for Jesus Christ in spreading the Gospel. A variety of guesses have been offered at his identity, but they are speculations. We do know, however, that he had a good name or testimony. His faithfulness and love for Christ gave people confidence that he could be entrusted with the important task of helping Titus with the love offering.

We are reminded here of the importance of having a good name and the loving favor of people. Solomon stated that they are more valuable than gold and riches.

**Proverbs 22:1 NASB A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold.**

If the goal of your life is to have a good name for Christ, then your attitude will help you to live above the boards. You will be motivated to not do anything that will hurt your testimony or other people. **What do people think when they hear your name? Do** they have thoughts of graciousness, goodness, kindness, and faithfulness? **Is** your name sweet to their ears and thoughts? **Do** they crave your company or do they hope to avoid you? **Is** your name a bitter thought? **Does** your name trigger thoughts of a person characterized by harshness, selfishness, stubbornness, moodiness, or a lack of discretion?

Solomon places a priority on the loving *favor, acceptance, or approval* of men. Such approval comes from having a good name and being a person of integrity and character. Having a good name is to be considered more important than riches. The loving favor of people is more valuable than gold and silver. Do your best to have a good name for Christ and for your family.

*You got your name from your Father. It was all he had to give.  
So it's yours to use and cherish, for as long as you may live.  
If you lose the watch he gave you, it can always be replaced.  
But a black mark on your name, son, can never be erased.  
It was clean the day you took it, and a worthy name to bear,  
When he got it from his father, there was no dishonor there.  
So make sure you guard it wisely, after all is said and done.  
You'll be glad the name is spotless when you give it to your son.*

**Charles Spurgeon** wrote, “A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you, and were helped by you, will remember you when forget-me-nots are withered. Carve your name on hearts, and not on marble.”

This is what a man named Kyle Rote did in the NFL.

**Kyle Rote, Sr.**, was an all-pro National Football League player of the 1950s. He was the captain of the New York Giants football team for 10 years. After Rote's death, his son, Kyle Jr., said of all the compliments and awards his dad had received, one stood above the rest: Fourteen of the elder Rote's former teammates named their sons Kyle.

Beloved, take care of *your character*, and *your reputation* will take care of itself. Few things are more dangerous to a person's reputation than having nothing to do, and plenty of time in which to do it.

*Folks, our name, our character, our integrity, and our testimony* are what give our witness for Jesus Christ *credibility* or *diminish it*. If we have a rotten reputation, then our words about how Jesus changed our lives are *muffled* and *muted* because there seems to be no evidence of change. Our words have little power or impact upon the people we are telling about the Lord because we have hurt our own personal credibility.

This is why it is vital that you clear your conscience with God and with men if you have lived an *inconsistent, carnal, backslidden life*. Clearing your conscience is the beginning phase of restoring your name and testimony.

**Acts 24:16 NASB** "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

At the end of **World War I**, **Herbert Hoover**, later to become President of the United States, led the allied relief efforts in Europe. He kept hundreds of thousands from starving, and a new word entered the Finnish language.

In Finland, to "**Hoover**" means "**to be kind, to help.**" If someone coined a word from your name, **what would it be?** Would it signify character, helpfulness, or cheerfulness, or would it be some mean and ugly word?

Beloved, God wants us to focus on having a good name more than great wealth. He wants us to live above the boards. **How do we do this?**

## **Some Things you Can Do to Live Above the Boards and Have a Good Name**

### **1. Conquer Hypocrisy in Your Life.**

Those without Christ are quickly turned-off by our hypocrisy. How many times have we heard such statements as, "**I'm not going to church! It is full of hypocrites!**"

Unfortunately, there are hypocrites in the church. When we claim to be something, we are not, our lives become a stumbling block to others, especially for weak Christians and people who do not know the Lord. It becomes much more difficult to reach that unsaved person for Christ. Paul warned us about this and Jesus rebuked hypocrisy.

**Matthew 23:27-28 NASB** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (28) "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

**1 Corinthians 8:9 NASB** But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

**Romans 14:13 NASB** Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

A stumbling block is usually something that is low and is doing nothing but getting in the way. Many times it is covered with dirt and cannot be easily seen. We become stumbling blocks, too, when we are spiritually low and not growing in the Lord. When we are doing nothing in our spiritual growth and walk with God, we tend to get in the way of the spiritual growth of others.

When we are dirty or living in sin, we are a stumbling block. **Let me ask, "Are you a stumbling block? Are you a Christian, but because of your hypocritical lifestyle, have you become a stumbling block to others?"** If so, why not get that corrected now?

Conquering hypocrisy in our lives will help us to establish a good name. For many people, the only thing they know about God is what they see in the lives of Christians. What do they see in your life? Are you living above the boards?

## **2. Be Consistent in your Conduct.**

The story is told that, as **Alexander the Great** reviewed his troops one day, and one of his soldiers slouched a bit. "What's your problem?" Alexander asked him. The soldier explained that he had been out on the town the night before. "What's your name?" Alexander asked. "Alexander," the soldier answered. The general said, **"Either change your conduct or change your name."** Alexander was concerned about the conduct of one that bore the same name as his.

Beloved, we too, should be concerned about having a good name and conducting ourselves properly. Our goal should be to live above the boards.

**Titus 2:7 NASB** in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified,

**Matthew 5:16 NASB** "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

When we are up one day and down the next, all the time, when we are living in a Christ-like manner one day, and then acting like the Devil on another, we create confusion in the minds and hearts of those without Christ. Our inconsistency turns people off toward the Lord and hurts our reputation. **You will find that the world has a higher standard for Christians than what believers have for themselves.** The unsaved may not know Christ, but they do expect us to act like Him consistently.

The reason we are inconsistent is because we are trying to serve two masters. We try to serve the Lord and this world or ourselves at the same time. We have not made up our mind to serve Christ and this makes us *inconsistent* and *unstable*.

**Matthew 6:24 NASB** "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

**James 1:8 NASB** being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

God wants us to finish our course for Jesus Christ. When we *get mad, backslide, quit going to church, or stop living for God*, we are saying to the world that the Lord is not worth living for and thus, we damage our name. We are saying that there are other things more important than the Son of God. This is what Demas did when he quit serving Christ.

**2 Timothy 4:10 NASB** for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

### **3. Be Compassionate and Concerned for Others in order to gain a good name.**

People tend to respond to our love more than anything else we do or say. **In fact, they don't care how much we know until they know how much we care.** This is what the Lord was trying to get across to us.

**John 13:35 NASB** "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

**Galatians 5:13 NASB** For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

You and I become an example of love by loving people. People learn to love others by the way they are loved or see love.

Our kindness, patience with the *faults of others, sacrifices, forgiveness*, and not *complaining* when we are hurt, demonstrates our love. One of the best ways we can establish a good name is by our compassion and love for other people. It is pretty hard to offend people when you are showing them love. It is easy to offend them when you show hate and indifference toward them.

#### 4. Have Christ-like Communication.

Our tongue has a way of offending people and turning them away from Christ. It is for this reason we are to be careful in what we say. **More people have ruined their reputation and their name by what they have said, than by any other method.** God consistently warns us of the power of the tongue.

**James 3:2 NASB** For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a **perfect** man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

The word “perfect” means "mature."

**Proverbs 18:21 NASB** Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.

**Titus 2:7-8 NASB** in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, **(8)** sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

**Colossians 4:6 NASB** Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

#### 5. Clear your Conscience.

There are going to be times when you do *fail* or *offend* others by your *actions, attitudes, or words*. If this happens, then we are obligated to clear our conscience with God and men. We protect God’s reputation of *justice* by *judging* ourselves and making our “**wrongs**” right with others. Paul stressed this truth repeatedly.

**1 Timothy 1:5 NASB** But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

**1 Timothy 1:19 NASB** keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

Having a clear conscience means we have a conscience which is not troubled or distressed by the guilt of our offenses. It means that we have made right, made restitution, or sought forgiveness for our offenses. No one can point a finger at us and say, “**You wronged me and have not made it right.**”

## 6. Be Consecrated to Christ.

*Our attitude* about sin, and *our actions* concerning temptation, heavily influence others. The crowd can influence someone to do that which is wrong, but also that which is right. God wants us to be holy people and encourage others to live for Him. He wants us to be *pure in heart, character, actions* and *attitude*.

When we live holy lives, we properly represent the Lord who is holy. **The world expects us to live holy lives even though they may tempt us to *sin* and *compromise*.** When we are consecrated to Christ, we are behaving in a way that will help us to establish a good name.

**1 Timothy 5:22 NASB** Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; **keep yourself free from sin.**

**1 Peter 1:15-16 NASB** but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; **(16)** because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

**1 Corinthians 6:18 NASB (18)** Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

Years ago the communist government in China commissioned an author to write a biography of **Hudson Taylor** with the *purpose of distorting the facts* and presenting him in a bad light. They wanted to discredit the name of this consecrated missionary of the Gospel.

As the author was doing his research, he was increasingly impressed by Taylor's *saintly character* and *godly life*, and he found it extremely difficult to carry out his assigned task with a clear conscience. Eventually, at the risk of losing his life, he laid aside his pen, renounced his atheism, and received Jesus as his personal Savior.

Whether we realize it or not, our example of consecration and godliness leaves an impression on others. Hudson Taylor established a good name by a godly life. His life pointed an unsaved man to Christ.

## 7. Be Confident in the Lord.

When we have faith and confidence in the Lord, it brings honor and glory to Him and gives us a good name. Our confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ pleases Him.

**Hebrews 11:6 NASB** And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.



**Romans 1:17 NASB** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

If we do not trust Him, how can we expect an unsaved person to have confidence in Him? Our praise for Him demonstrates our confidence in Him.

**Psalms 107:2 NASB** Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary

**Psalms 18:49 NASB** Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD, And I will sing praises to Your name.

We have examined two areas in this portion of [2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8](#).

1. *The Passion of Titus*
2. *The Praise for the Assistant to Titus*
3. *Next, the Precautions for Security and Integrity*

### III. THE PREPARATIONS and PRECAUTIONS FOR SECURITY and INTEGRITY—[2 Corinthians 8:19-21](#)

**2 Corinthians 8:19-21 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> and not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show* our readiness,

<sup>20</sup> taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;

<sup>21</sup> for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

This section provides important reminders to us about the *importance of precaution* and *preparation*. This man that was sent to assist Titus and Paul would help to provide added security in transporting the love offering back to Jerusalem. He would be a witness of the *eagerness, zeal, or "readiness of mind"* of the Corinthian believers to help the Jerusalem church. Paul was *taking precautions* and *making preparations* in two key areas: *security* and *integrity*.

We will first, focus our attention on the importance of "*preparation*" in the life of the Christian. Then we will address the issue of integrity. A key reason why many Christians do very little for Christ is because they are not prepared to do anything. Preparation is not even in their thinking.

**Our lack of preparation** can *spiritually harden* our *heart* because we are not alert to God's *leading* in our *lives* or to the opportunities that God places in our path. There may be something that the Lord wants you to do, but if you are not paying attention, or if you are not prepared for the task, then the opportunity is many times lost.

Frequently, we miss out on opportunities to serve the Lord because of several factors:

- 1) We are in financial bondage.
- 2) We are ignorant of Bible truths.
- 3) We have flooded our schedules with too many commitments.
- 4) We have damaged our testimony by sinful living and have not cleared our conscience.
- 5) We are physically drained from poor health or stress from our schedules.

We can become apathetic about serving Christ when we are overwhelmed by these issues. Apathy or unconcern for doing God's will breeds coldness in our heart. We get an "*I Don't Care*" or an "*I give Up*" attitude.

Have you ever *been there* or *been tempted* to think this way? Beloved, God wants us to be "**in tune**" with Him. We are to be attentive to His leading in our lives so that we will take advantage of the spiritual opportunities that come our way. According to the Bible, we are to make preparations **in several areas of our lives**.

### **1. Prepared to Search the Scriptures and Learn from God's Word**

**Ezra 7:10 NASB** For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

### **2. Prepared to Serve the Lord**

**2 Timothy 2:21 NASB** Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

**Titus 3:1 NASB** Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed,

### **3. Prepared to Shun Temptation**

**Daniel 1:8 NASB** But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

### **4. Prepared to Spread the Gospel**

**Ephesians 6:15 NASB** and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;

**1 Peter 3:15 NASB** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

## 5. Prepared for the Snatching of the Saints or the Rapture

**Matthew 24:44 NASB** "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

**James 5:8 NASB** You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

**1 Thessalonians 5:2 NASB (2)** For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NASB (51)** Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, **(52)** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Paul made *preparations for security*, but he also was *taking precautions to guard his integrity*. The apostle knew he had his enemies and his critics. He knew well that there would be critics who would not hesitate to charge him with turning part of the collection to his own use, and so he took steps to see that it would be impossible to level that charge against him, by ensuring that others would share with him the task of taking the love offering to Jerusalem. This is what he means by the phrase "**avoiding this that no man should blame us...**"

**2 Corinthians 8:20 NASB (20)** **taking precaution** so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift;

The word "**taking precaution**" is from the Greek word *stello* {*stel'-lo*} which means "**set in order, equip; to prepare one's self.**" He was preparing himself against "**being discredited**" which is a strong word in the Greek. The word "**discredit**" is from the root word *momos* {*mo'-mos*} which means "**blemish, blot, disgrace, insult or censure.**" Brother Paul was doing everything he could to prevent any kind of *blemish* or *disgrace* upon his testimony. This attitude is reflected repeatedly in the New Testament.

**Romans 12:17 NASB** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

**Romans 14:16 NASB** Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;

**1 Corinthians 10:32-33 NASB (32)** Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; **(33)** just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.

Paul was not shackled by being a man-pleaser when it came to preaching the Gospel and taking a stand against sin. **On the other hand**, he was concerned about what men thought when it came to the *issue of finances* and *conducting financial* matters above board. He did not want to do anything that would hinder his ability to reach the lost with the Gospel. He could not allow his enemies to make any false accusations that might discredit and bring suspicion on him before the watching world.

If he lost credibility or brought disgrace upon himself, his ability to reach the lost would have been greatly hindered or impossible.

**2 Corinthians 8:21 NASB (21) for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

The dread of damaging his testimony was the catalyst for him to provide honest things in the sight of the Lord and men. This word “**regard**” is from the word *pronoeo* {*pron-o-eh'-o*} which means “**to foresee or think beforehand, to provide, to care for a thing.**” The word reflects the attitude of the apostle’s concern about conducting himself with behavior that was above board.

Paul had a purpose to live above the boards and do what was right. He took great pains to do what was honorable before Christ and men. God used the apostle in a great way because he was a man of integrity. Integrity, just what is it? Webster defines it this way: “**An unimpaired condition or soundness, adherence to a code of moral values, and the quality or state of being complete and undivided.**” What does integrity mean? In a nutshell it means “**soundness, completeness, and honesty.**”

Beloved, we are facing a number of crises in our nation that threaten our very existence as a free and peaceful people. One of the most serious problems we face is the **integrity crisis**. A war is being waged in the hearts of our people, whether they are Christian or heathen.

It is a war between *Deception vs. Truthfulness; Loyalty vs. Disloyalty; Conviction vs. Convenience; Purity vs. Perversion; Trustworthiness vs. Treason and Treachery; and Honesty vs. Hypocrisy*. We face an integrity crisis because integrity seems **to be losing or is lost all together** in the moral conscience of our country.

Some Americans have committed acts of treason, selling defensive and military secrets for thirty pieces of silver to those who could rob us of our liberty or hold our nation hostage.

Married couples struggle to keep their vows, choosing to divorce one another, instead of endorsing Biblical principles of forgiveness, restoration, humility, and loving one another till death.

A person’s word today has become almost worthless, laying the foundation for anarchy.

Mothers shirk their responsibilities to their unborn babies by slaughtering them in what should be the *safest* and *securest* place in the world for their child, their wombs. Because of a lack of integrity, that place which nurtures life has become the graveyard, the butcher block of convenience and lustful living.

Two million American babies each year enter the portals of Heaven because they were aborted. If they could speak one day, I'm sure that some may ask the Lord, "Why? Why did my mother kill me and not love me at all?"

Because of the integrity crisis, unstable Christians will not make up their minds to totally sell out to the Lord. They are *double minded* and *unstable* as James says ([James 1:8](#)).

**James 1:8 NASB** being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Carnal Christians are trying to serve two masters and are failing ([Matthew 6:24](#)).

**Matthew 6:24 NASB** "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

God's people need a strong dose of integrity like some of the saints in Scripture. When we scan the Scriptures, we find that they reveal a number of insights concerning the issue of integrity.

## 1. The Direction of Integrity

Integrity is to guide the life of the Christian. Notice [Proverbs 11:3](#).

**Proverbs 11:3 NASB** The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.

When we examine the life of Joseph, we find that his integrity guided his life. It guided him in a number of situations.

1. When he was tempted and taunted by his brothers.
2. When he was sold into slavery.
3. When he was entrusted with the management of Potiphar's affairs.
4. When he was tempted by Potiphar's wife and refused to give in to her seduction.
5. When he was committed to prison after being falsely accused and forgotten by the butler. He did his best and found favor with the prison keeper.
6. When he stood before Pharaoh, making sure to give God the glory for the interpretations of Pharaoh's dreams.
7. When he was promoted and Egypt lay at his feet.
8. When his brothers were at his mercy, he forgave them and cared for them. The integrity of the upright shall guide them and preserve them.

## 2. The Diligence of Integrity

The person with integrity fulfills his obligations, whether they are required of him or not, or when no one is around to observe him. Jacob demonstrated integrity when he paid for what he was responsible for, whether he had to or not ([Genesis 43:12](#)).

**Genesis 43:12 NASB** "Take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake.

A reputation for integrity is worth far more than money you might save by compromising it. A person's integrity is truly seen when he thinks he is alone, but he is not.

An unscrupulous salesman was delivering a bid that his company had made for an engineering firm. He was ushered into the office where he would present his bid to the firm. After a brief introduction, the firm's representative politely excused himself for a minute. The shady salesman quickly noticed the bid of his competitor lying on the desk.

Unfortunately, there was a cold drink covering up the total amount of the bid. He gazed out into the inner office and noticed there was nobody to see him sneak a peek. He lifted the Pepsi can and got the surprise of his life. Rather than a cold soda, it was a bottomless can filled with BB's. The quiet office was filled with the sound of BB's racing across the desk and spilling onto the floor. The firm's representative then returned to the office and showed the dishonest salesman the door.

Integrity is demonstrated more when people are not looking than when they are. Daniel continued to pray to the Lord even when his life was endangered. His integrity is what his enemies used to try and destroy him ([Daniel 6:1-5](#)). God overruled his enemies and protected His servant.

**Daniel 6:1-5 NASB** It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, (2) and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. (3) Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. (4) Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him. (5) Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."

### 3. The Discipline of Integrity

The person with integrity *fulfills his word* or *promises* no matter how much time has elapsed. In [Joshua 14:6-12](#), God made a promise to Caleb to give him land that he wanted in the Promised Land.

**Joshua 14:6-12 NASB** Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea. (7) "I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as it was in my heart. (8) "Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully. (9) "So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.' (10) "Now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. (11) "I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. (12) "Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken."

Over forty years later, the Lord fulfilled His promise to Caleb because God's Word is reliable. Let me ask at this point, "Is your word reliable? Would you honor a promise over forty years old?"

We should honor our word, especially the promise or vow we made to our spouse. If you promise to love and cherish your spouse till death-do-you-part, then keep it no matter what length of time has elapsed. Integrity provokes discipline in doing what is right.

#### **4. The Defense of Integrity**

Integrity has a preserving influence in our own life and in our family.

**Psalms 25:21 NASB** Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for You.

**Proverbs 20:7 NASB** A righteous man who walks in his integrity-- How blessed are his sons after him.

Integrity walks hand in hand with uprightness. These two are to be our body guards to protect us from evil. Uprightness affects our desires and makes us learn God's requirements in order to strive and obey them. Integrity is what we claim to be and keeps us from being something we are not. Our integrity is to be consistent, affecting our life every day.

**John Wesley** was working in his garden one day when a neighbor came by to visit. The neighbor attempted to jolt Wesley by asking what he would be doing now if he knew Jesus would return that day. Wesley surprised his friend by saying, "I would go right on doing what I'm doing." May we too, live in such a way that Christ could return at any time and we would be comfortable continuing the task at hand.

Consistent, public integrity also helps to provide a person with a spiritual shield against false accusations of wickedness.

**1 Peter 3:16-17 NASB** and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. (17) For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

We find that Samuel was a man of integrity.

**1 Samuel 12:3-4 NASB** "Here I am; bear witness against me before the LORD and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore it to you." (4) They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand."

We have examined four important elements concerning integrity.

1. *The Direction of Integrity*
2. *The Diligence of Integrity*
3. *The Discipline of Integrity*
4. *The Defense of Integrity*
5. *Next, the Desirability of Integrity*

## 5. The Desirability of Integrity

Integrity is far more valuable than wealth and riches. Because of its value, we should desire it in our own life.

**Proverbs 19:1 NASB** Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity Than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool.

**Proverbs 16:7 NASB** When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

It is ironic that people cheat or are dishonest because they feel they will not get what eventually will not satisfy them. Do you find yourself sacrificing integrity for personal wealth? You will lose if you do. You will lose your *integrity* and *blessings*.

## 6. The Dependability and Delights of Integrity



Integrity produces stability and success.

**Proverbs 12:3 NASB** A man will not be established by wickedness,  
But the root of the righteous will not be moved.

Those with integrity have stable roots that are not moved. They are anchored in Christ. The *stability* and *dependability* that come from integrity lead to prosperity and blessing. Real success does not compromise integrity because that would violate God's standards.

If you violate God's standards of right and wrong to be a so called "success," then you have not achieved true success at all. You have not learned to live your life by God's blue-print for living. You have also failed to understand the final consequences that await you on the path that you are plodding.

Your path will lead to *defeat, distress, dismay, discouragement, depression, destruction, and possibly death*. To me, that kind of end does not describe success at all.

## 7. The Devotion of Integrity

Integrity is willing to lose *personal fame, status, or wealth* so that others will be *protected, blessed, benefitted, or treated right*. When we look at the integrity of **John the Baptist**, we find that he turned his followers over to Jesus, beginning with the baptism of Jesus. John turned his *popularity* and *ministry* over to the Lord so people would be *saved* and *blessed*. That was his responsibility and he fulfilled it as he said, "**He must increase, but I must decrease**" ([John 3:30](#)).

After the only year that **Ted Williams'** legendary batting average ever dropped below .300, he went to the management and demanded a pay cut. Ted said, "I looked him straight in the eyes and said, 'I'm taking a \$35,000 cut.'" Maybe this explains why he never again hit below .300. Ted felt that this was the right thing to do with the owners of his team.

## 8. The Details and the Degree of Integrity

The person with integrity is faithful in all areas of life, especially in small, insignificant matters which enable and prepare him for greater responsibilities.

**Luke 16:10-11 NASB** "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. (11) "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?"

If we are *unfaithful* with **earthly responsibilities**, we will be *untrustworthy* and *unfit* to **handle riches and responsibilities in God's kingdom**. Don't let your integrity slip in small details or matters, and it will not fail you in crucial decisions.

## 9. The Durability of Integrity

The individual with integrity is not swayed by outward pressures, trials, temptations, and circumstances. **Job** and **Daniel** were durable examples of men with integrity that were not swayed by pressure.

**Job 2:3 NASB** The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause."

**Job 2:9-10 NASB** Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" (10) But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Satan came to God and said, "If You let me deal with Job, he'll curse you. He'll turn his back on You. Take away his blessings, his riches, his family, and see what happens to his integrity." As the Lord allowed, Satan had a field day with Job. Yet, even *when his family was killed, his crops were wiped out, and his house burned down*, **Job never lost** his *integrity*, in spite of the *discouraging* and *destructive* statements from his own wife.

**Job 27:5-6 NASB** "Far be it from me that I should declare you right; Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. (6) "I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. My heart does not reproach any of my days.

Job says, "I don't care what happens, I will not walk away from integrity. I'm committed to this course. I adhere to these values. I will keep these standards no matter what. My wife can come down on me. My body can fall apart. My possessions and family can be taken from me, but I will not give up my integrity."

**Daniel 1:8 NASB** But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

Without integrity we are open to *evil influences* and *corruption*. The influence of corruption creates *instability* and *weakness* in our character. When this happens, our service for the Lord isn't worth shooting because it is either *pathetic* or *non-existent*.

## 10. The Development of Integrity

Integrity provides a person with a clear conscience which enables and equips him to minister to other people. Our integrity develops opportunities for ministering to others.

**2 Corinthians 4:1-2 NASB (1)** Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, **(2)** but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

**Acts 24:16 NASB** "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

Consistent *Christ-likeness* and *godly character* create confidence in us to be a witness to others. The confidence comes from the fact that *we are not* plagued by guilt from past offenses that have not been resolved. *We are not* worrying about our faults with others because they have been resolved or have never occurred. *Our integrity* helps us to lay aside any hindrances or weights that would hinder us from effectively serving the Lord and doing His will.

**Hebrews 12:1 NASB** Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

## **11. The Discovery and Derivation of Integrity**

If we are going to be people of integrity and truthfulness, then we must understand the three keys to obtaining integrity. How do we get it? We must realize....

### **A. The Author of Integrity**

Jesus Christ is the author of truth. The more we yield to Him, the more we will understand integrity and truth and demonstrate it in our life. We are given the mind of Christ so we can think God's thoughts and understand His ways (**1 Corinthians 2:16**).

**1 Corinthians 2:16 NASB (16)** For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

### **B. The Source of Integrity**

The source of integrity is found in the Word of God. The truth is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

**2 Peter 1:21 NASB** for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

The more we study, memorize, and meditate upon the Word of God, the more we will have the mind of Christ.

### C. The Guide to Integrity

The guide is the Holy Spirit who unites with our spirit when we trust Jesus Christ as our Savior.

**Romans 8:16 NASB** The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

The Holy Spirit teaches us and convicts us when we lie.

We have seen so far in this portion of [2 Corinthians 8](#), three areas.

1. *The Passion of Titus*
2. *The Praise for the Assistant to Titus*
3. *The Preparations and Precautions for Security and Integrity*
4. *Next, the Persistence of the Second Assistant*

### IV. THE PERSISTENCE OF THE SECOND ASSISTANT- [2 Corinthians 8:22](#)

**2 Corinthians 8:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you.

There wasn't much money in 1932, so it was no time to buy a drugstore. Then grasshoppers ate all the crops in the region. **This, in turn, was followed by a dust bowl, a long drought, temperatures for ten days straight over 100 degrees.** So the drugstore seemed about to fold. Nevertheless, **Ted and Dorothy Husted** were believers in God. They asked themselves: "How can we get these people into the drugstore?" They said, "We'll put up some signs."

So, they went 25 miles in each direction and put up signs that read, "Free Ice Water at the Wall Drugstore, Wall, S.D." They put up signs at 10 miles; and at 5 miles the sign read: "Hold on! It's Only 5 Miles to the Wall Drugstore and Free Ice Water." They got so enthusiastic that they even put up a sign at Albany, New York: "1725 Miles to the Wall Drugstore".

Now druggists had been handing out free ice water for generations but it was Ted & Dorothy who were the first people to think of advertising it. Today, more than 15,000 people crowd the drugstore on a busy day in a town of 800 people. It remains the most successful drugstore in the entire industry. The persistence of these Christians to not give up, but to keep trying led to their business success.

In the same manner, we too, are to be persistent in living our lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to do our best in sharing with others the message of the "**Living Water**" that is found in our Lord.

Paul mentions here that another brother in the Lord is being sent to assist Titus in the collection and security of the love offering. He would also help to protect the reputation of Paul in the handling of the love offering for the Jerusalem believers.

**2 Corinthians 8:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often **tested** and found **diligent** in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you.

The apostle revealed the godly persistence of this man by the fact that he had proved to be a diligent person in many things. What does Paul mean by the word “**tested?**” It is from the word *dokimazo* {*dok-im-ad'-zo*} which means “**to test, examine, prove, to scrutinize to see whether a thing is genuine or not such as metals, to recognize as genuine after examination.**” This brother in Christ was trusted because he proved to be the “**Real McCoy.**” His life was *scrutinized* and *tested* and he was found to be a trusted man of God.

Paul said he proved to be “**diligent**” which means he was “**zealous, earnest, active, and very diligent.**” This third unnamed assistant was actively persistent and serious about serving the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a man who was “**living above the boards.**”

Let me ask, “**Are you living above the boards? How determined are you in serving our Lord?**” May we all heed the challenge of Paul found in [1 Corinthians 15](#).

**1 Corinthians 15:58 NASB (58)** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

## V. THE PARTNERSHIP OF TITUS & THE PROOF OF THEIR LOVE [2 Corinthians 8:23-24](#)

**2 Corinthians 8:23-24 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

If any questions were asked about Titus and his identity, they were to explain that Titus was Paul’s partner and helper. If people asked about the assistants, they were to explain that these brothers were *messengers* or *representatives* of the churches. This is one place where the Greek word *apostolos*, usually translated “**apostle,**” occurs in the non-technical sense of a messenger or someone sent on a mission.

Paul instructs the team to openly show the Corinthians believers the proof of their love for them and the pride they had in these folks.

They were not going to Corinth to just “**take**” from these people. They were going also to *love* and *encourage* them for their *generosity, selflessness, and sacrifice* for Christ.

We too, are to show others the proof of our love for them. **We are to demonstrate our love** by *our words* and *actions*. This is the meaning of *endeixis* {*en'-dike-sis*} which is the word translated “**tested.**”

**Do you demonstrate your love to the Lord by the way you live?** Talk is not enough, beloved. Are you living above the boards when it comes to being open in your love for the Lord Jesus Christ? May the Lord help us all to prove our love for Him.