

STUDIES IN  
SECOND CORINTHIANS



**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK**

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**STUDIES IN  
SECOND CORINTHIANS**

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## P R E F A C E

In these studies in the Corinthian letters and the Gospel of Luke, I have given particular attention to the Scriptural emphasis on the great doctrinal issues of the revealed Word of God. I have endeavored to bring other passages of Scripture to bear on these issues because the Bible is its own best commentary. I have written out the shorter quotations in full. I have cited many other references with the hope that those who use the studies may take the time to examine all the Scriptures that are given and also search for additional ones that may bear on the subject being studied.

A wealth of doctrinal material is to be found in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians as well as in the whole Bible which was written "for our admonition." This is true whether it be the carefully investigated truth about Our Lord which Luke has given in his gospel, or the teaching about the church which Paul presents in First Corinthians, or doctrinal issues such as the covenants, the atonement, heaven and other issues presented in Second Corinthians.

The charts are given to enable the student to see the whole epistle or some particular section of it at a glance. They are the road maps to guide anyone following the path of Paul's thoughts that range from sorrow to triumph, from expressions of great love to warnings of great danger.

The outlines constitute a paraphrase of the text in outline form. The comments are intended to explain the meaning of words, phrases, and other problems of interpretation. They have been prepared from a careful consideration of the Greek text for light that may be given to the meaning of the message of the inspired Word. They have been presented without needless use of Greek forms that might serve only to confuse the English reader. Since I am a preacher of the gospel, I have not hesitated to preach in the comments wherever I have believed that it might do some good.

The summaries and the questions at the close of each chapter are presented to help the student recall the content of the chapter and think through the meaning of the many concepts presented in it.

The BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK series is the result of a dream of Don DeWelt who has sought to extend the teaching program of

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the church through the printed page. He had been editor, counselor, and friend to me in preparing three books in the series. I pray that the Lord may bless us as we seek to teach His Word through this medium.

Department of New Testament  
Pacific Christian College  
February, 1966

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## CHART OUTLINES OF SECOND CORINTHIANS

### PAUL'S MINISTRY AND APOSTLESHIP

#### *Introduction*

(1:1-2)

Defense of  
his ministry  
(1:3-7:16)

Instruction on  
Christian giving  
(8:1-9:15)

Defense of his  
apostleship  
(10:1-13:10)  
*Closing*  
(13:11-13)

### PAUL'S MINISTRY

#### Sincerity

(1:3-2:11)

1. Comfort in affliction  
(1:3-11)
2. Conduct among Corinthians  
(1:12-14)
3. Intended visit  
(1:15-22)
  - a) Fickleness  
(1:15-2:11)
  - b) Reason for delay  
(1:23-2:11)

#### Triumph

(2:12-6:10)

1. Background  
(2:12-13)
2. Praise  
(2:14-17)
3. Self-commenda-  
tion  
(3:1-18)
  - a) Corinthians
  - b) Covenants
4. No cowardice  
(4:1-5:10)
  - a) What he endured
  - b) Momentary affliction
5. Reconciliation  
(5:11-6:10)

#### Appeal

(6:11-7:16)

1. Reciprocal affection  
(6:11-13)
2. Separation from unbelievers  
(6:14-7:1)
3. Reasons for accepting his appeal  
(7:2-16)

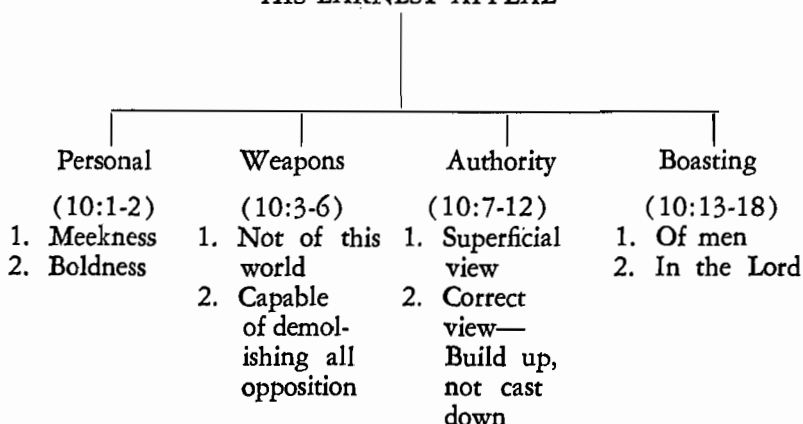
## THE GRACE OF CHRISTIAN GIVING

Macedonia (8:1-6)	Appeal to Corinth (8:7-15)	Mission of Titus and others (8:16-24)	Ministering to the saints (9:1-15)
1. Result (1-2)	1. Gracious privilege (7)	1. His concern (16-17)	1. The readi- ness (1-2)
2. Response (3-5)	2. Love (8-9)	2. His associates (18-23)	2. The brethren (3-5)
3. Titus (6)	3. Advice (10-15)	3. The proof of love (24)	3. The issues (6-14) a) Sowing and reaping b) Ability c) Result
			4. God's unspeakable gift (15)

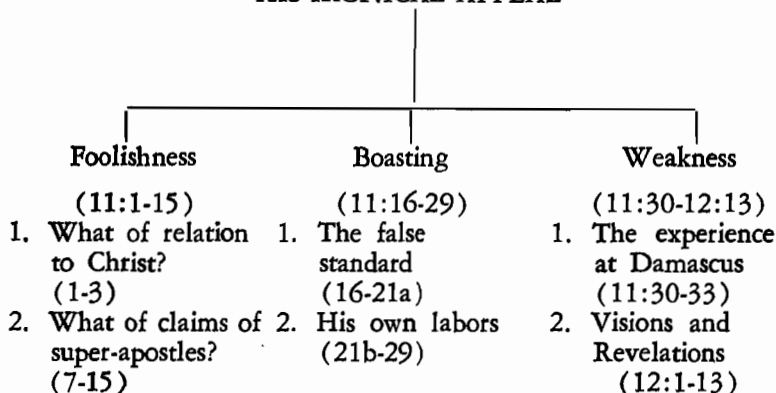
## HIS APOSTLESHIP DEFENDED

Appeal	Explanation
1. Earnest appeal (10:1-18)	of his intended visit
2. Ironical appeal (11:1-12:13)	(12:14-13:10)

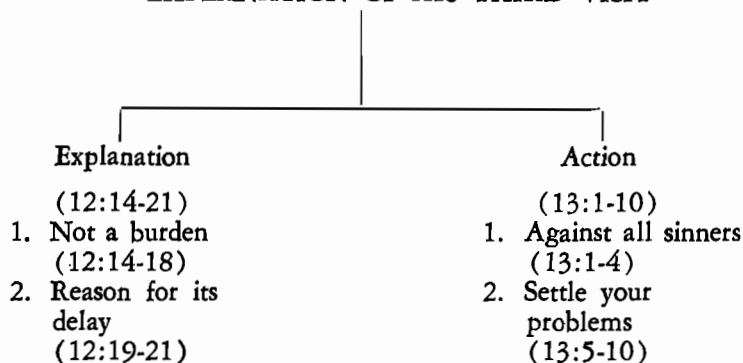
## HIS EARNEST APPEAL



## HIS IRONICAL APPEAL



## EXPLANATION OF HIS THIRD VISIT



## THE COVENANTS

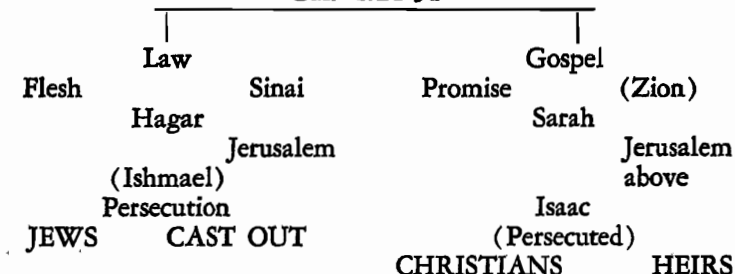
Promise (430)	Sinai Ex. 20	Pentecost Acts 2 New Covenant
To Abraham and seed—CHRIST.  Gal. 3:8-14.	Law did annul the Promise  Gal. 3:15-22  Old Covenant	Abraham's children Believers in Christ: Gal. 3:29 New Birth— John 3:3-5

(Gospels—Life of Christ)

## ALLEGORY OF ABRAHAM'S TWO SONS

### THE TWO COVENANTS

Gal. 4:21-31



## THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

(God's Rule In Hearts)



ISRAEL	CHURCH	HEAVEN
National and Religious	Spiritual kingdom of Christ.	Eternal kingdom of Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
OLD COVENANT	THRONE OF DAVID	
David	Lk. 1:32; Acts 2:29-36	II Pet. 1:5-11
Psa. 89:3-4	NEW COVENANT	Rev. 2:10
Law and Prophets	Acts and Epistles	
Gospels	Points to	→
Points to	→	
Points to		→

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Analysis*

- A. Paul sought in his opening words to prepare his readers to receive the message of his second epistle (1-14).
1. By his gracious salutation (1-2).
    - a) The writer: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God.
    - b) Persons addressed:
      - (1) The church of God, the one at Corinth.
      - (2) The saints in the whole of Achaia.
    - c) Salutation: Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
  2. By his praise to God for comfort in affliction (3-11).
    - a) He identified God (3).
      - (1) As the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
      - (2) As the merciful Father.
      - (3) As the God of all comfort—the compassionate God.
    - b) He explained why God had comforted Him (4).
      - (1) To enable him to comfort others in affliction.
      - (2) To comfort others by means of the comfort God had showed him.
    - c) He explained the relation between suffering and comfort (5-7).
      - (1) Just as the suffering which Christ experienced came like a flood upon Paul, so the comfort that he experienced came through Christ also.
      - (2) His affliction was for their comfort and salvation.
      - (3) Paul's comfort was to comfort them and help them endure their sufferings.
      - (4) His hope for them was firmly established, for he knew that as they had shared in the suffering so they would share in the comfort (7).
    - d) He told them about his affliction in Asia (8-11).
      - (1) Its intensity: It was so severe that he often despaired of life.
      - (2) His attitude toward it: He put his trust in God who raises the dead.
      - (3) His confidence: God will deliver us.

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- (4) His deliverance: It was a gift from God.
  - (a) The prayers of the Corinthians had helped to bring it about.
  - (b) It had resulted in thanksgiving to God from many people.
- 3. By a brief explanation of his conduct and his writing (12-14).
  - a) His conduct (12).
    - (1) His conscience said he had conducted himself in a holy and sincere manner before God.
    - (2) It was not in accord with fleshly wisdom, but with the grace of God who had granted him the privilege of living as a Christian.
    - (3) This was true of his conduct in the world and especially before the Corinthians.
  - b) His writing (13-14).
    - (1) They were to understand that he meant by his writing exactly what they were reading.
    - (2) They, in part, had understood that he was their reason for boasting as Christians and they were his reason for boasting in the day of Our Lord Jesus.
- B. Paul explained why he had delayed coming to Corinth (15-24).
  - 1. What he had planned at first (15-16).
    - a). Because of his confidence in their relation to Christ, he had planned to come to Corinth, then go on to Macedonia, and to return to Corinth.
    - b) This second visit would prove his kindly feeling for them.
    - c) It would have afforded them the privilege of sending him on his way to Judea.
  - 2. The defense of his plan against anticipated objections (17-22).
    - a) Questions that required a negative answer (17).
      - (1) In planning this, he didn't use levity, did he? No!
      - (2) He didn't make plans according to flesh, as men do, did he? No!
      - (3) His "yes" was not an absolute "yes" and his "no" an absolute "no" were they? Were not his plans made with this thought in mind: "If the Lord permits"? Yes!

- b) Answers to possible objections to his plan (18).
  - (1) It was based on the principle that God is trustworthy.
  - (2) Because of this he had not said an absolute "yes" or "no".
- c) Arguments proving him trustworthy (19-21).
  - (1) Based on the reference to his preaching: The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached by Paul and Silvanus and Timothy did not become a vacillating "yes" or "no" for in Him a "yes" is certain and trustworthy.
  - (2) Based on God's promises:
    - (a) The promises of God in Christ are trustworthy.
    - (b) They can trust God and glorify Him through the things Paul had taught them.
  - (3) Based on God's approval of Paul's ministry (21-22).
    - (a) The One who establishes us along with you (in the Day of Christ) and anointed us is God.
    - (b) He also sealed us and gave us the guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts.
- 3. His reasons for delaying his visit to Corinth (23-24).
  - a) The solemn statement: I call God as witness upon my soul.
  - b) The plain reason: To spare you possible sorrow.
  - c) The explanation:
    - (1) Lordship: We do not have lordship over your faith; we are fellow-workers with your joy.
    - (2) Faith: You stand in your faith, that is, in your relation to Christ, for He is Lord of your faith.

*Salutation  
Scripture*

1:1-2. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Comments*

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus.*—In the first epistle to the Corin-

thians, Paul spoke of himself as a "called" or summoned apostle. Since the Corinthians were already familiar with this fact, it seemed unnecessary to repeat it in the second letter. They knew that they had heard the Word of God through him and that their position as Christians depended upon the fact that he was an apostle of Christ. He had made this known to them in the first epistle, but they were to be reminded of it again in this letter.

Paul wrote First Corinthians to correct certain problems that were present in the church. They were (1) those reported to him by members of the household of Chloe and (2) those about which they had written requesting information and instruction.

The second epistle was written to complete the reformation which he had begun through the first letter. Following a brief introduction, it tells (1) about the sincerity of his ministry in their behalf, and defends his change of plans that had caused him to delay his return visit to Corinth; (2) it gives further instruction about completing the offering for the saints in Judea; and (3) it defends his apostleship against the claims of those whom he called false apostles.

*the will of God.*—Because of the rebellious attitude of some who were disturbing the faith of the Corinthian Christians, it was necessary for Paul to remind them in both of his epistles that he had received his apostleship through the will of God. The teaching, correction, and instruction which he wrote to them was given by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. To rebel against the inspired writing was to rebel against the will of God.

*and Timothy.*—Sosthenes was associated with Paul in the writing of First Corinthians, but Timothy is in that place of honor in the second epistle. There is no reason to suppose that either of them had anything to do with the content of the messages other than being associated with Paul who wrote them under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Timothy is mentioned again in 1:19 along with Silvanus who was another of Paul's helpers.

After having learned about the problems in the church at Corinth, Paul sent Timothy, his beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind them of the things which he taught everywhere in every church. He instructed them to receive him with respect what was due one performing the work of the Lord even as Paul himself was doing. See I Cor. 4:17 and 16:10-11.

*unto the church of God.*—It was necessary to remind the Corinthians again that they were of the church of God, not of men. Paul had made it clear to them in the first epistle that the church was the temple of



God and that the Spirit of God dwelt in it. Anyone attempting to destroy that temple would be destroyed, for God's temple is holy. The Corinthian Christians were to conduct themselves in a manner befitting the saints of God. See I Cor. 3:16-17.

*with all the saints.*—As the church is holy because it is separated from sin and dedicated to the service of God so those who are members of that holy body are called saints. The Corinthians were reminded that they had gotten their sins washed away in baptism. They had been separated from sinful practices and set apart to the holy service of God. All this had been done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in accord with the instruction given to them through the Spirit of God. See I Cor. 6:11.

All of this was intended to remind the church at Corinth that God would tolerate no false teaching nor conduct that fell below the standard presented by His inspired apostle. The apostle Paul had set the example of holy living for them. See I Cor. 4:16 and 11:1.

*in the whole of Achaia.*—This suggests that, while the letter was addressed primarily to Corinth, there were other congregations in the area also. There was one church of God, but many congregations. There was one divine standard of teaching to regulate the life and conduct of all.

*Grace to you and peace.*—This conforms to the standard of greeting in all of Paul's epistles, but it is more than a mere greeting. Paul was aware of the hardships through which the church was passing. He knew about the ones who were troubling the saints of God. He knew how very much they needed the grace of God, His unmerited favor. The church had been torn by strife and faction; he knew how they needed peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The salutation was like a prayer that God's grace and peace from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ might rest upon this congregation.

### *Comfort in Affliction*

#### *Scripture*

1:3-11. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; 4 who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ. 6 But whether we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or whether we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which worketh in the patient en-

during of the same sufferings which we also suffer: 7 and our hope for you is steadfast; knowing that, as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also are ye of the comfort. 8 For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: 9 yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead: 10 who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver: on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us; 11 ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication; that, for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf.

### *Comments*

*Blessed.*—It is characteristic of Paul to sing praise to God in the presence of persecution and distress. When he and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, they prayed and sang hymns to God. See Acts 16:25. His imprisonment in Rome resulted in Christ being preached. This led him to say, "Therein I rejoice and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:18). He was fulfilling the standard about which he had written to the Romans that they were to be "patient in tribulation; continuing steadfastly in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). He wrote to the Colossians to say, "I rejoice in my suffering for your sake and I fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the church" (Col. 1:24).

This attitude came, in part at least, from the fact that he had once been the chief persecutor—and chief sinner because of it—of the church. He now rejoiced that he had become identified with Christ. In no way was this more evident than in his suffering the same kind of affliction that Christ had suffered during His ministry.

Persecution and affliction do not always produce faithfulness and rejoicing. But those who have strong convictions about Christ and are fully assured about His resurrection and coming again rejoice in spite of hardships. See Rom. 5:1-5.

Paul began the letter on this note so that the Corinthians might understand when he listed some of the things he had suffered for that he was not asking for sympathy, but willingly enduring these things for their sakes.

*God and Father.*—This is not a repetition of verse two. There Paul wrote of "God our Father;" here, he writes of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We become children of God by being born of the water and the Spirit—the new birth. Our Lord Jesus Christ was designated Son because of the miraculous conception and by His resurrection from the dead (Luke 1:35; Rom. 1:3-4). His relation to the Father was unique, for He was the only begotten of the Father (John 1:14, 18). The writer of Hebrews quotes Ps. 1:7, "Thou art my son, This day have I begotten thee," and relates it, very likely, to the birth of Jesus Our Lord (Heb. 1:5). Paul used the same quotation in his sermon to the Jews in Antioch and related it to the resurrection (Acts 13:33). Hebrews, then, relates Sonship to the fact of His miraculous conception; Acts, to the proof of it.

Jesus made the distinction between His relation to the Father and ours when He spoke to Mary Magdalene, saying, "Touch me not (Greek: stop clinging to me) for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17).

We can call God our Father because of our relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. To those who accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God—that is, to those who believed on His name and were born of God. See John 1:12-13; I Cor. 4:15; James 1:18. He called God His Father because of His miraculous conception. This is in harmony with the deity of Jesus, for John explained that "the Word was God" (John 1:1). So Paul speaks of the God as well as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—unique relationships in both cases. Paul, writing to the Philippians, explained how this One who was on an equality with God came to be in the likeness of men. See Phil. 2:5-11.

On the cross, Jesus as man cried with a loud voice and spoke the words written in Ps. 22:1, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

*Lord Jesus Christ.*—The word "Lord" is used in many ways in the Bible. It is used in respectful address, like our word "sir." It may refer to the owner of a house or a master of a vineyard or to one who has the right to order his servants and expect them to obey. What did it mean in reference to Jesus Christ? In some instances it could well be rendered "sir." In others it suggests His right to command those who are to perform a service under His direction. But in addition to that, it refers to His deity. In the Old Testament God is called "Lord." It is well known that the LXX substituted the word "Lord" for "Jehovah." God told Moses that "JHVH" was the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. See Ex. 3:15. The apparent

reason for the substitution was to avoid using the ineffable name of God in vain.

Quotations from the Old Testament that refer to Jehovah (JHVH) are rendered "Lord" in the New Testament. One such is Isa. 40:3, quoted in Luke 3:4. It clearly refers to the work of John the Baptist who was to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the Day of Pentecost when Peter declared that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ it is very likely that the Jews who were used to this word for Deity understood him to say that Jesus is God.

"God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" contemplates Jesus in His unique relation to the Father in His deity, His office as Saviour, and as Messiah—that is, prophet, priest, and king.

*the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.*—God is the God of all comfort. Then comfort that comes from any other source is subject to question. This is not to say that God cannot use one whom He has comforted to comfort others. The Corinthians needed to remember that God is like a father who takes pity on his children in their distress. Corinth had its troubles and its troublemakers, but the Father knew all about them. The Old Testament has a significant word on this: "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust" (Psa. 103:13). But in the New Testament in the person of Our Lord, we see this demonstrated as He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and proclaimed the gospel to the poor.

The God of comfort is like one called to stand by the side of the helpless, the discouraged, and the oppressed. God comforted Paul as he faced death with the assurance that Christ lived and that after this body dies, he would have a building from God, eternal in the heavens. See II Cor. 5:1. Paul told the Thessalonians about the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, and added, "Comfort one another with these words" (I Thes. 4:18). He comforts those in trial with the assurance that the way out is provided for them—that is, by following His direction just as our Lord did in the wilderness temptation. See I Cor. 10:13; Matt. 4:4; Heb. 4:15. He comforts those who are sometimes misunderstood by the assurance that God knows the hearts of all men. See Rom. 8:27.

*that we may be able to comfort.*—God came to the aid of Paul in all the pressures of life that brought distress, not for his sake alone but that he might in turn pass this blessing along to others. He told the Corinthians how God delivered him that they might find in the God of comfort the relief from their hardships, discouragements, and

trials, which, in their case, often came from their own sinful practices or the disturbing influence of false teachers.

*For as the suffering of Christ abound unto us.*—The sufferings of Christ are the sufferings He endured during His ministry for the sake of others—that is, to help others. He was persecuted, maligned, and in the end, crucified. All who would be His disciples face the need of bearing the cross, drinking the cup He drank, and suffering as He suffered. But the flood of sufferings that often swept over Paul was balanced by the flood of comfort that came to Him through Christ.

*For your comfort and salvation.*—The things which Christ suffered led to His death and resurrection which provided the means of salvation for all those who are willing to become united with Him in the likeness of His death that they might also be in the likeness of His resurrection. Paul's sufferings were in a sense like the sufferings of Christ, for they provided comfort and salvation for others. Christ's sufferings provided salvation from sin, for He shed His blood to blot out sin. Paul's sufferings brought comfort and salvation, not in the sense of blotting out sin, but by encouraging others to patiently endure the suffering which were like his own sufferings through which he had safely passed.

*our hope for you.*—Paul knew about the sufferings of the church at Corinth, for he was like a loving father who suffered when he knew that his children were suffering. But he also knew that this example of patience in tribulation would be followed by the Corinthians. His confidence in them and his hope for them, remained undaunted despite the fact that in both of the epistles to the Corinthians Paul shows how far short of the standard of Christ the Corinthian church had fallen. His hope was not based on any false notion that the Lord would accept them in their sin, but that they would correct their errors and imitate him, their spiritual father as he imitated Christ.

*our affliction which befell us in Asia.*—Paul mentions this to show them the extent to which he had gone in suffering in order that he might minister to them. We have no way of knowing the exact thing to which he referred. Luke tells about the riot which Demetrius and the silversmiths caused at Ephesus when Paul was there. But he also reminds us that Paul's friends kept him from getting involved. See Acts 19:30-31. Paul mentions the fact that he had fought with wild beasts at Ephesus. See I Cor. 15:32. But we have no way of knowing exactly what this meant.

The thing that happened to him in Asia was so beyond his ability

to endure that he utterly despaired of life. In 4:10-11 he mentions the fact that he constantly faced death for Jesus. In 11:23-28 he listed many of the trials through which he had gone as an apostle, often being in danger of death. Constantly facing this sentence of death, he was led to put his trust in God who raises the dead. It was toward God, and not toward himself, that he directed his hope of continued deliverance.

*by your supplication.*—Paul had no doubt about God's ability to deliver him from this threat of death. But there were two other factors involved in the deliverance: (1) his own patient endurance of the trials that he suffered, and (2) the help which the Corinthians supplied by their supplication in his behalf.

This brings up the interesting subject of the place of prayer in connection with the providence of God. Paul urged the Colossians to pray for him that God might open a door for the word and that he might speak as he ought to. See Col. 4:2-4. Paul says that God's administration of the fulness of times bring all things together in Christ. This, evidently, is done to insure the success of God's plan of redemption. See Eph. 1:9-10. Abraham prayed for the deliverance of Sodom and Gomorrah from the destruction which God said was to come upon them, but they were not delivered because there were not even ten righteous men in those cities. Moses prayed that God would spare the nation of Israel when they sinned by worshipping the golden calf. The nation was saved, but the guilty ones were punished by being put to death. Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to have the apostles that he might sift all of them as wheat. He made supplication for Peter that his faith should not fail, but even the prayer of Jesus did not keep Peter from denying that he had ever known his Lord. Why? Because he would not listen to the warning which Jesus gave nor to the instruction which He had given him concerning the nature of His kingdom. Peter was sure that even if all the others should fail Christ, he wouldn't. But when Jesus meekly submitted to arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter lost all faith in Him. While the prayer of Jesus did not prevent Peter's denial, it did give him, because of the resurrection, an opportunity to find the basis of genuine faith which would not fail him. See I Pet. 1:3-7. Prayer must not only be offered in accordance with God's will, but those for whom it is offered must also be willing to conform to His will as revealed in His Word. See I John 5:14-15. The church ought always to pray for its minister, but their prayers won't keep him from teaching falsehood if he has not diligently studied and earnestly

sought to handle the Word of God accurately. The church ought always to pray for their missionaries, but prayer won't keep the missionaries from mistakes of judgment if their judgments are not based solidly on the principles presented in the Word of God. Even if death for the sake of the gospel should be their lot as it was in Paul's case, the crown of life awaits those who keep the faith.

*the gift bestowed on us by means of many.*—Paul's deliverance from the trial which he faced in Asia was like a gracious gift from God. It had been made possible by means of the prayers of the people on his behalf. He suggests that the many who had prayed should now thank God for the answer—the gift of deliverance. This points out a weakness in many prayers. Too often our prayers are requests that are not followed by prayers of thanksgiving. All eternity will not suffice to thank Him for the gift of salvation which He provided through the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. Thanking God for Paul's deliverance would help the Corinthians to look to God for deliverance from their trials which were largely the result of the work of the false teachers in their midst and of their own failure to follow the standard of conduct Christ had set for them.

### *Paul's defense of His Conduct and Writing*

#### *Scripture*

1:12-14. For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. 13 For we write no other things unto you, than what ye read or even acknowledge, and I hope ye will acknowledge unto the end: 14 as also ye did acknowledge us in part, that we are your glorying, even as ye also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

#### *Comments*

*For our glorying.*—Paul had just written of his deliverance from death which clearly suggested God's approval upon him as an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God. The basis for his view was two-fold: (1) his own sincere conduct before the Corinthians and (2) the trustworthy letters which he had written to them. He called upon his own conscience, that is, his sense of right and wrong, to testify for him in this matter. He was confident before God that what he had done and what he had written was right.

*holiness and sincerity of God.*—His life of purity and sincerity had God's approval. He did not act upon the basis of fleshly wisdom. This may be a suggestion that those who were troubling the church at Corinth were acting from such a motive. He had reminded them in his first letter that he had not spoken to them in excellence of speech or of wisdom, that is, in the manner ordinarily used by men, for he depended upon that revelation that came directly to him through the Spirit of God. He made sure that his conduct was in harmony with God's revealed will, lest he himself should be disqualified after having preached the gospel to others. See I Cor. 9:25-27. Paul insisted that his conduct was in harmony with the gracious privilege that God had given him, first of all to be a follower of Jesus Christ and then to be an apostle of Christ. Christ lived in him, for he was living the life of faith, and by so doing he did not make void the grace of God. See Gal. 2:20-21.

*in the world and more abundantly to you-ward.*—Paul was always careful about his conduct. It was not one thing before the world and something else before the Corinthians. He was particularly careful to conduct himself in a Christlike manner in their presence because he was aware of the fact that the false apostles were searching for an excuse to discredit him before them. Note his attitude toward the subject of money. See II Cor. 8:21.

*for we write no other things unto you.*—He was aware that some had been saying that his letters were bold but he was weak. See 10:10. He knew that some were "puffed up" rejecting the promise that he had made to visit them. See I Cor. 4:18. He assured them that they could trust what they read in his letter. He meant exactly what he said. He wanted them to continue to understand this with reference to everything that he was writing. What they read and understood him to say in his letters corresponded exactly to what he was before God and in the world.

*unto the end.*—Since this has to do with his writing it seems to suggest that he wanted the Corinthians to have a clear understanding of all he was writing. The phrase "to the end" is also found in I Cor. 1:8. There, however, it is associated with the day of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, for Paul was concerned about their remaining steadfast in their faith until that day.

*as also ye did acknowledge us in part.*—Some, perhaps the majority, had clearly understood what he had written about his intended visit, but some had not submitted to his authority. He told them plainly that he would not spare such when he came again. They could



depend on it. See II Cor. 13:2; I Cor. 4:21. Would they have him come with a rod of chastisement, or in love and a spirit of gentleness? How eager he was that it should be the latter! It was his fond hope that in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ they might be able to glory in the fact that they had accepted the message that had come to them through the apostle of Christ. Paul was also hoping that they would remain faithful so that he would be able to glory in their Christian conduct. They were to be the evidence of his faithful ministry as an apostle of Christ.

### *Explanation of His Deferred Visit*

#### *Scripture*

1:15-24. And in this confidence I was minded to come first unto you, that ye might have a second benefit; 16 and by you to pass into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come unto you, and of you to be set forward on my journey unto Judaea. 17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I show fickleness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be the yea yea and the nay nay? 18 But as God is faithful, our word toward you is not yea and nay. 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us even by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay, but in him is yea. 20 For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us. 21 Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God; 22 who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

23 But I call God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I forbore to come unto Corinth. 24 Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for in faith ye stand fast.

#### *Comments*

*And in this confidence.*—Paul was confident that the Corinthians understood that he was their spiritual father and that they were his spiritual children. See I Cor. 4:14-16. With this in mind, he had planned at first to come to Corinth and after passing through their area to go on to Macedonia and then to come back from Macedonia to Corinth in order that he might visit them twice. In this way he would demonstrate his good toward them. This differed from the original only in that it would give the Corinthians a second benefit,

that is, they would have the privilege of having the apostle with them on two occasions. It suggests a deeper concern for them than for the Macedonians. It was not to be understood as cancelling his original plan. See I Cor. 16:5-7. He wanted them to continue to understand that what he had written in the first letter about his intention to visit them would be fulfilled.

*set forward on my journey.*—This does not seem to suggest any financial aid, since Paul had made a rule in dealing with Corinth to accept no support from them, lest his motives be misunderstood or he should give occasion to the false teachers to justify their desire to be paid.

Luke tells of an occasion when Paul met with the brethren from Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem. He told how Paul spoke to them and then knelt down and prayed with them. All wept and fell on his neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for his word that they would not be able to see him again. See Acts 20:17-28. Paul probably had a meeting of this sort in mind when he suggested coming back to Corinth and have them send him on his way to Judea.

*When I was thus minded.*—The defense which Paul makes at this point is against anticipated objections. This is common in his writings because he knew the minds of those to whom he wrote. An example of it is given in Rom. 6:1-7:25 where he answered possible objections on the part of his readers.

There is no indication that the Corinthians had known anything about this plan to visit them twice until they read it in this letter. Timothy, of course, had been sent to Corinth and was with Paul as he was writing II Corinthians. See I Cor. 4:16-17 and 16:10. There is no indication, however, that he knew anything about the plan mentioned in the above verses while he was at Corinth.

Titus also had been sent to Corinth. This fact is mentioned in 2:13; 7:6-14; 8:6, 16, 23, and 12:18. There is no indication that Titus could have known that Paul was planning to make a trip first to Corinth and then to Macedonia. Paul had not been able to make contact with him until he found him in Macedonia, from which point he was writing this second Corinthian letter.

It seems best then to assume that Paul was anticipating possible criticism of the plan which he had not been able to put into effect. The Corinthians were being informed about it for the first time as they read this letter. He wanted them to know about it because he wanted them to understand his love for them as their father in the

gospel. He also knew that there were some among them who assumed that he would not come at all. See I Cor. 4:18.

*did I show fickleness?*—The word translated "fickleness" means "lightness." Some assume that Paul was vacillating as if he had been saying one thing but was now saying something entirely different. Paul explained this word by using two other expressions: (1) "purpose according to flesh"; and (2) "the yea, yea, and the nay, nay."

"According to flesh" seems to suggest the manner in which men make plans without considering their relation to God, a thing that Paul never did. See v.12 on "fleshly wisdom." James mentions those who say "today or tomorrow we will go into the city and spend a year there and trade and get gain." (James 4:13). He adds that because a man doesn't know what the morrow will bring, he ought to say, "If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that" (4:15). When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about his proposed trip he said "I will come to you shortly if the Lord will" (I Cor. 4:19). Later, he spoke of his desire to spend some time with them and added, "If the Lord permit" (I Cor. 16:7).

James also throws light on the meaning of "the yes, yes." See James 5:12. It is in a different context, for James is reminding the brethren that they are not to swear by heaven or earth or anything else. That is to say, they could not bind heaven and earth to make up any deficiency in the truthfulness of their statement. Therefore their "yes" was to be "yes." This was to be a positive affirmation that what they are saying was true or that their "no" meant just "no." But Paul is talking about his plan that had to do with future events. He could not, as men might do, say "Yes" affirming by this "yes" that he did not need to consider the Lord's will. The defense that Paul is making in these somewhat difficult phrases (that is, difficult for us to understand, not for the Corinthians) seems to be against the possible charge that he made his plan lightly, not considering the will of God. That this is so, seems to be clear from the fact that he stated these questions in forms that required "No" for an answer. He wasn't treating the matter lightly, was he? The only answer that could be given was "No." He didn't make the plan according to men who disregard God, did he? The answer was "No." His "Yes" wasn't "Yes" without considering God's will, was it? Again, the only answer was "No."

*But as God is faithful.*—The questions which Paul had just asked required a negative answer. To make sure that the Corinthians understood it, he added, "Our word to you is not 'Yes and No'." This does

not suggest vacillation, for it is based on the principle of the trustworthiness of God. The visit he planned to make to Corinth and had deferred was based on the principle of truthworthiness of God whom he served as an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God.

*For the Son of God, Jesus Christ.*—Having stated that his plan to visit Corinth had not been made lightly, he now proves his trustworthiness by a three-fold argument: (1) that based on his preaching; (2) that based on God's promises; and (3) that based on the evidence of God's approval on his ministry.

Paul and his companions, Silvanus and Timothy, had preached the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in the midst of the Corinthians. This was not a matter on their part of "Yes" and "No," for in Him—that is, in Christ—is the "Yes." The certainty—validity, trustworthiness—of the message of the apostle and his companions was not a matter of men's speech but of Christ Himself.

*For how many soever be the promises of God.*—God is trustworthy; the message concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, is trustworthy; the promises of God which are fulfilled in His Son are likewise trustworthy.

Paul and those associated with him could wholeheartedly say "Amen" to this.

*Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ.*—God is the One who established both Paul and the Corinthians in their relationship to Christ, and in the "day of our Lord Jesus" (verse 14).

The Corinthians had gotten their sins washed away by the blood of the Lamb, when they were baptized into Christ; they were separated from their sins; they were pardoned in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. See I Cor. 6:11. They could depend on that relationship because they were instructed by the inspired apostle of Christ. Paul had obeyed the gospel which Ananias had preached to him when he said, "Now why do you delay? Arise and get yourself baptized and wash away your sins, because you called on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). They could be sure about their relationship to Christ because of their obedience to the word that had come from Him.

*anointed us.*—Anointing had to do with one's installation in office. In the Old Testament times, both prophets, priests, and kings were anointed as they were installed in office. Christ Himself was anointed with the Holy Spirit as He began His ministry as Prophet, Priest, and King. See Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38. The apostles were baptized

in the Holy Spirit so that they might speak as the Spirit gave them utterance and reveal the message from God. See I Cor. 2:6-16.

When Paul insists that God anointed "us," in all probability he was referring to the whole apostolic group. When John wrote to the church mentioning the anointing which they had from the Holy One, he referred to this power that came to the apostles who were baptized in the Holy Spirit and those upon whom they laid their hands in order that they might bring the inspired teaching to all who would hear. John affirms that the message thus spoken was true. See I John 2:19-27. In the same way, the Corinthians could trust what Paul said because he was an apostle of Christ through the will of God.

*who also sealed us.*—Paul tells the Ephesians that they had been sealed by the promised Holy Spirit. See Eph. 1:13. The Holy Spirit through the apostles by the word which they preached had produced in them the identifying marks of a Christian, that is, Christian character and conduct. See Gal. 5:22-24; Rev. 7:3.

Paul was speaking of those things that marked him as a genuine apostle of Jesus Christ. His word was trustworthy. See 12:12 where he reminded them that the signs of an apostle were wrought among them. They were the signs and wonders and mighty works which he had done in the midst of them.

Since God's approval rested on him, they could trust his word and be assured of the sincerity of his plan to come to them.

*and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*—Paul also refers to "earnest" in 5:5 and Eph. 1:14. It ought not to be confused with "firstfruits" (I Cor. 15:20) which suggest that Christ's resurrection indicates that all the dead will be raised.

"Earnest" is usually defined as money paid down to guarantee the full payment of a debt. An instance in which the word meant a pledge, token or guarantee that one's word would be made good is mentioned in Gen. 38:17-18, 25. This meaning fits well each of its uses in the New Testament in which it is used. It is something that guarantees that God's promise will be fulfilled.

The earnest or the guarantee is the Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit is the One who gives the guarantee. In this instance, the guarantee had to do with Paul's apostleship and truthworthiness of his word. See I Cor. 2:6-16 where Paul argues for his inspiration as well as that of the other apostles. He declared that the Spirit had revealed the mind of God to them, and that they spoke that revelation in words that were Spirit-taught. He affirmed that we—the apostles—have the

mind of Christ. He knew that Christ, by the Spirit, had guided him into all the truth (John 16:13-14). He was aware of the fact that the Corinthians could trust his word because it was guaranteed by the Holy Spirit, for it came from God through the Holy Spirit.

*in our hearts.*—that is, in the hearts of the inspired apostles. The inspired message was in their minds, for they had the mind of Christ. This is not intangible subjectivism, but an awareness on the part of the apostles that they were actually being used by the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of God. The accompanying miracles gave objective testimony to this truth. See Heb. 2:3-4.

*But I call God for a witness.*—In this most solemn manner Paul assured the Corinthians that they could understand that he was telling the truth. The trip that he was planning had to be deferred because he had not learned of their reaction to the instruction given in First Corinthians. He had asked, "Shall I come to you with a rod of chastisement, or shall I come in love and a spirit of gentleness?" It was to spare them the embarrassment and sorrow of having to be reproved again, that he deferred the trip until he could hear from Titus and know about the situation at Corinth. See 2:12 and 7:6.

*Not that we have lordship over your faith.*—In First Corinthians, Paul had reminded them that he and Apollos were ministers—deacons—through whom they had believed. See I Cor. 3:5. They were responsible to the Lord, not Paul, for their belief. He challenges them in the closing words of this second letter to test out their own selves to see if they were in the faith—faith, that is, in the Lord Jesus Christ. All that Paul could do was to work for their joy, by encouraging them to remain faithful to the Lord and instructing them in their privileges and responsibilities as Christians. He couldn't believe for them.

*for in faith you stand.*—They had taken that stand when Paul preached the word of Christ to them. They had demonstrated that faith is obedience to Christ. There was no other foundation on which to build.

This in no way suggests that Paul was unaware of the fact that some were ready to listen to the appeal of the false teachers who were disturbing them, as the closing chapters of the letter clearly indicate. It does show his concern that they remember that their relation to Christ, the Lord, depended on faith expressed in obedience to Him.

*Summary*

Paul began his second epistle in a manner that was intended to insure a favorable reception on the part of his readers. In his usual, gracious manner he addressed them as the church of God. The brethren at Corinth were made aware of the fact that what he said to them was intended for all the saints in the whole of Achaia.

While this letter was to be critical of many things that were going on in Corinth, Paul began by telling them how God had comforted him in his sufferings for Christ. The merciful Father had done this so that he might be able to help others in their trials. He had a sure hope for them because he knew that as they were sharers of the sufferings so also they would be of the comfort.

He mentioned the thing he had suffered in Asia. It had been beyond his ability to endure; he utterly despaired of life. This was like a death sentence to him. He dared not trust in himself, but in God who raises the dead. God delivered him from such a death. He was confident that God would do so again if he should face the same trial again. The Corinthians had prayed for his deliverance which made this gift from God a matter of thanksgiving on the part of many people.

Paul had been conscientious in his conduct everywhere, and especially at Corinth. He wanted them to know that he intended to keep his promise to visit them again just as he had written in his first epistle. A delay had become necessary, but he would come again to Corinth.

They, for the most part, had understood that this promise had been made by their spiritual father. They were his beloved children. They could be proud that he was their father in the gospel, and they could be proud of his relation to them in the Day of our Lord Jesus.

Confident that they understood this relationship, Paul had planned to visit them first, then go to Macedonia and again return to them. They would have the privilege of helping him on his journey to Judea. Such a visit would prove his kindly feeling for them. They would have no reason to be jealous over his attention to other churches.

Was such a plan mere words spoken lightly with no intention of carrying out the plan? Nothing in his preaching could lead them to suppose he had been so fickle. The promises of God which they had heard from him were trustworthy. Moreover, God had established him in his relationship to them as the apostle through whom they had learned about Christ. He had equipped him to speak the wisdom

from God. God had given him the identifying marks of an apostle. As an inspired apostle, he had in his mind and heart the message which the Holy Spirit had revealed to him on which he based his confidence in God and His promises. No word of his was spoken lightly.

Why then had he delayed his coming? He called upon God to testify for him that it was to spare them from sorrow. The delay would give them time to examine their position and make sure about their faith in the Lord.

### *Questions*

1. Why did Paul call attention to the fact that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God?
2. Why did he mention Timothy in the salutation?
3. Why did he speak of the church as "the church of God"?
4. Why did he address the letter to all the saints in the whole of Achaia as well as to the church in Corinth?
5. Why did he speak of "saints" in this connection?
6. What significance did his greeting of grace and peace have to the Corinthians at this time?
7. How did Paul prepare his readers to accept the message of his epistle?
8. What are the three principal topics which Paul discussed in the epistle?
9. What was Paul's characteristic approach to the problem of suffering?
10. What had he done when he and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi?
11. In writing to the Colossians, what did he say about his attitude toward sufferings?
12. How do we know that Paul was not merely asking for sympathy when he told about his sufferings?
13. Why should Paul speak of "God our Father" and of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"?
14. What significant difference is there in the two phrases?
15. What is the probable significance of "Lord" as Paul used it to refer to Jesus Christ?
16. What additional truths are suggested about Him in the names "Jesus" and "Christ"?
17. Why does he speak of God as the Father of mercies and God of all comfort?



## CHAPTER ONE

18. What does the psalmist say about God's pity for his children?
19. How is all this demonstrated in the attitude of Jesus toward those who suffered?
20. How did God comfort Paul as he faced the possibility of death in Asia?
21. What was God's purpose in comforting Paul?
22. What did Paul mean by the sufferings of Christ? How did these sufferings sweep over him like a flood?
23. Why did Paul write about his hope for the Corinthians despite his knowledge of their sins?
24. Why did he mention the affliction that befell him in Asia?
25. Why did he mention the sentence of death?
26. How had the Corinthians cooperated in his deliverance?
27. What is taught in the Bible about the place of prayer in the providence of God? What is providence?
28. What clearly defined limitations of prayer are indicated in this matter?
29. What did Paul suggest that the Corinthians do since their prayers had helped in his deliverance? Why?
30. What had deliverance from death suggested as to God's attitude toward the apostle?
31. How did Paul view his conduct at Corinth and the letter he had written to them?
32. How could Paul make sure that his conduct had the approval of God?
33. In what other area was Paul concerned about his conduct?
34. How did Paul let the church know that he meant exactly what he had written in the first epistle about his intended visit?
35. How had the majority reacted to his letter?
36. What would happen to those who had not submitted to his authority as an apostle?
37. On what was Paul's confidence based when he planned to visit Corinth a second time?
38. What had he told them about the trip in the first epistle?
39. What was the second benefit that he had planned for them?
40. How did he expect the Corinthians to send him on his journey to Jerusalem?
41. When did the Corinthians first learn about this intended second visit?
42. What was his point in mentioning it here?

## II CORINTHIANS

43. Why did he defend himself against the possible charge of fickleness?
44. What is his point in the question about "yes" and "no"?
45. What did he always take into consideration when he made his plans?
46. How did Paul defend himself against the possible charge of vacillation?
47. How did Paul prove his trustworthiness?
48. Why did Paul refer to the many promises of God?
49. How had the relationship of Paul to the Corinthians as the apostle who had preached Christ to them been established?
50. What did he mean by the fact that God had anointed him and also sealed him?
51. What is the earnest of the Spirit? What bearing does this have on the issue of Paul's relationship to the Corinthians?
52. Why did he call on God "for a witness"?
53. What is meant by "lordship over your faith"?
54. Why did he say, "For in your faith you stand"?

### *For Discussion*

1. What may be learned from the manner in which Paul approached the Corinthians' problem that might help in presenting the gospel today?
2. What is the relation of reliability in personal obligations to the effective teaching of the Word of God?

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Analysis*

- A. Paul continued the explanation of his deferred visit to Corinth (1-13).
1. He explained his personal reason for the delay (1-4).
    - a) He had decided not to come again in sorrow.
    - b) He gave his reason: If I make you sorry, who is there to gladden me but the one I made sorry?
    - c) He reminds them that he had written—in First Corinthians—this very thing:
      - (1) He did so in order that he might not have sorrow from those who ought to make him rejoice.
      - (2) He had done so because he was confident that his joy was their joy—his visit was to be enjoyed by all.
    - d) He told them about the nature and purpose of his writing (First Corinthians).
      - (1) He wrote it out of affliction, anguish of heart, and many tears.
      - (2) He did so not to cause sorrow, but that they might know of his abundant love for them.
  2. He explained his attitude toward the one who had caused the sorrow (5-11).
    - a) He explained his reasons for this attitude (5-7).
      - (1) He had caused sorrow not to Paul alone but, in part, to all.
      - (2) His punishment at the hand of the many was sufficient.
      - (3) It was Paul's judgment that he should be forgiven lest he be overcome by his sorrow.
    - b) He appealed to them to let the one who caused the sorrow know of their forgiveness (8-11).
      - (1) He urged them to confirm their love for him.
      - (2) He had written (in First Corinthians) to put them to the test, that is, to see whether or not they would obey him in all things.
      - (3) He joined with them in forgiving this one for their sakes in the presence of Christ.

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- (4) Such forgiveness would prevent Satan from gaining the advantage over them.
- (5) He gave his reasons for this appeal: We are not ignorant of Satan's thoughts.
- 3. He explained why he left Troas and went to Macedonia (12-13).
  - a) The move to Troas.
    - (1) It was for the gospel of Christ.
    - (2) There a door was opened for him in the Lord.
  - b) The move to Macedonia.
    - (1) He had found no relief for his anxiety over Corinth.
    - (2) He had not found Titus.
- B. Paul interrupted the account of his search for Titus with an expression of thanks to God for Triumph in Christ (14-17).
  - 1. His thanksgiving: (14).
    - a) For His continuous leading in triumph in Christ.
    - b) For His making manifest through His messengers the savor of His knowledge in every place.
  - 2. His explanation: (15-16a).
    - a) The messengers are a sweet savor of Christ unto God.
    - b) The message is true with reference to those who are saved and those who perish.
    - c) In one it is a message from death unto death, and the other from life unto life.
  - 3. His question: (16b-17).
    - a) Who is adequate for these things?
    - b) "We are," is his implied answer.
    - c) The reason for this answer:
      - (1) We are not as the many corrupting the Word of God.
      - (2) We speak with sincerity in the sight of God in relation to Christ.

### *Further Explanation of the Deferred Visit*

#### *Scripture*

2:1-4. But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you with sorrow. 2 For if I make you sorry, who then is he that maketh me glad but he that is made sorry by me? 3 And I wrote this very thing, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that

my joy is the joy of you all. 4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be made sorry, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

### *Comments*

*But I determined this for myself.*—Putting the Corinthians first in his consideration, Paul explained that he had deferred his visit for their sakes, that is, to spare them the embarrassment of his having to reprove them upon his arrival at Corinth. He had left the choice up to them when he wrote I Cor. 4:21. Would they have him come with a rod or in the spirit of gentleness and love? But he also had a personal reason: he did not want to come again with sorrow.

This raises the question about the number of visits Paul made to Corinth. Acts records only two: the first, when the church was established at Corinth, and a second which lasted three months before setting sail for Syria. See Acts 18:1, 20:1-3. But in II Cor. 12:14 and 13:1 he mentions a third coming. In 13:2 he speaks of the second time when he was present with them. In 2:1 he says that he was determined not to come again with sorrow.

Various attempts have been made to harmonize all these references. The consensus is that Paul actually made at least three visits to Corinth, one of which is not mentioned in the book of Acts. This is the supposed sorrowful visit which, according to the theory, he made after writing First Corinthians and before writing II Corinthians.

These problems are interesting, but they do not affect the doctrine of the epistles of Paul or the history which Luke records in Acts. The Corinthians to whom Paul wrote these letters were fully aware of the number of times he had visited them as well as the number of letters he had written to them. We must also remember that it was not Luke's purpose to give every detail of every event in the journeys of Paul. It is possible, however, to harmonize all the known facts without assuming that Paul made three visits to Corinth. The problem is with the number two visit—the so-called sorrowful one. A possible solution is found in I Cor. 5:3-4. There Paul declares that although he was absent in body he was present in spirit when they were gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus to deliver the offending brother to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. That most certainly was a sorrowful experience for Paul, as much so as if he had actually been present in the flesh. He knew all the facts of the case;

he understood the seriousness of the situation; he was aware of the fact that the man might not repent; he was also certain that this action was the only thing that could possibly bring him to his senses and cause him to change his way before it was too late. The reference in II Cor. 13:2 to the second visit is very similar to his remarks in I Cor. 5:3-4. Although we must admit that he does not say that he was present the second time in spirit, the footnote in ASV which reads "as if I were present the second time, even though I am now absent," lends some support to the view.

*if I make you sorry.*—The gospel which Paul preached was not intended to make people sorry, except those who were guilty of sin. Paul, of course, did not hesitate to tell the truth about sin even though it might make some sorry. Such sorrow was intended to lead them to repentance which would bring salvation. See II Cor. 7:8-10.

The angel who announced the birth of Christ said, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all the people." When Philip preached Christ in Samaria there was much joy in the city. See Acts 8:4-12. Paul wrote to the Philippians calling them his joy and his crown. See Phil. 4:1. Jesus spoke of the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. The Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing after Philip had preached Christ to him and had baptized him into Christ. See Acts 8:39. Paul was eager to have the Corinthians overcome their sinful practices through obedience to the instructions he had written to them that his next visit might be one of rejoicing.

*who then is he that maketh me glad.*—The Corinthian Christians who were his children in the gospel were a source of real joy to Paul. John held the same view toward those whom he had taught. He said, "Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (II John 4). If it should become necessary for Paul to reprove the Corinthians when he visited them again, it would mean that the one whose heart had been gladdened by them was causing them sorrow. He did not want this to happen, for he was looking forward to a joyful meeting with the saints of God.

*And I wrote this very thing.*—Paul had explained in his first epistle that he was not writing to shame them but rather to admonish them as his children. There was still another reason: The delay had given them time to think about their sinful ways and to correct them.

This raises the issue of the number of letters Paul wrote to the

Corinthian church. Opinions vary. Some assume that he had written a "lost epistle" before writing First Corinthians. See I Cor. 5:9. See comment on this issue in *Studies in First Corinthians*. Others assume that the section from II Cor. 6:14 to 7:1 was originally a part of a "harsh letter" which somehow became incorporated into this epistle. Still others assume that chapters ten through twelve of this epistle were originally part of some letter which Paul had written at another time to defend his apostleship.

A careful reading of Second Corinthians, however, reveals a very definite plan into which every part of this letter fits perfectly. Those who object to the sharp contrast between the expression of Paul's affection and his strong warning about being unequally yoked with unbelievers as seen in chapter six, fail to see that such contrasts are to be found frequently in Paul's writings. See Galatians five for the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit. Second Corinthians is exactly what one would expect it to be in view of the deep concern Paul had for the church at Corinth. He expresses his heartfelt concern for those who were guilty of sin. But he turned to the opposite, expressing great hope and confidence and joy as he thought of the recovery—repentance—of God's people from those things that had disgraced them.

The absence of any manuscript evidence to the contrary leaves us with the conclusion that Paul wrote only two epistles to the Corinthians. The discovery, even at this late date, of another genuine epistle of Paul to the Corinthians would show that he wrote more than two epistles, but, since he always wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we can rest assured that it would in no way affect the doctrinal issues of the two letters which we know he did write to them. While some may find it worthwhile to spend time in these speculative things, it would seem that for the most of us, it would be better to spend our time learning those all important lessons which are so clearly presented in these letters that by the providence of God have come down to us with their solutions for problems which we face in this very day.

*of whom I ought to rejoice.*—Paul's hope for rejoicing depended on their obedience to the word which he had written to them. More than that, he was confident that they would, for the most part, obey the message of Christ which he as the inspired apostle had written to them. That would mean not only joy for Paul but for all the brethren at Corinth.

*I wrote unto you with many tears.*—The distress and anguish of the

apostle can be seen in his first letter. He was distressed that their sinful divisions were destroying the temple of God. It was with anguish of heart that he wrote to them to deliver to Satan the brother who was guilty of immoral conduct, the like of which was not even found among pagans. His tears stained the manuscript of First Corinthians—those stains were evident to all who had the privilege of seeing it—as he thought about the tragic divisions that made it impossible for them to keep the Lord's Supper. His deep concern for them caused him to show them the more excellent way of love to counteract their strife over spiritual gifts that had been given them for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. He was distressed that some of them were denying the very foundation of the faith by denying the fact of the resurrection.

*that ye might know the love.*—It was his love for them that caused his concern over the low state of affairs in the church at Corinth. As he considered the height to which they could rise by obeying the Word of Christ, he boldly declared his overflowing love for them.

### *The One Who Caused Sorrow*

#### *Scripture*

2:5-11. But if any hath caused sorrow, he hath caused sorrow, not to me, but in part (that I press not too heavily) to you all. 6 Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the many; 7 so that contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, let by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow 8 Wherefore I beseech you to confirm your love toward him. 9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye are obedient in all things. 10 But to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I forgiven it in the presence of Christ; 11 that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

#### *Comments*

*if any hath caused sorrow.*—Paul does not name the offending one, but the Corinthians knew who he was, and that is all that really matters. Our concern, of course, is with the restoration of the erring one. Since Paul chose to leave his identity undisclosed, we may assume that the principles involved in the case may be applied to any individual in the church who may become involved in sin.



There has been a great deal of speculation as to the identity of the offending party as well as the one offended. The case of the guilty party mentioned in I Cor. 5:1 corresponds to all the issues mentioned in this chapter. The instruction which Paul gave in that case should be carefully reviewed as we undertake the study of what he says here. These points should be noted: (1) the man was guilty of sinful conduct the like of which would not be tolerated even by pagans; (2) the church had neglected to take action in correcting the matter; (3) Paul, though absent, had written to them instructions to be followed which were as binding as if he had actually been present in their assembly; (4) his decision as the inspired apostle of Christ was that such a one must be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh in order that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ; (5) when the church came together in the name of the Lord Jesus, they were to carry out this order.

While Paul's instruction was intended to bring about repentance on the part of the sinner, the present chapter indicates what should be done by the church when they discovered that the man had repented. The course to pursue in the case of the restoration of an erring brother is indicated in various places of the New Testament, for example, Paul's instruction to the Galatians, "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Simon the sorcerer is another example. He had believed Philip's preaching and had been baptized and continued with Philip. Subsequently when he saw that by the laying on of the apostles' hands the power to perform miracles was given, he offered them money that he might buy the power to do that very thing himself. "But Peter said unto him, thy silver perish with thee because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray the Lord if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:20-22). James also has a word to say on the subject: "My brethren if any among you err from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall have a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). John indicates not only the procedure, but the means of accomplishing this desired end. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse

us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Then he proceeds to say: "My little children these things write I unto you that ye may not sin; and if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (I John 2:1-2). To sum up, the erring brother is to (1) repent, that is to make up his mind that he is not going to continue in the same sin. See Rom. 6:1-12; I John 3:9. If God's Word abides in a man, that is, becomes the ruling principle of his life, he cannot go on sinning for sin is the violation of the Word of God. (2) The erring sinner is called upon to make confession of his sin, not to man, but to God, for He alone can dictate the condition upon which the sin is to be removed. His Word makes it very clear that it is the blood of Christ that cleanses one's conscience from dead works to serve the living God. See Heb. 9:14.

*not to me.*—Paul had already indicated that the conditions in the church in Corinth had caused him distress and anguish of heart. The individual, however, of whom he now speaks had caused sorrow, not merely to Paul, but, in a measure, to the whole church. He said that the sorrow was caused "in part" that he might not press his charge too heavily on this man, for there were some who assumed the arrogant attitude that it was possible for one in the church to indulge in such conduct with impunity. The embarrassment and shame must have been felt by all with exception of a very few. Responsible leaders in the church who should have led in correcting the sin had become "puffed up" over their positions and had failed to take proper action in that tragic case.

*sufficient to such a one is his punishment.*—The punishment mentioned in I Cor. 5:3-5 was severe. The guilty one was to be delivered to Satan, that is, left entirely to the company of Satan. Paul explicitly stated that the church members were not to get mixed up with the brother who was guilty of such sinful conduct. They were to do nothing that in any way would give anybody the impression that the church approved what he was doing.

*by the many.*—It is very plain that there were some diehards in the church at Corinth that did not obey Paul's instruction. Many did obey and their action brought the desired result, that is, the sinner was brought to repentance. The negligent leaders of the church had been reminded of their responsibility and had acted to clear the church of this sinful situation.

*forgive him and comfort him.*—Jesus told about the case of the un-

forgiving servant. "And his lord called him unto him and said to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me. Shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you if ye forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts" (Matt. 18:32-35).

Paul wrote to the Ephesians saying, "be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

God Himself sets the standard of forgiveness, when He says, "And their sins I will remember no more" (Heb. 8:12).

*swallowed up by his overmuch sorrow.*—The failure on the part of the church to forgive the erring brother would ruin the whole purpose of the remedial action recommended by the apostle.

*confirm your love toward him.*—This unfeigned love of the brethren must proceed from the heart. See I Pet. 1:22. Remembering what some of them had been before becoming Christians, it should not have been hard for them to forgive and show love toward the brother who had repented. See I Cor. 6:9-11. For a definition of exactly what Paul means by love see I Cor. 13:4-8. Among other things "love is kind." This is exactly the attitude which he now suggests that they should take toward the man who had repented of his sin.

*to this end also did I write.*—He had given instructions in I Cor. 5:1-13 for dealing with a situation just like this. His closing word was, "Put away the wicked man from among yourselves." He wrote it putting them to the test whether or not they would obey the instruction given by the inspired apostle of Christ in all things. The man had been punished; he had responded to the corrective measures taken by the church; he was now to be forgiven. As they had joined with Paul in the punishment, so they were now urged to join with him in forgiving the one who had repented.

*for your sakes, in the presence of Christ.*—What had been done to cause Paul sorrow was inconsequential as compared to the sin against the body of Christ. What he now recommends was for the sake of the church as indicated by this: "that no advantage be gained over us by Satan." Forgiveness and reinstatement into the fellowship of the church was the only way to prevent Satan from recapturing this brother because of his sorrow in being cut off from the saints of God. How often has the failure to forgive on the part of the brethren given the advantage to Satan!

*for we are not ignorant of his devices.*—Many are the schemes by which Satan seeks to destroy the work of the church of God. Some of them are: (1) an unforgiving attitude which replaces brotherly love; (2) division over party loyalty of men that replaces the unity that should be expressed in loyalty to Christ; (3) worldliness that brings the church into disrepute that should be replaced by a life of purity and consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ; (4) the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) that should be replaced by the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-24); (5) the garments of sin which should be replaced by the garments of Christian character and conduct (Col. 3:5-17).

One of the most subtle of all of Satan's schemes is the substitution of human wisdom for the revealed wisdom of God in the Bible. "For seeing that in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21).

Paul says "we are not ignorant of his devices." The only sure way for us not to fall victims to them is to study God's Word until we know what He says and with deep convictions seek to put it into practice in our daily lives. However alluring Satan's schemes may appear to be, we must be on guard against those systems which borrow the techniques and procedures from the very Word of God but fail to point sinners to the only One who can forgive them and to the only remedy that blots out sin, the blood of Christ.

### *Troas to Macedonia*

#### *Scripture*

2:12-13. Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and when a door was opened unto me in the Lord, 13 I had no relief for my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.

#### *Comments*

*when I came to Troas.*—The record in Acts shows that Paul was in Troas on two different occasions, neither of which corresponds to the one he mentions here. According to Acts, he first came to Troas on his second missionary journey after having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. While at Troas he had a vision of the man of Macedonia who said "Come over into Macedonia

and help us" (Acts 16:6-10). He stopped at Troas again on his third journey, spending about a week there in fellowship with the church. On the first day of the week they gathered together to break bread, and Paul preached to them. He continued his speech until midnight intending to leave the next day. Eutychus went to sleep and fell from the third story and was taken up dead. After the miracle of bringing him back to life, Paul took leave of the brethren and continued his journey to Jerusalem.

Paul reminded the Corinthians of another brief stopover at Troas not reported in Acts. In his eagerness to learn from Titus about conditions in Corinth, he had gone to Troas hoping to find Titus. Failing to do so, he went on to Macedonia where he did meet him and received his report.

*for the gospel of Christ.*—In all his travels, Paul's only purpose was to proclaim the gospel of Christ. His mission was to tell the good news concerning Christ.

*when a door was opened.*—Paul had reminded the Corinthians of his intention to remain at Ephesus until Pentecost for a great and effectual door was open to him for the preaching of the gospel, and there were many adversaries. Again at Troas, he found an opportunity to preach the gospel awaiting him.

*I had no relief for my spirit.*—Why did the Lord allow Paul to suffer anxiety over the situation at Corinth because of the lack of information? Why didn't He send an angel or give him direct revelation through the Holy Spirit? There are basic reasons why this was not done: Miraculous communication was used (1) to reveal the truth of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:6-16), and (2) to give direction to the preachers of this inspired message in the apostolic period. For example, an angel spoke to Philip and told him to leave Samaria and go to the Gaza road where he met the Ethiopian. There the Spirit told him to join the chariot. He preached Jesus to the man who was reading from Isaiah. Paul himself had been under immediate direction of the Holy Spirit as he went through the country before coming to Troas the first time. Following his arrest in Jerusalem, while in prison, the Lord told him that as he had borne witness for Him in Jerusalem so he must also bear witness in Rome. See Acts 23:11. The Holy Spirit, of course, had directed him as he wrote to the Corinthians giving them instruction about their problems. But it was their responsibility to act upon that information and correct their problems. The principle is clear: Miraculous guidance and information was given in connection with the preaching of the gospel

in the absence of the written Word. But communication between the apostle and established congregations followed this procedure: When the apostles directed their letters to the churches, the letters were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Information regarding the reception of the message depended on the presence of the apostle himself or someone such as Titus, in this case, or Timothy, on another occasion, to report to the apostle on the situation in the church. One of the burdens which Paul bore throughout his entire ministry was "anxiety for all the churches" (11:28).

*I found not Titus, my brother.*—Timothy probably figured more prominently in the ministry of Paul than Titus. But Paul's affection for Timothy seems also to have been shared by Titus, whom he calls "my true child after a common faith" (Titus 1:4). Paul had trusted him with a very important mission in Crete, where he was to set things in order and appoint elders in every city. See Titus 1:5.

Titus is mentioned in Paul's last letter to Timothy as having been associated with him in his imprisonment in Rome (II Tim. 4:10). Perhaps the greatest tribute paid to Titus is the mission on which he was sent to Corinth to learn of their reception of Paul's instruction regarding their many problems and to return with that news. This he ultimately did and gladdened Paul's heart with it. An important tribute is paid to him in connection with his role in gathering funds for the sufferers in Jerusalem. Of him Paul wrote "Whether any inquire about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow worker to youward" (II Cor. 8:23). See also Paul's tribute of the work of Titus in II Cor. 7:5-16. Titus figured in the solution of an important issue among the Galatian churches. Some had insisted that Gentile Christians be required to keep the Jewish custom of circumcision. Paul laid the matter before the brethren in Jerusalem but not even Titus who was a Greek was compelled to be circumcised. Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to be Christians. The gospel was open to Jew or Gentile on the basis of faith expressed in obedience to the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Gal. 2:1-10.

*I went forth into Macedonia.*—Since there was an open door of opportunity to preach the gospel at Troas, the question comes: Why did Paul leave Troas and go into Macedonia to find Titus in order to learn what had happened in Corinth? There is no indication that the Lord had instructed him to do so. However, Paul did everything taking into consideration this principle: "If the Lord permit." This decision evidently had to be made on the basis of his own consecrated

Christian thinking with purpose in mind to serve the Lord in caring for "all the churches." His decision to leave Troas and go into Macedonia would easily lead the Corinthians to understand his deep concern and Christian love for them. To save that church, it seems, was the more important of the two issues that confronted him. This in no way suggests that Paul left Troas without doing something about the promotion of the cause of Christ in that city. That the opportunity was not ignored is indicated by the fact that when he came back to Troas on his third journey he met with the brethren, spending a week in their fellowship and preaching the Word.

### *Triumph In Christ*

#### *Scripture*

2:14-17. But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savor of his knowledge in every place. 15 For we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; 16 to the one a savor from death unto death; to the other a savor from life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.

#### *Comments*

*But thanks be unto God.*—Paul began this letter with an expression of praise to God for His mercy and comfort which had been shown him in all his afflictions. Having reminded his readers that he had gone into Macedonia, he turned to the expression of thanks to God for his triumphant ministry in Christ. It is not until 7:5 that he tells about finding Titus in Macedonia and learning what had happened in Corinth. Some speak of this as a long digression. The digression, however, if there is one, is the brief reference to the fact that he had not found Titus, and that when he did meet him he had learned the truth about the Corinthians' situation.

*leadeth us in triumph in Christ.*—God who comforted him in Asia led him in triumph in Christ in Macedonia and everywhere he went in his ministry. The figure which Paul uses to describe this fact is that of the victorious general leading his army in triumphal procession before the people. Some assume that Paul is thinking of himself as a captive of Christ having been taken captive on the Da-

masculus road. It is true that Paul refers to himself as the "prisoner of the Lord," but in a different context. See Eph. 4:1. Captives in the triumphal Roman march were being displayed to the people just before being put to death. The triumph which Paul referred to was the victory God gave him in the gospel as an apostle of Christ wherever he went—Asia, Troas, Macedonia, and Corinth. Regardless of his personal suffering, Paul thought only of victory for the gospel.

*the savor of his knowledge in every place.*—The gospel message was one of triumph over Satan. It told of God's power to save the believer (Rom. 1:16). It told of the whole armor of God that enabled the Christian to stand against the wiles of the devil. With the shield of faith they were able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. See Eph. 6:10-18. The knowledge about God, as revealed in Christ and preached by His apostles, was like the sweet smelling fragrance of incense offered with the sacrifices of the worshippers. This fragrance accompanied those marching with the triumphant general and his soldiers.

*for we are a sweet savor of Christ.*—The messengers as well as the message were acceptable in the sight of God. Their lives and their work were like the sweet smelling fragrance that accompanied the triumphal march.

*in them that are saved and in them that perish.*—The gospel message is one of salvation for those who accept it, but one of destruction, for those who reject it. Jesus said to the apostles, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

*a savor from death unto death.*—This explains the fact that the gospel message is one of salvation to the believer and destruction to the one who rejects it. The expressions, "from death unto death" and "from life unto life" have been understood in various ways. It is quite possible that we do not have the exact meaning of these intensified forms. There can be no doubt about the fact that they refer to destruction on one hand and salvation on the other. "Death unto death" may suggest endless death, and "life unto life" eternal life. This lesson is clearly taught by Our Lord in these words, "and these shall go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46). The gospel deals with the death of Christ which also indicates the death—that is, eternal separation from God—of the one who remains in sin. It also deals with the life of Him who arose from the dead, and depicts the eternal life of the one who



dies to sin with Him and is buried with Him through baptism into death that he might arise to walk with Him in the new life.

*and who is sufficient for these things?*—Since the gospel deals with eternal life and eternal death, the conscientious apostle raises the question about the one who is adequate for the task of preaching this gospel. He leaves no doubt in the minds of the readers, for he immediately answers, "We are not as the many who corrupt the word." In this he clearly implies that the apostles of Christ were adequately equipped to preach this gospel message. It also suggests that those who were claiming to be apostles but actually were false apostles were not qualified. This was not idle boasting on the part of Paul for he had already written "I am the least of the apostles that am not meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (I Cor. 15:9-10).

*corrupting the word of God.*—The footnote in the American Standard Version reads, "making merchandise of the word of God." The word actually refers to the corrupt practice of some merchants who diluted their wares or in some manner falsely displayed them. Paul says that some were handling the Word of God as if they were dishonest peddlers.

*but as of sincerity, but as of God.*—Paul who was an apostle through the will of God declares his absolute sincerity in dealing with this all important task of preaching the gospel of Christ. This was not arrogant boasting for he was speaking in Christ.

### Summary

Paul was waiting to find out about the response of the Corinthians to his first letter before visiting them again. He had given them specific directions in it about many things, among them what to do with the man who had been living with his father's wife. A deferred visit did not mean cancellation. He would come, as he had said in his first letter, even if it meant using a rod of chastisement. But he had decided to delay the coming so that he might not cause them sorrow. They had gladdened his heart by their response to the gospel which he preached to them. He wanted to give them time to correct any disorder in their midst so that he might not cause them sorrow, for it would be a painful thing for him to be forced to punish them.

Paul was confident that they would be looking forward to his next visit with joy just as he was. It was true that he had written them out of affliction and anguish of heart. Perhaps the very manuscript was stained with his tears. But this was not intended to cause them grief. As their father in the gospel, Paul wanted them to know about his genuine love for them.

The brother who had done wrong had not caused sorrow to Paul alone, but, in part, to all of them. They had acted upon his instruction in the first letter—he had learned this from Titus—and had “delivered him to Satan.” The remedy, though severe, was effective. The man had repented. The next move was up to them: they were to forgive him! Paul had, just as he had joined in administering the punishment to the one who had sinned. Forgiveness was necessary to defeat Satan’s scheme to keep the brother in his clutches forever. An unforgiving attitude on their part would serve his purpose just as well as the temptation that had led the man to sin in the first place. Paul was not ignorant of Satan’s schemes, nor did he want the brethren at Corinth to be.

Paul had gone to Troas, hoping to learn from Titus what the church had done about correcting their many sins. He was writing this second letter, of course, after he had met Titus in Macedonia, but he wanted the brethren to know of his deep concern over the situation at Corinth. That is why, even though he had a wonderful opportunity to further the gospel in Troas, he went to Macedonia. They could not fail to see his great anxiety over them that resulted from his sincere love for them.

The Corinthians were aware of the meeting with Titus in Macedonia, although Paul did not actually mention it until after he had written a somewhat lengthy explanation of the triumphant ministry in which the Lord had led him everywhere. No personal grief, no joy that ever came to him stirred him more deeply than the awareness that it was God who always led him in triumph in Christ. His thanksgiving knew no limits as he thought of the privilege that had been given to him to be a messenger of the gospel that had been accepted everywhere he had preached it.

The ministry of Paul was like a sweet smelling fragrance of Christ unto God. The message was also acceptable to God as it brought salvation to those who believed, even though some chose to perish because of disobedience. God’s love was so great that He gave His Son to die for them that they might live through Him.

Who was adequate for the task of carrying such a message? Un-

## CHAPTER TWO

flinchingly, Paul indicated, "We are." He gave two reasons for his response to the staggering task of preaching the gospel that brought salvation to those who obeyed it and destruction to those that rejected it. He was not guilty of diluting the message of God. With complete sincerity, knowing that God was watching every move he made, he was preaching the message of Christ.

### *Questions*

1. How many times did Paul visit Corinth?
2. Why had he postponed his coming to see them?
3. How had he caused them sorrow?
4. How had they gladdened his heart?
5. What was his purpose in writing to them as indicated by I Cor. 4:14?
6. What are some of the ways in which the gospel message brings joy?
7. How many letters did Paul write to the Corinthians?
8. Instead of causing him tears, what did Paul have a right to expect from the brethren at Corinth?
9. What was it that had caused him such anguish of heart?
10. What was Paul's purpose in telling them about his sorrow?
11. Why didn't Paul name the one who had caused the sorrow?
12. How does the case of the one mentioned in the fifth chapter of First Corinthians fit this situation?
13. What do the Scriptures say about the responsibility of Christians toward an erring brother?
14. What do they say that the erring one should do?
15. To whom besides Paul had this one caused sorrow?
16. Was the church unanimous in believing that this one had caused them sorrow?
17. How had the majority reacted to the direction which Paul had given for punishing the guilty one?
18. What was that punishment? What was its purpose?
19. Since the guilty person had repented, what was the church to do?
20. What did Jesus say about those who fail to forgive?
21. What did Paul say might happen to him if the church failed to forgive?
22. How were they to show their love for the one who had repented?

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23. What advantage would Satan gain through an unforgiving attitude on their part?
24. Why did Paul say, "We are not ignorant of his devices"?
25. What are some of the ways in which Satan destroys the work of the church of God?
26. Why did Paul go to Troas?
27. What opportunity for the gospel did he find there?
28. What indication is there that he did not overlook this, even though he left Troas and went to Macedonia to find Titus?
29. What did his going on to Macedonia reveal to the Corinthians about Paul's attitude toward them?
30. Why didn't Paul receive direct communication from God about the issues in Corinth instead of his having to wait until Titus reported to him?
31. What limit did God put on direct communication to the messengers of the gospel?
32. What did Paul think of Titus?
33. Why did Paul break off the description of his anxiety without saying whether or not he had met Titus in Macedonia?
34. What did he thank God for?
35. How could every effort of the apostle, even when the gospel was rejected by some, be thought of as triumph in Christ?
36. With what familiar custom did Paul describe his triumphant ministry for Christ?
37. To what did he liken the knowledge about Christ?
38. How did he indicate that Christ's messengers were also acceptable to God?
39. With what two issues does the gospel message deal?
40. What did Paul mean when he asked, "Who is sufficient for these things"?
41. What made him adequate for the task of preaching the gospel?
42. What may this have suggested as to the false apostles who were troubling the Corinthians?
43. What figure did Paul have in mind when he spoke of those who were corrupting the Word?
44. By contrast, what did Paul say of his own sincerity?

### *For Discussion*

1. What are some of the subtle ways in which Satan may be destroying the effectiveness of the church today?
2. What can the church do today to avoid misrepresenting the message of the gospel?

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Analysis*

- A. Paul answered the anticipated charge of self-commendation (1-11).
1. He asked two questions (1).
    - a) Are we beginning again to commend ourselves?
    - b) Do we, as do some, need letters of commendation to you or from you?
  2. He gave two answers (2-11).
    - a) As seen in his relation to the Corinthians (2-3).
      - (1) They are his epistle of commendation (2).
        - (a) This epistle is written in his heart.
        - (b) It is known and read of all men.
      - (2) They are also an epistle of Christ (3).
        - (a) It is evident that they are an epistle of Christ.
        - (b) The service of writing was done by Paul.
        - (c) This involves a two-fold contrast.
          - i) It was written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.
          - ii) It was not in tables of stone but in tables that are hearts of flesh.
      - b) As seen in his glorious ministry under the New Covenant in contrast to the glory of Moses' ministry under the Old Covenant (4-11).
        - (1) The source of his sufficiency under the New Covenant is God (4-6).
          - (a) His confidence toward God was in Christ.
          - (b) He explained that in himself he was not adequate for the task (5a).
          - (c) His fitness was from God who made him a minister of the New Covenant (5b-6a).
          - (d) Characteristics of the New Covenant (6b).
            - i) Not of letter but of spirit.
            - ii) The letter kills; the spirit gives life.
        - (2) The contrast between the glory of the Old and New Covenants justifies his glorious ministry (7-11).
          - (a) Contrasted as a ministry of death and a ministry of spirit (7-8).
            - i) The ministry of death (Old Covenant)

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written on stones was with glory so that Israel could not look upon the face of Moses.

- ii) The ministry of the spirit (New Covenant) is with glory, is it not?
  - (b) Contrasted as a ministry of condemnation and of righteousness (9-10).
    - i) The glory of the ministry of righteousness (the New Covenant) exceeds that of condemnation (Old Covenant).
    - ii) The glory of condemnation (Old Covenant) is as nothing compared to the surpassing glory of the ministry of the New Covenant.
  - (c) Conclusion from the contrast: If that which passes away (Old Covenant) was with glory, much more that which remains (New Covenant) is with glory.
- B. Paul explained the reason for his great boldness of speech (12-18).
- 1. As seen in the contrast between him and Moses (12-13).
    - a) His hope in the abiding glory of the New Covenant was the basis of his great boldness of a speech (12).
    - b) Moses, on the other hand, put a veil over his face to prevent Israel from seeing the end of the fading glory on his face (13).
  - 2. As seen in the contrast between those who were reading the Old Covenant and those who turned to the Lord (14-15).
    - a) Their minds were hardened at the reading of the Old Covenant because they were unaware that the veil was taken away in Christ (14).
    - b) Even in Paul's day wherever Moses was read the veil lay on their hearts (15).
  - 3. As seen in the result of turning to the Lord (16-18).
    - a) The veil is taken away.
    - b) The Lord is (identified with) the spirit-covenant (See verses 6 and 8 ASV).
    - c) Where the spirit-covenant of the Lord is, there is liberty.
    - d) Transformation results from looking into the glory of the Lord (as seen in the spirit-covenant).
- (1) This is to be done with unveiled face as we look

into the mirror—the New Covenant or spirit-covenant—where we see the glory of the Lord.

- (2) The transformation is into the same image from glory to glory—from the Lord of the spirit-covenant.

### *Self-commendation*

#### *Scripture*

3:1. Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you?

#### *Comments*

*Are we beginning again to commend ourselves.*—Paul had just written of the glorious triumph of the messengers of Christ and also of the message itself which had to do with eternal life and eternal death. He had indicated that he was adequate for this ministry. In his relationship to Christ as an inspired apostle, he spoke the Word of God with all sincerity. He did not make merchandise of it as some had done. The whole chapter is an explanation of his fitness for the task.

As he often does in his writings, Paul anticipated possible charges of self-commendation. He was well aware of the arrogance of some people at Corinth. See I Cor. 4:18. He knew of those who were bringing false charges against him. See II Cor. 10:10. The message of the Word of God was of such importance to the apostle Paul that he wanted to make sure that the Corinthians would not make the mistake of assuming that what he was writing was idle boasting about his own powers and abilities.

*epistles of commendation.*—There is certainly a place for letters of commendation. Paul had written many words of commendation about his fellow-workers, Timothy and Titus. In writing to the Philippians about Timothy, he had said, "for I have no man likeminded who will care truly for your state for they all seek their own and not the things of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 2:20-21). The closing words of First Corinthians contain words of commendation about some of the brethren who were also well known to the Corinthians. Paul wrote to the Romans commending Phoebe whom he calls, "our sister who is a servant of the church that is in Cenchrea." He urged them to treat her in a manner befitting the saints and to assist her in what-

ever matter she might have need" (Rom. 16:1-2). This faithful saint had been a helper of many including the apostle Paul. In the closing part of that epistle Paul mentioned a number of the brethren whom he commended in various ways because of their service in the Lord. His commendation of Luke, the beloved physician, is found in Col. 4:14. Mark, for some reason, had not completed the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas. This became a matter of sharp contention between them when they started on their second journey. Paul refused to take Mark with him. Long afterwards, he wrote to Timothy, saying, "Take Mark and bring him with thee for he is useful to me for ministering" (II Tim. 4:11).

*to you from you?*—Paul may have had in mind the many who were corrupting the Word of God and who may have brought epistles of commendation of themselves so that they might become established among the Corinthians. Paul knew about those who had caused so much trouble among the Galatian churches. They had come from James, but there is no good reason to assume that he had approved what they were doing. See Gal. 2:12. In the light of James' comments as reported in Acts 15 and Paul's investigation as given in Galatians two, one might readily assume that their claims were false.

Paul needed no letter of commendation to the church at Corinth, for he performed all the signs of an apostle in their midst. See II Cor. 12:12. Neither did Paul need a letter of commendation from them. He had written to them in First Corinthians saying, "If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (I Cor. 9:2). This point is elaborated upon in the two-fold answer that follows.

### *Our Epistle*

#### *Scripture*

3:2-3. Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; 3 being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone but in table that are hearts of flesh.

#### *Comments*

*our epistle.*—The reason he needed no letter from them is seen in the fact that they actually were such a letter. They were his beloved



children in the gospel. See I Cor. 4:14-15. They had become Christians as a result of obedience to the gospel which Paul preached to them. Despite the fact that conditions at Corinth were far from what they should have been Paul was perfectly willing to risk his reputation as an apostle of Christ upon the testimony of the Christian character and conduct of those who were faithful to the Lord.

*written in our hearts.*—This letter was written in his mind, that is, his understanding and his affections. He knew about the establishment of the church for he was the first one to preach the gospel there, and he had kept in touch with them through the household of Chloe and through the letters which others had written asking questions about their own problems. Paul had just laid bare his own heart as he told them about his anguish and tears and sorrow over those who had failed to come up to the proper standard of Christian character and conduct. He also revealed his anticipated joy which all were to share when he came to them again. The Corinthians knew that he loved them and cared for them as a father for his beloved children.

*known and read of all men.*—While this epistle was written in the apostle's heart, he says that all men knew it and read it. This undoubtedly means that all who came in contact with the church in Corinth knew of their relationship to Christ. They were also aware of the fact that the apostle Paul had brought the gospel to them. Corinth was a strategic point in which to establish the church, for men from the known world came in and out of that city carrying on their commerce. As they did so they learned about the church of God which was at Corinth.

*an epistle of Christ.*—As men came to know the life of the church at Corinth, despite all the sordid things that were known about some of them, it became evident that they were an epistle of Christ. A comparison of what they were before and after conversion is given in I Cor. 6:9-11. To see such people after their sins had been washed away by the blood of the Lamb, and to hear them boldly tell of their forgiveness in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ must have made a profound impression on the minds of all who came in contact with them.

*ministered by us.*—Paul had likened his ministry among them to one who planted and that of Apollos to one who watered. He had served as the masterbuilder to lay the foundation, but another had built upon it. Now he says, "Ye are an epistle which Christ wrote." Paul was the servant of Christ through whom the writing had been

done. But this was said in humility, not self-commendation, for it was the grace of God that had made it possible for him to serve in this capacity. See I Cor. 15:10.

*written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.*—Paul now contrasts the letter which Christ had written—the New Covenant—with the Old Covenant. The epistle of Christ had not been written with ink, for it was not just a piece of parchment with words written upon it. It was written with the Spirit of the living God through the inspired apostle. It was the message of life unto life and death unto death. It could be read by all those who saw the changed character and conduct of the church at Corinth. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul had made it clear that his message had been the testimony of God about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He had not spoken the wisdom of men, but the wisdom that had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. See I Cor. 2:1-2, 10-13.

*not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh.*—"Tables of stone" suggest the Old Covenant, that is, the Ten Commandments. See Ex. 34:28-29; Deut. 4:13. "Hearts of flesh" suggest the New Covenant. See Jer. 31:31-34 as quoted in Heb. 8:8-13. The essential difference in the two is indicated by the fact that the New Covenant became a living reality in the lives and hearts of those who became obedient to the gospel of Christ. This is the reason that the Corinthians were both an epistle of commendation of the apostle Paul and an epistle which Christ had written through the ministry of His inspired apostle.

### *Paul's Glorious Ministry Under the New Covenant*

#### *Scripture*

3:4-11. And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 7 But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: 8 how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? 9 For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10 For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glori-

ous in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth. 11 For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory.

### *Comments*

*And such confidence have we.*—Despite the hardships which Paul faced at Corinth, his ministry is characterized by confidence and triumph. His confidence was through Christ, for he knew what Christ had done for him. He knew of His resurrection which demonstrated that He had conquered Satan. He had surrendered to the risen Christ on the Damascus road. He had committed himself wholeheartedly to the service of the Lord. He remembered that day when Ananias told him to get himself baptized that his sins might be washed away, because he had called upon the name of the Lord. He had been summoned as an apostle of God. He was convinced that the way of victory was through Jesus Christ. He was never ashamed of Him nor of His gospel, for he was confident that it was the power of God to save the believer, whether Jew or Greek.

*our sufficiency is from God.*—That is, it is God who made him adequate for the task of preaching the Word that dealt with eternal life and eternal death. God had revealed the message through the Holy Spirit to the apostles and thus equipped them for the glorious ministry under the New Covenant. No one without that divinely revealed message could possibly undertake such a ministry.

How unfortunate that many who undertake the work of the ministry today seem called upon to substitute the wisdom of man for this divinely revealed message of God. Paul's confidence in this message is expressed in his word to Timothy, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17). He did not hesitate to urge Timothy to preach the Word; to be urgent in season, out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching. See II Tim. 4:2. The same divine Word which Paul preached will equip the consecrated minister of today who has the courage to preach this message of eternal life and everlasting death.

*ministers of the new covenant.*—A covenant is an agreement. When that covenant is between God and man, God Himself dictates all the conditions of the covenant as well as the blessings involved in it. Man agrees to the terms of the covenant in order to enjoy its blessings.

In the case of the Old Covenant which was given at Mt. Sinai, God revealed the commandments to Moses. The people entered into the covenant relationship when they said all that the Lord has spoken, we will do. See Ex. 19:8. Subsequently, all who were born into the family of the Jews were parties to that Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant only those who are born of the water and of the Spirit are parties to the New Covenant—a spiritual birth in contrast to a physical birth.

The New Covenant is the gospel of Christ that promises remission of sins and eternal life to the believer whose faith is expressed through obedience to the commandments of Christ. Every individual who comes into this New Covenant relationship with Christ through the new birth, publically and in the sight of God as he makes the good confession, promises to be obedient to its terms and pledges his allegiance to Christ. To say that I believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God is to endorse all that is involved in ones total relationship to God through Jesus Christ. As Christ, He is our Prophet. Through His prophetic office the message of the Bible was revealed from heaven. See Heb. 1:1-2. As Priest He shed blood for the remission of sins. Significantly, in instituting the Lord's Supper, He blessed the cup and said, "This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for the many unto the remission of sins." As King, He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God in fulfillment of the promise of God made to David. See Acts 2:25-36. He exercises His authority as well as His watchcare over His people through the inspired Word spoken through the apostles. All of those who pledge themselves to keep the terms of the New Covenant must let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom and teaching. See Col. 3:16.

This New Covenant was given in promise to Abraham in the Scripture which says, "In thee shall all the nations be blessed." See Gal. 3:8. It was given to Abraham some four hundred and thirty years before the covenant at Sinai, but was not annulled by that covenant. See Gal. 3:16-17. It came to its fulness with the preaching of the gospel on the Day of Pentecost. All those who accept its terms become sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. "for as many as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). Furthermore, "if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's offspring and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

God was a party to two covenants at the same time, but they were not in conflict because they served different purposes. One

was with Abraham and Christ; the other, the Ten Commandments, was with Israel. It was added, Paul says, because of transgression. There was a time limit on it, for it was to last until the promised seed of Abraham should come—that is, Christ. It served in the capacity of a trusted slave who watched over a child until his majority, and as such held sin in check until Christ came. But since it was a law that could not make alive one who had died in sin, it was necessary that the promise to Abraham be fulfilled in Christ and be put into effect through the preaching of the apostles. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostles told those who were guilty of crucifying the Son of God to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, for the promise—that is, the promise God made to Abraham—was to them and to their children and all that were far off, as many as the Lord God should call unto Himself. See Gal. 3:19-22; Acts 2:38-39.

*not of letter but of spirit.*—This expression is found three times in Paul's writings: once in this epistle and twice in Romans. The first instance in Romans is found in 2:29. There he uses "letter" as a symbol of outward conformity to the Law that had been written on the tables of stone. On the other hand, he uses "spirit" as a symbol of the inward life of the individual, Jew or Gentile, who actually carried out the provisions of the Law. Moses had written that the one who actually carried out the righteousness which is of the Law lived thereby. See Romans 10:5. Paul had said that not the hearers of the Law but the doers of the Law shall be justified. See Rom. 2:13. Such persons showed the works of the Law written on their hearts, that is, they understood what was right in God's sight and willingly complied with it. This was not, as some have contended, an impossible thing. Moses wrote, "This commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it" (Deut. 30:11-14). John says, "This is the love of God that we keep this commandment: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3).

The second instance in Romans is found in 7:6. The same basic idea is seen in this context. Newness of spirit refers to the new life in Christ which was characterized by intelligent, willing, loving

obedience to Him. Oldness of letter, on the other hand, referred to the life under the jurisdiction of the Law. Because of violation of the Law, life was characterized by sinful passions that brought forth fruit unto death. In II Cor. 3:6, Paul uses "letter" as a symbol of the Old Covenant just as he had done in Romans, and "spirit" as a symbol of the life under the New Covenant. Keeping in mind Paul's use of these terms will aid in interpreting 3:17-18.

Two further observations need to be made: (1) "letter" is not contrasted with the Holy Spirit. Verse three plainly indicates that the epistle of Christ had been written with the Holy Spirit, but in verse six "spirit" (spelled with a small "s") is used as a symbol of the New Covenant; (2) There is no justification whatever for the assumption that letter and spirit refer to a literal interpretation of the Word of God as opposed to a so-called "spiritual" interpretation. All of God's Word is "spirit and life" (John 6:63).

The Word is directed to intelligence of man and it appeals to his heart. It shows the way to forgiveness and purity in Christ. It is life, for obedience to it brings the gift of life eternal.

*for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.*—This unfortunately has led some to assume that an attempt to actually obey God's Word results in death. How can such a view be harmonized with what James plainly says? "Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only deluding your own selves" (James 1:21-22). Why then did Paul say that the "letter killeth"? Remembering that letter stands as a symbol of the Old Covenant, we may read "the Old Covenant killeth." The answer to the problem is clearly indicated in the Scriptures for Hebrews says that the Old Covenant gave place to the New because God found fault with those under the Old Covenant. He found fault with them because they continued not in His covenant. See Heb. 8:7. Paul shows that by the works of the Law no human being is pardoned in God's sight. See Rom. 3:20. By works of the Law he has in mind those ceremonies such as the animal sacrifices which only served to remind the one who had broken God's law that ultimately Christ would come providing the sacrifice that would actually blot out sin. See Rom. 3:25. He further states that if there had been a law given which would make alive then righteousness (pardon) would have been of the law. See Gal. 3:21. He also states that the law is not a matter of faith but "he that doeth them shall live in them" (Gal. 3:12). "Spirit" which stands for the New

Covenant gives life. Under this covenant the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, actually cleanses the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. See Heb. 9:14. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is given in Jer. 31:31-34 and in Heb. 10:16 in these words: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts and upon their minds also will I write them and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more." As sin reigned in death, even so grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21).

### *The Glory of the Old and New Covenants*

#### *Scripture*

3:7-11. But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: 8 how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? 9 For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10 For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth. 11 For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory.

#### *Comments*

*But if the ministration of death.*—Paul had just spoken of the Old Covenant under the figure of the letter that kills. Now for the same reasons he speaks of it as a ministry that produced death. Nevertheless, he declares that the ministry that produced death—a letter which was engraved on stones—came with glory. Paul was not one to criticize the Law of God. Although he had violated it and as a result had died, he insisted that the law was holy and the commandment was holy and righteous and good. See Rom. 7:9-12. He is now about to contrast the glory of the Old Covenant with the glory of the New that brought him life in Christ. When Moses came down from the mountain after he had talked with God his face shone with a brilliance that made it impossible for the children of Israel to look intently at it. They were aware of the fact that Moses had been in the presence of God and that the word he was speaking was

from God. When he finished speaking to them, he put a veil on his face. When he went again to speak to the Lord he took the veil off and came back to deliver the message to the people of Israel and then put the veil on his face again. See Ex. 34:29-35.

*which glory was passing away.*—The veil kept the people from seeing that the shining brilliance on the face of Moses was gradually fading away. It kept them from assuming that what he had said as the Word of God was only a temporary thing. But see verse fifteen for the distorted view that some continued to hold regarding this matter. *the ministration of the spirit.*—Some assume that this is a reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and therefore capitalize the word. Let it again be emphasized that Paul has already indicated that the New Covenant came into existence through the work of the Holy Spirit as He spoke through the inspired apostle. The word "spirit" in this verse however is to be taken, as it is in verse six, as a symbol of the New Covenant. As such it is contrasted with the ministry of death which is a symbol of the Old Covenant. The apostles' question was, "If the ministry of the Old Covenant, which was a ministry that brought death, came with glory as indicated by the shining face of Moses, how shall not also the ministry of the spirit-covenant (New Covenant) which brings eternal life be with glory?" The verses that follow indicate the surpassing glory of this spirit-covenant.

*for if the ministration of condemnation.*—The New Covenant which was symbolized by "spirit" gave life and was called a ministry of righteousness. Paul explained this righteousness as something apart from the Law, as a righteousness of God to which the Law and Prophets had borne witness. It was the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. It provided pardon from sin for all who fall short of the glory of God—that is, of His approval. That pardon is freely given because of God's grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. He is the One who through His blood blots out sins of those who believe in Him and expresses that belief in obedience to His commands. See Romans 3:21-26; Acts 2:38; 22:16. Righteousness is used in a three-fold way in Paul's writings. First, referring to the fact that God is right or just in word and deed. Second, it refers to the standard of conduct which God requires of His people. Third, it is the status of one whose sins have been pardoned by the grace of God through faith in Christ. Is there any wonder that Paul insists that the glory of this ministry of righteousness exceeds the glory of the ministration that brought



death? The glory of the New Covenant so outshines the glory of the Old as to cause it to appear as if it had not been at all.

*For that which passeth away.*—Paul explained in Galatians that the Law was to serve until Christ. But since faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under the Law. See Gal. 3:23-25. He also explained that Christ was born under the Law that He might redeem those who were under the Law. See Gal. 4:4-5. In the allegory of Abraham's two sons he again clearly points out that the possession of eternal life was not possible under the Old Covenant, for it belongs to those who enjoy the freedom under the New Covenant. Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, represented the Old Covenant. She and her son were cast out—did not inherit the blessing of Abraham. Sarah and Isaac represent those who are under the New Covenant. Paul adds, "Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." He cited the Scripture that said, "Cast out the handmaiden and her son, for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." Christians are children of the free woman—that is, the New Covenant—and are heirs of the promise of eternal life through Christ. See Gal. 4:21-31. This position is reinforced by the writer of Hebrews for he says, "In that he said a new covenant, he hath made the first old, but that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away" (Heb. 8:13).

It should be noted that verse eleven refers to the Old Covenant which was passing away. This had been symbolized by the fact that the glory that shone from Moses' face was also passing away. See verse 7.

*that which remaineth is in glory*—The New Covenant is the abiding covenant. Under it the perfect sacrifice has been made, and no further sacrifice is necessary since the blood of Christ actually cleanses the conscience of the worshipper. See Heb. 10:1-18. The glory of this covenant remains. Its glory is to be found in the fact that it came from God through Jesus Christ as He revealed it by the Holy Spirit through the inspired apostles. See John 16:13-14.

### *Paul's Great Boldness of Speech*

#### *Scripture*

3:12-13. Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, 13 and are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away:

*Comments*

*such a hope.*—Paul's hope was based upon the abiding nature of the New Covenant. The blessings of the New Covenant were remission of sins, eternal life in Christ, and the hope of the glory of God. See Rom. 5:1-2.

*great boldness of speech.*—This is said in justification of his claim that he was adequately fitted for the task of preaching the message of the gospel which dealt with eternal death and eternal life.

*not as Moses.*—The fact that God spoke to Moses was symbolized by the shining brilliance on the face of Moses when he came down from the mountain, but that message was temporary. Since it was to act as a guardian over God's people until Christ should come, the temporary nature of that message is suggested by the fact that the shining brilliance of Moses faded away. Moses had put the veil on his face to keep the children of Israel from seeing when this happened. It was in direct contrast to the great boldness of speech which characterized Paul's message under the New Covenant which is permanent.

*the end of that which was passing away.*—Moses did not want the children of Israel to see that the glory had left his face. So long as they were under the Old Covenant, he wanted them to remember that it was God's Word. As Moses prepared the children of Israel to go over into the promised land, he said, "You shall not add to the word which I command you nor take from it that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I commanded you" (Deut. 4:2). No other nation had a God like the Lord God of Israel; no other nation had a law like the law God had given them. See Deut. 4:7-8. The Lord spoke to Joshua as he was preparing to lead the children of Israel in their conquest of Canaan. "Be strong and very courageous being careful to do according to all that Moses my servant commanded you. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left that you may have good success wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7). Paul reminds us that the law was holy, and the commandment was holy and righteous and good. See Rom. 7:12. All this, however, cannot compare with the surpassing glory of the permanent New Covenant with its blessings of remission of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Some have suggested that "end" may refer to the purpose of the Law of Moses. But certainly Moses was not interested in obscuring that purpose, for he himself had said, "The Lord your God will raise

up for you a prophet like unto me from among you" (Deut. 18:15). Peter quoted Moses and showed that this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ. See Acts 3:20-23. Moses simply did not want Israel to see that the brilliance had left his face for it was a symbol that God had spoken to him.

### *Hardened Minds*

#### *Scripture*

3:14-15. But their minds were hardened: for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth, it not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ. 15 But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart.

#### *Comments*

*minds were hardened.*—This hardness was a subject of the prophecy of Isaiah which was quoted by Jesus in connection with the failure of some to understand the parable of the sower. "By hearing ye shall hear and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see and shall in no wise perceive. This people's heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing, their eyes they have closed lest haply they should perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and should turn again and I should hear them" (Matt. 13:14-15). Paul warned his Jewish hearers about the same thing when he spoke to them in Antioch of Pisidia. He said, "Beware therefore lest there come upon you which is spoken in the prophets: Behold ye despisers and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days which ye shall in no wise believe, if one declare it unto you" (Acts 13:40-41). He also quoted Isaiah's prophecy to the Jews who met with him in Rome. See Acts 28:26-28.

*at the reading of the old covenant.*—Tragically many of the Jews failed to anticipate the coming of Christ and the New Covenant although these matters had been clearly set forth in their Scriptures. They became satisfied that they were the chosen people of God. Their religion had become largely a matter of external conformity to ritual and form. They were interested in the ceremonies and the keeping of feasts and sabbaths. But Jesus asked them on one occasion, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your traditions" (Matt. 15:3)? Now Paul charges them with spiritual blindness and stubbornness, for even in his day they still clung to the Old Covenant as if it were a permanent thing. They refused to admit that

although God had spoken to the fathers in the prophets, that in the end of those days of revelation He had spoken with finality, completeness and authority in the exalted One who bears the name Son. See Heb. 1:1-2.

*it is done away in Christ.*—Moses removed the veil when he went back into the mountain to talk with God but the veil remained on the hearts of those who heard the reading of the Law of Moses for they were not aware that it is removed in Christ. What God said in the completed revelation of His will in the New Covenant is like speaking to Him face to face. See I Cor. 13:12. The examination of the facts concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Christ should convince one that God's approval rested upon Him. See Acts 2:22-36. The apostle Peter, recalling his experience in the holy mountain when God said this is my Son in whom I am well pleased, said, "We have the word of prophecy made more sure where unto you do well that ye take heed as unto a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts, knowing this first that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation for no prophecy ever came by the will of man but men spake from God being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:19-21). Paul indicates that God's gospel, which concerns His Son and the pardon that was made possible through His shed blood, is in accord with the testimony of the law and the prophets. See Rom. 1:1-4; 3:21-26.

*whenever Moses is read.*—Paul had had many experiences with the stubbornness of the Jews who steadfastly refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Disobedient Jews had rejected his message of Christ at Antioch. They led persecutions against him in Iconium and Lystra. They stirred up trouble for him in Thessalonica. Their hatred for him finally led to his arrest in the city of Jerusalem. Throughout his long imprisonment they pressed their charges with the hope of having him put to death. Only his appeal to Caesar prevented his falling into their murderous hands. Their stubborn hearts were veiled so that the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ did not penetrate that veil.

### *Transformed*

#### *Scripture*

3:16-18. But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding

as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

### *Comments*

*turn to the Lord.*—The only way to remove that veil is to make an honest investigation of the claims of Christ as set forth in the gospel which was preached by the inspired apostles. When it, the veiled heart, turns to the Lord the veil is taken away. Then one can see that God has spoken with finality through the Son in the New Covenant. The veil kept the Jews from seeing that the Law of Moses was supplanted by the gospel. They did not know that God was speaking through Christ, not Moses. See Deut. 18:15. The veil, which Moses removed when he was in the presence of God or speaking to the children of Israel, is taken out of the way when one realizes that God did speak with finality through Christ.

*Now the Lord is the Spirit.*—The word "spirit" in this verse is rendered "Spirit," assuming that Paul was referring to the Holy Spirit. The Lord is Jesus Christ. See 4:5. See also comment on 1:3. But this is to identify the Lord with the Holy Spirit. We are well aware of the fact that Scripture makes it clear that there is an intimate unity between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. But why should Paul refer to this unity at this point? He had already made it clear that the New Covenant came into being through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit as he directed the minds of those who wrote down the message of the New Covenant. He had also indicated that "spirit" stood as a symbol of the New Covenant. Since in this context he is contrasting the reading of Moses, that is the Old Covenant, with the boldness of Paul's speech in connection with the New Covenant, it is possible that he is speaking about the Lord who is identified with that spirit-covenant. It is to the Lord that the veiled heart was to turn. And that was to be done by the reading of the New Covenant which was symbolized by "spirit" rather than "letter." The New Covenant is the fulfillment of the Old.

*where the Spirit of the Lord is.*—While this could refer to the Holy Spirit through whom the New Covenant came into being, consistency would suggest that the reference is still to "spirit" as the symbol of the New Covenant. Where the spirit-covenant of the Lord is, there is liberty.

*there is liberty.*—This is the very issue that Paul discussed with the Galatians in chapters four and five. The New Covenant is represented by Sarah, and the Christian by Isaac. Paul concludes, "Wherefore

brethren we are not children of the handmaid but of the free woman" (Gal. 4:31). Again Paul says, "For freedom, did Christ set us free. Stand fast therefore and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). This freedom in Christ is within the regulation of the Law of Christ. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). See also Rom. 8:1-4.

*But we all, with unveiled face.*—The reading of the Old Covenant is here contrasted with the reading of the New Covenant. While the Jew read with a veil upon his heart, the Christian—the one who turned to the Lord—is aware that the New Covenant is the abiding message of Christ.

*beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.*—See James' use of the mirror as a symbol of the perfect law of liberty, that is, the gospel or the New Covenant. James 1:23-24. It is the glorious, abiding New Covenant that reveals the glory of the Lord. It reveals His deity, His majesty, His power and His authority. It reveals His work as Prophet, Priest, and King. It reveals Him as our example, in whose footsteps we should follow. See I Pet. 2:21. It reveals Him as the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. See I Pet. 1:25. It reveals Him as the One coming again for those who wait for Him unto salvation. God's children will be like Him for they will see Him as He is. See I John 3:2.

*transformed into the same image.*—The tragic failure of the Jews under the Old Covenant is indicated by the fact that they were not transformed into God's children. Though they claimed God as their Father, the simple truth was that they were filled with hatred for His Son and disregard for His Word. Therefore Jesus called them children of their father, the devil. See John 8:39-44.

Will Christ tolerate anything less than genuine transformation into Christlikeness under the New Covenant? Paul wrote to the Romans and said, "Be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds so that ye may approve the will of God, the thing that is good, and acceptable in His sight, and complete" (Rom. 12:2). How tragic that many of the Corinthians had failed to see this. Their sin of division was destroying the temple of the Holy Spirit, their immoral conduct defiled the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and their unChristian conduct made it impossible to keep the memorial feast of the Lord's Supper.

*from glory to glory.*—The image into which those who turn to the Lord are to be transformed is that of the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing short of Christlikeness in character and

conduct meets this demand. Paul had written to the Corinthians to say, "Imitate me as I am also an imitator of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). Guidelines to follow in this matter may be found in I Cor. 13:4-8. Christ demonstrated in His life the meaning of every one of these characteristics of love. Love is the crowning virtue of the Christian life. So the glory of Christ is to be seen in the glorious life of His church. He "cleansed it by the washing of the water with the Word that He might present the church into Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle of any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27).

*even as from the Lord the Spirit.*—This glorious transformation comes from the Lord of the spirit-covenant. Again some assume that "Spirit" is in apposition to "Lord" thus identifying the Lord with the Holy Spirit. The point that Paul is making is that the Lord has spoken through the New Covenant in contrast with the fact that Moses spoke through the Old Covenant as God revealed it to him.

#### *Summary*

Following the claim to be equal to the task of proclaiming the message of the gospel which was a message of life and death, Paul asked two questions: (1) Is this self-commendation? and (2) We do not need, as some do, letters of commendation to you or from you, do we?

He began his answers by saying, "You are our epistle." Others might need letters of commendation, but Paul didn't. He knew that they had become Christians through his preaching. He had an abiding love for them. They, then, were like a letter written on his heart, known and read by everyone. They knew of his love for them and that they had become new creatures in Christ. Indeed, they were like a letter that Christ had written through his ministers who had preached the gospel to them. It was written on living hearts—the understanding and affections—not stone tablets as if it affected external conduct only. It was not an ordinary letter written with ink, but one written by the Spirit of the living God. Paul was confident of all this because he knew that it had God's approval. God alone had made him equal to the task of being a minister of the New Covenant. This led to a contrast between the Old Covenant—the Ten Commandments given at Mt. Sinai—and the New Covenant—the gospel covenant given in fullness on the Day of Pentecost. He spoke of the Old Covenant as a "letter" covenant, and the New Covenant as a "spirit" covenant.

## II CORINTHIANS

To many, the letter-covenant was not obeyed out of love for God. It became a thing that killed, because death was the penalty for breaking it. The spirit-covenant, because it was intelligently, willingly, and lovingly obeyed, was a thing that made alive those who were dead in sin. The spirit-covenant was revealed by the Holy Spirit, but for that matter, so was the letter-covenant, and in some respects it too was spiritual. See Rom. 7:12-14. The expression, "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life" has nothing to do with the literal interpretation of the Scriptures as opposed to a spiritual interpretation.

Paul contrasted the glory of these two covenants, that is, the Old Covenant which kills and the New that brings life. The Old brought condemnation to the disobedient, but the New brings forgiveness to those who willingly obey it. The glory of the Old was such that the sons of Israel could not look steadfastly at the face of Moses which shone with a brilliant light because he had talked with God who had given him the covenant for Israel. But the glory of the New Covenant excels the Old just as forgiveness excels condemnation. The glory of the Old could not equal the surpassing glory of the New. Even the glory on Moses' face faded away, a symbol of the fact that the Old Covenant was to be replaced by the New which is permanent. As a minister of the New Covenant, Paul spoke with great boldness.

Moses put a veil on his face to keep the people from seeing the end of the glory with which it shone. Moses wanted them to remember the glory as a symbol of the fact that God had spoken to them through Him. This kept them from seeing that the Old Covenant had been done away. Even in Paul's time, a mental picture of that veil remained in the minds of readers of the Law because they were not aware that the veil had been done away by the New Covenant of Christ. It was done away whenever the veiled heart turned to the Lord through whom God spoke with finality, completeness, and authority. See Heb. 1:1-2. The Lord is the Lord of the spirit-covenant. The message of the New Covenant is forever fresh just as if one were speaking to God "face to face." Where the spirit-covenant of the Lord is, there is liberty. With unveiled faces because we are talking to the Lord, we look as into a mirror when we read the New Covenant and see the glory of the Lord.

As we behold this glorious image of the Lord, we are transformed into the glorious likeness of the Lord of the spirit-covenant.



## CHAPTER THREE

### *Questions*

1. What is the connection between the content of this chapter and that of the preceding one?
2. Why did Paul anticipate charges of self-commendation?
3. What is the purpose of letters of commendation? How had Paul made use of them?
4. Why didn't he need such a letter to the Corinthians or from them.
5. How had signs and wonders served to commend him to them?
6. How did their lives as Christians commend him to others?
7. In what sense was this letter written on his heart?
8. How could all men know and read it?
9. Why does Paul also call it an epistle of Christ?
10. What did Paul have to do with writing it?
11. Why did he say that it was not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God?
12. What message had been written on tablets of stone?
13. Why did Paul suggest that the gospel message which he preached had been written on hearts of flesh?
14. Why did Paul speak with such confidence about this letter?
15. What was the source of his adequacy for his ministry?
16. What are some of the contrasts between the Old and New covenants?
17. To whom was the New Covenant first given as a promise?
18. How did Paul show that there was no conflict between the Old and New Covenants?
19. What does "letter and spirit" mean in its various contexts?
20. To what does "letter" refer in this chapter?
21. To what does "spirit" refer in this chapter?
22. What indicates that "letter" is not contrasted with "Holy Spirit" in this context?
23. What is meant by the statement that "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life"?
24. What popular notion cannot possibly be supported by these words?
25. What did James say about actually doing what the Word says?
26. Why, then, was the Old Covenant spoken as the ministration of death?
27. In what way was the Old Covenant glorious?
28. What is the difference between its glory and that of the New?

## II CORINTHIANS

29. When and why did Moses put the veil on his face?
30. What is the ministration of the spirit?
31. Why was the Old Covenant spoken of as a ministration of condemnation?
32. Why was the New Covenant called the ministration of righteousness?
33. What does righteousness mean in this context?
34. In what way does the glory of the New Covenant outshine that of the Old?
35. How does the allegory of Abraham's two wives explain the relation between the Old and New Covenants?
36. Why is the New Covenant spoken of as the one that remains?
37. On what was Paul's hope based?
38. Why could he speak with such boldness about the hope of the New Covenant?
39. Why did Moses put a veil on his face? When did he remove it?
40. What is meant by "the end of that which was passing away"?
41. What caused the minds of the Jews to become hardened?
42. What was their attitude toward the reading of the Old Covenant in Paul's day?
43. What happens when the veiled heart turns to the Lord?
44. With what covenant is the Lord associated in this context?
45. Where is liberty to be found?
46. Why is the Christian's face spoken of as unveiled?
47. What is the mirror in which we behold the glory of the Lord?
48. What happens when we do?
49. What did Paul mean by the expression "from glory to glory"?
50. What did he mean by "even as from the Lord the Spirit"?

### *For Discussion*

1. What can be done through Christian living to promote the work of Christ?
2. What can be done to help church people speak with conviction about the Word of God?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Analysis*

- A. Paul explained the nature of his ministry under the glorious New Covenant (1-6).
1. His attitude toward his ministry (1-2).
    - a) Since he had received it through the mercy that had been shown him by the Lord, he did not lose heart (1).
    - b) He did, however, reject things that were unbecoming to such a ministry (2a).
      - (1) He renounced the hidden things of shame.
      - (2) He did not carry on his ministry by craftiness.
      - (3) He did not handle the Word of God deceitfully.
    - c) He conducted himself in such a manner as to commend himself to every man's conscience (b).
      - (1) He did so by making the truth clear.
      - (2) It was done openly as in the sight of God.
  2. His attitude toward the gospel which he preached (3-6).
    - a) He assumed that his gospel might become veiled in some (3-4a).
      - (1) This could happen in the minds of those who were perishing.
      - (2) It was done by the god of this world.
      - (3) It was the result of their being blinded by unbelief.
    - b) He pointed out the result of this blindness: Those who are perishing do not see the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ who is the image of God (4b).
    - c) He gave his reasons for this view of the veiled gospel (5-6).
      - (1) Based on the message he preached:
        - (a) He didn't preach himself but Christ Jesus as Lord.
        - (b) He was their servant for Jesus' sake.
      - (2) Based on what God said:
        - (a) Let light shine out of darkness.
        - (b) God caused light to shine in his heart by revealing His truth.

## II CORINTHIANS

(c) This caused him to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

B. Paul explained the secret of his ability to endure the trials of his ministry (7-15).

1. He was but an earthen vessel in which this treasure was carried that it might be evident that the power of his ministry was of God, not of himself (7).

2. Death was working in his case that they might have life (8-12).

a) He described the trials which he endured in his ministry (8-9).

(1) Pressed but not straightened.

(2) Perplexed but not unto despair.

(3) Pursued but not forsaken.

(4) Smitten down but not destroyed.

b) He explained the nature of these trials (10-12).

(1) They were like bearing about the dying of Jesus that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his body.

(2) He explained that he was delivered to death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh.

(3) This meant that death was working in him, but life in the Corinthians.

3. His ministry was carried on in the spirit of faith (13-15).

a) His faith was like that of the Psalmist who said, "I believed, therefore I spoke" (13).

b) His faith was in God who raised up Christ and would raise him also (14).

c) His ministry of faith was for their sakes that the multiplied grace of the many might cause thanksgiving to abound unto the glory of God.

C. Paul explained his view of temporal suffering (16-18).

1. He did not lose courage in face of such suffering.

2. He thought of them in contrast to things eternal.

a) They were as light afflictions compared to the weight of eternal glory.

b) Things that are seen are temporal; things that are unseen are eternal.

*Paul's Response To The Ministry Under  
The Glorious New Covenant*

*Scripture*

4:1-6. Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: 2 but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: 4 in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

*Comments*

*Therefore seeing we have this ministry.*—Paul had just explained his great boldness of speech in connection with his ministry under the New Covenant. This is a continuation of his answer to those who might criticize him for his claim to be adequate for such a ministry. *even as we obtained mercy.*—Paul had already made it clear that his sufficiency for this ministry was from God. He did not hesitate to admit that in himself he had no right to make such claims, for he remembered his former attitude toward Christ and his church. As he wrote to Timothy about the gospel of the glory of the blessed God which had been committed to his trust, he reminded him that Christ had counted him faithful and had appointed him to His service. This was in spite of the fact that once he had been a blasphemer and a persecutor and an injurious person. He had readily admitted to the Corinthians that he was the least of the apostles, not even worthy to be called an apostle because he had persecuted the church of God. See I Cor. 15:9. But he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. See I Tim. 1:11-14. God's mercy had brought him pardon; his sins had been washed away by the blood of Christ at the time of his baptism. See Acts 22:16. Although Paul had been a Pharisee, his humility as a Christian reminds us of the publican who prayed, "Be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke 18:13). Paul may have had in mind those arrogant false teachers who were

troubling the church at Corinth, suggesting that they, too, should have called upon God for mercy.

*we faint not.*—Paul's humility is matched by his courageous faith and confidence in the Lord. He was like David who, after he had slain the lion and the bear, fearlessly faced the giant Philistine who had been defying the army of Israel. Like David, Paul also came in the name of the Lord. He refused to act the part of a coward as he faced the hardships of this glorious ministry. Neither was he frightened by the derogatory slander of the false teachers at Corinth. *we have renounced the hidden things of shame.*—While "renounce" may have the sense of "give up," it is doubtful that this would be true in Paul's case.

As to the righteousness which is in the Law, Paul declared that he had been found blameless. See Phil. 3:6. This reminds us of the Rich Young Ruler who said to Jesus that he had observed all the commandments from his youth. See Luke 18:21. But he had failed to keep the first commandment which said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Paul freely admitted, however, that before he had become a Christian he had been guilty of covetousness. Sin had dwelt in him, dominating his life and leading him to do many things he hated. See Rom. 7:7-20. But he had been released from the tyranny of that master when he became obedient to Christ the Lord. See Rom. 6:17-18.

"Renounce" also means to refuse. Even as a Pharisee, it is doubtful if Paul ever resorted to the shameful practices which he condemns in this context. But certain Judaizing teachers who had been disturbing the churches were guilty of them. Paul categorized the corrupt teachers who had been disrupting the Galatian churches as "false brethren, privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Jesus Christ, that they might bring us into bondage" (Gal. 2:4).

It is true also that Paul had persecuted the church of God and had tried to destroy it, because he was convinced that it was wrong. See Gal. 1:13. "Breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" he had traveled even to Damascus hunting them down. He had obtained letters from the high priest giving him authority to arrest any whom he might find that were of the Way, men or women, and bring them bound to Jerusalem. See Acts 9:1-2.

Whatever these hidden things of shame were, as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul refused to become involved in them. He