

# FIRST THE WORK, NOW THE WORKER 2 Cor. 6:1-10

Intro: Paul wrote 2 Corinthians because there were those in Corinth who were questioning his ministry. He is used to opposition and controversy, but this is different from the controversy which he faced in the world. This was an controversy within the family of God, and it was a controversy which was affecting the Church's ministry to the world. Therefore, he writes to convince them that his work is of God, and that has no ulterior motives in his ministry. He seeks only their blessing for the glory of God.

But, as he writes, he cannot but refer again and again to the ministry itself--and all that involved in serving the Lord.

As far as the world is concerned, he was preaching a message of reconciliation--"that God was in Christ . . ." (5:19).

In the latter part of chapter 5 he has described THE WORK THAT THE CHURCH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO DO IN THE WORLD.

Now, in chapter 6 he is ready to talk about the one who is to do the work, i.e., THE WORKER.

And, as he besought (5:20) them to receive Christ before they were reconciled, so now (6:1) he beseeches them not to "receive . . . the grace of God in vain," i.e., unto hollowness or emptiness. BY THIS HE MEANS THAT BEING RECONCILED TO GOD, HAVING BEEN MADE NEW CREATURES, HAVING BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM, ALL HAS A PRESENT PURPOSE--THAT WE SHOULD BE WORKERS TOGETHER WITH GOD TO REACH OTHERS JUST AS WE HAVE BEEN REACHED WITH THE GOSPEL.

So he is seeking to help them see that they are to be WORKERS, TOO.

## I. THE EXHORTATION (2 Cor. 6:1-4a).

Back in 1 Cor. 3:9a Paul had written, "For we are labourers together with God." The Corinthians were more interested in working together with Paul, or Peter, or with Apollos.

Now he comes back to this theme again. AND NO ONE WILL EVER UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO SERVE THE LORD UNTIL THIS BASIC TRUTH IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN THEIR MINDS!

And it means that we are laborers together with Him for the salvation of men, for their reconciliation to God.

But we also need to know that since the death and resurrec-

tion of Jesus Christ we are in "the day of salvation" which Isaiah had predicted 700 years before: "Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee." Cf. Isa. 49:8a.

So Paul says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

This does not mean that no one was saved until Christ came, but it does mean that it was through Him that salvation was made possible, and therefore today is rightly called the day which is acceptable with God, "the day of salvation!"

THEREFORE, WE MUST BE CAREFUL TO BE WITHOUT OFFENCE OURSELVES SO THAT THE MINISTRY WILL NOT BE BLAMED, I.E., THAT MEN WILL NOT FIND FAULT WITH THE MINISTRY.

Two things stand out here:

- 1) Men may find fault with the ministry, with the people of God, but they will never find fault with the Lord. The tragedy is that many are turned away by what they see in the people of God, and so they do not look any farther.
- 2) Many would have us believe today that we will be an offence to the world if we are not like them. PAUL SAYS JUST THE OPPOSITE. HE INDICATES THAT WE WILL BE AN OFFENCE TO THE WORLD IF WE ARE LIKE THEM. IF YOU CLAIM TO BE A CHRISTIAN, A CHILD OF GOD, THE WORLD IS GOING TO EXPECT YOU TO BE DIFFERENT. IF YOU AREN'T, YOU WILL BE AN OFFENCE, A STUMBLINGBLOCK TO THEM.

Now let us get this perfectly clear!

--There is nothing wrong with God.

--There is nothing wrong with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Men will never be disappointed with either the Father or the Son.

--Nor is there anything wrong with the Gospel. It goes beyond anything that man would ever think possible.

BUT THERE CAN BE THINGS WRONG WITH YOU AND ME, THING WHICH KEEP MEN FROM KNOWING WHAT A WONDERFUL HEAVENLY FATHER WE HAVE, WHAT A WONDERFUL SAVIOR WE HAVE, AND WHAT A WONDERFUL GOSPEL WE HAVE.

That is the reason we need the following explanation.

## II. THE EXPLANATION (2 Cor. 6:4b-10).

The list of words which follows is divided into four groups:

- 1) The first: vv. 4b, 5.
- 2) The second: vv. 6, 7a—down through "by the power of God."

- 3) The third: from the last statement of v. 7 through the first two statements of v. 8.
- 4) The fourth: from the last statement of v. 8 down through v. 10--all of the statements which begin with the word, "as."

(Note: the Greek establishes these divisions with the words, en, dia, and hos.)

Paul explains what THE WORKER MUST BE if we are to commend ourselves to others as "ministers of God," as "workers together with him."

Standing at the head of the list is

- A. Patience in the face of all kinds of adversity (vv. 4b, 5).

How amazing that Paul would put this first! But read Jas. 1:2-4; Rom. 5:1-5.

Look at the list we have here. Some speak of trouble from those who oppose the Gospel; others speak of the exhausting work of the ministry.

How do we react? Do we run away? Do we get discouraged? Do we fight back, and grow resentful?

Paul places this first, and indicates that this is one major point the people of the world will notice.

- B. "Pureness" starts a list of words which indicate that we must be a holy, spiritually minded people (vv. 6, 7a, concluding with, "the power of God").

We do not reach the world by walking with the world.  
We reach the world by walking with the Lord.

Too many of us live right on the border line. "Pureness" not only means moral purity, but it means an intense desire to stay pure! It is like Joseph running from Potiphar's wife.

This will all affect our understanding of the Word of God, the evidence of the Spirit of God in our lives, as well as such things as "longsuffering . . . kindness . . . love."

- C. Perseverance, or consistency, regardless of the reception or rejection we meet (vv. 7b, 8a).

The effectiveness of the Lord's work today is often

judged on the basis of numerical results. And so we are always changing what we do to "get results."

Paul was not guided in his ministry by the response he got from men. He was no respecter of persons. His message was always the same! Whether men praised him or maligned him was not the main issue with him.

Paul warned Timothy, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10).

Finally, we have

- D. Paradoxes---unexplainable paradoxes---which often the child of God himself has a difficult time understanding, but which can have a tremendous effect upon the world (vv. 5b---beginning with, "as deceivers"---down through v. 10).

There are seven statements here, and, like the rest, they can all be illustrated from the life of the Apostle Paul, and even more so, from the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cf. Nicodemus  
the woman of Samaria  
the churches of Smyrna and Laodicea  
1 Cor. 3:21-23

Concl: What a unique and wonderful thing it is to be a Christian! Do not try to make it like the world. There is nothing in the world that can compare with it. It is a new creation of God every time someone receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. And our greatest influence on the world is to show the difference---not that the Lord takes us out of the difficulties of life, but that with even more difficulties, we have joy and hope that would keep us from going back to the old ways if we could.

GOD'S ANSWER TO THE CHURCH'S DILEMMA

2 Cor. 6:11-7:1

(DEALS WITH  
6:11-16.)

Intro: No one can read 2 Corinthians without realizing that the Apostle Paul carried a tremendous burden in his heart for the evangelization of the world, i.e., he lived to preach the Gospel, and to see men saved. NO ONE IN THE BIBLE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF OUR LORD, MANIFESTED A GREATER DESIRE TO SEE PEOPLE TURN TO JESUS CHRIST FOR SALVATION.

In every chapter up to our present text he has mentioned this!

Therefore, what he says to the Church must be read in the light of this emphasis upon the Gospel. He is not talking about two separate things when he says that we are ambassadors to beseech men to be reconciled to God, and then follows this with the exhortation that we have this morning, "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord"!

No, there is the closest possible relationship between the two.

I have entitled my message this morning, GOD'S ANSWER TO THE CHURCH'S DILEMMA. What is the Church's dilemma?

Possibly it has more than one. BUT ONE OF THE GREATEST DILEMMAS THAT WE ARE FACING TODAY IS THIS: HOW CAN WE IN THIS CONFUSED, GODLESS, OPENLY IMMORAL TWENTIETH CENTURY REACH PEOPLE WITH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST AND SEE MANY OF THEM GENUINELY BORN AGAIN?

Paul faced this problem right in Corinth. How did he answer it? Can we depend upon literature which is now about 2,000 years old for workable answers today?

I believe without any reservation whatsoever that we can!

But let us look today at the professing Church--and I am speaking now so as to include those of us who still believe that the Bible is the Word of God.

Our whole approach emphasizes that which appeals to the 20th century person. We do everything that we possibly can to avoid offence--even to the point where we want to delete the very terms which are used in the Bible: sin, salvation, born again, holiness, hell, heaven, the full name of our Savior--the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have entered into dialogue with men, instead of remembering that we have an infallible revelation which is to be proclaimed for men to hear!

IT SEEMS THAT WE ARE TRYING TO BECOME JUST AS MUCH LIKE THE

PEOPLE OF THE WORLD SO AS TO AVOID ANYTHING THAT WOULD MAKE THEM FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WHEN YOU TALK TO THEM ABOUT GOD, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO HIM.

We seem, also, to be more intent upon results, than we are regeneration. We know more about methods of evangelism than we do about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in bringing conviction to the hearts of men.

What is the answer to our dilemma BECAUSE IN SPITE OF ALL THAT WE ARE DOING WE ARE SEEING PITIFUL RESULTS FOR ALL OF THE EFFORTS THAT ARE BEING PUT OUT AND THE HOURS OF TIME GIVEN, TO SAY NOTHING OF THE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS BEING SPENT.

It is time for us to begin to ask: DOES THE WORD OF GOD GIVE US ANY LIGHT FOR THIS DILEMMA? We go to the Bible for the doctrine of salvation. Is it not reasonable that, if the Lord told us to take the Gospel to all the world that He would also tell us HOW?

The answer is, YES!

And here it is in a nutshell: IF WE ARE GOING TO SEE PEOPLE COME TO JESUS CHRIST FOR SALVATION IN THIS 20th CENTURY, THEN THE THING WHICH MATTERS THE MOST IS NOT THAT OUR LIVES ARE PLEASING TO THE WORLD, BUT THAT OUR LIVES ARE PLEASING TO GOD!

If you do not remember anything else that I say this morning, I hope you will never forget this. WE ARE TRYING TO REACH THE WORLD ON THE WORLD'S TERMS, WHEN WE SHOULD BE TRYING TO REACH THE WORLD ON GOD'S TERMS--BECAUSE PEOPLE WILL BE REACHED IN NO OTHER WAY.

All right, where do we begin? Notice

I. THE COMMAND (2 Cor. 6:14a).

If you believe that the Bible is the unchanging, infallible Word of God, then you will take this, not as something to discuss, or even to consider prayerfully, but as a command of God which is absolutely binding upon you as a child of God.

And it should not bother you that it is stated negatively. When some people see a "not" in the Bible, they immediately begin to cry, "Legalism." There are hundreds of times in the Bible when God tells us NOT to do certain things--and this is His right!

And, just as Paul in vv. 11-13 speaks of his great love for the Corinthians, so a failure to spell this truth out in

detail for us would have been a lack of love on his part, and a lack of love on God's part not to warn us of the pitfalls which stand in the way of any other course of action.

LET US REMEMBER, TOO, THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE BOTHERED IF THIS RUNS CONTRARY TO MUCH OF WHAT WE ARE HEARING EMPHASIZED TODAY IN CONNECTION WITH OUR MINISTRY TO THE WORLD.

Now, why does this Paul use this figure of speech--a yoke?

It comes out of the OT. Cf. Deut. 22:10,

"Thou shalt now plow with an ox and an ass together." A Jewish farmer would yoke together two animals to plow a field, or to pull a load. Thus, service seems to be prominently in view. To do this he could use two oxen, or two donkeys, but not one ox and one donkey.

The figure of speech is intended to show that in God's sight there is all of the difference in the world between a person who knows Jesus Christ as his Savior, and one who does not know the Lord.

Therefore, anything that brings a Christian and a non-Christian together in a close, working relationship with each other is specifically forbidden by the Word of God.

HE IS NOT TALKING ABOUT CONTACT WITH THE WORLD, BUT WITH INTIMATE, DAILY LIVING WITH THE WORLD.

This applies to worship. Churches start the downward trek when they fail to insist upon salvation as the primary condition for participation in the ministry of the church. People are not going to be won to Christ by compromise on this point.

This applies to marriage. Oh, what heartache comes to young people who know the Lord because they begin by dating and then marry those who do not share their faith in Christ.

This applies to amusements, to friendships, even to business if it means entering into partnership with someone who does not know the Lord.

IF WE ARE TO HAVE THE BLESSING OF GOD ON OUR LIVES THEN WE MUST NOT FORM OUR CLOSEST RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW THE LORD. BOTH SCRIPTURE AND EXPERIENCE SHOW THAT THIS IS USUALLY DISASTROUS FOR THE CHRISTIAN. IT IS ONE REASON WHY SOME CHRISTIANS NEVER GET THEIR PROBLEMS SOLVED.

Then, to show the reasonableness of what he is saying, Paul asks

II. LIVE QUESTIONS (2 Cor. 6:17b-18c). And the answer to every question is just the same.

Remember that Paul in his command has emphasized the difference between a believer and an unbeliever.

Now note:

- 1) All of the words he uses for believers, or words which can be associated with them.
- 2) All of the words which have to do with unbelievers.
- 3) All of the words which describe a close relationship between the two.

We will take the last first:

- 1) "Fellowship" - sharing, or participating in the same thing.
- 2) "Communion" - what belongs to one belongs to the other, and what is true of one is true of the other.
- 3) "Concord" - harmony. We get our word symphony from this.
- 4) "Part" - usually has to do with an inheritance, and one's share in it. What is the hope of the world as compared with the hope of a Christian?
- 5) "Agreement" - What is there in one which resembles what you would find in the other?

The contrast is between:

- 1) Righteousness, and lawlessness.
- 2) Light, and darkness.
- 3) Christ, and Belial (the Devil, the worthless one).
- 4) He that believeth, with one who is an unbeliever.
- 5) The temple of God, with idols.

The answer to every question is one word: NONE. The things which mean so much to us will mean nothing to a person who is not a Christian until he becomes a Christian. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:17ff.

When we try to adapt ourselves to the world we are trying to do something which cannot be done. The preaching of the cross will always be foolish to the world!

Finally, for this morning, let us note

III. AN ALL-IMPORTANT DOCTRINE (found in the CT and in the HT) (2 Cor. 6:16b).

It has to do with what we are: "the temple of the living God." HAS THIS TRUTH EVER REALLY GRIPPED YOUR HEART? DO YOU REALLY KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS? Cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19, 20; Lev. 26:11, 12; Ezek. 37:26-28.



What follows? Three wonderful truths.

- 1) "I will dwell in them"—His special place of abode on the earth. Cf. what Solomon said at the dedication of the Temple.
- 2) "I will walk in them"—His life and work through us.
- 3) "I will be their God, and they shall be my people"—All that a God should be, He will be to us—our Provider, our Protector, our Comfort, our Peace, our Sufficiency. We will experience His grace, His peace, His love—and so on and on.

Concl: We will conclude our text next Sunday. But here we have the heart of what we need to know. WE ARE NOT GOING TO REACH THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD BY SHOWING THEM HOW MUCH LIKE THEM WE ARE, BUT WHAT THERE IS ABOUT US THAT IS DIFFERENT!

It cannot be an act; it must be genuine. As we search His Word, and as we walk with our Lord, our love for the world will grow as we never realized that it could, but also they will see the evidence of what God has done for us, and that He is living in us!

Cf. 1 Pet. 3:15.

GOD'S PROMISES FOR THESE DAYS  
2 Cor. 6:17-7:1

Scripture reading: Isa. 52:1-12

- Intro: We have come to a very crucial passage in 2 Corinthians. It also becomes very controversial when as Christians we consider what this means to us today--what effect it is to have upon our lives.

- 1) And it is important to see that Paul told the Corinthians these things because of his great love for them (2 Cor. 6:11-13).

- 2) And we must also see that Paul wrote this after having expressed his great concern for the people of the world--people who did not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, but people who needed to know Him!

It is essential that we note both of these points!

This morning I want to direct your attention to the two words in 7:1, "these promises." In the Gk NT there is an emphasis on the word, "these," i.e., such promises as these!

- Paul wants us to recognize that he is saying some very wonderful things here which we must not miss.

"These promises."

Let me raise and answer three questions in dealing with these verses, 6:17-7:1:

- 1) Who is the promiser? Who is making the promises?
- 2) What are the promises?
- 3) Are there any conditions attached to the promises?

I. WHO IS THE PROMISER?

The answer is very simple. It is the Lord.

BUT, if you are reading the Scriptures carefully, you will note that the Lord is referred to in three different ways:

- 1) In 6:16, "as God hath said."
- 2) In 6:17, "saith the Lord."
- 3) In 6:18, "saith the Lord Almighty."

A. God.

— This is the title which identifies God as Deity, completely distinct from humanity.

One of the easiest things for us to do is to treat the

promises of God like we would treat the promises of man. Sometimes men do not keep their promises. At times it is because something prevents them. At other times it is because they forget them. Sometimes man will make a promise with no intention of keeping them.

GOD never falls into any of these categories. Cf. Num. 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Get this truth firmly fixed in your mind.

DISCUSS  
UNDER II.  
A, 3.

Then notice: God wants to dwell in you. He wants to walk in you. He wants to be your God. He wants you to be His people.

But, someone says, He is my God, He does dwell in me, He lives in me, I am one of His people.

Then let me come back with this question: HOW MANY PEOPLE KNOW IT?

Paul is not talking about THE DOCTRINE here; he is talking about THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE DOCTRINE.

Sometimes the people of God never get to the doctrines of the Bible, but there are others who never get beyond the doctrines! Paul wants us to know that the doctrine of the Word of God must become the living experience of the child of God or we will never be able to convince the people of the world that we are the people of God. That is what these promises mean.

Think about these words: GOD and THE PEOPLE OF GOD!

## B. The Lord.

This designates God as the One Who is our Owner, and the One Who, therefore, has sovereign rights over us.

Perhaps one reason we Americans have so much trouble recognizing the Lordship of Jesus Christ over us is because we live in a culture which more and more is despising authority.

When the Lord Jesus Christ becomes my Savior He also becomes my LORD. And when I read a verse like v. 17 and see words spoken by "the Lord," my reaction should be immediate obedience. If "the Lord" has said it, that settles it!

There are many of us who need to cry out in humiliation like Thomas did of old, "My Lord and my God."

Then, as though this were not enough, as though there still might be some doubt about the authority of what he is writing, Paul adds a third name:

### C. The Lord Almighty.

This is the only time that Paul uses this title for God in all of his writings. That should make us realize that there is something very special here.

THE ONLY OTHER TIME THIS EXPRESSION IS USED IS IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST—9 times (one of them translated, "omnipotent"). The first is in 1:8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Have we not forgotten this title when it comes to the evangelization of the world? We give the impression that we know more than the Lord does about reaching the hearts of men, and so we turn to our ways. With what results? A world, for the most part, that is unimpressed!

Oh, how we need to remember that HE is THE ALMIGHTY GOD!

But now what about

## II. THE PROMISES.

There are three.

A. "I will be their God." (See notes on p. 2 as marked.)

B. "I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17b).

But, you say, has he not already received me? Yes, but the verse here shows that Paul has reference to the acceptance, the blessing, the welcoming, the appropriating of that service which we bring to Him.

Cf. Isa. 1 for an example of rejected service.

C. I "will be a Father unto you, saith the Lord Almighty." Cf. 2 Cor. 6:18. IS HE NOT ALREADY MY FATHER?

Can it be that such words are true—that the God of the universe would become my heavenly Father?

But again I ask, Is He not already my Father? And again I must see that Paul is talking about the experience of this relationship.

To me, one of the greatest verses in the OT is Psa. 103:13,

"As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

Many, many times I have come to that verse, thankful not only that God is my God, and that the Lord is my Lord, but thankful also that He is my Father, and that He loves me with the love of a Father.

III. When Toby was killed. "When ye pray, say, Our Father" (cf. Mt. 6:9). Also cf. 2 Sam. 18:33. Is it any wonder that Paul says, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved"?

But, are there any

III. Conditions. Yes. Cf. 6:17a, 7:1. See also 6:14b.

What is "the unclean thing"? At least 60 times in the book of Leviticus Moses mentions things that are unclean to the Lord--things which are displeasing to Him, things which He cannot accept.

This is the reason we need the Word of God--OT and NT.

We are to stay away from the things which defile us in His sight, and seek the purity which grows and grows until that glorious day when we will become like Him!

Concl: Listen to me as I close today. Do you want to see the blessing of God in these days, these days of such open, brazen violation of God's Word which is an affront to God Himself. Then, as always, what God is going to do in the world is linked inseparably with what He is able to do in the hearts of His people, His children.

These are His promises for these days, and we can expect to see His blessing if we obey just as much as in any preceding generation of God's people.

DID DAVID WRITE Psa. 103 WHEN ABSALOM WAS KILLED?

GOD'S TIMELY ENCOURAGEMENTS  
2 Cor. 7:2-16

Intro: We come this morning to the second part of the epistle. Or, we might say that in chapter 7, verse 2, Paul is coming back to the subject which he left in chapter 2, verse 13.

He had been talking about his letter. Cf. "I wrote" in 2:3, 4, and "did I write" in 2:9. Compare this with 7:8.

Also in chapter 1 Paul had started by talking about "comfort," which means encouragement. Cf. 1:3-7.

Now in chapter 7 he comes back to the subject of comfort, or encouragement. Compare 7:4, 6, 7, 13.

In chapter 1 he calls God, "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort"; in chapter 7 he speaks of "God, who comforteth those that are cast down" (v. 6a).

It is wonderful to be able to see that, in "the ministry" which Paul has been talking about from the end of chapter 2 to the first verse of chapter 7, it is God who gives us encouragement, and that He gives it to us just at the right time!

In 7:6 Paul speaks of himself as "cast down," depressed. What was he depressed about? His sufferings? No. He was depressed about the work in Corinth.

We have seen from 1 Corinthians how many serious problems the Corinthian church. And we know that the Apostle Paul had written to them about the problems. Paul regretted sending the letter soon after it was gone because he knew that it would not make the Corinthians happy. See 7:8. Neither did he know whether it would do any good, or not.

He was expecting to hear through Titus how his letter had been received. When he got to Troas, hoping to find Titus, he did not find him, and so he left--EVEN THOUGH, AS HE WRITES, "A DOOR WAS OPENED UNTO ME OF THE LORD" (2:12). But Paul had to find Titus.

When he went to Macedonia he faced terrible suffering, but it was there that he and Titus got together. And so it was just at the time when he was facing such heavy opposition, and wondering how fruitful his work had been in Corinth THAT GOD SENT HIM ENCOURAGEMENT.

How wonderful it is to note the timing of the Lord in such cases!

Before we note the nature of the encouragement, let us spend just a moment noting:

- 1) That the Apostle Paul need encouragement.
  - 2) The kind of encouragement that he was looking for.
- (Comment briefly on both.)

#### I. THE NATURE OF THE REPENTANCE OF THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.

There are two possibilities for repentance, and Paul mentions both of them here. Note the names he gives them:

- 1) "The sorrow of the world" (v. 10).
- 2) "Godly sorrow" (v. 10), or "ye were made sorry after a godly manner" (vv. 9, 11).

The first is a sorrow that regrets the result, and the repentance is to get away from the results. BUT IT IS NOT A SORROW WHICH REGRETS SIN BECAUSE IT IS SIN IN GOD'S SIGHT!

"Godly sorrow" is lit., sorrow according to God, i.e., sorrow in God's way—sorrow which sees sin first and foremost as a violation of the righteousness of God, and deserving of nothing but His judgment. Cf. Psa. 51:4.

The Corinthians repented in a manner that spoke of salvation, and in a manner that caused them to make progress in their salvation. "The sorrow of the world" does not do anything to change a man's course because it is not the kind of repentance which satisfies God.

Thus, it is not only important to repent, but it is important to repent in God's way!

#### II. THE RESULTS OF THE REPENTANCE OF THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH. See esp. v. 11.

Paul uses seven statements to describe what it had done for the Corinthians to repent as God wanted them to repent.

- A. "Went carefully." We would say, diligence. Paul is talking about "earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything" (Thayer, p. 585). Cf. Rom. 12:8, 11; 2 Pet. 1:5. This is usually evident in one who has just come to know the Lord, but sin will do away with it.
- B. "Went clearing of yourselves!" It speaks of one who is willing to take a stand, but who is also careful to state verbally why he is taking such a stand. Paul had done this in writing both 1 and 2 Corinthians. In 1 Cor. 9:3 he wrote, "My answer to them that do examine me is this." Cf. 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 4:16.

- D. "What anger." This is the only time this noun is used in the NT, but the verb is used several times in Mt & Mk. Cf. Mark 10:14. It speaks of a strong, positive, outward reaction to things that are wrong, that are sinful. Such a person is sensitive to sin.
- E. "What fear." This is probably the fear of God. Cf. 7:1; 5:11. God Himself had taken a much greater place in their lives, consistent with their repentance and their idea of sin.
- F. "What vehement desire." This and the next word are found in v. 7. Both of them have to do with Paul. This speaks more of their desire for him as a person—their desire to remove any and everything that stood in the way of their fellowship with each other.
- G. "What zeal." In comparison with the preceding verse, this speaks more of Paul's position, and of their jealous to see that position recognized and maintained. It would show their recognition for all authority which God had established, instead of being satisfied with their divisions, and doing things the way they wanted them done.
- H. "What revenge." They felt that sin should be punished—not tolerated, nor excused in any way! It would follow "indignation" above.

The absence of any of these things shows the need for repentance. And it all ties in with 7:1.

Concl: As the chapter closes it is easy to see the abounding joy of the Apostle which had come to him at just the right moment—sent by God!

But he also wants them to know that all of the strong things he wrote to them, and his joy now, have been because of his great love for them (see v. 12)—not just because he was anxious to punish sin. PAUL WAS PREEMINENTLY CONCERNED ABOUT OTHERS. Cf. Rom. 9:1ff.; 2 Cor. 6:11-13; also 3 John 4; most of 2 Peter 1.

Today we certainly live in a day when it is not popular to stand for the Word of God. It is not even popular with many who are Christians. Nevertheless, this is the only way of blessing, and we can be sure that God will bring His timely encouragements along just when we need them. Standing for the truth of the Word is never easy, BUT, OH, HOW GREAT ARE THE BLESSINGS WHICH FOLLOW SUCH A LIFE!



UNCHANGING EVIDENCE OF GOD'S GRACE

2 Cor. 8:1-9

Intro: The word, "Moreover," at the beginning of chapter 8 suggests "a transition to something new" (Thayer, p. 125). That "something new" goes through all of chapter 8 and all of chapter 9. It has to do with giving.

In some respects it is not new because he had spoken to them about an offering for the saints in Jerusalem in 1 Cor. 16: 1-3.

However, from 2 Cor. 8:6 we learn that that offering was never completed, AND SO THE APOSTLE IS TAKING THIS SECTION OF HIS EPISTLE TO TALK, NOT ONLY ABOUT THAT OFFERING, BUT TO TEACH THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS WHAT THEY NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT THEIR GIVING TO THE LORD.

In the past weeks as we have considered 2 Corinthians together we have learned many things about (1) evangelism, and (2) the work of the ministry. I HAVE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT WE MUST KNOW THE WORD OF GOD IF WE ARE TO CARRY ON THESE PHASES OF THE LORD'S WORK SO AS TO HAVE HIS BLESSING. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO DO THE WORK OF GOD; WE MUST DO IT HIS WAY!

The same thing applies to the financial needs of the Lord's work.

If we look at what professes to be the Lord's work today, we will find a variety of methods being used.

Central Bible Church has had a very strong financial policy. We have depended upon the people of God to give as the Lord has led them to give. We have not solicited funds. No one representing the Church has come to your home each year to find out how much you expect to "pledge."

Neither have we gone to any and everybody, businesses and the like, to get financial support for the Church.

We do not teach that every Christian is obligated to tithe.

Central Bible Church has not put on church dinners, nor have we had bazaars or sales of any kind to raise money for the Church.

Now, the question is: ARE WE RIGHT, OR ARE WE WRONG? How can we tell?

There is only one way. WE MUST GO TO THE SCRIPTURES AND THERE LEARN HOW THE LORD WANTS TO MEET THE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF HIS WORK. Possibly there are some things about giving which we

can learn from these chapters which we have not known before.

Let us notice, first of all

## I. THE ORIGIN OF THE VERY DESIRE TO GIVE (v. 1).

It is to be seen in the words, "the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia."

What does Paul mean by "the grace of God"?

HE MEANS THAT WORK OF GOD, COMPLETELY UNDESERVED, TO WHICH WE MUST TRACE EVERY EVIDENCE OF GOODNESS OR BLESSING AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE.

It is "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" (Tit. 2: 11).

It is by the grace of God that we are what we are (1 Cor. 15:10).

So, nothing ever takes place in the life of the child of God that glorifies Him unless it is initiated by God Himself, by His grace, for without Him we can do nothing. Cf. Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13; 2 Cor. 1:4; 4:7.

Therefore, at the very outset of these two chapters it is strongly indicated:

- 1) That the Lord's work is to be supported only by the Lord's people.
- 2) That there is a definite relationship between our giving and our growth in grace—one is reflected in the other!

From this I can see as the Pastor of Central Bible Church that I need to realize that God must move upon your hearts to give, and that He will do this as you are growing spiritually and going on with Him. THEREFORE, IF I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH I MUST BE EVEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS IN ALL OF OUR HEARTS--AND MEETING THOSE NEEDS THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD.

Often the techniques which we use are just an indication of our spiritual need.

## II. AN ILLUSTRATION: "THE CHURCHES OF MACEDONIA" (vv. 2-5).

Macedonia was the province just north of Achaia. Corinth was located in Achaia. Cities like Philippi and Thessalonica were in Macedonia.

What kind of conditions existed in Macedonia?

Two things are noted in v. 2:

- 1) They were extremely poor--reduced practically to begging. They had hit bottom, is what "deep poverty" literally means.
- 2) They had abounding joy--joy that was more than they could contain, joy that was overflowing. Cf. 1 Thess. 1:5, 6.

This is what they took into their "great trial of affliction." GOD HAD TAKEN THIS POOR, NEEDY GROUP OF CHURCHES, AND HE HAD ALLOWED PRESSURES TO HIT THEM TO DEMONSTRATE IN ALL OTHER PLACES WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE, IN SPITE OF THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES, ARE WALKING IN FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM.

What did happen?

They "abounded unto the riches of their liberality." In v. 3--they gave as much as they were able, and then went far beyond--two things which are rare even among the people of God. And, they did this, not because they were forced to do so, but because they wanted to do so. "They were willing of themselves."

But, more than that, they insisted that Paul take the gift because they wanted to participate (have fellowship) in the ministering to the saints. HOW SIGNIFICANT THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD SHOULD BE REFERRED TO HERE AS SAINTS--those who are chosen of God, set apart from the world, holy, heirs of heaven!

MANY KNOW  
THIS TRUTH  
WHO HAVE HAD  
NO SPECIAL  
TEACHING. THEY  
HAVE WALKED  
WITH THE LORD,  
AND THIS HAS  
BEEN THEIR  
EXPERIENCE.

Why did they do this? The answer is in v. 5.

For an OT illustration of the same kind of thing, cf. Ex. 35:20-29; 36:4-7.

It is amazing to see what the Lord can do through His people when they give Him the opportunity!

Vv. 1-5 show an interesting intermingling of the divine and the human aspects of giving, but in vv. 6-8 Paul is going to show the responsibility that he and Titus had toward the Corinthian church concerning this subject.

### III. THE NEED IN CORINTH (vv. 6-8).

From these verses we can see that

- 1) It is a part of a pastor's ministry to teach his people to give. Therefore, he need not be apologetic if he is teaching giving according to the Word of God.

- 2) If we are not taught giving, then a vital part of our spiritual training is lacking.

For some reason the offering mentioned in 1 Cor. 16 had not been completed. Titus is being sent by Paul to bring it to completion (v. 6), but not only that, but to see to it that their giving keeps pace with every other aspects of their lives as believers (v. 7), and that, while he is not commanding them to give, their willing response will be a primary indication of the sincerity of their restoration to fellowship with the Lord (v. 8). (Comment.)

You can see from this that Paul was looking for the same thing to take place in Corinth that had taken place in the churches of Macedonia!

AS WE COME TO THE LAST VERSE (v. 9), WE LEARN THAT WHEREVER YOU HAVE THE GRACE OF GOD MANIFESTED THE UNCHANGING EVIDENCE IS ALWAYS GIVING.

--It was true in the churches of Macedonia.

--It could be true also in the church at Corinth.

--It was overwhelmingly the case when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world.

IV. THE GREATEST ILLUSTRATION OF ALL (v. 9). How wonderfully the coming of Christ illustrates the very thing Paul is teaching.

Note the expression: "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," our Lord's full title--taking into consideration all that He was and is.

No one was ever so rich, and became so poor, to meet the needs of those who were reduced to that which others might give them--spiritual beggars.

This passage parallels Phil. 2:5-7. Lit., He became poor, <sup>on account of us</sup> being rich, that through His poverty (reaching to the Cross), we might be rich.

Concl: We have only started into these two chapters, but you will notice that all that Paul has said thus far has to do with giving to others who know the Lord. This has to do with their physical needs, but it also has to do with their spiritual needs. Therefore, as we give, we give because the same grace that led the Lord Jesus Christ to come to meet our need has been given to us that through us the Lord might continue to meet the needs of His people. In this way "we are laborers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9a).

THE GIFT WHICH GOD ACCEPTS  
2 Cor. 8:10-24

Intro: It is important to know the situation which Paul is referring to in chapters 8 and 9.

As he concluded his first epistle to the Corinthians he was speaking to them about their offering for the saints, the people of God, in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3). In Jerusalem the Lord's people had suffered greatly at the hands of unbelieving Jews! Many of the churches outside of Jerusalem helped them in a monetary way.

Evidently the Corinthians had started to gather money together to send to Jerusalem, BUT THE OFFERING HAD NEVER BEEN COMPLETED. This was probably due to the troubles which they had within the Church in Corinth. Paul was concerned about finishing an unfinished task.

Now in 2 Corinthians Paul brings up this subject again.

We might very naturally feel that this was the wrong time to speak of such a thing, especially since it seems that ~~the~~ the difficulties between Paul and the Corinthians were just being healed.

We think like this because we have a 20th century orientation to giving rather than the New Testament doctrine. PAUL TALKED TO THEM ABOUT GIVING BECAUSE HE FELT THAT IT WAS JUST AS VITAL A PART OF THEIR LIVES AS CHRISTIANS AS ANY OF THE OTHER SUBJECTS WHICH HE HAD TAKEN UP IN 1 OR 2 CORINTHIANS!

He knew that blessing comes to an individual Christian, or to a Church, through its giving. Paul is the one who has preserved those words of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35b).

So, if you want to see blessing, you cannot ignore giving.

But Paul was always very careful about his motives in writing or speaking on such a subject--as I must be. Cf. Phil. 4:17. Here in 2 Cor. 8 he is also concerned about blessing. And this is the reason he is sending Titus to see that the gift is completed (v. 6), but in mentioning this to Titus he was delighted to learn that Titus himself was so eager to go that it was not really necessary for Paul to ask him.

2 Cor. 12:14.

Along with Titus two unnamed disciples were going. We will see the reason a little later. One is mentioned in v. 18; the other in v. 22; both, in v. 23.

Having seen all of this, and thinking of these three men carrying this epistle to Corinth, let us notice how Paul deals with

this subject.

Let us see

- I. THE ESSENTIAL WAY PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT GIVING. You will find it in v. 12: "It is accepted." A better translation would probably be, "he is accepted," but it is the idea that our giving can be acceptable to God, or unacceptable, that I want you to see.

WE MUST  
BE ACCEPTED  
BEFORE WHAT  
WE BRING CAN  
BE ACCEPTED.  
CF. ESTHER.

Will you note, as you think about this, that we have the idea in giving here that we do not give to a Church, or to a missionary, or to some work of God on earth; OUR GIVING IS TO THE LORD.

If there is any doubt about this, cf. 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15, 16; Phil. 4:18.

An amazing illustration is found in Isa. 1:10-15.

Somehow there has always been in the heart of man the feeling that if he gives, he is really paying for the privilege of living his life and using the rest of his money any way he wants to. NOTHING COULD BE FARTHER FROM WHAT THE WORD OF GOD HAS TO SAY ON THE SUBJECT.

But it is very important that we start here, or we will never really understand what it means to give to the Lord.

Although we do not bring our gifts to an altar, like the OT saints did, yet there are ~~three~~ <sup>two</sup> expressions in our chapter which suggest such an idea:

- 1) ~~The Greek word, προθυμία, is found 4x in chs. 8 and 9, but unfortunately it is translated a different way each time. The verses are 8:11, 12, 19; 9:2. We read, "a readiness," "a willing mind," "your ready mind," and "the forwardness of your mind." EACH TIME IT SPEAKS OF PUTTING SOMETHING BEFORE A PERSON, AND COULD GIVE THE IDEA OF PRESENTING A SACRIFICE.~~
- 2) Note the word, "blame," in v. 20. This can be translated, spot, or blemish, a word with a definite relationship to sacrifices.
- 2) V. 21. Our gifts have to be "honest," i.e., right, just, honorable, "in the sight of the Lord," in His presence.

Then, just as OT sacrifices have specific conditions which they must meet, what are the conditions which render our giving acceptable to God?

## II. THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR GIVING.

- A. *What (if) is Christ's (God's) will not yet said to be mentioned, THE ONE WHO GIVES MUST BE A CHILD OF GOD.*  
This is the emphasis of the whole passage. Paul is writing to a church, to those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

God is not asking, and has never asked, the world to support His work on earth. But with the church losing more and more of its distinctive traits, it has employed methods that are contrary to the Word of God. Even the Gospel has become obscure; it is no wonder that this basic principle of Scripture has been ignored.

We are delighted to have anyone attend Central Bible Church who would like to come, but we want everyone to understand that when the offering plate is passed it is only for believers to give, expressing their love for the Lord. If you have not received the Lord Jesus as your Savior, then let it be known that He wants you, not what you have. Until you have trusted Christ as your Savior, your gifts are unnecessary.

What a tragedy that many have been driven away from the church because the church has been more interested in receiving than in giving.

- B. Our gifts must be given willingly.

The emphasis in the church has been on tithing. Paul does not even use the word in these two chapters. More than that you will not find the word mentioned once in the NT as binding upon the people of God today. In fact, after you leave the Gospel of Luke in the NT, the only places where you find the Word mentioned from John to Revelation is in Heb. 7 where the writer is talking about the tithes Abraham paid to Melchizedek and comparing it with the commandment that the Levites had to take tithes of the Israelites under the Law. BUT WE ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO PAY TITHES. GOD WANTS OUR OFFERINGS TO BE VOLUNTARY, TO COME FROM OUR HEARTS. You may set a tithe, a tenth, personally as a voluntary matter, but you do not have to do this, nor do I or anyone else have the right to impose a tithe upon the people of God.

*Nor are we to  
give what others  
give. Cf. 4:12.  
See Luke 21:1-4.*

Cf. 2 Cor. 9:6, 7. Give because you love the Lord and because you want to—not because you have to.

In dealing with a subject like this we need to keep in mind that Paul has not said everything here that could be said. You would have to take all of the Bible for that. But he has said what the Corinthians needed to hear, and this can be instructive for us.

1. Is there to be any more of this kind of appeal?

Sometimes we are moved by an emotional appeal, or by the way we like an individual. But the question is this: I AM GIVING MY GIFT TO THE LORD. WILL IT BE USED FOR HIS GLORY?

Note carefully what Paul said in vv. 19-21, the divine side and the human side.

Finally,

- D. Our gifts <sup>are</sup> ~~should be~~ an expression of the life we have in Christ (v. 24). Cf. 1 John 3:14; Rom. 5:5.

Cf. vv. 2, 8. The very fact that we want to give, that it gives us joy to give, is in itself an evidence that we have life in Christ.

Concl: Is this not quite a different picture from what we usually get from the church today? What blessings we miss because we do not know the Word of God as we should. It is only through the Word that the work of God can be carried on according to the will of God.

It may be that I am speaking to some who have never really faced the fact that this is a vital part of our relationship with the Lord. You have been missing a blessing. I am not saying that you should give to Central Bible Church. I am saying that you need to give to the Lord--not because you have to, but because this is the fruit of having given yourself to Him.

And may our giving never be with the idea that we are buying the Lord off. Let it be in recognition that all that we are and all that we possess is His.

Perhaps there are those, too, who have even let this be an issue which has stood in the way of their acceptance of Christ. Let me say that you will not understand the feeling that Christians have in giving until you become a child of God yourself. But right now you must understand that the Lord does not seek what you have; HE SEEKS YOU. And He is not at all concerned about what you can give Him; He is concerned about all that He has to give to you. Cf. 2 Cor. 8:9.



# WHAT GOD GIVES WHEN WE GIVE

## 2 Cor. 9:1-15

Intro: This week, after bringing two messages on the subject of giving, I received a cartoon in the mail. The cartoon showed a minister with his ushers who were just bringing in the offering. There were only a few coins on the plate. One of them is saying to the pastor, "You keep telling the congregation like it is, and the collection will never be like it was!"

Let me explain for any who might be with us for the first time in this series--I am preaching through the 2<sup>nd</sup> epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, and in chapters 8 and 9 Paul is writing about giving.

In particular, he is talking about an offering which was being taken by several churches for the church in Jerusalem. The Corinthian church had not completed its offering because of troubles within the church, but now, with many of the problems solved, Paul is encouraging them to get back to their offering.

I am sure that all of us have found quite a different emphasis from the Apostle Paul from what is often made in the church of Jesus Christ today.

He has not said anything about tithing. He has not set any amount for them to give. Instead, he has emphasized that they should give from their hearts--give because they want to give. He has used expressions which go back to the OT sacrifices, and he has even indicated that it is possible to bring offerings which the Lord will not accept. Underlying the whole passage is the fact that the Lord wants His work to be supported by His own people--not by the people of the world. And we could go on and on.

This morning in chapter 9 he spends the first five verses completing what he was saying in chapter 8 about the offering for the Lord's people in Jerusalem. (Review them briefly.)

Beginning with 9:6 and going through the rest of the chapter he writes about the results of our giving. I have entitled these verses, WHAT GOD GIVES WHEN WE GIVE. Here we are to learn that, while we are not to give because of the results, yet it is important for us to realize that there will be results!

I never like to hear people talk about giving to the Lord like paying taxes to the government. Nor do I like to hear them talk about giving to the Lord like they would about investing in the stock market. Let us never put the Lord's work in this light. We are to give because we love the Lord, to give be-

cause we want to--not because we are trying to get something from Him. BUT HE WANTS US TO KNOW THAT, IF WE GIVE, THERE WILL BE THINGS GIVEN FROM HIM IN RETURN. When you and I see what these gifts are, we will realize why Paul puts our giving along with other things related to the spiritual life in 8:7.

# I. THE PROMISE OF BLESSING (v. 6).

He likens giving to the farmer who sows seed, and Paul uses two words to describe how Christians can give to the Lord: "sparingly" or "bountifully." In one case you have a Christian who gives just as little as he can. He holds back. The other gives perhaps more than he can really afford--"bountifully." It is like the little boy who gave his entire lunch to the Lord. (And, by the way, this is the one miracle of our Lord which is recorded in all four Gospels--the only one!) What did the Lord do with it? He fed 5,000 men plus women and children, and there were twelve baskets full left over when everyone had eaten all that they wanted.

So Paul is teaching us a truth--a truth which is supported by the Old Testament, which is seen in the ministry of the Lord, and which has been confirmed over and over again in the lives of the people of God right down to the present day. Cf. Prov. 11:24, 25; 19:17, 22-9

Many of you could tell how the Lord has blessed you because of the way He has moved on your heart to give to Him. Sometimes the blessing has been material. Sometimes it has been through the joy of the Lord in your heart. Sometimes it has led to opportunities to minister to others--possibly people have been led to the Lord. BUT, ALWAYS, THE BLESSINGS HAVE EXCEEDED OUR GIVING. Even if we have sown sparingly, we have reaped more than we have sown.

But now let us look at the four special blessings which Paul mentions here which result when we give to the Lord because we love Him and because we want to and because it is our desire to please Him. Remember, we may give to people, to a church, to a missionary, but it is always to be as unto Him.

# II. AFTER GIVES WHICH GOD GIVES WHEN WE GIVE TO HIM.

## A. We enter into a deeper experience of the love of God (v. 7).

Look at this verse very carefully. This is the teaching of the NT regarding this subject of giving--expressed in just one verse.

We are to give as we prefer to give. This means, as

we have voluntarily chosen to give, making our decision as in the presence of the Lord.

We are NOT to give if it hurts us ("grudgingly"), nor are we to give if we feel that we have to give ("of necessity").

The Lord wants our giving to be "cheerful," that is, with joy, referring to one who is glad to give for that which needs to be done for the glory of God.

BUT REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE THE ONE WHO IS TO BE LED. YOU ARE THE ONE TO DECIDE IF A CERTAIN WORK IS TO BE SUPPORTED BY YOU. AND YOU HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE THAT YOUR GIFT IS GOING TO BE HANDLED AS IT SHOULD BE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD--according to 8:20, 21.

You cannot give to everything, and you need not give to all who seek your help. The Lord must lead you and He measures your gift according to that which you have, and not according to what you do not have (cf. 8:12).

Many of the Lord's people are being duped today by men and works which are not worthy of support. Be sure you know what you are giving to, and that your gift is being used properly. But enough of that!

Where is the blessing here?

Look at the statement, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

Does He not love an <sup>(?)</sup>uncheerful giver? What does this mean? Cf. 2 Cor. 6:17, 18; John 14:21, 23.

THE LORD PROMISES THAT THOSE WHO GIVE AS DESCRIBED IN THESE TWO CHAPTERS WILL ENTER INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LOVE OF GOD WHICH WILL BE UNKNOWN TO THOSE WHO DO NOT GIVE. Therefore, giving is directly related to our spiritual blessing and growth! If you are not giving, and giving joyfully to the Lord as you are able, then there is going to be a very serious lack in your understanding and experience of the love of God.

- B. The Lord will see to it that you have "all sufficiency in all things." Cf. v. 8. What a verse this is, but how strange to find it here--AND YET HERE IT IS!

Not only does one who gives to the Lord enter into a deeper experience of the love of God, but he also enters into a deeper experience of the power of God!

Look at the all's in the verse:

- "all grace"
- "always"
- "all sufficiency"
- "all things"
- "every (or, all) good work."

Because of the enabling grace of God, you are promised here that you will have such a wonderful provision from the Lord that you will be independent of circumstances. You will have what Bishop Moule (whose life was changed by this verse) said was "such a supply on the spot as to be independent of externals" (p. 93).

Now let me be clear. God is not saying that money will buy all of this for you. But keep it in its proper place according to 8:7. Giving bases upon such a foundation will bring this blessing which is absolutely necessary in everybody's experience.

Think what God is able to do: Rom. 4:21; 11:23; 14:4; Eph. 3:20, 21; Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 2:18; 5:7; 7:25; 11:19; Jude 24.

What a promise!

- C. He will cause "through us thanksgiving to God"---from the lives of others (vv. 11-13).

You see, He will bring spiritual blessing into the lives of others. DON'T YOU WISH THAT ALL MEN WOULD PRAISE THE LORD? Would you not like to be one whom the Lord can use to bring praise to Himself from the hearts and lips of others?

What a privilege to have a part in turning discouragement and difficulties into praise! It is impossible for us to know how many times this has happened, but it does happen!

- D. Finally, Paul mentions the effect that it has upon the love that others have for us, causing them even to pray for us (cf. v. 14).

The body of Christ is built up, and drawn together. How many people do you have praying for you? No one can do more for you than to pray. And Paul wants us to know that, when we give, we are doing a work which will cause those to whom we give to lift our names before the throne of grace in prayer.

Concl: But now let me close as Paul closes.

You cannot enumerate the blessings of God, what He has given to us, without a reference to the greatest of all gifts: "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift"--the gift which defies description, where words fail us. "It is higher than the mind can conceive; higher than language can express" (Barnes, p. 202).

What is this "unspeakable gift"? It is CHRIST!

Cf. John 3:16. How can we possibly tell others about HIM? Have you ever felt like you have done justice to Him when you have spoken of:

- His Deity.
- The miracle of His incarnation.
- His death--can you fathom it?
- His amazing resurrection from the dead.
- His ascension and present ministry in heaven.
- His care for us, His faithfulness, His patience with us, etc.
- His promises, His Word, esp. our hope.

"He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things" (Rom. 8:32).

If you have Christ, God's greatest gift, you have eternal life. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE CHRIST, YOU REALLY HAVE NOTHING!

Oh, how wonderful it is to know Him! And anyone can know Him simply by recognizing Who He is, What He was doing when He died and rose again, and that He will be our Saviour the moment we turn in faith in Him, trusting Him to save us from our sins!

It is though the Lord is saying to us this morning:

"I gave My life for thee, My precious blood I shed,  
That thou mightest ransomed be, And quickened from the dead;  
I gave, I gave My life for thee, What hast thou given for Me?"

What does He want? He wants you.

Then He wants your life.

Then He wants all that you have.

What will be the results? We have seen part of them this morning--blessings that we will never be able to measure, blessings that will fill our lives to overflowing with the joy and peace which we all want, but which can only be found in Christ!

# THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

2 Cor. 10:1-6

Intro: This morning we come to the third major section of 2 Corinthians.

The three are:

- 1) After a brief introduction Paul discusses the ministry in chs. 1-7.
- 2) In chs. 8 and 9 he talks about money--their part in the offering which was being taken for the believers in Jerusalem.
- 3) From ch. 10 to the end of the epistle he is defending his apostleship.

We need to keep in mind that the authority of Paul's epistles rests on the fact that he was truly an apostle. So this is not just a matter affecting the Apostle Paul, but IT AFFECTS A GREAT SEGMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE VERY CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH ITSELF SINCE THE REVELATION OF THE CHURCH WAS GIVEN PRIMARILY THROUGH PAUL!

He had had to face this problem in 1 Cor. 9 and also in Gal. 1, 2. Cf. also 1 Cor. 15:8, 9.

In both 1 and 2 Corinthians Paul identifies himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." His right to speak as he does is dependent upon his right to call himself an apostle.

The problem stemmed from the fact that he was not one of the original twelve.

From the way he writes here in chapter 10 we can see some of the things which were being said about him, some of the accusations which were being made. Let us note carefully how he gets into this subject in the first six verses of chapter 10.

## I. THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLE (in vv. 1, 2a). Cf. 1:24.

This is the second and last time he mentions himself by name in the epistle. Cf. 1:1. This emphasizes the importance of what he is about to say.

There is both a tenderness and a solemnity in what he writes.

He says, "I beseech," in both verses, but he uses different words in the original. The first is stated as a warning; the second, as a plea--almost as a prayer, and possibly with the thought that he had been praying about it.

Then, although they had accused him of being "bold" when absent, and "base" (like a servant - 1 Pet. 5:5) when present, he claims for himself "the meekness and gentleness of Christ":

- 1) "Meekness" - that grace of God wrought in us by the Spirit of God which accepts God's dealings with us as what we need, without disputing or resisting it. Cf. David's attitude toward Shimei in 2 Sam. 16:11.
- 2) "Gentleness" - the person who refuses to claim the full legal rights he has because he does not want to do something which would injure another.

Perhaps one reason he could speak of these things was because he knew what the Lord had done for him.

This is what he had written about back in 3:18. We may to speak with severity, but we must always do so with "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Cf. Matt. 11:28-30.

## II. THE WALK OF THE APOSTLE (vv. 2b, 3).

We are going to be thinking about his warfare in a moment, but right now it is important to notice that he speaks of his walk before he speaks of his warfare.

"Warfare" is a term which Paul is using to describe the nature of his ministry, BUT HE WANTS US TO REALIZE THAT YOU MUST KNOW HOW TO WALK BEFORE YOU CAN WAGE AN EFFECTIVE WARFARE.

What could you say about his walk, his manner of living?

Two things:

- 1) It was "in the flesh." How well we know this! The flesh with its weaknesses, its limitations, its sin. How wonderful it will be when we are no longer "in the flesh." Cf. Phil. 1:24.
- 2) It was NOT "according to the flesh"--and neither would the warfare be "according to the flesh." We are not limited to our own resources. WE ARE INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD. Cf. the difference between "the works of the flesh" and "the fruit of the Spirit" in Gal. 5:19-23.  
Cf. Zech. 4:6, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."  
Cf. "Our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5b).

Do we know this great truth, or are we trying to please the Lord and serve the Lord with our limited resources. To do so is just as big a mistake as to try to save ourselves.

But now, what about--

### III. THE WARFARE OF THE APOSTLE--and of every other child of God (vv. 5, 6).

We will pass over v. 4 for the moment.

What was the warfare that Paul was engaged in?

It had to do with the way people think! The thoughts of men are like great fortresses where men take refuge from God and from His Word.

Paul was not a weak, frightened child of God, trying frantically to hang on to his faith. NO! He was a mighty soldier, storming the fortresses which had been raised against God by the reasonings, the philosophies of men--everything that raised itself "against the knowledge of God." Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-7.

N.B. How  
PAUL DRINKS  
GOD + CHRIST  
TOGETHER IN  
V. 5.  
ALSO IN  
2:14-17.

What was his objective? Not only to knock the walls down, but to capture the inhabitants and to bring them to complete obedience to Christ!

Paul believed that Jesus Christ was LORD.

Before we talk about his "weapons," let us note from what he has said in 1 Cor. 1 and 2 Cor. 4 that this was going to come about, not by a philosophical approach to the Gospel, and not by trying to answer all of their problems, BUT BY THE SIMPLE, FAITHFUL, AND POWERFUL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.

Oh, that we believed this the way the Apostle Paul did!

But, you say, so often when the Gospel of Christ is preached it seems powerless. Why? It is because we have not paid attention to--

### IV. THE WEAPONS OF THE APOSTLE (v. 4).

He does not describe them here. I am going to ask you to turn to another passage this morning to see what the weapons are. But, before we do that, let us notice what he DOES say here.

There are three things: one negative; two positive.

- 1) The negative: They are "not carnal." That is the weapons do not come from you and me. Our training, our experience, our knowledge, our zeal --all have their place. BUT THESE ARE NOT ENOUGH IF THIS IS ALL WE HAVE!



- 2) The positive:
  - a) The true weapons are "mighty through God," i.e., mighty to Him, that which He recognizes and that which He will use. This is very important to know because we often use that which seems to be mighty to us, but it does not have the blessing of God. Cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9.
  - b) The true weapons will demolish the "strongholds." This is what we want--that which can expose the emptiness of man's ideas and bring conviction to a heart blinded by sin!

YET, HOW OFTEN THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED, AND MEN TURN AWAY APPARENTLY UNTOUCHED! Why?

Please turn to Eph. 6:10-20.

What do we have here? Two things: the Word of God, and prayer--our armor and our weapons.

Which comes first?

The Word does.

What does He say about it? He says that we must put it on! This is really the most important thing that is said about these verses. There must be the practical application of the Word of God to our lives. We must not only know it; WE MUST LIVE IT! This is why Paul spoke about his walk before he spoke about his warfare.

Then what follows?

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit . . . (and on down through v. 20 with its evangelistic emphasis). "THE GOSPEL MOVES WITH SLOW AND TIMID PACE WHEN THE SAINTS ARE NOT AT THEIR PRAYERS EARLY AND LATE AND LONG" (BOUNDS, 101).

Concl: How is the battle going with you? Are you trying to hang on for dear life, or are you throwing down the citadels of unbelief? What shape are your weapons in, or are you trying to fight "according to the flesh"?

Oh, that the Lord would be able to impress us with the importance, yes, the absolute necessity of giving ourselves to the Word of God and to prayer IF we expect to see Him gaining the victory in the lives of His people and in winning the people of the world to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. THIS IS HIS WAY, AND THERE IS NO OTHER WAY! Let us believe it, act on it, and see the blessing of God!

THE LIMITATIONS OF A LIMITLESS MINISTRY  
2 Cor. 10:7-18

Intro: In the book of Hebrews, chapter 5, verses 1 and 5, we read these words:

"For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins . . . And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

Therefore we can see in these verses the limitations which God placed upon the priestly ministry of the OT:

--Men did not choose the priesthood; they were "called of God."

--They did not determine their own ministry; God told them what they were to do, when, and why!

They were ordained by God and called by God. NO ONE ELSE HAD THE RIGHT TO MINISTER AS A PRIEST.

In Neh. 7:63-65 we find that, at the time of the third return of exiles to Jerusalem, there were some who were serving as priests whose genealogical descent from Aaron could not be established. Therefore, they were "put from the priesthood."

During our Lord's ministry here on earth, the most scathing words of denunciation he spoke were directed at the men who were considered the spiritual leaders of the people. But listen to come of the things the Lord said to them:

- 1) "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither permit them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13).
- 2) "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matt. 23:15).
- 3) "Ye are like whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:27, 28).

AND YET THESE ARE THE VERY MEN WHO WERE TRYING TO EXCLUDE OUR LORD, AND THEY WERE ALWAYS TELLING HIM WHAT HE SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT DO!

It has always been true that, when men have gotten away from the Word of God, their ideas about the work of God have gotten completely distorted.

God's work in the world is limitless. It is limitless as to time; it is limitless as to people; it is limitless as

to what God is able to do. Cf. Mark 16:15; Matt. 19:26,  
"with God all things are possible."

BUT, at the same time, GOD HAS ESTABLISHED LIMITATIONS AS TO WHO WILL SERVE HIM, HOW THEY SHALL SERVE HIM, AND AS TO WHAT THE PARTICULAR NATURE OF THEIR MINISTRY SHOULD BE.

Let us look this morning at the limitations which God had placed upon the Apostle Paul. There are two things which we need to note:

- 1) He was called by God as "the apostle of the Gentiles!" Cf. Rom. 11:13, "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office."
- 2) In Rom. 15 we have the other part. He writes of "the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles," and then a few verses later he writes this: "Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:15b, 16a, 20).

I can tell you now that, if you tried to call the Apostle Paul to be the pastor of this church, he would turn it down. Why? Because he was called of God to do something else--namely, preaching to people who had never heard of Christ, seeing them established in the faith, and then moving on to do the same thing over again.

God does not call all of His servants with these limitations<sup>s</sup>  
BUT THIS WAS HIS WILL FOR PAUL!

We need to understand this if we are to understand the passage before us this morning. THE MINISTRY IS LIMITLESS, BUT THERE ARE LIMITATIONS GOD PLACES ON EACH MAN'S MINISTRY.

Looking at this in more of a general way so that we can all profit from this passage, what are some of the limitations which God has placed upon His work--limitations which are in effect today?

#### I. THERE ARE LIMITATIONS AS TO WHO CAN SERVE THE LORD.

In v. 7 Paul makes it very clear that any person who is to serve the Lord must be "Christ's." This means he must be a child of God, he must be saved, he must be a person who has received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior!

WE ARE NOT  
TO JUDGE  
ACCORDING  
TO OUTWARD  
APPEARANCES.  
CF. 1 SAM.  
16:7.

Illus: A few years ago I met a young minister of a certain denomination who had quit a \$20,000 a

year job to go into the ministry. He told me how he had looked forward to going to their Seminary, as he put it, to be with men who talked all of the time about Jesus. When he got there, he told me, to his dismay he found that the men not only did not talk about Jesus; he could not find even one who claimed to know him as Savior! Today I suppose that most of these men are pastoring churches in their particular denomination.

This is a truth which has been practically eliminated from many of our churches. BUT IT STANDS FOREVER IN THE WORD OF GOD AS ONE OF THE LIMITATIONS WHICH GOD HAS PLACED ON HIS WORK. IF YOU ARE NOT CHRIST'S, YOU CANNOT SERVE HIM!

A second limitation:

## II. THERE IS A LIMITATION AS TO WHAT WE PREACH.

Look at v. 14 and then at v. 16, and notice what he speaks about doing in v. 15.

There are thousands of churches in America today; how many of them are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ like Paul preached it?

There are millions of church members in America today; how many of them do you suppose have trusted Christ as Savior AND ARE ABLE TO TELL SOMEONE ELSE HOW TO BE SAVED.

I am sure that if you were to visit the Protestant churches, so-called, in America today, you would literally hear every thing under the sun. BUT, ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD, THERE ARE LIMITATIONS ON WHAT WE ARE TO PREACH. We are limited to the Word of God!

Thank God there are hundreds of pastors who stand for the truth, and hundreds of churches that are dedicated to the ministry of the Word, but by comparison with the total numbers who claim to be Christian, our ranks are pitifully small. It has always been so.

Along with this, the Apostle points out another limitation

## III. THERE ARE LIMITATIONS TO THE FELLOWSHIP WE CAN HAVE.

Paul was not only ready to preach the Gospel to the world; PAUL WAS READY TO STAND FOR THE GOSPEL IN THE CHURCH.

Who is he talking about when he says, "any man" in v.

7, and when he says, "say they," in v. 10, and "such an one," in v. 11. Who is he talking about? Evidently they claimed to be "Christ's" (v. 7), but this seems to mean very little to the Apostle Paul when you are talking about the ministry of the Gospel.

THEY WERE TRYING TO INTRODUCE INTO THE GOSPEL, INTO THE MINISTRY, INTO THE CHURCH, THINGS WHICH WERE FOREIGN TO THE WORD OF GOD--AND THE APOSTLE WAS READY TO EXERCISE HIS FULL APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY TO SEE THAT THEY DID NOT!

He not only preached the Gospel; he stood ready to do as Jude wrote: "earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all) delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). SOMETIMES YOU WILL FIND THAT THERE IS MORE TROUBLE WITH THIS INSIDE THE CHURCH THAN THERE IS OUT-SIDE!

People are saying today that the Church has to change to meet the needs of the people in this generation. I will say so too--but not the way they are saying it. THE CHURCH NEEDS TO CHANGE BACK TO THE MESSAGE IT HAS FORSAKEN--A GOSPEL OF A SAVIOR WHO DIED TO SAVE MEN FROM THEIR SIN!

But let me go on to my last point. Because all of these things are true, there is another limitation.

IV. THERE ARE LIMITATIONS IN THIS MINISTRY AS TO WHO WE ARE TO PLEASE.

Cf. vv. 12, 17, 18. *Self-commendation almost always rests on human standards, and comparisons with others. This is out!*

The servant of the Lord often runs into this dilemma: THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING TO THE LORD WHICH ARE NOT PLEASING TO MEN, AND THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH ARE PLEASING TO MEN WHICH ARE NOT PLEASING TO THE LORD. In such cases, what do we choose?

Fortunately there are times when we can please the Lord and men, too. But when there is the conflict, if we know our calling, we have no choice but to obey the Lord. V. 17 was used first in 1 Cor. 1:31; it comes originally from Jer. 9:23, 24. To glory in the Lord means to rejoice because you know that you are doing the thing which pleases Him--instead of glorying in the things of men!

Remember 2 Cor. 5:9. GAL. 1:10.

Concl: A limitless ministry--with limitations. It is only

only as we observe the limitations that we will see the limitlessness of what God will do in our day. May the Lord give us the courage to stand by the limitations in these days when many of the people of God are acting as though there were none.

It may not be popular, and we may be outnumbered, but there is no doubt from the Word of God that this is the way to see the blessing of God.

When the Babylonians took Judah into captivity, certain young men were selected for special training by the king. These young men were in a foreign land, among worshippers of heathen gods, and they were to be taught "the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans" (Dan. 1:4b). But there were risks involved concerning their relationship to God. One day the decree went out that whoever would not bow down and worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar would be burned alive in a fiery furnace. You remember the stand that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego took:

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3:16b-18).

What happened?

In this case, God spared them (although it is not always so). Then listen to what Nebuchadnezzar said:

"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him, and hath changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore, I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, who speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

"Than the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon" (Dan. 3:28-30).

May the Lord give us young men, older men, young women, and older women who will trust the Lord in our day like these young men did in their day!

THE FOLLY OF A JEALOUS APOSTLE  
2 Cor. 11:1-15

Intro: My subject this morning is rather startling! The folly of a jealous Apostle!

Perhaps you might feel that this is a gross misrepresentation of the Apostle Paul, but I want you to notice that Paul uses both of these words in vv. 1, 2, and applies them to himself!

What was his "folly"? He uses the same word again in vv. 17, 21. A reading of the chapter will indicate he considered his boasting about his apostleship as folly.

This is quite out of keeping with what he had written in 1 Corinthians about the fact that he was an apostle. Do you remember 1 Cor. 15:9?

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet (or fit) to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

Why does he boast now?

Because he was jealous.

But, then we may ask, Why was he jealous? Was he jealous of Peter and Apollos? No. Was he jealous of the false teachers? Was Paul the kind of a person who had to be the center of everything? NO!

Why, then, was he jealous? HE WAS JEALOUS FOR THE SPIRITUAL BLESSING AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS.

We have already seen in our Corinthian studies that there is a grammatical connection between the words jealous and zealous! Paul was zealous to see them experience all that they had in Christ and jealous lest anything rob them of any blessing that was theirs in Christ!

Since he was the one who had come to them with the Gospel, and since it was through him that they had come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the attacks which false teachers were making upon him were also attacks upon the message he preached and the Lord he served--and so Paul had to speak out in defense of his apostleship.

He wanted to be able to "present" them, possibly at the coming of the Lord, "as a chaste (pure) virgin to Christ."

Let us notice how this jealous Apostle exercises his so-called folly.

1. HE FIGHTS AGAINST THE FALSE TEACHERS--AND IN DOING SO HE GOES RIGHT TO THE SOURCE. Cf. vv. 3, 13-15.

Who is responsible for all false teaching? Satan is. But it is his policy to work behind the scenes and to create an atmosphere and to present teachings that seem to be indisputable.

Note how Paul vouches for the historical accuracy of Genesis 3.

There Satan used a serpent. The serpent was wise, and it was beautiful. And it appeared in the capacity of a teacher. And from that day until this Satan's appeal has been to the minds of men.

Note what Paul says: "So your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not."

BUT SATAN DOES NOT LEAVE US ALONE AFTER WE ARE SAVED. He still by his teachings makes assaults on our minds.

What is the answer? The <sup>minds</sup> ~~hearts~~ of the people of God must be filled with the Word of God. They need teaching. The Apostles were teachers. Pastors are to be teachers. The reason the Church is prey today to false teachers is because the Church has not been taught.

But one way that Satan seeks to discredit the teaching is by discrediting the teacher. And this is why Paul was forced to speak up in his own defense as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The greatest need in the church today is for a teaching ministry. Nothing will stand if the people of God do not know the Word of God.

- II. PAUL IS WILLING TO LAY HIS TEACHING ON THE LINE. Cf. vv. 4-5.

He singles out three areas of truth, the three which were at the heart of his teaching, and dares to say, "If the false teachers are giving you another Jesus, or another Spirit (should be capitalized), or another Gospel, THEN YOU HAD BETTER LISTEN TO THEM!"

Was this not a daring, possibly a dangerous, thing for the Apostle Paul to say?



Absolutely not! If these great truths cannot be exposed to the critics, then perhaps we need to discard them.

First of all, let me ask you <sup>three</sup> questions:-

- 1) What do you know about <sup>what</sup> the Bible teaches concerning "Jesus."?
  - 2) What do you know about the Scriptural teaching concerning the Holy Spirit?
  - 3) What do you know about the Gospel of Christ?
- (Briefly review each one.)

Now, on behalf of the Apostle Paul, could I ask you, the next time someone presents some doctrine to you, will you ask, What do you teach about Jesus? If they give you an answer, will you then take it to the Word of God and examine what they teach in the light of what the Word teaches?

If they say, "Nothing. We do not teach anything about Jesus," then will you ask, "What do you have to take His place? Do you have Someone better? Do you have Someone who can do more for me than He can?"

And then will you ask the same questions about the Holy Spirit? And then about the Gospel?

Paul would stand right up with the Corinthian philosophers and with the false teachers of his day and boldly ask them, "Do you have something better?"

Cf. Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:8-14.

LET ME ASK ANY OF YOU WHO MAY BE HERE THIS MORNING SEEKING--HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ANYTHING THAT WILL SURPASS WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THE BIBLE, WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN CHRIST, ANYTHING THAT WILL COMPARE WITH THIS SALVATION?

If you are looking, you can find this morning that which will satisfy the greatest needs you will ever have--and we are not ashamed to tell others this good news!

But, there is one final word.

III. PAUL DEFENDS HIS PRACTICE CONCERNING THE SUPPLY OF HIS OWN PERSONAL NEEDS. Cf. vv. 7-12.

We have had three Sundays recently when we considered 2 Cor. 8, 9 where Paul speaks of money. He has sought to show them the blessings that come through giving, and how the Lord meets the needs of His work.

Now he brings this up again and he wants to show that there are times when you do not even talk to believers about money. PAUL HAD NOT TAKEN ANY SUPPORT FROM THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT ANYONE TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT HE WAS IN THE MINISTRY FOR WHAT HE COULD GET OUT OF IT!

But what had happened? The "false apostles," who were after the money, had said that Paul did not ask for money because he knew he had no right to ask for it because he was not a true Apostle!

Was he keeping the Corinthians from blessing? Did this mean that he did not love them? NO--on both counts! BUT HE DID WANT HIS ACTIONS TO BE SO FAR ABOVE REPROACH THAT HIS ENEMIES WOULD REALLY HAVE NO GROUND FOR BRINGING ACCUSATIONS AGAINST HIM! Cf. v. 12.

Concl: The folly of a jealous Apostle! What do you think about it?

Can we not thank God for a man like Paul who was willing, by the grace of God, to stand against all comers in his day?

These were not casual little arguments he got involved in. These were issues so strong that ultimately he was to lay down his life for them. But to Paul, the most important thing in the world was what God was doing in the hearts and lives of His people. That was the starting place for any blessing that was going to reach the world.

It is the same today! With all of the confusion and unrest there is in the world today, this, of all times, is a time when the Church needs to know the Word of God, walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him to help us, to bless us, and then to use us to make known the great truths of the Gospel--and of the only One who can possibly meet the needs of men!

# A STRANGE KIND OF BOASTING

2 Cor. 11:16-33

Intro: In the latter part of 2 Corinthians Paul is forced by circumstances in the Corinthians Church to defend his apostleship.

This is very distasteful to him! It is so contrary to much that he had already written to the Corinthians:

- 1) 1 Cor. 1:26-31, esp. v. 29, "That no flesh should glory in his presence."
- 2) 1 Cor. 3:5-7, "Who, then is Paul . . ."
- 3) 2 Cor. 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

And there are others!

Paul knew that he had been saved by the grace of God--in spite of what he was--and he knew that God was the One who deserved all of the glory for any blessing any person had received in his ministry! Cf. 1 Cor. 15:9, 10a, "For I am the least of the apostles, and 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 . . ."

He even admits in the passage before us this morning that "I speak not after the Lord," i.e., according to the way the Lord would speak. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:17. All of these truths which appear in his epistles are truths which he had learned from the Lord. It grieved him that he was forced to write as he was writing.

CF. 10:1  
BUT ALSO  
JN. 2:13-17.

But, boast he must!

Now I want you to note the strange kind of boasting which we have here. It is specifically stated in v. 30. "I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." YOU SEE, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS FORCED TO BOAST ABOUT HIMSELF, TO SPEAK OF HIMSELF IN WAYS HE DID NOT WANT TO, TO SET HIMSELF IN THE LIMELIGHT, SO TO SPEAK, YET HE WAS NOT ONE TO ALLOW HIMSELF TO FALL INTO A TRAP THAT WOULD WORK AGAINST HIM.

So--he does not write here like he does in Phil. 3. (These two chapters have much in common: 2 Cor. 11 and Phil. 3.) But he speaks so as to give the glory to God even though he does speak and boast of himself. Let us note how he does it.

There are two things which I want to point out about the Apostle Paul this morning:

- I. He was a man of deep conviction.
- II. He was a man of great compassion.

## I. HE WAS A MAN OF DEEP CONVICTION.

You cannot read his epistles without realizing this.  
But, this morning, I want you to see it in two ways:

- 1) His conviction regarding the doctrine of salvation.
- 2) His conviction regarding the way you should treat people.

## A. His conviction regarding the doctrine of salvation.

You say, where do you get salvation in this passage of Scripture?

Read v. 20. IF YOU KNOW MATTHEW 23, AND ESPECIALLY THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS, YOU IMMEDIATELY DETECT THE SIGNS OF THE <sup>FALSE</sup> DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY WORKS--a doctrine which came out of a corrupted form of Judaism, a doctrine which put people under the hopeless bondage of obeying the Mosaic Law in order to earn salvation for themselves.

The reference in v. 22 also proves that these false apostles were Jews.

IT IS THE HARDEST THING IN THE WORLD FOR MEN TO BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN BE SAVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD, WITHOUT ANY WORKS ON OUR PART!

Remember Paul's strong words of denunciation and judgment in Gal. 1:8, 9.

Paul is not answering these false teachers here, but he is saying, "You have listened to them who have put you under such bondage and have tried to take away all you have, will you not give me an ear, I who have come to take nothing from you but to give you what you could never buy!?"

His conviction regarding how you should treat people.

Listen to me this morning: What you believe about salvation is going to affect how you treat people in preaching your doctrines to them!

Read Matthew 23 some time soon.

Then note what Paul has to say in this 20th verse of 2 Cor. 11. Note also what he writes in vv. 7 ff. of this same chapter.

WHY vv. 32, 33?  
AS A TESTIMONY  
TO THE FAITHFUL-  
NESS OF GOD - HIS  
FIRST "PERIL" AFTER  
RECEIVING CHRIST.  
B. CF. ACT 9:23-24.

These false prophets would enslave men by their doctrines, take away all that they had, exalt themselves for honor and veneration, and then slap the people in the face every opportunity they got! How do you like methods like that?

Paul was a man who was willing to stand his ground regardless of the circumstances, and regardless of how many were against him.

Illus: Did you notice in the Oregonian this week the news about Bill Pierson, the 6' 3" 250 lb. center at San Diego State who stood guard for 3 hours by a flag pole and refused to let anyone lower the flag. He is a veteran, having served in the Navy. He faced 150 during those three hours, and refused to give way.

I am looking forward to meeting the Apostle Paul in heaven--a man of conviction, who knew what the truth was, and refused to give any ground!

But, coupled with this was another important feature of the Apostle's life and ministry--equally important with the first . . .

## II. HE WAS A MAN OF GREAT COMPASSION.

He could claim all they could. Cf. v. 22.

But, he could claim MORE than they could. Read vv. 23-28.

From the statement in v. 28 it would seem that the primary emphasis in vv. 23-27 had to do with what he had experienced in getting the Gospel to people who did not know the Lord, and v. 28 has to do with his work with those who received Christ as Savior and became the people of God.

(Read these verses over carefully.)

V. 28 expresses what Paul had been going through with the Corinthians.

Therefore,

A. He had great compassion for Gentiles (this was amazing because he was a Jew) who did not know the Lord. There was no other reason why he would be willing to live such a life.

Cf. Rom. 9:1-3.

- B. He was a man of great compassion for the people of God. Cf. vv. 28, 29.

Cf. 1 Cor. 9:22.

Do you and I carry daily "the care," the anxieties, the worries, that we should because of the people of God and their needs?

When we see their weaknesses and sins, do we go to them as sinners saved by grace? When we see them stumble into sin and trapped by sin, do we burn with the desire to see them set free?

Cf. 2 Cor. 12:15.

Think of our Lord Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John 13.

But there is one other place we see the devotion, the compassion, of Paul.

- C. He was a man of great compassion and love for God, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. v. 31.

So much is often seen in so little.

Here is Paul praising himself, but he concludes by saying that the only One who is "Blessed," worthy of our praise, worth saying a good word for, is God (and with Him, our Lord Jesus Christ).

Concl: When you get through a passage of Scripture like this, while you cannot help but thank God for what He did in the life of Saul of Tarsus, yet--the passage leaves us with the impression that, after all of the boasting, the devotion of this man's heart shines through, and we find ourselves wanting to worship his Lord!

OUT OF WEAKNESS MADE STRONG  
2 Cor. 12:1-10

Intro: In 1 Sam. 16 we have the story of God sending Samuel the prophet to the home of Jesse in Bethlehem to anoint one of his sons as the new King of Israel. When Eliab, the oldest, came with all of his brothers, Samuel felt that the Lord's anointed one was standing before him. But the Lord said to Samuel,  
"Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Seven sons went by, but the Lord indicated to Samuel that he had not chosen any of them. Samuel was confused about it, and asked Jesse, "Are all thy children here?" And Jesse answered,

"There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep" (1 Sam. 16:11).

When David came in, the Scriptures say that

"he was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look at (handsome). And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he." Cf. 1 Sam. 16:12.

This illustrates the truth which is specifically stated by Isaiah, the prophet:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9).

If I could ask you to memorize a couple of verses out of the Bible, I would ask you to memorize these. How important it is for us to know the ways of the Lord.

Psa. 103:7a says, "He (the Lord) made known his ways unto Moses." Moses did not already know the ways of the Lord; HE HAD TO BE TAUGHT WHAT THEY WERE!

David's prayer in Psa. 86:11 was, "Teach me thy way, O Lord." You find it also in Psa. 27:11.

If you will read the Bible from cover to cover, you will see again and again the greatest problem which the people of God have in every generation is that they have not understood the ways of God. He does not do things the way we would do them, and so we get discouraged, we get rebellious, or we foolishly rush ahead instead of waiting on God. When you become a child of God you have to start learning about life all over again!

This, basically, was the problem with the Corinthians. As far back as 1 Cor. 3:3 he had reproved them for their "envying and strife and divisions," asking the question, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

Cf. 10:2, 3.

They scorned Paul because he besought them "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:1), while his opponents made slaves of the Corinthians, took everything away from them, exalted themselves, and slapped them in the face. Cf. 2 Cor. 11:20.

In 2 Cor. 10:10 we have something else they were saying: "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

Paul admitted all of this. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:1 ff. And now, here in chapter 12, he is preparing to tell them why he was weak, and how that related to the ways of the Lord with him!

Note how he does it.

WE MIGHT CALLS THIS THREE THINGS WHICH GOD GAVE PAUL.

- I. HE HAD HAD A MOST AMAZING EXPERIENCE--14 years before (2 Cor. 12:1-6).

He had never said anything about it, but doubtless it had had a most profound effect upon his ministry! I DO NOT KNOW OF ANYTHING IN THE WORD OF GOD THAT CAN COMPARE WITH IT! Paul, whether in spirit, or in body (he did not know) was caught up into "the third heaven," the very presence of God--BUT HE WAS NOT PERMITTED TO TELL WHAT HE HEARD.

Peter and John refer to their experience on the mount of transfiguration. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell us about it. John tells us his vision of the Lord in Rev. 1. Moses came out from the presence of the Lord with his face shining, but he told the Israelites what God had told him. Isaiah tells his experience of seeing the Lord.

BUT GOD WOULD NOT LET PAUL SAY A THING! Why? Obviously because it was an experience which was meant for Paul himself, and not for anyone else. The effect of it was to be seen in his life and ministry. He could never be the same again. He had other "visions" and other "revelations", but never anything like this!

It must have been something which he saw as well as heard, or why would he speak of "visions and revelations in v. 1. WHAT WAS IT?



Possibly this enabled Paul to write as he did in Phil. 1:20-23. Did he actually die in Lystra when he was stoned? Cf. Acts 14:19.

Until we get to heaven, we can only speculate on what all of this was. But one thing is certain: IT WAS SUCH A TREMENDOUS EXPERIENCE THAT IT COULD EASILY HAVE RUINED HIS MINISTRY--through pride! Therefore . . .

- II. THERE WAS A SECOND THING GOD GAVE TO PAUL: "a thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7, 8).

At the beginning of v. 7, and again at the end, Paul tells us why. It was, "lest I should be exalted above measure."

Man is so perverse, our hearts are so full of pride, that we can even get proud over the blessings of God. This was even a danger to the Apostle Paul.

You and I must be careful that this does not happen to us.

But now the ways of God come into operation.

He writes, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh!"

Who gave it to him? God did. Satan would gladly have seen Paul ruined through pride. BUT THIS ALSO BECAME "THE MESSENGER OF SATAN TO BUFFET" PAUL, THAT IS, TO BEAT HIM WITH HIS FISTS, LIKE A BOXER WOULD, UNTIL PAUL IS SO OVERWHELMED WITH DISCOURAGEMENT THAT HE CANNOT EVEN STAND ON HIS FEET.

How quickly Satan tries to take advantage of EVERYTHING which the Lord does!

Cf. 2 Cor. 2:7, 10, 11.

Have there not been times in your life when, although you believed in the absolute sovereignty of God, and that the Lord was dealing with you for one reason or another, and yet it just got to be too much! Satan has moved in. 1 Cor. 10:13 is still in the Bible.

Paul's thorn in the flesh was obviously something painful, something which appeared to be a hindrance to his ministry--possibly eye trouble. Cf. Gal. 4:13-15. But, whatever it was, it was what Bishop Lightfoot calls, "a stake driven through his flesh" (Gal., p. 189). It was no small problem.

Now, get the picture:

- 1) God had given Paul a most wonderful experience.
- 2) Then, to safeguard his ministry, He had given him a thorn in the flesh.
- 3) Satan had taken advantage of all that God had done to discourage the Apostle to the point that he could not serve the Lord.
- 4) Paul had prayed--three specific times he had come to the Lord especially about this--but the thorn was not removed.

Was there no help? Yes!

### III. GOD COMPLETELY OVERRULED SATAN BY GIVING PAUL A MOST WONDERFUL PROMISE (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).

Note the promise, and the response of the Apostle Paul.

"Rest upon" carries the idea of coming to make its home with Paul, and to be there right along with the thorn!

Moule translates, "I take pleasure," as, I feel deliberate complacence.

Cf. Rom. 8:37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Concl: It is no wonder that Paul has been insisting upon glorying in his weakness. This was the source of his strength. HIS WEAKNESSES KEPT HIM REMINDED OF HIS NEED TO DRAW UPON THE STRENGTH AND POWER THAT WERE TO BE FOUND IN THE GRACE OF GOD.

There is no word in the Bible any more wonderful than the word, grace.

Illus. There was a man who was in great agony over some problems in his life. He had prayed, like Paul, but the problems had not been taken away. One day as he was praying, and the tears were rolling down his cheeks, he said, "Lord, let thy grace be sufficient for me." As he prayed, he looked through his tears and he saw a plaque on the wall with the words, "My grace is sufficient." But the thing which he had not noticed before was that someone had painted the one word, "is," differently from the other words. It was bright and conspicuous. And he saw the truth like a flash. We do not have to pray that His grace will be sufficient; IT ALWAYS IS!

ABUNDANT LOVE AND ABSOLUTE TRUTH

2 Cor. 12:11-13:14

Remain Next

Intro: I want to conclude our study of 2 Corinthians this morning. This is not as difficult as it might appear because the epistle is really concluded with 12:10. What follows contains concluding re-statements of matters he has mentioned before (for emphasis), and some parting words of exhortation and encouragement.

Paul seems to want to do two things as he brings this letter to a close:

- 1) To assure the Corinthians that he loves them.
- 2) To encourage them with the absolute truth of the Word of God.

Let us look, first of all, at

I. THE ABUNDANT LOVE WHICH HE MANIFESTS TOWARD THEM.

It is shown in three things:

A. Money, and its place in his ministry (12:13-18).

Evidently this was a major accusation that Paul's enemies used against him because he refers to it so much.

They even said that he did not take any money himself, but he got Titus to get it (cf. vv. 16-18).

Paul utterly denies this, and states what we have in v. 15 instead. Not only had he not taken anything, but he had spent his own money, time, and strength until it was all exhausted!

When he returned for his third visit he expected to do exactly the same, feeling like a father would about his own children (v. 14).

B. Maturity, as his major concern for them (12:19; 13:9, 10).

How this has been ignored and neglected by the Church! Paul did not want to see his "children" remain spiritual infants! He wanted them to grow. He had written about this in 1 Cor. 14. IF SALVATION HAD BEEN THE ONLY CONCERN OF THE APOSTLE PAUL, HE WOULD NEVER HAVE WRITTEN ANY OF HIS EPISTLES!

This is where his love was put to the test.

Every problem in the Corinthian church could have been avoided with healthy, steady spiritual growth.

C. Morals, and his courage in writing about them  
(12:20, 21).

→ OR SINS

No servant of the Lord likes to talk about sin, but there are times when he has to--if he is going to be a faithful servant of the Lord.

It is interesting to see that he relates the sins in v. 20 with the sins in v. 21.

--"debates"--Contention, strife, wrangling. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3.

--"envyings," to make war on something good which one sees in another. The result of jealousy.

--"wraths," sudden outbursts, which can result in murder. Cf. Luke 4:28.

--"strifes," like a politician who is trying to put himself forward and to gather a following. Cf. Phil. 2:3, 4.

--"backbitings," open, vocal defamation of a person. It is "evil speaking" (1 Pet. 2:1). This word is only found in the NT. It must have been coined to describe a special sin of believers.

--"whisperings," the same as "backbitings," only done in the ear.

--"swellings," of a person who is puffed up with pride. Cf. 1 Cor. 4:18 ff.; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4.

--"tumults," one who stirs others up, as was done frequently in the book of Acts. Cf. Acts 13:50; 14:5, 19; 16:22.

Then--

--"uncleanness," anything which defiles as indicated by some law (as the Word of God).

--"fornication," a general term for illicit sexual relationships.

--"lasciviousness," wantonness, a person without any restraint where moral issues are concerned.

Do you think it was easy for Paul to name sins by name? Why would he do it? The whole tone of this epistle makes it very clear that it was because of the great love which he had in his heart for them. He hoped that they would be cleared up. If not, he was prepared to take even more severe steps.

The Church today knows very little about discipline, and this is probably one of the greatest reasons why we have so little influence in the world.

Now let us look at

## II. THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH WHICH HE HAD BROUGHT TO THEM.

I want to approach this in a slightly different way this morning.

Anyone who knows the teachings of the Scriptures knows that here we have truths that are absolutes. They are not true because they were taught by the Apostles. Nor are they true just because they were accepted by the majority of the people of God--either in the OT or the NT! THEY ARE TRUE BECAUSE THEY ARE ESTABLISHED BY GOD--and we need to treat them that way.

BUT DO WE BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE ABSOLUTELY TRUE, i.e., ABSOLUTELY DEPENDABLE, COMPLETELY TRUSTWORTHY, A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR OUR LIVES?

Notice how Paul held

### A. The Scriptures. Cf. 13:8.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that about your life?

Paul had been talking about his authority as an Apostle, but even he did not have the right to work against the Word of God. Nothing could be more ridiculous.

And yet how many Christians are there who are simply ignoring the Word of God in the lives and then wonder why things are not going right. YOU "can do nothing against the truth." So don't try! You might as well try to get the world turning another way as to try to have joy and peace and blessing in spite of the fact that you are ignoring the Word of God.

Along this line, notice why Paul says about

### B. Salvation (2 Cor. 13:5).

Whenever Christians sin, it throws doubt upon their salvation. They will even doubt it themselves!

Assurance of salvation does not just automatically come, but it is there for us. Do you know how to test your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ? It has to be by the Word of God.

BUT THEN--once you are sure, do you know what that means about you, what it means that you have? IT MEANS THE JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF IS "IN YOU." Cf. Gal. 2:20.

This is true whether we understand it or not, or whether we feel like it or not. Why? Because the Word of God says so--that's why! And you do not need any other reason. The Word of God settles it--for ever!

What a wonderful person you should be!

But, Paul can say even more--as he brings this epistle to a close. It has to do with our

C. Resources--as the children of God (2 Cor. 13:14).

Do you just think of this verse as a benediction to close a meeting? This is the most wonderful truth that you will find any place in the Word of God. If the Corinthians had believed this, and accepted it for themselves, the problems which Paul has been writing about would be over!

1. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ"--His full title. Cf. 2 Cor. 8:9; 9:8.
2. "The love of God"--Think of it: GOD! Cf. Rom. 8:35-39.
3. "The communion of the Holy Spirit," the HOLY Spirit. We can participate in all that the Holy Spirit has been sent to do--especially as our Teacher of the Word of God! Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9, 10.

Concl: What excuse can we possibly have for the carnality, the ignorance, the indifference and coldness of heart, for our lack of joy, our lack of peace, our lack of blessing, our lack of power?

There is no excuse!

Let us begin to take the Word of God seriously, to believe and ~~\*\*\*~~ to live it, that God may work in us and through us His works to the glory of His name and to the blessing of those who so desperately need the Lord in their lives.