Treasures From
Second
Corinthians
Volume One
Dr. Rod Mattoon
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR READERS ON THE TREASURES FROM SCRIPTURE BOOKS

* Brother Mattoon, I am reading your book Treasures From Judges. I am completely blessed by your writings. Your outlines are excellent and the material is above reproach; the illustrations are well chosen. I do pray that God’s richest blessings will continue upon you and your ministry.

Dr. Lee Roberson, Chancellor, Tennessee Temple University, Chattanooga, Tennessee

* Dr. Mattoon has given to the Christian world a very practical, powerful, and prudent filled book. This book will serve as a text in Christian colleges and seminaries. This book is very readable for the common person who has no background in understanding Genesis. This book is a goldmine for Sunday School teachers and Christian workers.

**Dr. J. Arnold Fair, Pastor, Faith Baptist Church, Angola, Indiana**

* This book is filled with what the title suggests, "Treasures". It's not only a good commentary on Genesis, but also a great reference book on Old Testament customs and people. A great book for topical seed sermons. The quality of the book is excellent. Treasures From Judges is beautifully done. It is practical, straightforward and even tackling some of today’s more difficult issues. Well done, Rod.

** Dr. Greg McLaughlin, Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church Huntsville, Alabama**

* Treasures From Genesis by Dr. Rod Mattoon should be in the library of every young preacher. The outlines are excellent and provide a valuable source for sermon material.

** Dr. Sylvester Matthews*

* The pages of this book are packed with research and information that will feed any pastor's people. It is not hard to use and is very readable and useable. It is first class in its publishing and layout. It's structure is well thought out and the result is a book that invites your attention. The features most helpful to me are the illustrative charts, the alliterated outlines and the subject index in the back of the book.

** Pastor Mark Thrift, Parkwood Baptist Church, Houston, Texas**

* After perusing this volume of Genesis, I was made aware of the fact that this book is not just a book about Genesis and how to interpret it, but it is a book filled with a treasure of knowledge rarely found in one volume. The tools you have provided will allow anyone studying this book to find information at his or her fingertips that will enrich his knowledge of God’s Word and the subject at hand. The index information you printed in the book is also easy to find and especially helpful when looking for a specific topic in the book.

** Dr. Ron Allen**

* The books are some of the best material I’ve read and studied. They fed me. It has been a joy and blessing to study these books. Thanks.

*Pastor Mike Oldham, Sanford, North Carolina*
* Dear Rod, Thank you for your kind gift of *Treasures from Philippians*. I appreciate your labor and research and hard work in producing this book. Thank you also for thinking of me and sending me a copy of it. I appreciate this gesture of kindness and generosity. May God give it a broad audience and influential reading. May God’s blessings be with your ministry.

****Dr. Jack Schaap, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana****

* Your work on Genesis is not only one of the finest commentaries on that particular text, but the practical “life applications” for the believer’s walk, especially as you relate the truth to other parts of Scripture are outstanding! I urge every serious Bible student, teacher, and preacher to add this commentary to their library.

**Evangelist Dennis Erwin, Edgewood, Texas**

*I have been reading and studying through Dr. Mattoon’s Treasure series and I must say that they have truly been a blessing to me. Not only do they contain a wealth of information but they have also helped me to study the Bible in a way that I had not before. Consequently, they have helped me in my own sermon preparation. The Bible believing world has needed such resources.*

**Pastor Walter Myers, Maynard, Massachusetts**

* Dr. Mattoon....I just wanted to add a brief note to let you know how much I have enjoyed your Treasures from Scripture Series. I started with Joshua and then Judges and found them refreshing and informative. Yours is the first commentary that I reach for in my studies. I have, since the beginning, purchased each of your volumes as they have come out. The topical studies in each book have been an added blessing. Thank you again for your diligent work.

*Pastor Dan Norton, Grace and Truth Bible Church, Hummelstown, PA.*

* Dear Brother Rod....Just a few words to let you know that my congregation is blessed abundantly. People are being saved, delivered, and restored to ministry. I have found a mine of spiritual food. Your material has helped me in my own sermon preparation. Your books are like a spring of living water. May God continue to use you. We are praying for you, your family, and congregation.

Pastor Julio Carrion, Rio Vista, California

* Dear Dr. Mattoon.... Praise the Lord, you have written three more books. It sure made my day when I opened the mail and read the circular. I have all the previous books you have done and they have been such a help and a blessing to me, not only in my ministry and teaching, but also in my own devotional reading and leisure time. Thank you so much for dedicating the talent the Lord has given you in writing and may He continue to bless you in this area and use you mightily in the days to come to produce some more fine commentaries. They are a great addition to my library. I highly recommend them to other preacher friends...

Dr. Ernest Moore, Cumberland County Maranatha Baptist Church, Vineland, N.J.
This Book is Dedicated to
Dr. Jim Lyons
Garland, Texas

Dr. Jim Lyons has dedicated his life in serving the Lord Jesus Christ as an evangelist. He has been serving in this capacity since 1965. He worked as an associate pastor at First Baptist Church in Hammond, Indiana and also served as the Staff Evangelist at Lavon Drive Baptist Church of Garland, Texas.

God has used his love, kindness, joy, and concern for people and their souls to win hundreds of people to Christ through four decades of service and to be a blessing, challenge, and encouragement to many churches and Christians. He has also written several tracks and soul-winning tools that have been greatly used by the Lord to reach people for Jesus Christ.

Solomon said in Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." Jim Lyons has a good name for he has been a good man, faithful and steadfast in living his life for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for these reasons he is being honored in this book. We hope that this dedication will be a great encouragement to him for his faithfulness to our Savior.
Treasure Book
Features

* Expository Notes
* Alliterated Outlines
* Bible Custom Information
* Historical Information
* Greek & Hebrew Word Studies
* Practical Applications for daily living
* Abundant Sermon Illustrations
* Topical Index in the Back
* Illustration Index in the Back
* Strong Hard-Back Binding
* Based on the 1769 King James Translation of the Bible
* Easy to Read and Understand
Gratefulness is communicating to others the precise ways in which they have benefitted my life, and looks for ways to honor them. It is a trait of maturity. Have you expressed “Thanks” to those folks that have helped you and invested in your life?
Thank You

Lincoln Land Baptist Church

It has been again a wonderful delight and joy to be able to bring these studies to you. I want to express my gratitude and love to my wonderful church family for their love, encouragement, spiritual maturity, sacrifice, and vision in allowing our church to have this ministry and letting the world share in the pulpit ministry of Lincoln Land Baptist Church, and in the hours of research and preparation that go behind each message. Thousands upon thousands of dollars have been spent to produce this material for preachers all over the world and to ship the books to foreign countries. If you ever get the chance, come and meet these wonderful Christians. They are precious people that want our church to be used of God for His glory!

Lincoln Land Baptist Church is an Independent, Fundamental Baptist Church in Springfield, Illinois, which is the capital of the great state of Illinois. This church has had a rich heritage of pastors that have fed the church on evangelistic, expository Bible preaching since it was begun in 1965. In August of 2005, we celebrated our 40th birthday.

Since 1999, the book ministry of this church has grown beyond whatever we dreamed as over 7550 preachers are now using these books in their studies and 210 Bible colleges or institutes are using them in their curriculums or by their students in their private studies. What a blessing, but what a responsibility too. For this reason, we strive to be as accurate, thorough, and practical in our research and presentation of Scripture and Christian history.

Since August of 1971, I have had a thirst to learn the Word and preach its truths. What a wonderful journey it has been to dig for delightful diamonds of truth in the Scriptures these past 37 years. I hope this 28th book on Treasures from 2nd Corinthians, Volume 1, will enlighten, encourage, energize and enrich you and bring you closer to our wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
# Table of Contents

1. The Beginning of a Passionate Letter 1:1-2 Page 1
2. Why Do Bad Things Happen to God’s People 1:3-11 Page 9
3. A Closet with No Skeletons 1:12-14 Page 28
5. The Rigors of Restoration 2:1-11 Page 64
6. The Fragrance of Our Life 2:12-17 Page 85
8. The Ministry of Your Life 3:7-4:6 Page 114
9. Treasure in Cracked Pots 4:7-12 Page 129
10. Seeing Him Who is Invisible 4:13-18 Page 144
11. Living with One Eye on Eternity 5:1-10 Page 160
12. The Grip of a Great God 5:11-21 Page 180
15. Fighting, Fear, and Friends 7:1-7 Page 253
16. The Stress & Sweetness of Spiritual Surgery 7:8-16 Page 278

BIBLIOGRAPHY Page 298

INDEX ON 2 CORINTHIANS Page 299

TREASURE FROM SCRIPTURE BOOKS Page 303

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Chapter 1
The Beginning of a Passionate Letter
2 Corinthians 1:1-2

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

We now open the curtain on Paul’s most intensely personal and deeply emotional letter, the book of 2 Corinthians. Nowhere is Paul’s heart so torn and exposed as in this letter. Second Corinthians bears a fierce tone of injured love, of wounded, relentless affection. The first letter to the Corinthian church removed the roof of the church where we could look into what was going on in this church with all of its many problems. This second letter to the Corinthians reveals Paul’s great love for the people and his concern for the Lord’s work. The first letter reveals Paul as the instructor who answers questions and sets matters right. In this letter, he is the loving pastor pouring out his life so his spiritual children might spiritually mature and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This letter gives a clear, focused view of Christian ministry and says a great deal about Christian suffering, service, giving, and spiritual victory.

What was Corinth like? What was the atmosphere like that this church was facing? Corinth was one of the most celebrated cities of Greece. Corinth exceeded all the cities of the world, for the splendor and magnificence of its public buildings, such as temples, palaces, theaters,
porticos, baths, and other edifices. These buildings were all enriched with beautiful columns, capitals, and bases, from which the Corinthian order in architecture took its rise.

Corinth is also celebrated for its statues, especially of Venus, Neptune, Diana, and Apollo. The temple of Venus was not only very splendid, but also very rich, and maintained not less than 1000 courtesans, who were the means of bringing an immense concourse of strangers to the place. The population of Corinth was largely immigrants and opportunists who were seeking a better life. Corinth became the popular answer to Rome’s overpopulation. A large portion of the population consisted of freed slaves. Ex-Roman soldiers seeking a better life for their families were drawn to Corinth.

The wealth and financial prosperity of the people led to corruption and perversion. In fact, Nero felt very comfortable here. He never visited Sparta or Athens, but he spent a lot of time in Corinth. The Corinthians were as lewd as they were learned. Public prostitution formed a considerable part of their religion. They were accustomed in their public prayers to request their pagan gods to multiply their prostitutes! They did not think there was anything wrong with having sexual encounters with these temple prostitutes because they considered it as an act of worship to their gods. In fact, the Greek word "to Corinthianize" came to mean "to practice sexual immorality." This was the philosophy and mentality that Paul encountered when he preached here.

Sports was also important to the Corinthians. Every five years the Isthmian games were held. These games were only second to the Olympic games. Athletes competed in running, throwing, leaping, and wrestling. Paul alludes to these games in different parts of his epistles.

The city embraced the commerce of the whole Mediterranean Sea, from the straits of Gibraltar on the west to the port of Alexandria on the east, with the coasts of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor. Corinth was destroyed in 146 B.C. by the Romans and had remained uninhabited for a hundred years, until 44 B.C. when Julius Caesar rebuilt it. So when Paul visited the rebuilt Corinth in 49-50 A.D., it was just over eighty years old with a population of some 80,000 people. Yet, during its short history, this city had become the third most important city of the Roman Empire, behind Alexandria and Rome itself. Situated on the isthmus of Greece, it was variously called "The Master of Harbors" or "The Crossroads of Greece." This background information will bring clarity to some of the passages we will encounter as we read through the
Corinthian letters.

The questions we want to address now are these, “Why did Paul write this second letter? What was he trying to accomplish?” Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote 2nd Corinthians.

1. To Commend their Actions:
   He commended the church for disciplining an immoral member of the church and encouraged them to forgive and restore him when he repented. (1Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11)

2. A Change in Plans is Explained:
   He intended to visit them but there was a change in plans. (1Corinthians 16:3-7; 2 Corinthians 1:15-22).

3. A Challenge is Answered:
   Paul’s authority as an apostle was being questioned. (2 Corinthians 10-12).

4. To Compose a Plan for his visit:
   He wrote them to prepare them for his planned visit. (2 Corinthians 13)

5. To Coax or Cheer the Church to Give:
   He encouraged them to give to the Jerusalem saints. (2 Corinthians 8-9)

6. To Contradict Accusations that were False:
   Paul was being accused of wrong motives (2 Corinthians 4:1-2). There were a majority of folks that had repented of their sins in the church and dealt with their sin problems thoroughly. There was a minority in the church, however, who challenged Paul’s authority, suspected his motives, and questioned the validity of his ministry. Paul’s response to these believers is an amazing mixture of tender love and stern rebuke.

   The book of 2nd Corinthians is a great book and filled with wonderful, treasured truths. Here are some of the treasures we will dig up for inspection and admiration.

1. The Treasure of our Stability & Showing Forth Christ

* 2 Corinthians 4:8-11... We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; [9] Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; [10] Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. [11] For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.
After conducting Beethoven’s magnificent Ninth Symphony, Arturo Toscanini brought down his baton to a burst of applause. The audience went crazy and roared its approval. Toscanini and his orchestra took repeated bows. When the cheering finally subsided, Toscanini turned back to his musicians and leaned over the podium. Voicing his words in whispers, he said to them: “Gentlemen, I am nothing....Gentlemen, you are nothing.....but Beethoven....Beethoven is everything, everything, everything!”

Beloved, the principle here is the same for us. No matter who you are or what you have accomplished, you are nothing, but the Lord Jesus Christ is everything! When that gets cemented in our minds, we won’t even try to be first or to be a big shot. We’ll just be satisfied to be the least of saints used in the hands of God Almighty. Jesus put it this way, “Without me, you can do nothing.”

2. The Treasure of Suffering’s Purpose
* 2 Corinthians 4:17-18... For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; [18] While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

3. The Treasure of our Substitute
* 2 Corinthians 5:21- For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

4. The Treasure of the Seat of Judgment
* 2 Corinthians 5:10- For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

5. The Treasure of Spiritual Rebirth
* 2 Corinthians 5:17- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

6. The Treasure of the Sweetness of Giving
* 2 Corinthians 9:7- Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

7. The Treasure of our Spiritual Weapons
* 2 Corinthians 10:3-4... For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: [4] (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

4 Chapter 1...The Beginning of a Passionate Letter....1:1-2
8. The Treasure of our **Sufficiency and Satisfaction**.
* 2 Corinthians 3:5 - Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God;
9. The Treasure of **Servanthood**
* 2 Corinthians 4:5 - For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord: and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. Our servanthood to Christ is expressed in our servanthood to others.
10. The Treasure of **Separation**
* 2 Corinthians 6:14,17... Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?[17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.
11. The Treasure of **Strength when we are Weak**
* 2 Corinthians 12:9-10... And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

The gospel does not ride on health and wealth but on weakness. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not one of splash and flash, but of meekness and weakness in the believer. The Christian life is full of paradox. In giving, we receive and in losing, we find. In dying, we live. Meekness brings strength into our lives and weakness puts power on display.

George Matheson was the author of the song "**Oh Love that will not Let me Go.**" Like the Apostle Paul, Matheson had his own thorn in the flesh and source of affliction. Born in 1842, in Glasgow, Scotland, George had eye trouble throughout his entire childhood. By the time he entered the ministry, he was almost totally blind. Yet, for 40 years he preached the Word of God all throughout Scotland. Because of his ability to memorize his sermons and large portions of Scripture, many folks did not realize he was blind. George recorded the lessons he learned from his difficulties and trials in his journal **Thoughts for Life's Journey.** Here are some thoughts he wrote:

My soul, reject not the place of thy prostration! It has ever been the robing room for royalty. Ask the great ones of the past what has been the spot of their prosperity. They will say, "It was the cold ground on which I once was lying."
* Ask Abraham; he will point you to the sacrifice of Moriah.
* Ask Joseph; he will direct you to his dungeon.
* Ask Moses; he will date his fortune from his danger in the Nile.
* Ask Ruth; she will bid you to build her monument in the field of her toil.
* Ask David; he will tell you that his songs came from the night.
* Ask Job; he will remind you that God answered him out of the whirlwind.
* Ask Peter; he will extol his submission in the sea.
* Ask John; he will give the palm to the Isle of Patmos.
* Ask Paul; he will attribute his inspiration to the light that struck him blind.

* Ask one more, the Son of Man; Ask Him whence has come His rule over the world. He will answer, “From the cold ground on which I was lying, the Gethsemane ground; I received my scepter there.”

George Matheson, along with Paul, recognized that God’s power is perfected in weakness, not in degrees or diplomas, not in accomplishments or accolades, not in wealth or in wisdom, but in weakness. It is the leg that limps which leans on something other than itself for support. So God may touch our leg so we might learn to lean on Him. Do you rely or lean upon the Lord in your life? How dependent are you upon Him to live day by day? This is the challenge of Scripture.

* Proverbs 3:5-6... Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

* Philippians 4:6- Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

* 1 Peter 5:7- Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

As this letter opens, in the first two verses, Paul addresses his relationship with God, our relationship with one another, and our relationship with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 1:1-2

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: [2] Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Paul addresses his apostleship right up front and his relationship with God. He takes the bull by the horns and gets down to business. He is an apostle of Jesus Christ. What does this mean? The Greek word for “apostle” is *apostolos*, which is used 80 times in the Bible. An *apostolos* was a person sent by an authority with a commission, such as an ambassador. Cargo ships were called apostolic ships because they were dispatched with a specific shipment with a specific destination. The idea of the word “missionary” comes from the word “apostle.” We are to be like apostles in the sense that we are ambassadors for Christ, missionaries sent to this world for a specific mission.

An apostle of Jesus Christ, such as Paul, met several requirements.
1. He was chosen by God (Acts 9:15).
2. He was personally commissioned by Jesus Christ (Acts 9:6).
3. He had seen the risen Savior (1 Corinthians 9:1,2).
4. He was a recipient of divine revelation (Galatians 1:10-12).

There were never many of them and there has not been any for almost two thousand years. The voice of the last apostle was silenced when John died of old age at Ephesus. There are no apostles today because no one meets these requirements. We have God’s complete revelation of truth in the Scriptures.

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. He did not appoint himself as one. He was chosen by God to represent and be an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not apostles, but we are ambassadors of Jesus Christ. We are to be telling others about Him.

Paul addresses our relationship with one another by speaking of Timothy. Timothy is a brother in the Lord. The messenger of God is not above other servants; he is a brother to all other servants. Regardless of his call and ministry, he is one among all brothers who serve under the will of God.

* Romans 12:3- "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

* Philippians 2:3-4..."Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."
This letter was not intended exclusively for the Christians in Corinth, but also for all the believers scattered through the province who were connected with the church in Corinth. Paul is not addressing a single house church; rather, he is speaking to the church of God that is represented in the city of Corinth through many house churches and throughout Achaia.

Caesar Augustus divided Greece into two provinces, Macedonia and Achaia. Macedonia included Illyricum, Epirus, and Thessaly (much of what we call Yugoslavia) while Achaia referred to all the southern part of Greece, including Corinth, Cenchreae, and Athens. There were believers scattered all throughout the region of Achaia.

Paul greets them by wishing them grace and peace, “Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” This was the common greeting that Paul and other New Testament writers extended to the early Christians who received their letters. The word “grace” conveys the idea of “Good day to you,” or “I am so glad to see you.” The New Testament writers, however, give the term charis, the Greek word for “grace,” a spiritual connotation that relates to God’s indispensable blessing extended to the recipient.

Grace is God’s great kindness toward those who are undeserving of His favor but who have placed their faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace flows from God. As oil makes a machine function smoothly, so the grace that comes from God facilitates the relationship between Himself and the believer.

Paul wishes them “peace” also. Grace is the fountain of which peace is the stream. Because we have grace from God we have peace with God and the peace of God.

* Philippians 4:7- And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The word “peace” is a translation of the Hebrew greeting “Shalom.” Shalom has a deeper meaning than just “peace.” In context, the word intimates absence of tension between two parties and the presence of goodwill. Further, the Hebrew expression connotes completeness, prosperity, ease, health. The one who sends greetings, therefore, wishes that the recipient may enjoy both spiritual and material prosperity. Where do these blessings come from? The answer is from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know God’s peace, then you must know Him and receive His saving grace. Put your faith in Christ today.
Chapter 2
Why Do Bad Things Happen to God’s People

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; [4] Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. [5] For as the sufferings of Christ abide in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. [6] And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. [7] And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. [8] For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: [9] But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: [10] Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; [11] Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Paul was an outstanding Christian who was committed to doing the will of God in his life. Even though he loved the Lord and was probably one of the greatest Christians that ever lived, he had bad things happen to him. He faced circumstances that were terrible,
traumatic, taxing, trying, and terrifying. Why would the Lord allow these awful things to happen to such a wonderful, godly man? Why does He allow bad things to happen to you? The answer to these questions are found here at the dawn of 2 Corinthians. Let’s answer the question on why bad things happen to God’s people. As we journey through this chapter, we will find that God uses our trials to teach us vital lessons.

1. OUR PERILS ARE NOT AN OBSTACLE TO GOD’S CARE FOR US 1:3-4

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; [4] Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, ....

Lesson one is this, “In spite of what you are facing, the Lord can comfort you. Your perils are not an obstacle to Him.” He is worthy of our praise and all the blessings from our lips because He is a blessing. Because of the work of Jesus Christ, we have hope and comfort.

The title “Lord Jesus Christ” summarizes all of His redemptive work. The word “Lord” describes His sovereign deity. Jesus is God. The word “Jesus” (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Yeshua; “God saves”) describes His saving death and resurrection. The word “Christ” (“anointed one”) describes Him as the King who will defeat God’s enemies and rule over the redeemed earth and the eternal kingdom. Our Lord is the God of ALL comfort because of His power and care over our lives. He is to be praised and blessed by our lips for many reasons. Here are a few.

1. Because He gives and He also takes away.

*Job 1:21- And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

2. Because of the spiritual blessings He gives us.

*Ephesians 1:3- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

3. Because we have been born again to a living hope.

*1 Peter 1:3- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4. Because He lives. We serve a living Savior, not a dead god.

*Psalm 18:46- The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.*

In the late 1960s, while expecting their third child, Bill and Gloria Gaither were going through a traumatic time. Their firstborn, Suzanne, was 4, and her sister Amy was three months old. The timing for another baby wasn't ideal. On top of that, Bill was recovering from a bout with mononucleosis. The breakup of the marriage of Bill's sister, Mary Ann, had left his family devastated. What's more, a close friend's accusation that Bill and Gloria were using their ministry just to make a buck blind-sided the couple and plunged Bill into a deep depression.

Gloria also remembers it as a time of fear and sadness. The educational system was being infiltrated with the "God is dead" idea, while drug abuse and racial tension were increasing. The thought of bringing another child into the world was taking its toll. But after a simple prayer by one of Bill's close friends—a prayer that commanded the devil to back off—both Bill and Gloria recall that the strength of the Holy Spirit seemed to come to their aid. Christ's resurrection, in all its power, was reaffirmed in their hearts. They were assured that the future, left in God's hands, would be just fine.

In July, 1970, a healthy baby, Benjamin, was born. Inspired by the miracle of their son's birth, "Because He Lives" poured out of the Gaithers' grateful hearts. The song clearly affirms the hope believers have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Precious praise for God poured forth from the pen of Bill like treasured oil from West Texas sand, "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know who holds the future, my life is worth the living, just because He lives."

People turn to all sorts of things for comfort. There is a whiskey called "Southern Comfort." Southern Comfort Whiskey is not going to comfort you my friend. It will eventually ruin your marriage, your home, and your job. Others turn to drugs for comfort, but there is no comfort there. True comfort comes from God. We have a lot to be thankful for, even though we may be facing trials in our life. Our Lord is the God of all comfort and can help us to overcome our fears, terrors of the past, bad dreams, and failures.

This word "**comfort**" is the key word in this section. It occurs ten times as a noun or verb. The word "comfort" inspires the thought of agreeable temperatures, of being in a warm home during the winter, or of enjoying cool relief from the heat in summer. We think of comfortable
living quarters equipped with modern appliances and conveniences. We reflect on enjoyable experiences in the past and on a feeling of contentment in the present. However, the term “comfort” which is derived from the Latin words con and forte, means “to make strong together.” It shows a relational aspect that greatly overshadows the idea of individualistic comfort. The word “comfort” implies that one party strengthens another. For instance, medical doctors and nurses aid their patients in recovery from physical ailments or a counselor helps a person to overcome periods of depression.

In the Greek language, the word “comfort” means much more than mere sympathy. It is from the Greek word paraklesis {par-ak'-lay-sis}. This word communicates the idea of one person standing alongside another to encourage and support his friend. The same word describes the Holy Spirit who is at our side through thick or thin, up or down, fear or courage, rich or poor, sick or healthy. The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit is our Comforter or our Parakletos.

This word “Comforter” comes from the Greek word parakaleo, a verb which means “to encourage.” This verb, parakaleo was used several ways in Greek literature which reveals the work of the Holy Spirit in our own lives and why we have great comfort from the Lord.

a) It was used to call an advocate into court.

The Greek word for advocate is parakletos. The word “para” means “along side” and “kaleo” means “to call.” John was the only one who used this term in the New Testament. The “parakletos” was the one called alongside to assist, help, defend, or intercede on the behalf of another or to give counsel. The advocate counseled, coached, and championed the cause of another in court. He was a helper, supporter, and a witness giving favorable testimony. In Rome, boys of good families replaced their toga with a purple stripe at the age of seventeen and put on a white toga of a man. They were then presented as speakers or advocates in the courts. Our Lord is our advocate and defends us against the accusations of Satan.

*John 2:1 - My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

The parakletos was also one who lent his presence to his friends. In a military court martial, the officer who defended the accused soldier was called the prisoner’s friend. The parakletos was also called in to help in a situation with which a man by himself could not cope alone.
The Lord is our friend too. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother and helps us to cope with conflicts, concerns, and when we are crushed by utter despair and feelings of betrayal and worthlessness.

b) **It was used to call in a coach to train a team at his own expense.** He counsels and gives advice to the team. The Holy Spirit is our trainer and teacher too, giving us direction in our lives. He shows us what to do if we will let Him lead us.

*John 16:13- Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

*John 14:26- But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

c) **It was used to call in the Greek gods as helpers.** The Holy Spirit is our helper (Hebrews 13:6).

*Hebrews 13:6- So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

d) **It was the word of the rallying cry.** It was used of speeches of the leaders and soldiers who urged or encouraged each other in battle. *Parakaleo* meant to challenge the timid soldiers to fight on courageously. This is what the soldiers who were fighting for the independence of Texas did when they shouted “Remember the Alamo!” The Holy Spirit gives us boldness to live for Christ and do His will (Acts 4:31). The Holy Spirit cheers us on to face everyday life with courage and to go forward with our lives in spite of the tragedies and defeats of our past.

The *parakletos* then, is an encourager. He is one who puts courage into the faint-hearted and makes an ordinary man cope with dangerous, difficult situations. He is a helper, counselor, and the One who stands by you. He puts courage into the faint hearted. He keeps a man on his feet when, if left to himself, he would collapse. He encourages a man to pass the breaking point. Such is what the Holy Spirit and Jesus do for us.

The **Lord is our encourager and comforter.** No matter what difficulty we face, He has the ability and power to comfort us. Have you lost a loved one in death? He can comfort you! Have you failed or suffered a defeat? He can and will come to your side. Have you faced a traumatic experience that has left you insecure or afraid? The Spirit of God will restore your joy if you will surrender your life and problems to Him. Don’t turn your back on the Lord because of your trials. Embrace Him and trust in Him. This is what Job did in spite of all of his
sufferings. He was determined to trust God no matter what.

* Job 13:15- Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

In 1858, Scottish missionary John G. Paton and his wife sailed for the New Hebrides (now called Vanuatu). Three months after arriving on the island of Tanna, his wife died. One week later his infant son also died. Paton was plunged into sorrow. Feeling terribly alone, and surrounded by savage people who showed him no sympathy, he wrote, “Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me. As for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows... but for Jesus, and His fellowship, I would have gone mad and died.”

Paton’s trials were terrible, abominable, deplorable, detestable, formidable, horrible, irritable, and miserable. He was able, however, to cope with his complications because God’s comfort was accessible, acquirable, available, credible, and possible. Beloved, because our perils are not an obstacle to His comfort, our trials are bearable, tolerable, and we can be comfortable in His care. We not only enjoy comfort from the Lord through the Spirit of God who indwells us, but also through the Word of God. This is why it is so important to read the Bible.

* Romans 15:4- For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

* Psalm 119:50-52 ... This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. [51] The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law. [52] I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself.

* 1 Thessalonians 4:18- Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Our Lord comforts us in all our tribulations. This word “tribulations” is from the Greek word thlipsis (thlip'-sis). It means “pressure, tribulation, distress, affliction, or pressing together.” R. C. Trench writes, "When, according to the ancient law of England, those who wilfully refused to plead had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were so pressed and crushed to death, this was literally thlipsis.

Sometimes there falls upon a man's spirit the burden and the mystery of this unintelligible world. In the early years of Christianity, the man who chose to become a Christian chose to face trouble, trials, and tribulation. There might well come to him abandonment by his own
family, hostility from his heathen neighbors, and persecution from governmental authorities. In spite of the hurricanes of Hell, believers can anchor themselves to the comfort that God provides in such harrowing circumstance. The promise to all believers is that God will faithfully sustain and strengthen them as long as they are obedient to His will, until His appointed time to bring them to Himself. Notice what Paul said later in this letter about the comfort of God in tribulations.

* 2 Corinthians 4:7-11.... But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. [8] We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; [9] Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; [10] Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. [11] For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Philip Crosby, in his book March Till They Die, tells of a forced march of American and European soldiers in Korea. In November of 1950, the North Koreans were being pushed north, and they were taking with them the Americans and Europeans they had captured as prisoners of war. It was a terrible march. They were forced to go sometimes twenty miles a day though they were emaciated, hungry, and suffering.

Soldiers who couldn't keep up would fall back, and shots rang out. They had been executed. Philip Crosby and his friends, as they passed close to those GI's who were having a hard time keeping up, would say slowly in a comforting whisper, "God is near us in this dark hour. His love is real. His mercy is real. His forgiveness is real. His reward is waiting for us." Beloved, are bad things happening to you? God is near, His love is real, His mercy is real, His forgiveness is real, His reward and blessing are waiting for you. Our Lord allows bad things to happen to us to show us this is true. Our problems are not an obstacle to His comfort.

II. PREPARATION IS BEING MADE TO COMFORT OTHERS 1:4-7

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. [5] For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. [6] And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also
suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. [7] And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

Another reason why bad things happen to God's people is the Lord is using our trials to prepare us for ministry. He is equipping us to comfort others down the road of our future. Paul put it this way, "That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." Again, the Greek word parakaleo is used here for "comfort," which means "to call to one's side, to encourage." God allows us to go through the School of Hard Knocks to make us "soft and tender," that we may be enabled to tenderly comfort others who need it. We are not comforted to be comfortable but to be comforters. Our trials are for the benefit of others, for their comfort and salvation.

A godless ruler confirmed this truth and did not even realize it. Adoniram Judson, the renowned missionary to Burma, endured untold hardships trying to reach the lost for the Lord Jesus Christ. For seven heartbreaking years he suffered hunger and privation. During this time he was thrown into Ava Prison, and for 17 months he was subjected to incredible mistreatment. As a result, for the rest of his life he carried the ugly marks made by the chains and iron shackles which had cruelly bound him.

Undaunted, upon his release he asked for permission to enter another province where he might resume preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The godless ruler indignantly denied his request, saying "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might SAY, but I fear they might be impressed by your SCARS and turn to your religion!" This ruler realized that suffering amplifies the message of the one who is speaking.

Beloved, God does use our suffering to bring about the salvation and comfort of others. In fact, many times people will not give a Christian the time of day, they will not open their hearts or their ears, until they witness the life of that Christian when he is on the stage of suffering. Suffering sifts the chaff of hypocrisy from the lives of people. Hypocrisy provides a foundation of sand, not rock. Your life will crash like a house built on sand when the storms clash against your phoniness. On the other hand, when those without Christ witness our faith, peace, joy, and strength, when we are going through the hurricanes of suffering, then they have a sense of security they are witnessing a Christian that is
real, authentic, and that his message is truly genuine. If they come to this conclusion, they are more prone to believe that Jesus Christ is the answer and solution to the needs they have in their own lives and put their faith in Him. Paul told us that people are reading our lives.

*2 Corinthians 3:2- Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

Paul is revealing here in 2 Corinthians chapter one, the secret of combating depression and discouragement. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself and remaining down in the dumps, go to the side of another, encourage them, and emotionally and spiritually lift them up. Turn your misery, your melancholy, your mourning, your misfortune, your maladies, and your mishaps into ministry! Use the burden of your brokenness and bitter pain to be a blessing! Like a sprinter on a track relay team that passes his baton to the next runner on the team, we are to pass the baton of comfort to those who need our love and help. When God uses you to invest your life into another, it creates a ripple effect. The comfort you receive from God, they can pass to another.

In verse five, Paul reveals the proportion of the comfort we receive from God. He said, “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” He shows us that the cares of life cannot outdo the grace of God. The greater our suffering and affliction, the greater will be our comfort from the Lord. God’s salve is in proportion to the extent of our wounds. That salve is stored in the believer so that at the appropriate time he might dispense it to another in need.

Paul assured the Corinthians as they shared in Paul’s suffering, they would share in God’s comfort too. God has grace, strength, and encouragement to meet any circumstance that we may face because He has already been where we are now. The Lord knows what it is like to be you.

* He knows what it is to be human.
* He knows what it is to suffer.
* He knows what it is to be rejected and betrayed.
* He knows what it is like to be poor and homeless.
* He knows what it is like to be falsely accused and slandered.

If you want to hear God’s voice speak, allow your soul to be quieted long enough so that you can hear the One who was in the beginning say to you, "Draw near to me and I'll draw near to you."
Our Lord knows the depth, dread, and the dregs of suffering. One day an unbeliever vented his rage upon a Christian who was trying to comfort an unsaved man in his grief. The unbeliever snarled, "Where was your God when my son was killed?" Quietly and wisely the Christian replied, "He was in the same place when His son was killed." Beloved, our Lord is no stranger to suffering even though He is God.

* Hebrews 4:15 - For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The ministry of comfort and encouragement is amply seen in a story about Natalie Gilbert. When 13-year-old Natalie Gilbert was asked to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at a nationally televised NBA Western Conference playoff game, it was a dream come true. But what happened on the day of her performance was more like a nightmare. On April 25, 2003, Natalie bravely stood alone at mid-court in Portland's Rose Garden Arena. As she began to belt out the familiar words of the national anthem before a capacity crowd, however, her mind went blank. She forgot the words. Closing her eyes and shaking her head, she appeared on the verge of tears.

At that moment Maurice Cheeks, the head coach of the Portland Trailblazers, walked toward her. Cheeks put his arm around the girl and began singing with her. He told CBS Sportsline, "I didn't even know if I knew all the words, but as many times as I've heard the national anthem, I just went over and continued to sing. The words started coming back to me and I just tried to help her out." As he reminded the girl of the lyrics she'd forgotten, he encouraged the crowd to sing along and they did. Together, the whole arena made it all the way through, to "the home of the brave."

What was an ordinary situation turned into an extra-ordinary situation of urgency and need for comfort and assistance. The need of one brought forth the comfort and encouragement of many. I dare say that people who normally didn't sing The Star Spangled Banner, sang it on that day. Beloved, this is a great story of how we are to come to the side of others in order to encourage and comfort them, not just watch them flounder in fear, frustration, and failure.

We have seen so far that God allows bad things to happen to His people for several reasons.
* To show that our Perils are Not an Obstacle to God’s Care for Us  
* To Prepare Us for Ministry and to Comfort Others  
* Thirdly, to get us to Place our Trust in God when we are Under Pressure

III. OUR PRESSURES ARE TO PROMOTE A TRUST IN GOD 1:8-10

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: [9] But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: [10] Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

...God also allows bad things to happen to God’s people to teach them to trust in God when pressure comes into their lives. Paul uses a personal illustration to teach this truth to the Corinthians and to assure them they can seek refuge in the Lord and He will care for them. When Paul was in Asia, he went through the ringer. You talk about pressure, he went through it. Notice his description of his ordeal.

A. They were Crushed: “…we were pressed out of measure, above strength,...” 1:8

Paul was overwhelmed and pressured beyond his own ability to endure. He was “pressed out.” What does he mean? These words come from the Greek word bareo {bar-eh'-o} which means “to burden, to depress or weigh down; to overcome.” Paul was weighed down beyond what was credible, even beyond what any natural strength he could support. His circumstances were bad. He was pressed out of measure or beyond his own ability to cope with the situation. Can you relate to what he was going through? There is no part of St. Paul’s history known to us which can justify these strong expressions, except his being stoned at the city of Lystra. If Lystra is not what he is talking about, the facts to which he refers are not on record.
B. They were Confounded and felt Confined: "...we despaired even of life..." 1:8

A college student shared this story while attending college. He visited a psychiatric institution with a group of students to observe various types of mental illness. The experience proved to be very disturbing. He remembered one man who was called "No Hope Carter." His was a tragic case. A victim of venereal disease, he was going through the final stages when the brain is affected by the disease. Before he began to lose his mind, this man was told by the doctors that there was no known cure for him. He begged for one ray of light in his darkness, but had been told that the disease would run its inevitable course and end in death.

Gradually his brain deteriorated and he became more and more despondent. When the student saw him in his small, barred room about 2 weeks before he died, he was pacing up and down in mental agony. His eyes stared blankly, and his face was drawn and ashen. Over and over he muttered these two forlorn and fateful words: "No hope! No hope!" He said nothing else, and no one could pierce the veil of darkness that enveloped him. The despair that this man faced was very close to what Paul felt in his own life.

The trials and pressures were so intense for Paul that living became a burden. He despaired of life. The word "despaired" is from the Greek word *exaporeomai* (ex-ah-pore-oh-mahee) which means "to be utterly at loss, to be utterly destitute of measures or resources, to renounce all hope, to be in despair or perplexed; to have no passage, no exit or escape." Paul saw no escape from the desperate situation that threatened his life. He felt trapped. Have you ever felt this way?

In the 1800's Christina Georgina Rossetti penned these words of desperation. Perhaps you can relate to her.

\[
I \text{ have no wit, no words, no tears;} \\
\text{My heart within me like a stone} \\
\text{Is numbed too much for hopes or fears;} \\
\text{Look right, look left, I dwell alone;} \\
\text{I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief} \\
\text{No everlasting hills I see;} \\
\text{My life is in the falling leaf} \\
\text{O Jesus, quicken me.}
\]
C. They were Convinced: "...we had the sentence of death in ourselves,..." 1:9

Paul's circumstances were so bad that he truly believed that he was going to die. The word rendered “sentence” is from the Greek word *apokrina* {ap-ok'-ree-mah} which means properly “an answer, a judicial response, or sentence.” Here it is synonymous with “verdict.” Paul felt that he was condemned to die for the sake of the Gospel. He truly felt as if he were under the sentence of death and with no hope of acquittal. The apostle was called to contemplate the hour of death as imminent.

God, however, was watching over him in his trials. Beloved, when God puts His children into the furnace, He keeps His hand on the thermostat and His eye on the thermometer. I like what Ruth E. Renkel said, “Never fear shadows. They simply mean there's a light shining somewhere.”

*1 Corinthians 10:13- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

*1 Peter 1:6-7... Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: [7] That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

D. They were Confident: "...that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God...” 1:9

In 1835, a man visited a doctor in Florence, Italy. He was filled with anxiety and exhausted from lack of sleep. He couldn't eat, and he avoided his friends. The doctor examined him and found that he was in prime physical condition. Concluding that his patient needed to have a good time, the physician told him about a circus in town and its star performer, a clown named Grimaldi.

Night after night he had the people rolling in the aisles. "You must go and see him," the doctor advised. "Grimaldi is the world's funniest clown. He'll make you laugh and cure your sadness." "No," replied the despairing man, "he can't help me. You see, I am Grimaldi!!" Grimaldi
was helpless and could not comfort himself. He was like many others facing the same dilemma today. There are going to be times we feel helpless, empty, and need genuine comfort that truly satisfies.

Paul explains why God allowed him and his friends to go through such desperate circumstances. He explains why bad things happened to them. Their pressures were to promote a trust in the Lord, not in their own selves and schemes. In fact, God uses the trial to reveal your helplessness and inability to solve your problem.

We often depend on our own skills and abilities when life seems easy, but we turn to God when we feel unable to help ourselves. When this happens, the light bulb comes on and we begin to develop the “I Need the Lord’s Help” philosophy. Trusting in the Lord with your life and depending on God is a realization of your own powerlessness without Him and your need for His constant touch in your life. God is our source of power, and we receive His help by keeping in touch with him. With this attitude of dependence, problems will drive us to God rather than away from him.

Most people just don’t know the strength of their faith until it is tested. The testing reveals if there are any weaknesses or doubts. When the doubts, the despair, the discouragement, and the distress are faced with faith and a confident resolve to rely on the Lord, then God honors that faith and strengthens the believer to face the next test when it comes his way. This is why the constant challenge of Scripture is to trust the Lord, especially in times of difficulty.

* Proverbs 3:5-Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
* Psalm 37:3- Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.
* Psalm 115:11- Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield.
* Psalm 118:8 - It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.

God’s power comforted Paul and delivered him from the hour of his death until it was God’s time for him to come home to glory. Paul had confidence that the Lord could deliver him at any time. Paul spoke of God’s deliverance in three tenses in verse ten: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;
* Past Tense: *delivered*
* Present Tense: *doth deliver*
* Future Tense: *will yet deliver us*

When Paul writes this letter, he knows that the same God who delivered him in the past is able to deliver him day by day, and will continue to deliver him until that final, grand moment when he will be completely released from the tribulations and persecutions of this world. His time is in God’s hands and so is yours. Stop worrying about what might happen to you and just LIVE! Live your life for Christ! God allows the bad things in your life to get you to trust in Him all the time.

Why do bad things happen to God’s people? Paul has given us several answers so far.

* To show that our Perils are Not an Obstacle to God’s Care for Us
* To Prepare Us for Ministry and to Comfort Others
* To get us to Place our Trust in God when we are Under Pressure
* Fourthly, to Promote Prayer in the Life of Believers

IV. TO PROMOTE PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF BELIEVERS 1:11a

_Ye also helping together by prayer for us, ...._

_G_ od also allows bad things in the lives of God’s people to move His people to pray for themselves and for one another. Paul understood the importance of prayer, as did James, if he was to wage spiritual warfare and attain victory.

* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
* Romans 15:30 - Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;
* Ephesians 6:18- Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
* Philippians 1:19- For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
* 1 Thessalonians 5:25- Brethren, pray for us.

Paul’s difficulties made him dependent upon the Lord and drove him to pray. The Arabs have a proverb, "All sunshine makes a desert."
The danger of prosperity is that it encourages a false independence and security. It makes us think that we are well able to handle life alone. For every one prayer that rises to God in days of prosperity, ten thousand rise in days of adversity. As Lincoln had it, "I have often been driven to my knees in prayer because I had nowhere else to go."

It is often in misfortune, in misery, or in malady, that a man finds out who are his true friends and his need for God's help in his life. This is why the Lord allows bad things to happen to God's people, so that they will learn to seek Him. The Lord likes to hear from us. He likes to hear from you. How often do you speak to Him? Is it only in times of distress or do you speak to him in times of delight?

* Isaiah 55:6- Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Some folks will not pray because they have a problems with apathy that puts them in spiritual slumber, actions that are sinful, attitudes that are sour, or an adamant spirit that is rebellious toward the Lord. The Bible warns us of several elements that will hinder our prayer life.

* What Hinders Our Prayers

1. Stability that is lacking-
   * James 1:6-7 ... But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. [7] For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

2. Sin in our lives-
   * Psalm 66:18- If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:
   * Isaiah 59:2 - But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

3. Selfishness-
   * James 4:3- Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

4. Stubbornness toward God-
   * Zechariah 7:13- Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts:
   * Proverbs 1:24-28... Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; [25] But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: [26] I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; [27] When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a
whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. [28] Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

God also informs us how to get our prayers answered and how to pray properly.

* What Are the Conditions for Successful Praying

1. Contrition-
* 2 Chronicles 7:14- If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

2. Complete Surrender of our heart to the Lord-
* Jeremiah 29:13- And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

3. Consecration to Christ-
* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

4. A Compliant or obedient attitude-
* 1 John 3:22- And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

5. Confidence or faith in the Lord-
* Mark 11:24 - Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Not long before his death, Henri Nouwen wrote a book called *Sabbatical Journeys*. He writes about some friends of his who were trapeze artists, called the Flying Roudellas. They told Nouwen there's a special relationship between flyer and catcher on the trapeze. The flyer is the one that lets go, and the catcher is the one that catches. As the flyer swings high above the crowd on the trapeze, the moment comes when he must let go. He arcs out into the air. His job is to remain as still as possible and wait for the strong hands of the catcher to pluck him from the air. One of the Flying Roudellas told Nouwen, "The flyer must never try to catch the catcher." The flyer must wait in absolute trust. The catcher will catch him, but he must wait. We too, must learn to wait on the Lord and trust Him.
Why do bad things happen to God’s people?
* To show that our Perils are Not an Obstacle to God’s Care for Us
* To Prepare Us for Ministry and to Comfort Others
* To get us to Place our Trust in God when we are Under Pressure
* To Promote Prayer in the Life of Believers
* In the fifth place, To get us to Praise God and Give Thanks in Everything

V. TO PRAISE GOD AND GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING 1:11b

"...that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf."

God also allows bad things to happen to God’s people so that He will be praised when He answers our prayers and we will learn to be grateful. It is the will of God that we have a thankful spirit.

* 1 Thessalonians 5:18- In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

The word “persons” used here is literally translated in the Greek language “faces.” The Greek term portrays faces lifted upward to God in prayer and those same faces praising God for Paul’s deliverance.

When God answers your prayers, do you remember to thank and praise Him or do you go on your way and forget what He has done? Many Christians are weak in praising the Lord and it is for this reason He sometimes allows bad things to happen in your life so you will learn to praise Him no matter what. Look for opportunities to praise Him.

The editors of Religion Today reported on August 10th, 1999, that teen-agers held a praise service during a traffic jam. Thirty-nine members of a youth group and eight chaperones from Northside United Methodist Church in Jackson, Tennessee, were returning wet and tired from a rafting trip when their chartered bus became stuck in a traffic jam on Interstate 24 because of an accident a mile ahead. The teens invited other motorists to use the bathroom in their bus, played with children in nearby cars, and obtained permission from the driver of a flatbed truck nearby to use his trailer for a praise service.

So there on Interstate 24, 47 teenagers climbed onto the flatbed, and pulled out several guitars and a harmonica. People gathered around to listen as they sang songs they had learned weeks before at Jubilee Weekend in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Before long, 25 more teens
arrived and climbed aboard the truck, including those from a Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee. The bus was filled with lines of people waiting for the bathroom, and the flatbed was surrounded by an audience. People with food began to pass it out to those who didn't have any. Some motorists on the other side of the interstate, where the traffic was moving, pulled over to take photographs. The praise service lasted two hours, ending when the students got word that the wreck was about to be cleared and they should return to the bus. "What a witness it was," one participant said. Beloved, sometimes the Lord allows traffic jams or road blocks in our life so that we will stop and praise Him.

* Psalm 7:17 - I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.
* Psalm 107:8 - Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!
* Psalm 150:6 - Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord. This is the last verse in the book of Psalms.
Chapter 3
A Closet with No Skeletons
2 Corinthians 1:12-14

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. [13] For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; [14] As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The next portion of 2 Corinthians is very relevant and practical for us today. These verses provide answers on what to do when your integrity is under attack. They express to us the triumph of transparency, the importance of integrity, and the comfort that comes from having a closet with no skeletons.

Now what is going on here? The answer is Paul’s integrity is under attack. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to defend himself against the attacks and assaults of the false apostles at Corinth.

* 2 Corinthians 11:13-For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

There were deceptive men that were determined to discredit him, weaken and undermine his authority, and then replace God’s truth with false teaching. These liars had to destroy the people’s trust in Paul before they could make head-way with them with their false doctrines. If they could destroy their confidence in Paul, they felt they could destroy their confidence in his message. The false teachers launched a three-pronged attack on Paul’s credibility and integrity.

* On the moral level, they accused him of secretly being a wicked sinner, justly suffering all the time because of the chastening of God. They must have been saying that there was more in Paul's conduct than met the eye. In other words, there must be skeletons of perversion in his closet.
* On the **motive level**, they accused him of being insincere, deceptive, and manipulative. They charged that he was not what he appeared to be on the surface; that in reality, he was using the Corinthians for his own selfish purposes. They portrayed Paul as a manipulator, scheming to defraud the Corinthians and to promote his personal agenda. In short, according to the false apostles, Paul’s motives were corrupt, his words untrustworthy, and his actions devious. There were **skeletons of corruption** in his closet.

* On the **message level**, they charged that Paul misrepresented God’s Word and was a liar and a false teacher. There were those who said that Paul in his letters did not quite mean what he said. There were **skeletons of deception** in his closet. What hurt Paul more than those baseless, slanderous lies was the sad fact that some in the Corinthian congregation believed them.

No matter how godly you may live, there will always be some that will be critical of your life. The best thing you can do is live your life in such a way that no one will believe your critics. This was Peter’s counsel for us.

* 1 Peter 3:16- Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Paul refutes these false prophets and assassins of his character by the evidence of his character. His transparent life was the foundation of his defense. We will examine his confidence, his conscience, his conduct, and his clear-cut message.

**I. THE CONFIDENCE OF PAUL  1:12a**

“For our rejoicing is this,.....”

The word “**rejoicing**” is derived from the Greek word *kauchēsis* {kow'-khay-sis} which means “act of glorying, boasting, proud confidence, or rejoicing.” Paul frequently used this word *kauchēsis*, and the related noun and verb forms in this letter. Twenty-nine of their fifty-nine uses in the New Testament are found in 2 Corinthians. Negatively, *kauchēsis* describes unwarranted boasting in one’s achievements and merits.

Boasting in the form of human arrogance is sin, for our God must receive all glory and honor. Human pride must be banished and God is to be glorified. Christians, therefore, should never glorify or extol
themselves but only glory in the Lord Jesus. If this is not done, then the
boasting is bad. This is what James talked about in chapter four.
* James 4:16- But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing
is evil.

Boasting can also be used, however, of legitimate confidence in
what God is doing in your life as it is used this way in this verse. Paul
gives God the glory for enabling him to live a godly life by His grace. In
a nutshell, he praises the Lord for the fact he does not have skeletons in
his closet. This gave him confidence in ministry.
* 2 Corinthians 7:4- Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great
is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in
all our tribulation.
* 2 Corinthians 7:14- For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am
not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our
boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.
* 2 Corinthians 8:24- Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the
churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.
* 2 Corinthians 11:10- As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop
me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

Rejoicing or boasting in the Lord and what the Lord accomplishes
in His people is appropriate. In fact, God Himself delights in such
boasting:
* Jeremiah 9:23-24... Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in
his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich
man glory in his riches: [24] But let him that glorieth glory in this, that
he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise
lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these
things I delight, saith the Lord.
* 1 Corinthians 1:31- That, according as it is written, He that glorieth,
let him glory in the Lord.
* 2 Corinthians 10:17- But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas addressed the issue of
glory in a recent speech. He said his brother's death caused him to re-
evaluate his own life. Baring his soul, as he often does in public talks,
Thomas added, "Work became irrelevant. Being on the Supreme Court
became meaningless." Thomas said he realized that the three F's—faith,
family, friends—are paramount, "not who is smartest, not who has
written the most opinions..."
Let me ask at this point, "Are you thrilled about what the Lord has done in and with your life or are you ashamed because you have not let Him have His way in your heart? Have skeletons of sin in your closet robbed you of your joy and your effectiveness for Jesus Christ?"

II. THE CONSCIENCE OF PAUL  1:12b

“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, ....”

During the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Selena Roberts wrote in the New York Times: About 10 yards past a security checkpoint along the path of a cinder-block hall inside the Salt Lake Ice Center, a panel of nine judges filtered into a room for a standard post-competition meeting last Tuesday morning. Twelve hours removed from the controversial moment when gold medallions were draped over the Russian team of Yelena and Anton, instead of Canada’s Jamie Salé and David Pelletier, the judges assembled for a review of the decision under Ron Pfenning, the head referee.

At first, it was business as usual as the judges sat around a table, pouring over marks and scores for several skaters. Then the meeting took a bizarre turn. Ron Pfenning, known as a gentle and meticulous caretaker of skating, handed each judge a piece of paper with a passage about honesty and integrity. As each person passed back the pieces of paper, the judge Marie-Reine Le Gougne began to sob. "It was a rambling avalanche of words," Pfenning said. "I hadn't asked her a question. She had been teary-eyed through a lot of the meeting. It was an outburst: 'You don't understand. You don't understand. We're under an awful lot of pressure. My federation, my president Didier, said I had to put the Russians first.'"

Didier was the president of the French Figure Skating Federation. Pfenning said that when Marie called out Didier’s name, he knew he had to report the incident to the International Skating Union. For several minutes, the weeping and wailing from Marie Le Gougne grew so loud that a person in the room stripped tape over the crack in the door in an apparent soundproofing effort. The two high-ranking skating officials said no one embraced Marie, the stylish 40-year-old Frenchwoman, as she cried out. Many of the judges saw her as a pathetic figure. Some had seen her crying in the same way while standing in the hotel lobby after the competition. They already knew why she was distraught. They said, "Her conscience had caught up to her."
What was behind this scandal? It was alleged that this was part of a deal to get an advantage for the French couple Marina and Gwendal in the ice dance competition which was to follow a few days later. However, in a signed statement, Le Gougne denied taking part in such a deal and also stated that she had truly believed the Russian pair deserved to win, even though she revealed the scheme earlier. The final outcome of this whole controversy is the Canadian couple had their silver medal upgraded to a gold medal with the Russian couple. Marie was immediately suspended for a total of three years and was barred from the 2006 Winter Olympics.

This story shows that the witness or testimony of our conscience can be very powerful and distressing, especially when we are under conviction. Paul spoke of the “testimony” of his conscience in this portion of chapter one. The word “testimony” is from the Greek word *marturion* (mar-toor'-e-on) which means “testimony, witness, or proof.” Paul, in essence, said that the proof or the evidence of his conscience revealed there were no skeletons in his closet. There was no reason for him to be ashamed of anything he had done.

The apostle spoke repeatedly about the conscience in his letters. The conscience is the soul reflecting on itself. Both the Greek word *suneidesis* (conscience) and the English word “conscience” have the idea of “knowing oneself.” According to Romans 2:14, even those without God’s written law have an innate moral sense of what is right and wrong. They instinctively obey God’s Law, even though they have not heard it. The instinct comes from God, the Creator of all men.

* Romans 2:14 - For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

**The conscience is not infallible.** Seeing that man has been affected by sin, both a person’s perception of the standard of right and wrong and the function of the conscience itself are contaminated and influenced by sin. For this reason, the conscience can never be accorded the position of ultimate judge of your behavior. Let me illustrate. One day, children lined up in the cafeteria of a religious school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The teacher made a note: "Take only one, God is watching." At the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. A boy wrote a note: "Take all you want, God is watching the apples."
It is possible that the conscience may excuse you for that which God will not excuse or your teacher will not excuse. Sin is so deceitful that believers will sometime sin without their conscience being aware of it. Thus, they must constantly examine themselves in light of Scripture, allowing God to be the final judge. Like David, they must constantly pray, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).

On the night of November 27, 1983, Avianca Flight 011, en route from Paris to Bogotá via Madrid, approached Madrid’s Barajas airport. The weather was good, and there were no mechanical problems with the 747 jet. The crew was experienced; the pilot had more than 20,000 hours of flying time and had made this same approach twenty-five times before. Yet, with its flaps extended and its landing gear down, the jumbo jet smashed into a series of low hills about seven miles short of the runway. The plane cartwheeled, broke into pieces, and came to rest upside down. Tragically, 181 of the 192 people on board lost their lives.

Investigators determined that a series of errors by the crew caused the crash. The crew misunderstood the reality of their location. They thought they knew the truth about the plane’s position, but they did not. Shockingly, the final and fatal error came when the pilot, so sure he knew where he was heading, ignored the computerized voice of the plane’s GPWS (Ground Proximity Warning System), which repeatedly warned him, “Pull up! Pull up! Pull up!” The cockpit recorder had his strange reply to the warning. He said, “Shut up, gringo” and switched off the warning device. The next moment, he was dead with the rest of the victims because he ignored the warnings.

That tragic story is a compelling illustration of the way people often ignore the truth of their life’s direction and the warning messages from their conscience. The conscience is a warning system, placed by God into the very framework of the human soul. Like physical pain, which warns of damage to the body, the conscience warns of damage to your life and your soul. It reacts to the proximity of sin, warning you to “Pull up! Pull Up! Get out of here! Don’t do it!” before it suffers the terrible consequences of sinful choices.

To reject the voice of your conscience is to invite spiritual catastrophe. We cannot reject the voice of our conscience with exemption from problems or pain. We will get stung. Unfortunately, society today aggressively tries to silence the conscience. People have
been taught to ignore any and all conviction or guilty feelings that the conscience produces, viewing them as harmful to their self-esteem or mental health. They believe their problems stem not from their sin, but from external factors beyond their control. Sin and guilt are not viewed as moral and spiritual problems. Instead, they are viewed as psychological issues or even health problems, as sins are labeled as diseases or are blamed on someone else. The voice of your conscience cannot be safely rejected, for those who attempt to do so face spiritual ruin. The skeletons will invade their closet.

* 1 Timothy 1:19- Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck;
* 1 Timothy 4:2 - Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;
* Titus 1:15- Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

The word “defiled” in Titus 1:15 is from the Greek word *miaino* {me-ah'-ee-no} which means “to dye with another color, to stain, to defile, pollute, or contaminate.” Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure, but nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their minds and consciences are corrupted. Their conscience has been dyed with sinful attitudes and reasoning.

Since the conscience holds people to their highest perceived standard, it is vital for spiritual victory that Christians set that standard to the highest level. This is done by obeying the Word of God. As they continually fill their minds with the truths of Scripture, Christians clarify God’s perfect standard of right and wrong. Their consciences will then call them to live according to God’s standards. Our conscience is not like a torch or lamp. It functions much like a skylight. It does not produce its own light. Instead, it lets moral light in. This is why Paul stressed repeatedly that we keep our conscience clear. This was one of the key goals of Paul’s life. It was a goal that he reached with consistency.

* 1 Timothy 1:5- Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: The purpose of Paul’s instruction was that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine, sincere faith.
* Acts 23:1- And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.
* 2 Timothy 1:3 - I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

Having a clear conscience was a key defense against slander or being accused of having skeletons in your closet. Remember what Peter said?

* 1 Peter 3:16- Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

This brings us to a very important question, “How do you get a clear conscience?” The Bible provides the answer.

* How do You Clear Your Conscience and Maintain It?

1. The Way of God’s Salvation must be Chosen.

Jesus said that He was the only way to Heaven. If you want your conscience cleared, you must ask Christ to forgive and cleanse you of your sins and trust Him for eternal life. This is the first thing you must do.

* John 14:6 - Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

At the point of our salvation, God cleanses the conscience from its lifelong accumulation of guilt, shame, and self-contempt. No matter what you have done, there is forgiveness and cleansing in Jesus Christ.

* Hebrews 9:14 - How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

* Hebrews 10:22- Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The conscience of the born again sinner is cleansed at salvation and the guilt of our sins are removed because we have been pardoned by the Lord.

* Psalm 32:5- I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

* Psalm 103:12 - As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

* Colossians 1:14- In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:
2. The Word of God must be Obeyed.

Once you have become a Christian, then it is vital you make the Bible an important part of your life. It is your spiritual food and source of strength to do what pleases God. We are to read it, study it, learn its truths, meditate upon them, and put them into practice.

*Psalm 37:30-31* ...The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. [31] The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

*Psalm 119:11* - Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

*1 Peter 2:2* - As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

The great eighteenth-century English hymn writer Isaac Watts composed the following stanzas about the pursuit of righteousness and obedience to God’s Word:

Blest are the undefiled in heart,
Whose ways are right and clean,
Who never from the law depart,
    But fly from ev’ry sin.

Blest are the men who keep Thy Word
    And practice Thy commands;
With their whole heart they seek the Lord,
    And serve Thee with their hands.

Great is their peace who love Thy law;
    How firm their souls abide!
Nor can a bold temptation draw
    Their steady feet aside.

Then shall my heart have inward joy,
    And keep my face from shame,
When all Thy statutes I obey,
    And honor all Thy Name.
3. Watchfulness and Prayer
* Proverbs 4:26 - Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Solomon warned us to watch our path and the result was our way would be sure and safe.
* Matthew 26:41 - Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Jesus used Peter's drowsiness to warn him about the kinds of temptation he would soon face. The way to overcome temptation is to keep watch and pray. In other words, be alert and aware of the possibilities of temptation. We are to be spiritually equipped to fight temptation. Because temptation strikes where we are most vulnerable, we can't resist it alone. Prayer is essential because God's strength can shore up our defenses and defeat Satan's power. Prayer also keeps our heart warm and tender toward Christ. God wants us to be alert to His leading in our lives. By watching and praying, we can discern what He is trying to do in us, for us, and through us.

National Football League running back Sherman Smith, the "Sherman Tank," stood six feet four inches tall and packed 225 pounds of solid muscle. His reputation for bowling over defensive linemen with his speed and strength raised his celebrity to near-cult status in the Pacific Northwest, where he played for the Seattle Seahawks. Then, without warning, out of the clear blue, the Seahawks traded their most popular player to the San Diego Chargers. Everything changed overnight for this running back, whose Christian faith was as rock solid as his abs.

Sherman wasn't with the Chargers for more than a few weeks when he seriously injured his knee. While in rehabilitation, Sherman wondered, "Lord, what are you doing? Why did you ship me to San Diego?" Sherman got his answer. He realized that God was directing his path and putting him where he was needed.

While Sherman's knee mended in San Diego, he had the opportunity to lead one of his teammates to the Lord Jesus Christ. That converted party-guy, Miles McPherson, became a youth evangelist that eventually reached thousands for Christ. Miles is now the pastor of Rock Church in San Diego, California, and reaches thousands of people for Christ every week with the Gospel. They have five services on Sunday to contain the crowds. The mission of their church is to save, equip, and send out soul-winners for Jesus Christ. He says, "Everything we do from Sunday services, to ministries, to small groups only helps to fulfill this mission. It is a church with a purpose."
4. Be Wary of Your Pride

* 1 Corinthians 10:12 - Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Pride creates complications for us. It leads us to behave in an offensive way where we will need to clear our conscience with God and others. It makes us unteachable, rude, harsh, selfish, and insensitive to the needs of others. When we have hurt others, our pride hardens our heart toward repentance and restoration. Avoid your pride like you would avoid a nest of hornets.

We have seen so far that you can clear and maintain your conscience by:
* The Way of God’s Salvation
* The Word of God
* Watchfulness and Prayer
* Being Wary of Your Pride
* Next, Warrant the Seriousness of Sin

5. Warrant the Seriousness of Sin

* Romans 4:25 - Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

One sin brought death upon the human race. It caused Adam and Eve to be kicked out of the Garden of Eden. Our sin led to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. If we are going to clear our conscience, we need to take our sin seriously and warrant or realize the destructive effects it has on our life and the lives of others. Such understanding will be a deterrent in doing wrong in the future.

* Psalm 39:1 - I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

6. Willfully and Wittingly make Up Your Mind to Do what is Right

Maintaining a clear conscience demands that you make up your mind to please the Lord and live a godly life. It involves a resolve to dissolve the desire to disobey the Lord and let nothing divide your heart from fellowship with Him.

* Psalm 119:106 - I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

On February 14, the business of Valentine's Day is to ardently pursue love interests and warmly renew those already in progress. Daniel Webster, a 19th century lawyer and statesman, was courting his wife-to-be, Grace Fletcher. As he held strands of silk thread for her, he suggested, "Grace, we've been engaged in untwisting knots. Let us see if we can tie a
knot which will not untie for a lifetime." They stopped right then and tied a random silk knot that would be almost impossible to untie. Grace accepted Webster's proposal. After they passed from this world, their children found a little box marked "Precious Documents." Among the contents were letters of courtship and a tiny silk knot. It was one that had never been untied.

Beloved, those who know the love of Jesus Christ can boldly say, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). The love of God is everlasting for His children. His mind is made up. Have you made up your mind to walk with Him and do what is right?

7. Withstand the First Hint of Temptation
* James 1:14-15... But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. [15] Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

The trail from temptation to throwing in the towel to sinful living is a quick one. Why? The flesh loves to cater to its desires. It likes to “feel good.” If you are going to maintain a clear conscience, then temptation must be “nipped in the bud.” If David would have looked the other way when he saw Bathsheba and squelched the temptation he faced at that moment, he could have prevented the heartache of his failure and the murder of a great warrior.

8. Wrongs Must Be Made Right with Others
* Acts 24:16- And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Restitution involves repairing or replacing that which was damaged. If you have damaged someone’s reputation by slandering them, then you need to publicly restore their name because you don’t know how far your slander has traveled. If you have offended someone privately, then you go to that person and seek their forgiveness privately. If you have done something that has entered the public arena such as a moral failure, then you seek repentance publicly, especially with your church family. You go as far as the ripple goes.

Public repentance is necessary for your testimony because people don’t know what is going on in your life unless you tell them. If you got your life right with God, then tell them and seek forgiveness for your bad
example and offensive behavior. After Zacchaeus met the Lord, he wanted to make restitution with others who were offended by his dishonesty.

* Luke 19:8- And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

Unwillingness to get your life right with people indicates a pride problem and spiritual immaturity. You will continue to struggle in your Christian growth until you clear your conscience.

Paul has been presenting his case that he had no skeletons in his closet. His life was above reproach, his integrity was intact, his character was Christ-like, his sincerity was sterling, his veracity was valid, his candidness was clear, and his faithfulness was flawless. The witnesses to his character were first of all his confidence and secondly, his conscience. The third area of evidence was his conduct. The principles that he shares about his own conduct should be mimicked in our own personal lives.

III. THE CONDUCT OF PAUL  1:12c

"... that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."

The attacks made against Paul on a moral and motive level were refuted by the conduct of Paul. He confronted those who were accusing his character, that he was not genuine, or he was concealing hidden motives. Paul had nothing to hide at all. He was transparent and above board. Blessed is the man who has nothing to hide! Paul’s conversation was in this world.

This word “conversation” is from the Greek word anastrepho (an-as-tref-o-j). It is an interesting word. It means “to turn upside down, to turn hither and thither or to turn one’s self about from a course of conduct; the behavior of a person.” This verb anastrepho is formed from two words, ana which means “again,” and strepho, which means “to turn; a continual coming back again to the point from which he set out; a circulation; beginning, continuing, and ending every thing to the glory of God.” This same word is used in these familiar verses.

* John 2:15- And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out
the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

* 1 Timothy 3:15- But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou  
oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the  
living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

There are several thoughts we will address here from this word  
"conversation." First of all, Paul's life as well as the Christians of the  
early church did turn the world upside down.

* Acts 17:6- And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain  
brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the  
world upside down are come hither also;

Paul had a huge impact on the early church and still is impacting  
the world for Christ today. His life did go in circles in the sense that he  
began for Christ, he continued for Christ day by day, and he ended his  
life living for Christ. He was consistent like a circle, repeating his walk  
with God each day. Our lives are to regularly and daily revolve around  
the Son of God as the planets revolve around the sun. Christ is to be the  
center of our lives. When we have this attitude and put it into practice,  
we can keep the skeletons out of our closet and God can use us in a very  
special way to reach others for Him.

Edward Kimball is probably not known to you. He lived over a  
hundred years ago. He was a Sunday school teacher in Boston, where a  
young teenager became part of his class. The young man was a country  
boy. He didn't know the ways of the city or of the church, but he came to  
Kimball's Sunday school class. When the teen first came to his class,  
Edward Kimball handed him a Bible. When Mr. Kimball said, "Turn to  
the Gospel of John," the country boy didn't know how to find the Gospel  
of John.

Edward Kimball recognized what was happening, and while the  
other boys were snickering, he opened the Bible to the Gospel of John  
and handed it back. When he asked the boys to read, the country boy  
fumbled as he read. Edward Kimball had a big perspective, and he saw  
possibilities in the boy. Kimball worked with him, and after some months  
he went down to the store where the boy was working, went into the back  
room where he was stacking boxes, and led Dwight to the Lord Jesus  
Christ.

That was the beginning of the ministry of Dwight L. Moody, this  
continent's greatest evangelist during the last century. You didn't know  
Edward Kimball, an obscure Sunday school teacher who had a vision, but  
his conduct, concern, and compassion led to the conversion of a young
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That was the beginning of the ministry of Dwight L. Moody, this continent’s greatest evangelist during the last century. You didn’t know Edward Kimball, an obscure Sunday school teacher who had a vision, but his conduct, concern, and compassion led to the conversion of a young man who became an influential Christian that God used in a great way. God used both of these men in His own way.

Such was the case with Paul. God used him mightily. When we examine Paul’s life and conduct we find that it was characterized by several traits which defend his behavior.

**A. Simplicity: “that in simplicity”**

What is Paul talking about when he uses the word “simplicity?” This word is derived from the Greek word *haplootes* {hap-lot’-ace}. The word means “sincerity, mental honesty, the virtue of one who is free from hypocrisy, not self-seeking, generous.” Paul refuted any charges of hypocrisy, greed, or selfishness. People who are hypocritical and greedy tend to struggle with skeletons in their closet because of choices they have made in their past, but are unwilling to clean their slate and make matters right in their lives. God’s challenge to us is to flush the hypocrisy out of our lives.

*James 3:17 - But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

*Romans 12:9- Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Dissimulation means “hypocrisy.”*

**B. Sincerity that was Godly: “and godly sincerity”**

What is godly sincerity? This word is from the Greek word *heilikrineia* {i-nil-ree’-ni-ah} which means “unmixed, purity, integrity, sincerity.” It is an interesting word used to describe genuineness of character. It originally might have pictured the sifting of grain, which in this verse would remind believers they need to sift impurities out of their lives and be like pure, wholesome grain.

This word has another meaning. It is derived from two Greek words meaning “sun” and “to judge.” If we make those two into a compound word, it would literally mean “testing by sunlight or sun-tested.” It describes something which can bear the test of being held up to the light of the sun and looked at with the sun shining through it.

In Bible times, the finest pottery was thin. It had a clear color, and
it brought a high price. Fine pottery was very fragile both before and after the firing process. This pottery would often crack in the oven. Cracked pottery should have been thrown away, but dishonest dealers were in the habit of filling cracks with a hard pearly wax that would blend in with the color of the pottery. This made the cracks practically undetectable in the shops, especially when painted or glazed. The wax, however, was immediately detectable if the pottery was held up to light, especially to the sun. In that case the cracks would show up darker. It was said that the artificial element was detected by “sun-testing.”

Honest dealers marked their finer product by the caption sine cera—“without wax.” This caption forms our English word “sincere.” Beloved, happy is the man whose every action will bear the light of day and who, like Paul, can claim that there are no hidden actions in his life. May our lives be sin cera, genuine, and without wax. May we test our lives for the wax of phoniness, and keep the skeletons out of our closet. When held up to the light of God’s Word, the presence or absence of sinful cracks will be apparent. That’s why it is so important for us to feed daily on the Scriptures and to allow our lives to be shaped by their power.

* Psalm 119:9-11... Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. [10] With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. [11] Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

C. Sophia or wisdom that was not fleshly or carnal.

The word sophia is the Greek word for wisdom. Paul said his wisdom was not fleshly or carnal wisdom. Paul’s Christlike conduct was not achieved by his own power, strength, or efforts, but by the grace of God working in his life. Fleshly wisdom cannot produce holiness and godly sincerity, because it is nothing more than the manifestation of sinful man’s rebellion against God. Such wisdom is not wisdom at all, but foolishness. I never cease to be amazed at the stupidity of wicked people and Christ rejectors, especially those kinds of folks who are in leadership positions in government, science, and education. Their anti-God, perversion-promoting programs, policies, and philosophies are atrocious, fallacious, ferocious, infectious, nauseous, noxious, obnoxious, and vexatious. Their philosophy of life and their actions are foolish.

* 1 Corinthians 3:19 - For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. Wordly wisdom will breed skeletons in your closet. Paul challenged us to stay
away from the mold of this world.

* Romans 12:2- And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

God's grace and working enables us to remove the skeletons from our closet and live a consistent, Christ-like Christian life that is characterized by victory over vices, maturity in matters of daily living, and purity in our ponderings, practices, and pronouncements.

* 1 Corinthians 15:10- But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

* Colossians 1:29- Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

* Philippians 1:6- Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: What the Lord has started in you will finally be completed when Christ returns to this earth.

* Philippians 2:13- For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

J. Sidlow Baxter said, "What God chooses, He cleanses. What God cleanses, He molds. What God molds, He fills. What God fills, He uses." Beloved, let the Lord work in your life and use you. A person can be a Christian for many years yet remain spiritually immature. Therefore, it's possible for a new Christian to be far more grown up in the Lord than someone who has been saved for 40 years. A good example of this is found in an incident described by Ethel Barrett in her book It Only Hurts When I Laugh.

Ethel said that when D.L. Moody became a Christian, he developed such a hunger for God's Word, spent so much time reading it, and was so quick to obey it that he became a "menace" to some believers. His rapid spiritual growth was an embarrassment to certain people who, though they had been saved for many years, never grew up in Christ. Week after week in the church Moody attended, he would share a new experience he had with the Lord. Finally, some of the older saints who just couldn't stand feeling humiliated by his exemplary life, went to Moody's uncle and urged him to quiet down his nephew.

Ethel Barrett drew this conclusion about Moody: "His robust spiritual health and bounding energy disturbed their napping; he was just
too much. So, while they were sucking their thumbs, he was growing until he left them far behind. Moody grew more in a few years than they did in thirty." Beloved, let me ask, "Are you growing spiritually?" Are committed Christians an embarrassment to you? Realize that spiritual growth will help you to keep the skeletons out of your closet.

Paul's closet had not skeletons.
* * His Confidence confirmed this.
* * His Conscience confirmed this.
* * His Conduct confirmed this.
* * Next, his Clear-Cut message confirmed this.

IV. THE CLEAR-CUT MESSAGE OF PAUL 1:13-14

For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; [14] As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Not only can the Corinthians examine Paul's conduct, but also they can scrutinize his epistles which would include those addressed to them and those sent to other churches. When the wording of a written communication is not clear, the message is likely to be misunderstood. Paul makes it very clear that his message was aboveboard and straightforward. There was nothing that was vague or written between the lines that the people could not understand. There were no hidden meanings or ulterior motives. He did not say one thing and mean another. Paul hoped they would acknowledge this.

It is interesting to note that both the word "read" and the word "acknowledge" in verse 13 are compound forms of the verb ginōskō (to know), forming a play on words in the Greek language. There is a play on words found in this verse that cannot successfully be reproduced in the English language.

The Greek word for "read" is from the word anaginosko {an-ag-in-oce'-ko} which refers to what they know from reading his letters and the Greek word for "acknowledge" is from epiginosko {ep-ig-in-oce'-ko} refers to what they know through personal contact and thorough acquaintance with Paul. They are being assured that the two are in complete harmony. What Paul wrote in his letters was perfectly consistent with who he was in person. What he said, he meant and did not waver because he wanted God’s message to be clearly understood so
it could be put into practice. Does what you say match with what you do?

What Paul said about his message is the essence of truth. There is no need to waver on the truth because it is always the truth. There is no need to be ashamed of the truth. Truth breeds confidence and security. Deception is not necessary in speaking the truth. It is open to scrutiny and inspection and does not fear that inspection. It was Paul’s prayer that if they did not understand everything completely, they would some day be proud of what the Lord did through Paul just as Paul was proud of what the Lord did in their lives.

At the Judgement Seat of Christ, Paul would be fully vindicated by the Lord and the fruit of his labor would be fully realized. The apostle looked forward to that day, when the presence of those to whom he had ministered would bring him great joy. These same truths hold for you and me. What you have done for Christ will come out into the open one day when you stand before the Lord. If you have faithfully served Him, you will behold the faces of those touched by your life.

* 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20... For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? [20] For ye are our glory and joy.
* Philippians 2:16 - Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.
* 2 Corinthians 5:10-11... For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. [11] Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

Adoniram Judson and his sweet wife, Ann, were missionaries in India and Burma. During their tour of service, Adoniram was arrested as an enemy agent when his homeland, England, and the nation in which he served became disenchanted with one another. Immediately, Judson was imprisoned. The tiny cell in which he was incarcerated was so crowded and small that the prisoners had to take turns sleeping. There was not enough room for all of them to lie down. The hot sun beating upon the dingy cell caused unbearable suffering through heat prostration. The stench of body order, urine, and manure also became obnoxious as the men were never allowed to bathe. The flies were terrible.

One day the government officials decided to punish the prisoners and Judson was hoisted into the air by his thumbs. Pain wracked his body
as he remained suspended between heaven and earth for hours at a time. His precious helpmeet, Ann, would come by the prison daily and look inside the cell. The agony of her husband tore at her heart. From her eyes a stream of tears would flow like a broken necklace of pearls. However, this soldier of the cross always encouraged her man by saying, "Hang on, Adoniram. Hang on, Adoniram. God will give us the victory."

As the sands of the hourglass continued to flow for days and weeks, faithful Ann no longer made the visits to the prison and Adoniram's loneliness escalated. No one had informed him that she was dying. All he had now was a memory of his sweetheart saying, "Hang on, Adoniram. God will give us the victory."

Months later, upon his release, he immediately began the search for Ann. As he approached the area where he formerly lived, he saw a child so begrimed with dirt that he failed to recognize the little one as his own child. He dashed into the tent and saw the form of a woman so small and weak from malnutrition, that she appeared to be a skeleton. Her beautiful long-flowing hair had also fallen out and she was bald.

As Adoniram called out to Ann, "Ann, Ann! It's me Adoniram!" she failed to respond. It seemed as though she were already dead. He took her into his arms and wept. The hot tears dropping on her angelic face revived Ann and she said, "Hang on, Adoniram....God will give us the victory."

Adoniram lost his sweetheart, but not his faith and courage. He continued under dire circumstances to preach the Word of God and to build churches. When this man of God was buried, scores of churches had come into existence through his labors for Christ. Adoniram and Ann ran their race for Christ and finished pressing toward the mark for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Are you running your race for Christ or are you just sitting by on the bench watching others serve the Lord because you have skeletons in your closet? Beloved, hang on! God will give you the victory if you will repent of the wrongs in your life and if you will purposely serve Christ with your life!
Chapter 4
Complications from Cancelled Plans
2 Corinthians 1:15-24

And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; [16] And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea. [17] When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? [18] But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. [19] For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. [20] For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. [21] Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; [22] Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. [23] Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. [24] Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Have you ever made plans, such as for a trip, only to have them cancelled? Perhaps the weather was bad, you got sick, someone died, your car broke down, or the airline went on strike. The list is almost endless. Plans that get cancelled have a tendency to create complications. If you have a setback or cancellation of plans, you have to resort to Plan B or maybe Plan C, which can be costlier, demand more sacrifice, take up more time, or cause you to experience great
disappointment because you missed out on something that was very important to you. Do you know what I am talking about?

Such was the case with the Apostle Paul. He had planned a trip to a church and the plans were changed. Unfortunately, the change in plans spurred an attack on his character from those that were looking for faults in Paul that they could fester. This portion of Scripture provides a response to the accusations against Paul. It reveals the foolish thinking of bitter people. Better yet, it also reveals important insight about the character of God, His promises, and His enablement in helping us to have character and integrity in our own lives. Notice verses 15 and 16.

I. THE CONFIDENCE OF PAUL 1:15-16

And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; [16] And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

The word “confidence” is from a Greek root word *peitho* (pi'-tho) which means “to be persuaded, to make friends, to have faith, trust, or confidence.” Paul was persuaded and confident that the Corinthians respected him and were his friends as verse 14 indicated. He was also confident in his integrity based on his conscience, conduct, and clear-cut message. He felt secure in their love and support.

Let me ask right here, “Do people feel confident in your friendship and love for them? What kind of friend are you? What kind of husband or wife are you? What kind of son or daughter are you? How much of your time do you spend griping, complaining, or nagging? Do little, petty things set you off like a rocket, causing you to explode and lash out in anger or are you patient with those who love and care about you even when they do things that irritate you?”

If you are a lousy friend or struggle in loving others, ask the Lord to calm you down and help you with your impatience and temper. Spend more time reading the Bible and pray more about those things that bother you. Realize that petty matters will not mean a hill of beans ten years from now. Purposely work on expressing gratitude and love to other people through your words, notes, cards, calls, or gifts to them. Instead of being a burden, why not be a blessing to someone today! Do this especially if you are down in the dumps!
The confidence that Paul had, caused him to plan to stop by and visit the Corinthians on his way to the Macedonian church and then upon his return from Macedonian to Judea, he would stop by and see them again. Thus, a double visit and double blessing. This is the idea behind the words “second benefit.”

The word “benefit” is from the Greek word charis {khari'-ece} which means “grace, joy, pleasure, or delight.” In fact, Tyndale renders this: “that ye might have had a double pleasure.” The idea is, that they had been formerly gratified and benefitted by his residence among them. He believed that his coming and fellowship would do them good. Paul had been with them formerly almost two years. His residence there had been pleasant to them and to him. He did not doubt that it would be so again.

Paul also desired that they would “bring him on his way to Judea (vs.16).” This phrase does not mean merely that the Corinthians said “Good-bye” to Paul. In the early church, it was a phrase that obligated Christians to supply a missionary with money, food, beverage, clothing, and protection provided by traveling companions. This phrase is from the Greek word propempo {prop-em'-po} which means “to send forward, to escort, to fit someone out with the needs for a journey.” Paul wanted the Corinthians to show their generosity by sending him on his way to Jerusalem with both the collection for the saints and the necessary supplies he needed for the journey.

II. THE CRITICISM OF PAUL’S CHANGE IN PLANS 1:17

When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

Paul had hoped that he would be able to come to Corinth, but he hadn’t come there yet. There was a change in plans. It happens. Complications developed as some of his enemies in Corinth were critical saying that he didn’t mean what he said. They accused him of being fickle, insincere, unconcerned about their feelings, and unreliable. Now Paul is telling them that he certainly was sincere and not wishy-washy. He may have used the words of their criticism in his response. He asked, “When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? In other words, “Do you think I was careless, fickle, or vacillating back and forth when I made my plans?” This is the idea
behind the word “lightness.” He continued and said, “Do you think I am like people of the world that say “Yes” when they really mean “No?”

Paul’s plan changed, but his principles were not altered at all. Paul finds it incredible that any at Corinth could really have thought that a change in plans pointed to a change in character. Such reasoning was idiotic, but that is the nature of those who are bitter, jealous, or filled with hate.

When you are bitter or jealous toward someone, you become very unreasonable, unacceptable, unbearable, unbelievable, uncomfortable, uncontrollable, unexplainable, and unlovable. The actions of others are twisted into faulty assumptions as their character is assassinated by insane charges. You become focused on any fault you can find or make up. The result of such anger and bitterness is the poisoning of your soul. That’s what bitterness does to you. Couples who have suffered a divorce need to be especially careful about venting their bitterness about their former spouse to their children. You can spiritually poison your kids by your anger. Notice the warning from the writer of Hebrews.

* Hebrews 12:15- Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Bitterness not only troubles you, it defiles others around you who are infected by your bitterness. In fact, the word “defiled” is from the Greek word minaino {me-ah'-ee-no} which means “to dye with another color, to stain, defile or pollute.”

In his book Hidden in Plain Sight: The Secret of More, author and pastor Mark Buchanan illustrates God’s love through the story of Tracy. He writes: Tracy is one of the worship leaders at our church. One Sunday, as she sat at the piano, she talked about the difficult week she’d just been through. It was chaotic, she said—a mess of petty crises on top of a rash of minor accidents, all mixed up in a soup can of crazy busyness. It had left her weary and cranky.

She got up that Sunday to lead worship and felt spent, with nothing more to give. However, Tracy’s 8-year-old daughter, Brenna, helped her gain new perspective earlier that morning. When Tracy had walked into the living room, the window was covered with scrawl. Using a crayon, Brenna had scribbled something across the picture window, top to bottom and side to side. At first, it seemed like one more mess for Tracy to clean up. Then she saw what Brenna had written: love, joy, peace, patience, kindnece, goodnece, faithfulnece, gentlnece and selfcontrol (in Brenna's
delightful spelling).

Mark writes: "Tracy stopped, drank it in. Her heart flooded with light. It was exactly what she needed to be reminded about: the gift of the fruit of the Spirit that arises, not by our circumstances, but by Christ within us. And then Tracy noticed one more thing Brenna had written at the edge of the window: Love one another. Only Brenna, in her creative spelling, had written: "Love won another." As Mark concludes: "It's what Jesus has been trying to tell us all along. You were won that way. Now go and do likewise." Beloved, don't let bitterness rob you of your love for your husband, wife, kids, parents, or others in your life.

There is another area we want to address before we move on. Paul says that when he says “yes,” he means “yes,” and when he says “no,” he means “no.” Christians today ought to be that kind of folk. They should not use lightness or carelessness in making appointments and arrangements in the business world and in their daily appointments. We are not to be fickle or flippant with our promises. Christian men, women, teenagers, and children need to stand by the things that they have said. We are to be alert to what we are doing and not apathetic. We are to do the best job we can for those we serve. If we fail to behave this way, we can make some foolish mistakes. Consider some rumored notes from hospital charts that may have been written by a sleepy intern or a worn out, frazzled nurse. These were submitted by Marshall Shelley, editor, Leadership Journal.

* The patient refused autopsy.
* Patient has left white blood cells at another hospital.
* Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.
* On the second day, the knee was better, and on the third day it disappeared.
* The patient has been depressed since she began seeing me in 1993.
* She is numb from her toes down.
* Occasional, constant, infrequent headaches.
* Patient was alert and unresponsive.
* Patient has two teenage children, but no other abnormalities.

Beloved, keep your word and fulfill the responsibilities for those who are depending or counting upon you. Pay your bills, be on time, follow instructions, do your best, have a great attitude, keep your promises, and be thankful for what you have. If you do these things, others around you will be blessed, encouraged, and respect you. On the other hand, if we cannot be trusted, if our word is unreliable, then how
can we expect people to believe us when we share the Word of God with
them. Whether you like it or not, people look at you.
* Romans 12:11- Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the
Lord;
* 1 Corinthians 10:31- Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever
ye do, do all to the glory of God.

III. THE CLARITY & CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S WORD 1:18-20

But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. [19]
For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us,
even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in
him was yea. [20] For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in
him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

It's hard to imagine how excited Norreasha Gill must have been
in May, 2005, when she won the big "100 Grand" contest run by
her Lexington radio station, WLTO-FM. According to the Associated
Press, "She won by listening to the station for several hours and being the
ten tenth caller at a specified time." The night before she went to collect her
prize, she promised her three young children that they were going to get
a minivan, a home with a backyard, and lots of shopping. The next
morning she went to the station but was asked to return later. When she
got home, there was a phone message from the station manager
explaining that she had won a Nestle's 100 Grand candy bar, not
$100,000.

Norreasha sued them for deceptive advertising. The station manager
offered her $5,000, but she wouldn't go for it. "I said I wanted $95,000
more. Nobody would watch and listen for two hours for a candy bar."
The message of the station was considered deceptive or very vague for
sure. At this point, I don’t know what the final outcome is about this
matter. There are many things like this today. Such is not the case when
it comes to the Word of God. God’s message is clear and the
consequences of our obedience or disobedience to Him are certain.

Paul makes it clear that as God is faithful, Paul’s word was also
faithful and did not waver or vacillate. His message was not a “Yes” then
“No” message. It was not fickle and unstable. What Paul told them
about Jesus Christ was true, dependable, and reliable. God’s Word is
ture and His promises are true and can be trusted. That is very
important, especially in those times when we encounter complications
from a change in our plans and are setback, tripped up, or moved aside. The reliability, dependability, believability, capability, credibility, durability, impeccability, infallibility, and sensibility of the Word of God gives us a firm foundation from which we can live our lives and face our storms and complications when there is a change in our plans. D.L. Moody said, “God never made a promise that was too good to be true.” His promises are good and they are always true!

* Psalms 119:86a-All thy commandments are faithful:....
* Isaiah 55:11-1 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.
* Psalms 93:5a- Thy testimonies are very sure: ...
* John 17:17- Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

IV. THE COMMISSION OF THE LORD 1:21

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

When you experience complications from changes in your plans, when your life is turned upside down by the viciousness of others, you need strength to face LIFE and face people. Where do you find this kind of strength and stability? Paul offers the answers here. The Lord “stablisheth” us. What does this mean?

This word is from the Greek word bebaiao {beb-ah-yo'-o} which means “to make firm, establish, confirm, or make sure.” It is a technical, legal term denoting a seller's guarantee of the validity of a purchase. It is in the present tense and refers to God's present, continuous, strengthening and enablement of believers in their faith in Christ.

God establishes believers in Christ at salvation. This is the work of saving grace that puts believers into union with Him. We have God’s guarantee of salvation when we have been redeemed by Him through faith in Him. We also have His guarantee of saving, life-changing grace to become like Christ because He lives within us. He is ever with us and will never leave us. He provides power and strength to face life day after day and the complications that arise when our plans change. If you have the Spirit without the Word, you blow up. If you have the Word without the Spirit, you dry up. If you have both the Word and the Spirit, you grow up.
* Romans 8:1 - There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
* Galatians 2:20 - I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Our Lord gives us calm and confidence when complications arise from cancelled plans. How?

The establishment of the Christian continues day after day through the work of the Holy Spirit. First of all, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin when we do wrong. The Lord Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came into the world, He would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He also indwells us and revives us when we need reviving. He comforts us when we are broken hearted for He ever lives within us. We belong to Him.

* John 14:17- Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.
* 1 Corinthians 3:16- Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?
* Philippians 2:13 -For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

One of the most well known hymns of the church is the song “A Mighty Fortress.” It was written by Martin Luther who faced weakness and intense turmoil in his life during the time it was written. It was a terrible time for Luther. The year was 1527, which was one of the most trying years of his life. It's hard to imagine he had the energy or spirit to compose one of Christendom's most memorable hymns in this difficult time.

On April 22, a dizzy spell forced Luther to stop preaching in the middle of his sermon. For ten years, since publishing his 95 Theses against the abuse of indulgences in the Catholic church, Luther had been buffeted by political and theological storms. At times his life had been in danger. He faced severe depression and anger as he battled with reformers over the issue of the Lord’s supper and its meaning.

On July 6, as friends arrived for dinner, Luther felt an intense buzzing in his left ear. He went to lie down, when suddenly he called, "Water or I'll die!" He became cold, and he was convinced he had seen his last night. In a loud prayer, he surrendered himself to God's will. With a doctor's help, Luther partially regained his strength, but this depression
and illness overcame him again in August, September and late December.

Looking back on one of his bouts, he wrote his friend Melanchthon, "I spent more than a week in death and hell. My entire body was in pain, and I still tremble. Completely abandoned by Christ, I labored under the vacillations and storms of desperation and blasphemy against God. But through the prayers of the saints [his friends], God began to have mercy on me and pulled my soul from the inferno below."

Meanwhile, in August, the plague had erupted in Wittenberg. As fear spread, so did many of the townspeople, but Luther considered it his duty to remain and care for the sick. Even though his wife was pregnant, Luther's house was transformed into a hospital, and he watched many friends die. Then his son became ill. Not until late November did the epidemic abate and the ill begin to recover.

During that horrific year, Luther took time to remember the tenth anniversary of his publication against indulgences, noting the deeper meaning of his trials: "The only comfort against raging Satan is that we have God's Word to save the souls of believers." Sometime that year, Luther expanded that thought into the hymn he is most famous for: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The following verse, translated by Frederick Hedge in 1853, comes from one of more than sixty English versions. It shows Luther's confidence in God and the strength God gave to him to serve the Lord and face his complications and change in plans.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And though this world with devils filled} \\
\text{should threaten to undo us,} \\
\text{We will not fear, for God has willed} \\
\text{his truth to triumph through us.} \\
\text{The prince of darkness grim? We tremble not for him.} \\
\text{His rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure.} \\
\text{One little Word shall fell him.}
\end{align*}
\]

Not only does the Lord establishes us, but He also anoints us. What does this mean? The word "anoint" is from the Greek word \textit{chrio} \{khree'-o\} which not only means "to anoint, but to endue Christians with the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are given to the believer to serve Christ and strengthen other believers." To anoint someone is to \textit{commission} them for service. We have been commissioned for service by the Lord at the moment of salvation. We are saved to serve Him and have already been equipped by Him to do His will whatever it may be. This truth is
reflected in the fact that the present tense is not used for anoint, but the aorist tense or past tense. God’s Spirit guides, empowers, and teaches us that we may serve Him.

*John 16:12-13a...I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. [13] Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: ....."

The anointing of the Holy Spirit reminds us that we have already been equipped by the Lord to face the complications that arise from the changes in our plans. You have what you need to do, what needs to be done, and to respond the way the Lord would have you to respond when changes take place. Better yet, we are to be mindful that our plans and will need to be in line with God’s will for our lives. This is why we are to seek His direction and leading. Sometimes the Lord changes our plans because our will is in conflict with God’s will or He is trying to direct us on a different path. Paul did not return to Corinth when they expected him because God’s will led him in a different direction.

V. THE CONFIRMATION & COLLATERAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT 1:22

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

We are not only established and anointed by the Spirit of God, we are also sealed. Because we do not directly and immediately receive the fullness of all of God’s promises when we first believe, we may sometimes be tempted to doubt our salvation and wonder about the ultimate blessings that are supposed to accompany it. Some of our blessings are reserved in Heaven for us (1 Peter 1:3,4).

As one means of guaranteeing His promises to those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior, God has sealed or confirmed them in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. What the Father decrees, the Son accomplishes, and to the work of the Son, the Holy Spirit sets His seal!

The sealing of the believer is the Spirit’s “Amen” to the work of Jesus Christ. The sealer is God. The seal is the Holy Spirit. The sealed ones are the believers. What is the significance of the sealing of the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to you and me, especially when we encounter complications from our cancelled or changed plans? We will see that because we are sealed, we can have stability when we are shaken, serenity when we are stressed, and security when we are scared. A look
at the seal will explain this statement.

1. **A Seal is for PRESERVATION & SAFETY**

*Jude 1:1* - Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

Preserving is a simple process. The housewife takes the fruit of the harvest, seals it within a jar to avoid fermentation and corruption, and reserves it for a day of safe feasting around the table of fellowship. The Christian is called the *Fruit of Christ’s passion*. We are preserved in Christ and sealed within Christ by the Holy Spirit unto a future day....the day of redemption. God has given us power to preserve us from the evil of this age. What a blessing to know this, especially when we have complications from a change in our plans and go through difficult trials.

*Galatians 1:4* - Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

2. **A Seal Signifies AUTHENTICITY & GENUINENESS**

The Holy Spirit sets His seal that the work of Christ is satisfactory. Documents in ancient times were sealed with clay or wax and stamped with a metal or stone seal on a ring or worn around the neck. It was the same as a signature. The document was not considered valid, the real thing, or genuine without the seal. The seal had to be present to be authentic and genuine. The presence of the Holy Spirit proves the believer is genuine also and has been truly born again. It is not lip service, religious activity, or good works, but the witness of the Holy Spirit that makes our profession of faith authentic. His presence indicates we belong to the Lord. We can rest assured that we are under His care when we encounter difficult complications from a change in our plans.

*Romans 8:9* - But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

3. **A Seal Signifies SECURITY & APPROVAL**

In ancient times the seal of a king represented security and inviolability. When Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den, King Darius and the nobles placed seals on the stone over the den’s entrance so nothing would be changed. To break the seal without the king’s consent could mean forfeiture of your life.

The tomb of Jesus was sealed. Why? It was feared that the disciples would steal his body and claim He arose. No one dared to defy the law or tamper with the seal of the Roman government. The fact that
the seal was on the tomb or placed on a document showed the approval of the one placing the seal.

The believer belongs to God and is safe, secure, and protected because he is part of a finished transaction. He has been bought with a price and belongs to the Lord Himself. Our salvation is approved by God. He rejoiced when we put our faith in Him.

* 2 Peter 3:9- The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

* John 10:28-29... And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. [29] My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. We are secure in Him.

4. A Seal Signifies OWNERSHIP

* 2 Timothy 2:19 - Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

* 1 Corinthians 6:19- What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

* John 10:14 - I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

The Ephesians would understand the seal of ownership. Ephesus was a maritime city, trading in timber by the ship masters was big business. The method of purchase involved these steps:

1. The merchant selected the timber.
2. He stamped his signet of ownership on the log.
3. The owner sent the agent later with his signet and matched seal. He would claim the property and carry it off for the master’s use.

In the north lands of Canada, cut trees are carefully stamped with the seal of the owner so that months later the tree can be identified and claimed. The logs are stored in frozen rivers. In the Spring thaw, they float them down the river to the mills. There is no difficulty identifying them with the seals on the logs. Ranchers in Texas brand their cattle to prove they belong to them.

The Christian is stamped and sealed for identification by the Lord. The Lord seals us unto the day of redemption. His seal is our security and mark of ownership which is revealed by the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our life. If you are facing complications from a change in your
circumstances or plans, you can have peace knowing that you belong to Him and He will do what is best for you and will provide solutions to your complications.

We have seen several functions of a seal so far.

* Preservation and Safety
* Authenticity and Genuineness
* Security and Approval
* Ownership
* Next, Destination

5. A Seal is for DESTINATION

Truckers put seals on their loads to prove that the load has not been tampered with until it arrives at its final destination. We are sealed until we reach God's destination for us. Notice these two verses in Ephesians.

* Ephesians 4:30 - And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.
* Ephesians 1:14 - Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The word "until" and "unto" are not synonymous. The differences in these words are these:

* Until speaks of "incompleteness" and unto speaks of "completion."
* Until speaks of arrest or stopping; Unto speaks of arrival.
* Until signifies continuance of an action up to the time of another action. For example, "I will play until Mom calls me for supper." Unto on the other hand, places a limit and implies termination. It speaks of reaching the destination.

Being sealed unto the day of redemption implies destination. There will be a day of redemption when our salvation will be finally complete. The roots of redemption lie in the past in the Cross. The fruits of our redemption are future at His coming. It is then we will receive everything He has planned for us. The past, present, and future work of redemption are seen in 2 Corinthians 1:10

* 2 Corinthians 1:10 - Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

1. He has "delivered us." This is the past work of Christ.
2. He "doth deliver." This is His present work.
3. He will "yet deliver us." His future work.

Life may be difficult right now. Your circumstances may be complicated and your dreams may have gone up in smoke, but thank God one day we will not have to deal with trials and heartaches anymore. We
will be with the Lord.

6. The Seal is for PRESENTATION

The day of redemption will be a day of presentation. For example, at Christmas time gifts are wrapped and sealed for presentation in beautiful packages. The careful sealing of the gifts are a sign of love and care. Sloppy, carelessly wrapped packages that are wrinkled, spotted, crumpled, and torn speak of relieving an obligation rather than bestowing a gift of affection and respect. When Christ presents His Church, which has been sealed by the Holy Spirit, it will be a “glorious church,” not having spot or wrinkle (Jude 24, 25).

The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance in Christ. This is what Paul was speaking about in verse 22 of 2 Corinthians 1 when he mentioned the “earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” He used the same word in Ephesians 1:14.

* Ephesians 1:14- Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The word “earnest” is the Greek word “arrabon.” It meant the down payment to guarantee the final purchase of some commodity or piece of property. It was caution money deposited by a purchaser in pledge of full payment. In 2 Corinthians and Ephesians, it is God’s pledge of future blessedness, a guarantee that God will complete what He started. Our promised spiritual blessings in heavenly places will one day be completely fulfilled. The Holy Spirit is the down payment of what the Lord will completely fulfill when we go home to Him or when He returns.

The word “earnest” also means “engagement ring.” The ring is an assurance, a guarantee that the promise made will be kept. Christ is the bridegroom and the Church is His bride. The Holy Spirit is the evidence of His love for us. We know that Jesus will come and claim His bride because He has given us His promise and His Spirit as the engagement ring.

* 1 John 3:2- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
VI. THE CALL FOR GOD AS A WITNESS 1:23-24

Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. [24] Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Paul’s integrity was under assault and he calls upon the Lord as his witness that he was telling the Corinthians the truth. He was not fickle and unstable. The reason Paul did not return to Corinth was to spare the Corinthians from a severe rebuke. The apostle wanted to avoid the necessity of inflicting punishment and exercising severe and painful discipline on the church for the corruption that existed within it. If he went among them in their state of disorder, he would feel it to be necessary to exert his authority as an apostle, and remove at once the offending members from the church. He expected to avoid the necessity of these painful acts of discipline, by sending to them a faithful and affectionate epistle, and thus inducing them to correct their problems on their own and reform. It was not, then, a disregard for them, or a lack of attachment to them, which had led him to change his purpose, but it was the result of tender affection.

Paul did not desire to pull rank and lord his authority over the church. He wanted to be an encourager and helper of their joy. He also stayed away so that their faith might be strengthened and that they might grow up in the Lord on their own. This is one of the reasons God permits many of us to undergo certain hardships and certain difficulties in our lives. The trials we face are for the purpose of strengthening our faith and our life.

Widely regarded as the greatest composer ever, Beethoven began losing his hearing at age 31 and was completely deaf 16 years later. As he became more and more deaf, Beethoven grew profoundly depressed. Shortly before his death, Beethoven wrote, "O how harshly was I repulsed by the doubly sad experience of my bad hearing. But little more and I would have put an end to my life."

Even so, Beethoven persisted. He felt called to produce his art, and he would not quit. As his prison of silence grew quieter, he had to rely on his "inner ear", his memory of sounds. All the odds were against him, and so it would have turned out, had it not been for something inside Beethoven that just would not bend. He would not quit.

In the midst of his affliction, he wrote: "There is no greater joy for me than to pursue and produce my art. Oh, if I were only rid of this
affliction, I could embrace the world! But I will seize it by the throat; most assuredly it shall not get me wholly down.”

Beethoven continued to compose even after he became completely deaf. The most enduring and beautiful works Beethoven ever conceived were entirely created during this period of total deafness including the monumental Ninth Symphony. The complications that he encountered from a change in his plans did not defeat him, and should not defeat us either.
Chapter 5
The Rigors of Restoration
2 Corinthians 2:1-11

Solving problems or conflicts with people presents a variety of challenges. It has its great rewards, but also has its rigors. The difficulty that goes with conflict is the stress it places upon our lives. This is why most people try to avoid it and get just get along with others or ignore petty annoyances. They don’t like the residue of resentment, rebellion, or resistance that can shadow confrontation. There are times, however, where conflict cannot be avoided. A parent may have to confront their child, a friend may have to deal with a problem with another friend, or a pastor may have to handle a situation in the church that cannot be ignored.

Such was the case with the Apostle Paul. There was a serious problem of sexual immorality that existed in the church at Corinth and Paul had no choice but to deal with it because the people were not doing so.

* 1 Corinthians 5:1-2... It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. [2] And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

In fact they considered such behavior as normal or were proud of it. This is the idea of the words “puffed up” which are derived from the Greek word phusioo (foo-see-o'-o). Why they would have a proud attitude about perversion does not make any sense, but that is what happens when people ignore or excuse sinful behavior. They lose their common sense.

Paul had no choice but to deal with this problem and it created stress and tension between him and the people in Corinth. In fact, it caused him to change his plans in visiting the church until the problem could be
resolved by that local church. This incident reveals the rigors of restoration but also the rewards that result from dealing scripturally with sin problems and restoring a wayward brother or sister in Christ. The rigors are worth the rewards that come from doing what is right and helping others who are struggling or have fallen to get back on their spiritual feet and live right. It also reveals the great love that Paul had for these people, even for those who had been sinful. Notice verses one through three.

I. SORROW OR PAIN IS AVOIDED  2:1-3

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. [2] For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? [3] And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

Paul is saying that he made up his mind to not bring sorrow and grief to these people with another painful visit by him. If he caused them to be grieved, who would encourage him? It certainly would not be the church if they were grieving. Paul had written a letter to the Corinthians admonishing them to deal with their sin problem so that when he arrived at the Corinth church again, he could rejoice with them all instead of being grieved by sin that still existed in the church.

Now what is the story behind this statement? What has actually transpired that caused Paul to write such a statement? There are several ideas that have been offered about what happened. Based on what I have studied, I will give you my conclusion. When Paul found out about the immorality that existed in the Corinthian church, he wrote the letter that we know as 1 Corinthians to them to deal with problems in this church. When Paul found out that the problem of immorality was not dealt with in the church, Paul made a second visit to Corinth to deal with the problem. We know he made a second visit based on 2 Corinthians 12:14 and 13:1 because he was preparing to see the Corinthians a third time. This visit was not recorded in the book of Acts.

* 2 Corinthians 12:14 - Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.
2 Corinthians 13:1- This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

On this second visit, matters evidently got pretty heated. This is when Paul came to them in sorrow or heaviness as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:1. Paul had instructed the church to remove this man from the church, and possibly his friends heatedly opposed Paul when he arrived. The process of restoration was rigorous at this time.

1 Corinthians 5:13- But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

When Paul arrived, there was evidently a confrontation with this man who insulted, verbally attacked Paul, and challenged his apostolic authority to have him disciplined in the church. In other words, “Who are you to tell me what to do or how to live? What gives you the right?” He may have physically attacked Paul too. The fact that the man had not been dealt with reveals he may have been very influential in the church or in the city of Corinth. He may have been a wealthy business man, very popular, or a big guy that intimidated others with his size. This is speculation but a strong possibility.

Paul left Corinth and returned to Ephesus where he wrote a severe, stern letter to the church to deal with this problem. Evidently, nothing had been resolved. This letter was delivered by Titus to the Corinthians. As far as we know, this stern letter has been lost and is unavailable now. Paul expressed here in chapter two that he did not want to return to Corinth until the church had properly dealt with the source of sorrow in the church. This is why there was a change in plans in his visit. He did not want his next visit to be a source of grief and conflict again, but a time of rejoicing because the church had been obedient to the Lord. He said what needed to be said. Now the ball was in their court. They needed to act.

It was from Titus that Paul learned that these people were longing for Paul’s fellowship and expressed deep sorrow. They realized that they had nothing to be proud of at all. Instead, what was tolerated brought shame and reproach on their testimony in the community. They had dealt with this man and the man repented of his sin. The spiritual surgery was painful, but brought forth the healing of the church and the wayward Christian.

2 Corinthians 7:6-7... Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; [7] And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you,
when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

As we look at these first three verses in chapter two, we note important insights about the rigors of restoration and concepts about confrontation. The sensitivity and patience that Paul had with the Corinthians did not mean that he was unwilling to discipline them if they did not repent. His desire for the purity of the church made him willing to cause them sorrow if necessary. If he did, the only thing that would make him glad would be the repentance of those whom he made sorrowful. It was his concern for purity in the Corinthian church that prompted the letters he wrote to them. Sensitivity and the desire to avoid unnecessary confrontation must always be balanced with a commitment to the purity of the church.

There is an old story of a ship that was traveling across the Mediterranean, and one of the passengers cut a hole through the side of the ship. The sailors came and demanded to know what he was doing. "What difference does it make to you?" he asked. "The hole's under my own bunk." The hole may be under his bunk. It may be his hole, but it affects the whole ship. The same truth holds when it comes to Christians that are living wickedly. When sin is allowed to fester in the church, it will weaken it. For this reason, it must be confronted and corrected even at the expense of people getting upset or angry. Yes, restoration can be rigorous at times.

* 1 Corinthians 5:6-8... Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? [7] Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: [8] Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

* 2 Corinthians 2:9- For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. Paul wrote them to test their obedience in all things.

* 2 Corinthians 7:8- For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

The Apostle Paul was not sorry that he had sent a severe letter to them, even though he was sorry at first because he knew it was difficult and painful for them for a short time. The issue, however, had to be addressed and the problem had to be solved, no matter how difficult it
was.

Paul was not eager to chew them out or rebuke them. He hesitantly used severity and rebuke. He used it as a last resort. Paul used rebuke only when he was forced to use it and there was nothing else left to do. Sometimes you have to confront others about that which is wrong because when you ignore or avoid the problem, it only leads to future problems which tend to be greater in magnitude because no warnings or rebukes have been offered. As people pursue a downward course in sin, the destructiveness of their decisions become greater. Addictions can become stronger or their actions may have more far-reaching consequences which may affect them for the rest of their lives.

Today, there are some people whose eyes are always focused to finding fault with others and whose tongues are always tuned to criticize. I call them Gestapo squads. It is as if they are on a mission to destroy other people by griping about every little petty thing and blowing it out of proportion. When I was in Bible college, there were students who were like this. They always wondered why they did not have many friends.

Paul was not like that at all. In this he was wise. If we are constantly critical and fault-finding, if we are habitually angry and harsh, if we rebuke far more than we praise, the plain fact is that even our rebuke loses its effectiveness. Our rebuke can become ignored because it is so constant. The more seldom a man rebukes, the more effective it is when he does. Our main focus should be to look for things to praise in others, not to condemn. If criticism is necessary, use it sparingly and carefully.

Notice something else about Paul's rebuke and sternness. When Paul did rebuke, he did it in love. He never spoke merely to hurt. Some people enjoy inflicting pain on others with their harsh words, but Paul was not like this at all. He never rebuked to cause pain; he always rebuked to restore joy. It is possible to hate the sin but love the sinner. If someone has to be confronted or rebuked, then realize the effective rebuke is given with the arm of love round that person. The rebuke of blazing anger may hurt and even terrify people, but the rebuke of hurt and sorrowing love alone can break the heart.

* Revelation 3:19- As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

We have seen first of all that Sorrow was Avoided. We will now look at the Sincere Desire of Paul's Heart. Notice verse 4.
II. THE SINCERE DESIRE OF PAUL'S HEART 2:4

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

Paul was in great anguish when he wrote his letter of stern rebuke to the Corinthians. Remember, this letter is not a reference to 1 Corinthians, this is a letter of rebuke that was written after his second visit with them. Paul did not have the attitude, "I'll show them! I'll let them have it between the eyes!" No, he wrote this letter with tears flowing from his eyes like dangling pearls. His heart was full of affliction and anguish.

What does this mean? The word "affliction" is from the Greek word thlipsis {thli'p-sis} which means "pressed or squashed together, distress, or tribulation." It was a traumatic time for Paul. The word "anguish" is from the Greek word sunoche {soon-okh-ay'}. It carries the idea of of being surrounded by pressure, squeezed, or imprisoned. The root word sunecho {soon-ekh'-o} was used to describe the attack of a city, the pressing of your hands together or holding your ears. It was also used to describe a cattle squeeze that forced the cattle into a position where they could not move so the rancher could administer medication. This is how Paul felt in dealing with this problem. It was stressful but he had no choice. Sometimes, you have to face the same type of situation in trying to help or restore someone. Restoration can be rigorous.

It is not fun, especially for parents or grandparents, to discipline their kids or grandchildren. If you don't, however, you are going to rear a bum, a brat, a bully, a burden, and possibly a burglar or some other kind of criminal. Children need to learn the value of boundaries and the meaning of the word "No!"

I like the story that tells of a man named John who possessed a compulsion to tear paper. After years of therapy, John was still tearing paper. His family was losing hope. Finally, they took John to a new therapist. This fellow walked with John around the room and quietly talked with him. When John left the office, he was cured. The family was overjoyed. They asked the therapist what he had told John. The therapist said, "I told him, 'Don't tear paper.' " Evidently, the parents did not stress this or the boy had no respect for his parents.

Parents, when your kids are bad, tell them "No" and enforce it. You won't warp them and mess them up psychologically. You are not being
a blessing to them by letting them have their own way and running the home. If they grow up being selfish and getting their own way all the time, then a catastrophe tends to strike when they get married. Their spouse will resent their selfishness and the marriage will be strained or dissolved. For some, they struggle to get married because the people they date detect their selfishness in time and terminate the relationship. Momma, don’t let those kids walk all over you. Teach them what is right and rule your roost!

* Proverbs 29:15- The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

It is also not fun when a pastor has to deal with wayward people in his church, but there are times that is necessary. Preaching hard against sin is not fun either, but crucial for the health of the church. Preach the Word and let it do its work. Don’t worry about tickling ears. Aim for the heart. That is the only way you are going to help people grow in the Lord. If you live to please people, misunderstandings will depress you, but if you live to please the Lord, you can face misunderstandings or conflict with faith and courage. You can deal with the rigors of restoration.

* 2 Timothy 4:2-4... Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. [3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; [4] And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Paul was truly trying to help these people. His goal was not to grieve the Corinthians, but to express his great love for them. Some of the greatest acts of love are demonstrated by people who will confront you when you are doing something that is going to destroy your life. They are willing to risk your anger to spare you of anguish. They do this because they really care about your life. Solomon spoke of this kind of love. Solomon also mentioned that a wise man will recognize the value of correction and its benefit.

* Proverbs 27:5- Open rebuke is better than secret love.
* Proverbs 9:8- Reprove not a scorners, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.
III. THE STRESS & SORROW ON THE ENTIRE CHURCH  2:5

But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

The translation here is difficult. Here is what Paul is saying. Paul said that if anyone has caused sorrow, he has not only hurt Paul, but to put it mildly, he has hurt or grieved the entire church at Corinth. Everyone was affected by what this person did, not just Paul.

For this reason, it was the responsibility of the church to discipline this man. The burden was on the leaders at the Corinth church, not upon Paul. Notice that this remark is very delicately done. He does not mention the offender by name. The apostle makes his remark general, that it might be as tender and kind to the offending brother as possible. They would know whom he meant.

Paul did not bash this person over the head. He did not want to say too much about the offense or exaggerate it. Instead, he downplayed the incident and cautioned the Corinthians not to blow it up out of proportion. All that Paul said in regard to him was as tender as possible. He did not harshly charge him with sin. Instead, he gently insinuates that he "had caused grief" and had pained the hearts of his brethren. The man had repented; the incident was closed; and it was time to move on. The same attitude should be adopted when you have conflicts with others. If the matter gets resolved, then move on and stop picking at the wound.

In the rigors of restoration we have seen so far...

* Sorrow was Avoided
* The Sincere Desire of Paul's Heart
* The Stress & Sorrow on the Entire Church
* Next, The Scriptural Counsel about Forgiveness

IV. THE SCRIPTURAL COUNSEL ABOUT FORGIVENESS 2:6-8

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. [8] Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

The majority of the people in the church opposed what this man did and Paul said this was sufficient punishment for what he had done. The discipline had accomplished all that he had desired. It had
humbled him, and brought him to repentance; and doubtless led him to put away his wife since it was an incestuous marriage. Now that this was accomplished, it was proper that he should be again restored to the privileges and fellowship of the church. No evil would result from such a restoration, and their duty to their penitent brother demanded it. His name is carefully protected so that his identity would be protected when this epistle should be read, as Paul doubtless intended, by other churches, and be transmitted to future times.

The church was urged to forgive the offending brother. What had evidently happened was the church put him on probation instead of pardoning him. When someone is pardoned, the slate is wiped clean. On the other hand, probation keeps a person feeling watched, distrusted, and unsettled. Paul told the Corinthians to pardon the offender for he has suffered enough. He no longer needed discipline; he needed forgiveness and reassurance from the people.

The rigors of restoration are very difficult. It is not easy and it was not easy for the church at Corinth. When someone is living in sin, it is not easy to try to persuade them to change direction. So how do you do this? How do you restore someone? What are some basic steps you can follow to try to spiritually restore someone?

* The Rigors of Restoration

A. Consideration of Yourself.

We are to examine ourselves first before we confront others about their sin. We are to judge ourselves first always. Many cannot or will not approach others that need help because they cannot get past this first step. This is why it is so important to clear your conscience with God and men so you can be used to help others in the future.

* Matthew 7:4-5... Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? [5] Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

* 1 Corinthians 11:31- For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

* Galatians 6:1- Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. We are to approach the offender with meekness and humility and be careful not to fall or yield to temptation ourselves.
B. Concentration on Scripture

If you are going to try to restore someone, it is important to know the Word of God. If someone is wrong, then need to know why they are wrong. Show them in the Bible. Filling your life with Scripture will also develop spiritual wisdom, patience, love, strength, and maturity in your own life.

* Psalm 119:11- Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
* Psalm 1:1-3... Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. [2] But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. [3] And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

C. Confrontation with the Sinner

When you are spiritually prepared, then approach the brother or sister in Christ. Matthew 18 gives principles on how to do this. Deal with the issue privately first. If this fails, then take someone with you and try again. Remember, the goal is to try to help the person spiritually.

* Matthew 18:15-16... Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. [16] But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

D. Cancellation of Social Relationships

If the sinner is unwilling to repent or turn from sin, then the Bible teaches that there is to be a break in fellowship with that person. The separation in fellowship is not for the purpose of being mean, but for the purpose of getting the sinner to realize the seriousness of his sin and bring him or her to a place of repentance and restoration. Restoration is the goal of the whole ordeal. This step of isolation is like a child that is sent to the corner by his teacher.

* Matthew 18:17- And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.
* 2 Thessalonians 3:14- And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.
* 1 Corinthians 5:9-10.... I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: [10] Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this
world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

The basic steps we have seen so far in trying to restore someone are:
* Consideration of Self
* Concentration on Scripture
* Confrontation with the Sinner
* Cancellation of Social Relationships

E. Contemplation and Supplication

If the person does not repent, continue to pray for them throughout the day. Ask God to change their heart and bring them to repentance.
* James 5:16- Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

F. Consolation for the Sorrowful, Submissive Sinner

God has a way of turning the deepest pain into victory. Because Ethiopian Christians faithfully ministered to a convicted murderer in jail, God brought salvation to Mohammed Ahmed, who was convicted of killing an evangelist named Tulu on February 2, 2005. Tulu was the fifth eldest child of eight, but suffered from an unidentified disease that made him physically weak and a slow learner. During July of 2001, Tulu accepted Christ and experienced God's healing hand. His health improved to such an extent that he was able to attend secondary school in a predominantly Muslim area in southern Ethiopia.

Tulu devoted time to prayer and studying the Word of God. He became known for his warmth and affection when witnessing about God's love to the community. However, some Muslim extremists did not appreciate the change in Tulu's life and attacked him with a spear five months after his conversion. Even though the spear penetrated his skull, after intensive treatment he miraculously recovered. "During this time," recalls his mother, "there were only four believers in our area, but through Tulu's persecution, 50 people came to know Christ as their Savior, including his father and me."

Mohammed confronted Tulu at a secondary school on that tragic day in 2005. Mohammed swung his machete and hit Tulu's throat with a single blow as he shouted the Jihad (Islamic) war cry: "Allahu Akbar!" The family tried to rush Tulu to a nearby clinic, but the young evangelist took his final breath and died en route. He was only 19 year old.

Two local church leaders in southern Ethiopia have permission to visit prisoners at least once a week. During such a visit, the church
leaders approached Mohammed with a few words of encouragement. Though at first he was not receptive, the leaders continued to demonstrate God's unconditional love. As the leaders continued to invite him to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, he started to show interest. Because of their patience in sharing the gospel and their reassurance that they held no grudge against him, God's grace broke through and Mohammed accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord.

Mohammed confessed religious fanaticism, fanned by Muslim extremists, was the real reason for Tulu's murder. He sincerely regretted what happened. The two church leaders taught Mohammed and three other Muslim-background believers while in prison. On March 5, a little more than two years after the murder, Mohammed was baptized in the name of the God he once persecuted. The prison authorities escorted him and the other three prisoners to the church compound and witnessed their baptism. When the excited converts were asked to give their testimonies before being immersed, Mohammed made sure all the witnesses understood that he was being baptized in the name of the Almighty God, testifying of His redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is power in forgiveness and that is what Paul was stressing to us here in 2 Corinthians.

If the sinner repents, he is to be forgiven. Paul stresses the importance of this issue in 2 Corinthians 2. Paul said “forgive” him in verse seven.

* 2 Corinthians 2:7- So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

What is he saying? The word “forgive” is from the Greek word charizomai {khar-id’-zom-ahee} which means “to do something pleasant or agreeable to someone, to do a favor, to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent; to grant forgiveness or to pardon; to give graciously and freely.” Remember that he is using this term in reference to someone who has been offensive. He is saying we should invest in the life of the offender who has repented.

* Ephesians 4:32- And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Forgiveness is difficult for people in this day because it is viewed by many as a sign of weakness instead of a godly virtue. Some of the "self help" books teach that many of your problems can be traced and blamed upon others. They claim that you are not responsible for your
failures. This philosophy is supposed to make the person feel better and remove his guilt. Everyone is a victim. Vengeance, retaliation, be number one at any cost, are all promoted by this philosophy and seeking forgiveness and restoration are demoted and considered unnecessary because you have supposedly done nothing wrong. You are not responsible. Such teaching is destructive and unproductive because the source of failure is not addressed and the problems don’t get solved.

**Beloved, when we refuse to forgive someone, we lose and pay a high price.** Our unwillingness to forgive others produces hatred, bitterness, animosity, anger, and retribution. It not only clogs up the arteries, but also the courts with thousands of vengeful lawsuits. Refusing to forgive imprisons people in their past. Unforgiving people keep their pain alive by constantly picking at the open wound and keeping it from healing. Bitterness takes root in their hearts and defiles them. Anger rages out of control and negative emotions run unchecked. Life is filled with turmoil and strife instead of joy and peace.

On the other hand, when we forgive others, it frees us from the past. Forgiveness is liberating, exhilarating, and healthy. Forgiveness relieves tension, brings peace and joy, and restores broken relationships. When we are unwilling to forgive others it shows a lack of love. Forgiveness, on the other hand, fulfills the royal law of love according to James.

*James 2:8- If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*

**Forgiving love is a precious jewel, a rich treasure in the life of any church.** Without it, churches and homes are torn, split, and fragmented. When people practice forgiveness, people can emotionally and spiritually heal and backsliders can be restored to spiritual usefulness and maturity.

Paul also added the fact they were not only to forgive him but to “comfort” him. This word “**comfort**” is from the Greek word *parakaleo {par-ak-al-eh'-o}*. It is a word used to describe the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. It means “to call to one’s side, to speak to, to comfort or instruct, to encourage.” This is especially important for a person who has been away from the Lord and has repented. He needs to know that he is loved and still accepted by other believers. How do you comfort someone who needs restoration?
* Concepts for Comforting Others who Need Restoration
1. **Assure** the person of your love and concern for them. Verbalize your concern and express it in your actions toward them.
2. **Attention** is needed. Do not ignore them. Sit with them and talk to them.
3. **Ask** how they are progressing as they try to get back on their spiritual feet.
4. **Associate** with them. Do things together. Invite them to fellowship with you.
5. **Affirmation** is essential. They need reassurance at first that they are truly loved and accepted. This is what Paul was speaking about in verse 8 when he urged they must “confirm” their love for him. The word “confirm” is from the Greek word *kurioo* (*koo-ro-'o*). This word means “to give authority, to establish as valid, real, and genuine.”

They were to give strong expressions and assurances of their love and concern for him. There was to be no room for doubt. Don’t forget that discipline is for the purpose of correction, not vengeance. When the person repents, get them back on their spiritual feet. Notice that Paul urged them. He did not order it because Christian love must be unforced, spontaneous, and genuine or else it ceases to be what it professes to be.

Paul stressed the importance of forgiveness and confirming our love, “lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” He did not want the repentant sinner to become overwhelmed by excessive grief, sorrow, and discouragement. This is a strong expression, denoting intensity of grief. We speak of a man’s being drowned in sorrow. That is the idea here. The figure is probably taken from deep waters, or from a whirlpool which seems to swallow up anything that comes within reach. Excessive grief or calamity, in the Scriptures, is often compared to such waters.

*Psalm 124:2-5.... If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: [3] Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: [4] Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: [5] Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.*

By excessive grief, the offending brother would be destroyed. His life would waste away under the effect of his excommunication and disgrace, and the remembrance of his offence would prey upon him, and sink him to the grave. Despair can drive a person to suicide or deeper sin. This is why it was vital that he be restored.
V. SUBMISSION IS TESTED  2:9-10

For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. [10] To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

The reason Paul had written the earlier letters to the Corinthians was to test them to see if they would be obedient to Paul’s instructions. If they had forgiven anyone for anything, Paul also forgave that person. Paul’s desire was that the Corinthians take the lead in forgiving the repentant sinner. He held no grudges at all against the offender.

VI. THE SCHEMES OF SATAN  2:11

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

When we fail to obey God’s Word, Satan can outsmart, outwit or take advantage of us. This happens because we let it happen. Our choices open the door for him to get a grip into our lives. Paul spoke of this in his letter to the Ephesians. He warned us to not give ground or give Satan an opportunity to work in our lives. This is part of the rigors of restoration. We must be on guard against an unforgiving heart when we are offended or hurt.

* Ephesians 4:27- Neither give place to the devil.

Satan’s goal for the church is the opposite of God’s. God wants humble, merciful, joyful, loving, obedient fellowship with Him and with one another. Satan wants the church to be in a condition where sin reigns supreme. If sin is confronted, Satan wants it done so in a harsh, graceless, merciless manner. Both failing to deal with sin and failing to forgive repentant sinners can destroy a church. The hard work of disciplining sinners and restoring those who repent is a true test of a church’s love for the Lord and the spiritual maturity of that church.

Paul acknowledged Satan as a valid adversary. He was familiar with Satan’s purpose and schemes. So what are the devices or the “thought-out” schemes of Satan that he uses to destroy or ruin Christians? We will mention six of his most effective ones.
* The Devices of the Devil

1. Deception

Satan deceives believers into thinking that things are more important than the Lord. This is the deception of riches. He also deceives Christians into thinking that sin will not hurt them. It will.

* Galatians 6:7- Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

* Matthew 13:22- He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Satan desires that we not receive the blessings that God has for us. Chuck Swindoll shared a story that took place some years ago. The people of Texas were being plagued by a Mexican bandit who continuously slipped across the border and robbed their banks. His name was Jorge Rodriguez. He had become bolder and more successful, and yet, they could never capture him before he hightailed it back across the border to his hideout in the mountains of Mexico. Finally, they had enough of this so they hired a well-known detective and sent him down into Mexico to get back their money. He set off for the small town reputed to be the hideout of Rodriguez.

The detective found the small Mexican town, walked into the saloon, and, lo and behold, there in the corner was the man he was after, Jorge Rodríguez. "Aha!" he said, "I've found you!" and he pulled out his gun. "Where have you hidden the millions you have stolen from our banks in Texas? Tell me, or I'll blow you away!"

At this point another man, Juan Garcia, who was also in the saloon, stepped up to the detective and said, "Sir, you are wasting your time talking to Jorge like this. He doesn't understand a word of English. He has no idea what you just said. Would you like me to translate for you?" The detective said, "Yes, of course. Tell him to confess to me where the money is or I'll kill him."

So Juan Garcia turned to Jorge and jabbered away at him for a few moments in Spanish. There was much gesturing and chattering, and Jorge told Juan in Spanish that if he would take the man to the well that was just a mile out of town, climb down into the well, and remove the third brick, there he would find more than $3 million in gold. When Jorge was finished speaking, Juan, the helpful translator, turned around to the detective and said, "Senor, he says that he has absolutely no idea where the gold is. I'm sorry."
Beloved, this is the way Satan works. He wants to rob you of God’s blessings and all that the Lord has for you. He will endeavor to get you to doubt God’s promises. He does not want you to have eternal life or the rewards that come from faithfully serving the Lord. This is why John and Paul issued a warning to us that reminds us to beware of Satan’s deceptions.

* 2 John 1:8- Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.
* 2 Timothy 3:13- But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

2. Discouragement

Satan tries to use our discouragement or fatigue to get us to quit. If he can shift our focus from faith to focusing upon our frustrations, fears, and feelings of hurt, then he can fuel our discouragement to the point where we want to give up. In 1 Kings 19, we find this is what happened to Elijah who said, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers (vs.4).” Paul admonished us to not quit in his letter to the Galatians.

* Galatians 6:9- And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

An elderly lady was once asked by a young man who had grown weary in serving the Lord, whether he ought to give up the struggle. “I am beaten every time,” he said dolefully. “I feel I must give up.” Smiling into the troubled face before her, the elderly woman wisely replied, “Did you ever notice that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old spot where they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing?” Beloved, the moral of this lesson is don’t give up. Blessing will eventually come if you will not become discouraged and quit.

3. Distraction

Satan has a clever way of getting us distracted and off course to the point we don’t grow in the Lord. The story of Atalanta is a great illustration of Satan’s tactics. Atalanta was a gorgeous maiden of passing beauty and was exceeding swift of foot. Her hand in marriage was offered to any Greek who would beat her on the race course. Many men tried and failed, and as a consequence, they forfeited their lives. At last, Hippomenes ventured his fate and set off from the mark with the maiden on his heels. As she was about to pass him with her blazing speed, he threw out on the course a glittering golden ball. Atalanta pounced after
the toy while the young man shot ahead in the race.

Again she overtook the young man, and again he enticed her from the race course. A third time he played his trick of distraction upon her, and she bounded after the golden ball as he passed the finish line, won the race, escaped death, and claimed his beautiful bride. Not by the superior speed of her opponent was Atalanta overcome, but by her own folly in being distracted and leaving the course for a mere toy.

Has this same pattern often been the undoing of the saint in his race for the Lord Jesus Christ? How many Christians have been defeated in their Christian lives because they have been distracted by the trifling prizes of the world and have become consumed in the mundane trivial affairs of this life?

We tend to be so easily distracted from serving our Savior. We as a people are distracted by being busy with our activities, by bombs from attacking adversaries, by the burdens of the affairs of this life, and by beliefs that are atheistic. Mankind is distracted from God's glory by the contractions from his conflicts, the satisfaction of his sin, selfishness, and sensuality, by the attraction of allurements and temptations, by the subtraction of his security and serenity, by the reactions of those who resist, and by the transactions of temporal, business affairs. These things can turn the heart from God.

When a person's heart is turned away from the Lord, he is facing the wrong direction. The distractions of Satan can make one unstable. When the love for the Lord fades for a love for something else, you will be unstable. Satan can use money, fame, a handsome, attentive man or beautiful woman to distract us and get our eyes off of God. Such was the case with King Solomon who started out so well, but got sidetracked later.

* 1 Kings 11:1-4... But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; [2] Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. [3] And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. [4] For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.
* 2 Timothy 4:10 - For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.
* Revelation 2:8 - Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Beloved, don’t get off course in your walk with God. You will cease to grow spiritually. Many a Christian has been lured off the path of God’s will by some attraction of the world. What is Satan using to try to distract you? Is it money, men, women, fame, or popularity that he is using to get you sidetracked? Don’t be distracted by the cares of this life and snared in Satan’s traps.

* 2 Timothy 2:26 - And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.
* Mark 4:19 - And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

4. Defeat

* 1 Peter 1:6 - Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:
* Psalm 51:3-4, 12... For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. [4] Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. [12] Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Some believers feel they are totally worthless after they have suffered a spiritual defeat and scarred their lives by their sin. Peter struggled until the Lord restored him. Those who have suffered defeat need our love and encouragement. We can help them get the joy of their salvation back.

We are looking at the common devices of Satan. We have seen so far that he uses:
* Deception
* Discouragement
* Distraction
* Defeat
* Next, we will look at Depravity
5. Depravity

* 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 ... It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. [2] And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Sin will ruin your testimony and effectiveness in telling others about Christ. For this reason Satan tempts us to ruin. If for some reason you mess up, clear your conscience with God and men.

* Acts 24:16- And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

6. Division and Disunity

* 1 Corinthians 3:3- For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

When there is division among believers, then it becomes difficult to reach others for Christ and encourage other believers because the focus of the divided is not on these things. The focus has been shifted to those we are angry with and their faults.

Paul said we need to obey the Lord, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Beloved, restoration is hard work but it yields great rewards and blessings in our own lives and the lives of others. Do not fear or be hesitant to help another get on their spiritual feet.

In May of 1990, the cargo ship Hansa Carrier was hit by a severe storm during its voyage from South Korea to the United States. In the middle of the tempest, a large wave swept 21 shipping crates into the sea, five of which contained Nike shoes. About six months later, a dedicated beach scavenger named Steve McLeod spotted a clump of Nikes while walking along the Oregon coast. Then another. Then several piles of the gleaming, plastic footwear. Soon, McLeod's Cannon Beach apartment was packed with several styles and sizes of Nikes, each of which he carefully cleaned, dried, and de-barnacled. There was only one problem: the vast majority of the shoes were left-footed.

This phenomenon attracted the attention of local scientists working to decipher the Pacific's ocean currents. With the help of Nike and the Hansa crew, they determined that the shoes had not been connected during their ocean voyage. Furthermore, the slight toe curvature of the right-footed shoes caused them to tack northeastward into the Alaska
Current, while the left-footed Nikes slid neatly into the southeast-bound California Current. Thus, for months, a small physical difference forced each shoe farther and farther away from its mate.

Once Steve McLeod had put these pieces together, he began contacting other known scavengers for news of another Nike windfall. Sure enough, he heard about a large number of shoes that had beached to the north along the Queen Charlotte Sound. A meeting was arranged and, in one day, 1,200 pairs of Nike tennis shoes were re-united using serial numbers. Once the pair became whole again, it went home with whomever it fit. Their restoration made them useful and of value. This is what the Lord does with the restored believer. He makes that Christian useful and valuable in the cause of Christ. The rigors of restoration have their rewards.
Chapter 6
The Fragrance of Our Life
2 Corinthians 2:12-17

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, [13] I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. [14] Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. [15] For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: [16] To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? [17] For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

We are confronted with smells and fragrances every day. Some are pleasant and some are repulsive. I love the smell of certain perfumes like Red Door perfume, Royal Copenhagen Cologne or Mustang Cologne for men, cinnamon roles, steak on the grill, or garlic and onions cooking in an Italian dish. There are also smells that make me gag or curl my nose such as dead animals, skunks, sewage, or body odor.

In fact, the other day my wife walked by me and I smelled the stench of sweat and body odor. I said, “Linda, that dress smells. I have never smelled that smell on you since I have known you.” She said in a defensive, you’re-in-trouble tone, “What do you mean? I don’t smell!” I said, “The dress smells!” and I went over to her to smell it. Guess what? For some strange reason it didn’t smell. Now I’m wondering, “Where is that aroma coming from?” So then I smelled me. Guess what? The problem was under my own nose and arm pit. I was the one that
smelled so I cleaned myself off and put on some cologne and more deodorant. Needless to say, my wife gave me the riot act about this the rest of the day. She really teased me big-time on this one.

Yes, fragrances do affect us in a positive or negative way. In this portion of Scripture, Paul addresses the issue of the importance of the fragrance of our life and the fragrance of Christ in a world that is filled with the stench of sin. This is why he urged the Corinthian church to forgive and restore the backslidden Christian involved in immorality in the church because of the effect it would have on the repentant sinner and also because of the example the church would have in a lost community. As we examine this portion of Scripture, we will focus our spiritual magnifying glass on three areas:

* The Feelings of Paul’s Distress
* The Fragrance of Our Lives
* Fraudulent Living is Rejected

I. THE FEELINGS OF PAUL’S DISTRESS 2:12-13

_Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, [13] I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia_

Paul went to Troas to preach the gospel. Troas was a seaport on the Aegean Sea in western Asia Minor which is Turkey today. It was about ten miles from the famous city of Troy, for which it was named. Troas was founded in 300 B.C., and Emperor Augustus had granted it the coveted status of a Roman colony.

The apostle wanted to go to Corinth, but there were unresolved problems in that church which kept him from going. That, however, did not stop Paul from preaching. He made the decision to take the treasure of God’s Word somewhere else. Where one door closed, another door of opportunity to serve Christ opened up. He had a passion to make his life count for the Lord and share with others the message of Jesus Christ. He was....

* committed to Christ
* fitted for fighting Satan
* knitted to the Pneuma or the Spirit of God
* outfitted for the opportunities God put on his path
* submitted to the Savior’s will for his life.
* 1 Corinthians 9:16- For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! The fragrance of the Lord was on his life.

God opened the door of opportunity for Paul. He can do the same for you too. You may have loved ones that you are trying to reach for Christ right now, but the opportunity to get through to them has not presented itself yet. Keep praying and be alert for the opportunity to surface to speak with them again. Many times, when you least expect it, the door opens to share the Lord with others who are ready to listen to what you have to say.

God opened the door of opportunity to preach in Troas, but there was a problem which distracted Paul and made him very uneasy and stressed. He had no rest, no ease or freedom in his spirit. He could not find Titus and was very concerned about his welfare. So he decided to leave Troas and look for his dear friend in Macedonia. This is what he felt the Lord wanted him to do. Even though a door may open for you, it does not necessarily mean you are to walk through it unless God leads you to do so. For example, the door was open for Jonah to get on a ship going to Joppa, but it was not the direction the Lord wanted him to go.

Who is Titus? Who is this guy? Titus probably gets the Pauline service award with 20 years as Paul's co-worker. He was born a Gentile, and when he became a Christian he did not get circumcised. When Titus accompanied Paul on a visit to Jerusalem, some Jewish Christians insisted Paul's companion be circumcised according to Jewish law. As Paul put it, he "did not submit even for a moment," and Titus remained uncircumcised.

Titus thus served as a powerful symbol of justification by grace, not by the law. He served with Paul during his extended stay in Ephesus as a "partner and fellow-worker," and from there, Titus tackled his toughest assignment which was to combat grave immorality in the Corinthian church and mediate their reconciliation with Paul.

Titus put his pastoral skills to work and reported back to an anxious Paul who was awaiting a response to his severe second letter to the Corinthians. He reported to Paul that they had repented and wanted to see Paul. Titus was later appointed the first pastor of the troubled church at Crete, where Paul wrote him about the qualities of a good pastor. Eusebius reports that Titus died there in 96 A.D. and was buried in the ancient capital, Gortyna.
Paul was concerned about this man because he could not find him. Distractions do come in our lives. When they occur, our responsibility is to keep our focus on the Lord and seek His direction and leadership. The fact that Paul was so concerned about Titus reveals the fragrance of his love and concern for others. Is the fragrance of love in your life? Teenagers, do you have a love and concern for others, especially those who are much older than you? Senior Christians, do you demonstrate love and concern for teenagers? What about the Lord? Are you dedicated and in love with Him? If you are, the fragrance of your love will be evident to all by the way you live.

* John 13:35 - By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

A class of little girls was learning to spell. They spelled a number of small words, such as "pig," "cat," "dog," "cow," and amused themselves by imitating the sounds that these animals make. Then little Mary was asked to spell "love." She didn't stop to give the letters, but ran and threw her arms around the teacher's neck and kissed her on the cheek. "We spell 'love' that way at our house," she said. The girls laughed, but the teacher said, "That is a beautiful way; but do you know another way to spell 'love'?") "Oh, yes," cried Mary, "I spell love this way," and she began to put the books in order on her teacher's desk. "I spell love by helping everybody when they need me."

II. THE FRAGRANCE OF OUR LIVES 2:14-16

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. [15] For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: [16] To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

This is a very interesting section of Scripture. Paul was so thankful for God's leadership of his life, and the fact that he was a servant or slave of the Lord. This truth is seen in the Greek word for "triumph." It is the word thriambeuo {three-am-byoo'-o} which means "to lead in triumph." It can also carry the meaning of "making a spectacle of someone or something." In fact, this reading appears in a number of ancient translations of the Greek text, including the Coptic and the Syriac, and has merit. In the Greek, the phrase "causeth us to triumph
in Christ” is actually rendered “who always leads us in His triumphal procession in Christ.”

Now what is Paul talking about or referring to here? Paul is painting a picture of what is known as the Roman Triumph and is picturing the Lord as “The Conqueror” of his life. He was thrilled at the way God opened doors of opportunity for him and also God’s direction that helped him to look for Titus. He knew that Lord was in control of his path.

Now what is a Roman Triumph? The highest honor which could be given to a victorious Roman general was a Triumph which was something like an American ticker-tape parade, yet different. To receive this fantastic honor, certain requirements had to be met.
1. He must have been the actual commander-in-chief in the field.
2. The war must have been completely finished, the region pacified and the victorious troops brought home.
3. A minimum of five thousand of the enemy must have fallen in one engagement.
4. A positive extension of territory must have been gained for Rome, and not merely a disaster retrieved or an attack repelled.
5. The victory must have been won over a foreign foe and not in a civil war.

**What was this parade like?** In an actual Triumph parade, the procession of the victorious general marched through the streets of Rome to the Capitol. The streets were decorated and garlanded and the people were shouting and cheering the participants, especially the honored general.

At the front of the parade there came the state officials and the senate. These officials were followed by the trumpeters. In the shadow of the trumpeters were the spoils taken from the conquered land. After the spoils were displayed in the parade, there came pictures of the conquered land and models of conquered citadels and ships.

As the procession continued, the captives or prisoners of war, enemy princes, leaders and generals walked in chains, awaiting pending imprisonment or death in the arena of the Circus Maximus where the helpless captives would entertain the people by fighting wild beasts. These prisoners were shadowed by lictors who would smack the prisoners with their whipping rods. Next came the musicians with their lyres playing triumphant music in praise of the general.
Finally there came the victorious, conquering general himself. He stood in a magnificent chariot, adorned with ivory and plates of gold and usually drawn by two to four beautiful white horses. Other animals have been used to draw the chariot. When Pompey triumphed over Africa, his chariot was drawn by elephants. Lions drew the chariot of Mark Antony. Others have used tigers or deer. The children would sit at the feet of the general in his chariot, ride on the chariot horses, or follow behind him in another chariot.

The general was also adorned in a purple tunic embroidered with golden palm leaves, and over it a purple toga marked out with golden stars. In his hand he carried an ivory scepter with the Roman eagle at the top of it. A slave would hold over his head the crown of Jupiter. In order to keep him humble amidst these great honors this slave would remind him of his faults and vices. He would warn him of pride and the fact that glory is fleeting.

The general’s army followed his chariot wearing all their decorations and shouting, “Io triumphi!” their cry of triumph. The people would throw flowers at the general and the army. The procession was closed by the priests and their attendants, with the different sacrificial utensils, and a white bull, which was to be the chief sacrifice to the Roman gods. The priests would swing their censers with the sweet-smelling incense burning in them. They would be burning the incense to their gods to whom they gave credit for the victory. All the way through the procession would be clouds of smoke from the incense, sometimes even obscuring the procession as it passed by. It was a rare and special day for all. This is the picture that was in Paul’s mind.

The questions at this point we want to address are, “What did this picture of the triumphal procession mean to Paul? Why is he using this illustration? How did he see himself in relation to it?” Some think he saw himself as a victorious soldier. I believe he saw himself as a conquered subject. Paul viewed himself as God’s captive. He was a prisoner of Christ who was led by the Lord until the day he died. He sees the conquering Christ marching in triumph throughout the world, and himself in that conquering train.

Paul was an enemy of God’s people, putting many to death. God, however, conquered him on the Damascus Road when he trusted in Christ and surrendered to God’s call for his life. The Lord was his master and he was His servant or slave who followed the Lord to the day of his death. His life was not his own for he was the Lord’s slave, following the
orders, the directions, and the leadership of Christ to his time of death.

*Galatians 1:10- For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to
please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.
*Titus 1:1a- Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, ....

Paul was eventually executed for the cause of Jesus Christ. He may
have been charged with the burning of Rome with the rest of the
Christians. There were plenty of people who wanted to gain Nero’s
favor. Paul was not killed by the lions in the Roman arena.

* 2 Timothy 4:17- Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and
strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that
all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the
lion.

The tradition is that Paul, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded on the
Ostian Road just outside of Rome. Nero died June, 68 AD, so that Paul
was executed before that date, perhaps in the late spring of that year (or
67). It is possible that Luke and Timothy were with him. He lived for
the Lord no matter what the cost so that Christ’s power, majesty, and
glory would be manifested in his life. He finished what God led him to
do. His epitaph is recorded in 2 Timothy 4.

* 2 Timothy 4:6-8... For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of
my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished
my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me
a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give
me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his
appearing.

Because of his submissiveness to the Lord as a servant or slave of
Christ, because he was letting the Lord lead him, he was a victorious
Christian and had no regrets. This is one of the great paradoxes of
Scripture. You become victorious when you become a servant or slave
to Christ. You become a leader, you become great, when you become a
servant to others and follow the Lord.

* 2 Corinthians 4:8-10... We are troubled on every side, yet not
distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; [9] Persecuted, but not
forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; [10] Always bearing about in the
body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made
manifest in our body.

* Matthew 20:26-27... But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever
will be great among you, let him be your minister; [27] And whosoever
will be chief among you, let him be your servant: If you want the
The fragrance of Christ in your life, be saved and be a servant of the Lord.

In Cremona, Italy, where most experts believe history's best violins were made, Andrea Mosconi has the tall task of keeping the precious instruments in shape. For the past 30 years, six days a week, the old musician has gone to the museum in Cremona's city hall where the 300-year-old violins are stored in display cases. Each morning, before the museum opens to the public, Mosconi plays each violin for 6–7 minutes. He starts with basic music scales and then makes his way to Bach, Tchaikovsky, and Bartok.

Over the course of an hour, he plays three violins by the Amatis, two by the Guarneris, and four instruments by Stradivari. Why does Mosconi do this day after day? A violin needs to be played to perform at its best level. "The wood gets tired," explained Karl Roy, a German violin-maker and one of the field's top experts. "It's the same as with a human being. If you just sit and rest in your comfortable chair, when you get up after a while, you will feel crazy." Christian brothers and sisters, God did not save you to sit around and do nothing. Put your talents and abilities to use for His glory, lest you lose those abilities and they waste away.

Let me ask, "Are you a servant of Christ that actively walks with God each day? Are you letting the Lord lead your life? When you make decisions, do you consider what God's Word says before you make your choices?" If your choices are in conflict with the Scriptures, the Lord is not leading your life. He will never lead you to do something that contradicts His Word. When Christ is truly leading your life, His fragrance will be upon you. Others will notice the change in your life. They will note the difference in the way you live or treat others because they are watching your life.

* 2 Corinthians 3:2- Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

There is a perfume that my wife has worn that always reminds me of her whenever I smell it. I recognize it immediately whenever I happen to smell it in a store or I'm out in the public and someone is wearing it. In the same manner, the fragrance of our life should point others to Jesus Christ too. Our lives should remind people of Him. Beloved, God will use you if you will be a servant to the Lord. He will use you to manifest or spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere like a delicate, sweet perfume that fills a room.

About 20 years ago, when I served in Texas, we had a problem with honeybees coming in the air vents of the girl's restroom. The bees had
built a six foot hive in the attic of the church. They entered a hole about the size of a dime. The smell of the perfume that came from the exhaust vents of the girl’s restroom attracted the bees. The fragrance was like a field of flowers to them. Does the fragrance of your life attract people to Jesus Christ? It should. Paul said our lives are a sweet savor or a Christ-like fragrance rising up to the Lord.

Our life and witness is perceived differently by folks who know the Lord and those who are perishing without Christ. To the victorious general and his army, the fragrance from the censers in his parade would be the perfume of joy and triumph. Those who were marching to their deaths would have a different perspective about the fragrance of the censers. It would be the smell of death to them for they were defeated and marching to their deaths. Their lives were about to end.

In the same manner, the gospel witness of believers is a fragrance from life to life for those who believe in the Lord. It is a message of life. The gospel is life-changing and gives hope of eternal life. Believers are the very fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ when they are living for Him.

For those who reject the gospel, it is a message of death for the message speaks of man’s sin, the eternal punishment for sin, and the need for a Savior .... a Savior they have rejected. Our Lord is either accepted or rejected. There is no in-between. There is no neutrality with Jesus. The Christian life and ministry are matters of life and death. The way we live and work can mean life or death to a lost world around us.

* John 3:36- He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

* John 3:19-20... And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. [20] For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

* 1 Peter 2:7- Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

People may sense the fragrance of the Lord in your life, but they may still reject Him. The same sun that softens the wax will harden the clay. The same rose that brings joy from its beauty and fragrance may cause an allergic reaction in others. Throughout the Bible, individuals responded differently to the fragrance of the Lord. When we look at the sons of Abraham, we find that Isaac became a believer, the son of
promise, and Ishmael became a rebel. Ruth and Orpah both married Elimelech's sons and were exposed to the truth of Jehovah. Ruth went on to follow Naomi and her Lord while Orpah returned to her land of idolatry.

Let me ask, "Have you responded to the fragrance of Christ?" In other words, "Have you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you?" This is the only way you will be allowed to go to Heaven. You must be in Christ. Let me illustrate. The Yorkshire veterinarian James Herriot told the story of a sheep that died while giving birth to a lamb. No other sheep would suckle this motherless lamb because it did not have the right fragrance upon it. On the same farm, another sheep gave birth but the baby lamb died at birth. So the farmer skinned the dead lamb and wrapped its coat of wool around the living lamb. This baby lamb was presented to the bereaved mother lamb. She smelled the fragrance of the wrapped lamb and accepted it because its fragrance was acceptable and familiar.

In the same manner, we are allowed to go to Heaven because we have the fragrance of the crucified Lamb of God on our life. We are accepted by God the Father because we are wrapped in Christ. His blood covers our sin, providing for us acceptance with God.

* Ephesians 1:6-7... To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. [7] In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Living, healthy flowers release a wonderful fragrance. The rose garden of Tyler, Texas is one of the most beautiful places in the state. The fragrance of the roses permeates your clothes. Even though you have left the gardens, the smell of roses is still upon you. This brings us to another question. What releases the fragrance of flowers, perfume, or incense? There are several procedures.

* Pressure and crushing are used to release the fragrance of flowers to manufacture perfume.

* Incense is burned to release its aroma. In like manner, the sweet fragrance of Christ is released in our times of suffering and pressure when we are reliant upon Him. It is interesting to note that the rose gives off its greatest fragrance in the dark, right before the sun rises. It is in our dark and difficult times that we can greatly reveal the fragrance of Christ in our own life. When we go through our fiery trials, the Lord is glorified when we are yielded to Him and living our lives for the Savior.
* 1 Peter 1:7- That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 

* Fragrances are also released when something dies. The fragrance of Christ is released in our own life when we die to our self and will. Again, another paradox is seen here. Life is evident from death.

* John 12:24- Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

* 1 Corinthians 15:31- I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Let me ask, “Is the fragrance of Jesus Christ in your life? How are you living at work, school, or at home? What are you doing or saying around those you rub shoulders with each day? Men, how do you treat your wife? Are you mean as a rattlesnake? Ladies, how do you treat your husband? Are you naggy, withdrawn, and cold toward him? Kids, do you treat your parents like garbage? Are you letting the Lord live His life through you? Do you spend time with Him?” When you have a close walk with God, His fragrance will be in your life.

* Acts 4:13- Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

We have seen so far...

* The Feelings of Paul’s Distress  
* The Fragrance of Our Lives  
* Next, Fraudulent Living is Rejected

III. FRAUDULENT LIVING IS REJECTED  2:17

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

The fragrance of truth was on Paul’s life and should be on our lives too. He was not a fraud or a fake like others who corrupted the word of God. This word “corrupt” is from the Greek word kapeleuo {kap-ale-yoo’-o} which means “to peddle, to contaminate, to whittle down.” It is used only here. It is derived from the noun kapēlos. A kapēlos was a huckster, a con artist or street hawker who cleverly deceived unwary buyers into purchasing a cheap imitation of the real thing. When they sold produce, they would put the best fruit on top of the
basket to cover the rotten fruit below. Paul may have had in mind the description of Jerusalem's unscrupulous Israelites who used false weights in their business or "diluted" their wine with water to increase their profits, when he used this word.

* Isaiah 1:22 - Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:
* Hosea 12:7 - He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

Whom is Paul referring to when he speaks of many that corrupt the Word of God? Paul had in mind especially the false teachers at Corinth, who peddled a corrupt mixture of divine truth and Jewish legalism to the Corinthians. They would mix other things with the gospel such as personal philosophy, speculations, or religious fads. These false apostles watered-down or adulterated the Word of God for profit. They served themselves, not God whom Paul represented. They were "greedy for money," an evidence of their falsehood. These false teachers were preaching without understanding God's message or caring about what happened to their listeners. These men weren't concerned about furthering God's kingdom at all for they just wanted money.

* 1 Peter 5:2- Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
* Matthew 22:29- Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.
* 2 Corinthians 4:2- But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Brothers and sisters, greed will cause your life to...

* stink from selfishness,
* shrink in service to others,
* sink in spiritual growth,
* chink your character,
* wink at wrong and wretchedness, and
* pink or pierce people with harsh words and ridicule.

When you give people the impression that you are more concerned about their money or yourself than them, you will hurt your testimony for Christ. The fragrance of your life will go from Channel No. 5 to Skunk No. 7. If you want to have the fragrance of Christ on your life, then live and speak the Word of God with sincerity, surety, clarity, and authority,
realizing that the Lord is watching you. Don’t forget you must give an account to Him.

Paul spoke with sincerity when he preached God’s Word. He was saying in essence that the fragrance of the Lord was in his life. This word “sincerity” comes from the Greek word heilikrineia {i-lik-re’-ni-ah} and speaks of the character we should have and the way we should always live. It is formed from two words. The first is heile {hay-lee} which means “the rays of the sun” and the word krino {kree'-no} which means “to pick out, choose, to judge.” So this word means “to be found pure when unfolded and examined by the sun’s light.” Buyers of pottery would check for cracks by holding the pottery up to the sunlight. It means “to be pure, sincere, unsullied.”

This is the way Paul described his life and preaching. The fragrance of purity, genuineness, and sincerity was on his life and should be on our lives too. Let me ask, “When people think of you, do they think of someone who is pure, sincere, and without hypocrisy? Do you have an attitude of gratitude and thankfulness? Are you using your abilities and blessings to serve the Lord? What is the fragrance of your life?

The great missionary explorer, David Livingstone, served in Africa from 1840 until his death in 1873. Pastors Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro tell of an incident from Livingstone’s life that illustrates why we need to be thankful in all things and use what God has given us for His glory.

David Livingstone was eager to travel into the uncharted lands of Central Africa to preach the Gospel. On one occasion, the famous nineteenth-century missionary and explorer arrived at the edge of a large territory that was ruled by a tribal chieftain. According to tradition, the chief would come out to meet him there. Livingstone could go forward on the land only after an exchange of gifts was made. The chief would choose any item of Livingstone's personal property that caught his fancy and keep it for himself, while giving the missionary something of his own in return.

Livingstone had few possessions with him, but at their encounter, he obediently spread them all out on the ground including his clothes, his books, his watch, and even the goat that provided him with milk. Chronic stomach problems kept Livingston from drinking the local water. To his dismay, the chief took this important, valuable goat. In return, the chief gave him a carved stick, shaped like a walking stick.
Livingstone was most disappointed. He began to gripe to God about what he viewed as a stupid walking cane. What could it do for him compared to the goat that kept him well? Then one of the local men explained, "That's not a walking cane Mr. Livingstone. It's the king's very own scepter, and with it you will find entrance to every single village in our country. The king has honored you greatly."

The man was right. With that scepter, the fragrance of the king was on David Livingstone's life. The scepter showed he had been with the king and was honored and approved by him. God opened the door to Central Africa to Livingstone, and as successive evangelists followed him, wave after wave of people came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. The Lord took away what Livingstone treasured and replaced it with something that was more valuable, even though David did not realize it at first.

Beloved, as the fragrance of Christ is upon our life, the Lord will open doors to serve Him. What we might consider a loss could actually become a blessing. God will replace our losses with His blessings. He will powerfully provide for us the needs that we have in order to serve Him just like He provided Livingston with the scepter of the king.

We must realize that the Bible is not just an ordinary book, it is the scepter of the king. It is the Word of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It is more powerful than any scepter of any king, providing us with truth that will make us free and lead us to God's gift and blessings. May the fragrance of God's Word be on all of our lives.
Chapter 7
Living Letters
2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? [2] Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: [3] Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. [4] And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: [5] Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; [6] Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

It is no fun when people try to destroy your life with their tongues. This, however, is what Paul faced with some in the Corinthian church. His reputation was being reproached; his character was being criticized and castigated; his motives were being maligned; and his words were being warped and distorted by those who were against him.

Paul’s defense, as we will see, was not letters of recommendation, but living letters of the lives of the Corinthian Christians. This section reveals the relevance of the message of your life. You are a living letter to the world that is being read by others. What you are teaching with your lifestyle is important, influential, interesting, and impacts the hearts of those who watch in silence or fellowship with you in times of fun, frustration, fretting, or fear. The purpose of this study is to cause you to examine the letter of your life. What is your message? Notice verse one.
I. THE INQUIRY CONCERNING CREDENTIALS 3:1

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

Peddlers of the Word of God, hucksters, or false teachers did not like Paul at all because he exposed them for what they really were and pointed out the distortions they would make to the Gospel. In turn, these deceivers undermined Paul by accusing him of being proud, cocky, and arrogant. They felt he praised or exalted himself above others and accused him of acting like he was better than everyone else.

In their attempt to discredit Paul, the false teachers claimed that he lacked the proper official letters of commendation. Where were his references? Such letters were commonly used in the ancient world to introduce people to those who did not know them. Paul himself wrote these commendation letters for Timothy, Titus, Phoebe, and Epaphroditus. The book of Philemon is a letter of commendation for Philemon.

When the false apostles arrived in Corinth, they likely produced deceptive letters of commendation, possibly claiming to have come from the Jerusalem church. They used those letters to help them gain acceptance by the Corinthians. These false apostles also sought letters from the Corinthians. Because they were unregenerate and corrupt, their true colors would end up showing. Therefore, they could not remain long in one location before being unmasked and exposed. Before they moved on to their next victims, they would seek letters of commendation from those whom they had deceived. They then used those letters to enhance their credibility with their next victims.

Paul did not have any letters of recommendation and these deceivers made a big deal about it. He was not like these deceivers. He needed no letters of commendation to prove his credibility to the Corinthians. The apostle has already proved his metal. This is why he asked the question, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?"

The word "commend" is from the word sunistano {soon-is-tan'-o}. One of its meanings is "to introduce." Paul was basically asking, "After all they had gone through together, did he really need to reintroduce himself to the Corinthians? Did they not know him well
enough by now?” He has already lived among them and ministered to them for eighteen months. Was it really necessary for Paul to start all over again and prove to them what kind of man he was? These folks already had firsthand knowledge of his virtuous, godly, sincere life and powerful preaching.

For the Corinthians to demand letters of commendation from Paul was absolute stupidity, absurdity, and totally unnecessary. He was not a stranger here. That they could be so foolish and deceived as to doubt what they knew was true about Paul was tragic. His blameless life and effective ministry were his “letters of commendation.” Some of the pages of his life have already been read and found to be sincere, saintly, sterling, Spirit-filled, and steadfast.

The Apostle Paul was not in the business of promoting or exalting himself. He sought no glory or praise from men. He was not trying to be a big shot or the focus of attention. This man was not in competition with other godly Christians to see who could be the number one Christian. This was not Paul and it should not characterize us either.

* 2 Corinthians 10:12- For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. Paul did not dare say that he was as wonderful as other men who claimed to be important. These men compared themselves with each other and used themselves as their standard for success. Paul says they are ignorant.

* 2 Corinthians 10:18- For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Beloved, if you go through life trying to promote or exalt yourself, you will find a boat load of frustration because you can’t make people praise or exalt you. That comes from their heart which you can’t control. Most people really don’t care what you have done or who you are. If they do, they don’t care for long or soon forget. They are concerned about what is going on in their own lives and the problems they are facing.

If you try to be a big shot, you will miss the target or goals that God has for you. Paul did not claim that he had arrived at perfection. He was careful to not be distracted by his achievements in the past. Instead, he kept his focus on the target and goals that God had for him.

* Philippians 3:13-14 .... Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [14] I
press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Apollo 11 landed on the surface of the moon on Sunday, July 20, 1969. Most of us are familiar with astronaut Neil Armstrong's historic statement as he stepped onto the moon's surface: "That's one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind." But few know about the first meal eaten on the moon.

Buzz Aldrin had brought aboard the spacecraft a tiny Communion kit provided by his church. Aldrin sent a radio broadcast to Earth asking listeners to contemplate the events of that day and give thanks. Then, in radio blackout for privacy Buzz Aldrin read, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” Silently, he gave thanks to the Lord and partook. He desired to honor the Lord for His blessings.

Beloved, our responsibility is to do our best at whatever task is at hand so that God would be glorified. This may involve matters at work, school, church, home, etc. Do your best and the Lord will honor you for good work in due time. When character, consistency, carefulness, and concern are written in the pages of your life, others will notice and commend you. Do your best for the Lord and He will take care of the rest.

We have seen the inquiry concerning credentials in verse one. We will now examine the impression of a Christ-centered life. Notice verse two.

II. THE IMPRESSION OF A CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE 3:2

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

False apostles relied on letters of commendation to gain acceptance. Paul, however, did not carry with him these types of letters. Instead, he carried living letters with him in his heart. The Corinthians believers were his letter of recommendation. They were written permanently or engraved on his heart, so that they could not slip away or be forgotten. God had used Paul to write that letter in the debauched, vile city of Corinth by preaching the Gospel. The evidence of the transformed lives of the believers by the power of the Gospel, and the ministry of Paul, made an impression on those that observed the change in them. A change from corruption and carnality to Christ-like behavior grabbed the attention of some of the people in the city and
made an impression on men and women, especially those weary from their sin.

Written letters may easily mislead, but living letters of people’s lives will reveal the truth. The letters written with pen and ink will be read only by a limited number of people, but your life is read by all, even the illiterate. Human words written in ink are silent; they just sit fading on a page. Anyone can write a dead letter with ink, but only Christ, through the supernatural power of the Spirit of the living God, can write a living letter. The believers in Corinth were an open letter of Christ to the world and were a declaration of Christ’s power and love. They were a living letter of Christ, because it is He alone who saves and sanctifies through the power of God in the preaching of His Word by faithful men like Paul.

* 1 Corinthians 2:4-5... And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: [5] That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

* 1 Thessalonians 1:5 - For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

Beloved, you are an open letter for Jesus Christ. We are known and “read.” This word “read” is from the Greek word anaginosko {an-ag-in-oce'-ko} which means “to distinguish between, to recognize, to know accurately, to read.” Every Christian, whether he likes it or not, is an advertisement for Christianity. The honor of Christ is in the hands of those who follow the Lord. A store is judged by the kind of goods that are sold. We judge a craftsman by the kind of articles he produces. In the same manner, we judge a church by the kind of men and women it creates. In turn, men judge Christ by His followers. May the message of our lives point people to the Lord Jesus Christ. The way we live should distinguish us from other people.

* Our attitude should be admirable and agreeable.
* Our work should be worthy of our best.
* Our patience should be persistent and pleasant.
* Our words should be wonderful and wise.
* Our generosity should be genuine and gallant.
* Our character should be consistent and Christ-like.
Charles Spurgeon said, “A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you, and were helped by you, will remember you when forget-me-nots are withered. Carve your name on hearts, and not on marble.”

* 2 Corinthians 5:20- Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

A young lady named Helen from Illinois shared this story that compliments the point we are making here: As our pastor's sermon stretched on, my daughter grew impatient and started to talk. "Shh," I whispered. "I want to hear the sermon." Later that week, we saw our pastor while shopping. We exchanged greetings, and as we walked away, I asked my daughter, "Do you know who that was?" "Sure," she replied. "That was the Sermon." This little girl was on target. The way we live preaches to others. Our life is a living letter that speaks volumes.

We have seen so far....

* The Inquiry Concerning Credentials
* The Impression of a Christ-centered Life
* Next, the Inscription of the Christ

III. THE INSCRIPTION OF THE CHRIST  3:3

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Paul says to the Corinthians that they are clearly a letter of Christ. They show the result of his ministry among them. They are a letter not written with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. The paper is not on tablets of stones, but on human hearts. Beloved, when you trusted Christ as your Savior, the Lord left His mark on your heart. Only the Author of Heaven can reach your heart and engrave His truth and love upon you. His inscription on your heart is not illegible and it does not fade. When the Lord leaves His mark in your life, it is life-giving and a living influence. It’s a permanent, precious mark that lasts forever.

The ministry of Jesus Christ was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel. God had promised Israel, centuries before, through the prophet Ezekiel, that a time was coming when he would change the hearts of people.
* Ezekiel 11:19-20... And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: [20] That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

* Ezekiel 36:26- A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

When Christ leaves His mark on our heart, He changes it. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, He gives us a new heart. Dr. Christian Barnard, the first surgeon ever to do a heart transplant, impulsively asked one of his patients, Dr. Philip Blaiberg, "Would you like to see your old heart?" At 8 p.m. on a subsequent evening, the men stood in a room of the Groote Schuur Hospital in Johannesburg, South Africa. Dr. Barnard went up to a cupboard, took down a glass container and handed it to Dr. Blaiberg. Inside that container was Blaiberg's old heart.

For a moment he stood there stunned into silence. He was the first man in history ever to hold his own heart in his hands. Finally he spoke and for ten minutes plied Dr. Barnard with technical questions. Then he turned to take a final look at the contents of the glass container, and said, "So this is my old heart that caused me so much trouble." He handed it back, turned away and left it forever.

This is a picture of what Jesus Christ does for us. We remain the same people, but our hearts become radically new. True, we still battle with our flesh, but as members of Christ's Body, our spiritual inclinations are matched to God's laws. They are no longer external and foreign to us but internal. We have the nature of God living within us through the person of the Holy Spirit. Wow! Let that sink in for a minute!

* 2 Corinthians 5:17- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

* 2 Peter 1:4- Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

When Christ comes into your life, you become a living letter penned by the Spirit of God writing on your heart and soul. The script of the Savior is chiseled on the manuscript of your heart day by day. He is penning compassion for others, composure of our self, compunction or remorse for sin, concern for others, consistency in Christ-likeness, and compliance to His Word upon our heart day by day. Conflicts arise,
however, when we try to erase or ignore what He has written or is trying to write upon our heart. Beloved, be a living letter of what He is writing in your life.

IV. THE IMMUTABLE CONFIDENCE IN GOD  3:4-5

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: [5] Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Paul was confident of the Lord’s work in their hearts because of his great trust in God through Christ. His trust was God-ward which means he knew he was serving the Lord and was living his life before the gaze and inspection of God Himself. We all are living letters being read by men but also by the Lord too.

Paul was not self-confident, but God-confident. This is to be our attitude too. God-confidence will give you the courage you need to face any difficulty in life. God confidence will help you to be devoted to the Lord and His will for your life. God confidence gave him self confidence to do what the Lord wanted him to do and it will do the same for you. The Apostle Paul knew that his abilities came from the Lord and anything that was accomplished through him was on the account of the Lord’s working in his life. He was a living letter of what the Lord had engraved on his heart.

* 1 Corinthians 15:10-But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain: but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

* Ephesians 3:7- Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

The apostle made it very clear that his sufficiency was of God. The word “sufficiency” is from the Greek word hikanotes {hik-an-ot'-ace} which means “ability, competency to do a thing, adequacy, qualifications.” This word denotes the capability to perform a task that demands expertise. Paul’s abilities and competence came from the Lord, not from his self assurance. He made no bones about it. The same truth holds for you too. No matter who you are, your abilities are from God.

Stuart Briscoe told this story about his kids: Many years ago when the children were small, we went for a little drive in the lovely English countryside, and there was some fresh snow. I saw a lovely field with not
a single blemish on the virgin snow. I stopped the car, vaulted over the
gate, and I ran around in a great big circle striding as wide as I could.
Then I came back to the kids, and I said, "Now, children, I want you to
follow in my footsteps. So I want you to run around that circle in the
snow, and I want you to put your feet where your father put his feet."

Well, David tried and couldn't quite make it. Judy, our overachiever,
was certain she would make it, but she didn't. Pete, the little kid, took a
great run at it, put his foot in my first footprint and then strode out as far
as he could and fell flat on his face. His mother picked him up as he
cried.

She said to me, "What are you trying to do?" I said, "I'm trying to
get a sermon illustration." I said, "Pete, come here." I picked up little
Peter and put his left foot on my foot, and I put his right foot on my right
foot. I said, "Okay, Pete, let's go." I began to stride one big stride at a time
with my hands under his armpits and his feet lightly on mine.

Well, who was doing the walking now? In a sense, he was doing it
because I was doing it. In a sense there was a commitment of the little
boy to the big dad, and some of the properties of the big dad were
working through the little boy. In exactly the same way, in our
powerlessness we can't stride as wide as we should. We don't walk the
way we should. We don't hit the target the way we ought. It isn't that at
every point we are as bad as we could be. It's just that at no point are we
as good as we should be.

Beloved, that story reminds us that if you are going to be a living
letter, you need to be God-confident and God-dependent. We need to
yield to Him and let Him live His life through us. Paul was a man who
was dependent upon the Lord. Are you? It is when we cease to be God-
dependent people that we make foolish choices that get us into trouble.
We tend to run ahead of or away from the Lord. For this reason the Bible
reminds us to be dependent upon the Lord for all of our needs.

* Dependence Upon God
1. For our Problems* solutions
*Genesis 41:16- And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me:
God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.
2. For our Provisions
*Luke 11:3- Give us day by day our daily bread.
*Philippians 4:19- But my God shall supply all your need according to
his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
3. For our Productiveness and Performance of Duties
* Philippians 4:13- I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.
* John 3:27- John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.
* John 15:4-5... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
* 1 Timothy 1:12- And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;
* Philippians 2:13- For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

4. For Power and Strength when we are Weak.

Hudson Taylor once noted that "God uses men who are weak and feeble enough to lean on Him."
* 2 Corinthians 12:10- Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.
* Psalm 18:32- It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.
* Psalm 28:7- The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

5. For Powerful accomplishments
* Acts 3:12- And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

It is the Lord that helps us to do a number of things that will help us to be living letters of His glory.

a. To Preach or speak to others about Him.
* 2 Timothy 4:17- Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.
* Exodus 4:12- Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.
b. To know His Plan and Purpose for our lives.
* Psalm 32:8- I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

c. To Pray
* Luke 11:1-2... And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. [2] And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

d. To Pardon or forgive others.
As living letters, the Lord helps us to forgive those who offend us.
* Matthew 6:14- For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
* Matthew 5:44- But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

e. To Provide or serve others
* Philippians 2:3-4... Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. [4] Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

After the death of her first husband, Jim Elliot, Elisabeth Elliot reached the Auca tribe for Jesus Christ. Years later she married Addison Leitch. Shortly after Elisabeth married Addison Leitch, Addison was diagnosed as having two entirely distinct, unique, unrelated, painful types of cancer. Day and night, literally, Elisabeth Elliot had to care for this godly man.

She said she used to pray that God would give her strength to get her through the week. Then it got so difficult that all she could pray for was that God would give her strength to get through the day. Then she used to pray that somehow God would just give her the strength to get through the hour, because at 9 a.m. it was unbearable to think about praying somehow about getting strength for 10 a.m. God helped Elisabeth to have the strength to serve someone else. He will help you too.

f. To be Persistent and Unafraid.
* 2 Timothy 1:7- For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
* Isaiah 41:10- Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will
uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Beloved, any success that you may enjoy in life, in school, at work, or at church is to be traced to the Lord Jesus Christ. Your abilities are from Him. Our ability to just think or reason with clarity, clearness, correctness, and calm come from God. Our health is so fragile. Sickness and disease can zap our strength and abilities. One little blood clot can bring on a stroke, not to mention all the problems and distractions that we face in our life that can cloud our thinking and sift our strength.

If you are not careful, success or prosperity can cloud your thinking of what it really means to be successful. God’s standard of success is much different than man’s criteria for success. The scales of God are weighted to much different values than man’s. Yet, if we don’t use our head, we start basing our lives on the world’s guidelines of success and accomplishment. If we focus our energy on human accomplishment then we lose sight of God’s enablement and help. If we emphasize self-confidence, then we can be entrapped by our own pride. We develop a “I did it all” mentality.

The world’s view of Paul would have been one of success. If he wanted to brag or boast, he had a lot to brag about to others. He mentioned this to the church at Philippi. He told them, “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more (3:4).” Notice his credentials.

1. Impressive Ancestry
* Philippians 3:5a- Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews;

2. Impeccable Orthodoxy
* Philippians 3:5b- “....as touching the law, a Pharisee;”

3. Incredible Activity
* Philippians 3:6a- Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;....

4. Immaculate Morality
* Philippians 3:6b- “....touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

Paul however had adopted God standard of success in his life. All his accolades and accomplishments were nothing to him. His desire was to be a living letter of God’s grace.

* Philippians 3:7-9.... But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. [8] Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win
Christ, [9] And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

So far in this section we have addressed four things about being living letters.
* The Inquiry Concerning Credentials.
* The Impression of a Christ-centered life.
* The Inscription of Christ
* The Immutable Confidence in God
* Last, we will look at the Impact of God’s New Covenant

V. THE IMPACT OF GOD’S NEW COVENANT  3:6

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

This section of the passage deals with the contrast between the old and the new covenant. A covenant means an arrangement made between two people through which they enter into a certain relationship. It is not an ordinary agreement, because the contracting parties enter into an ordinary agreement on equal terms. In the biblical sense of a covenant relationship, it is God who is the prime mover and approaches man to offer him a relationship upon conditions which man could neither initiate nor alter, but only accept or reject. The work of salvation is completely the work of God. Our responsibility is to either accept or reject His terms for salvation by trusting in His Son.

As living letters of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has made us able ministers or servants of this new testament or covenant. We can do all things through the Lord Jesus Christ who strengthens us. The heart of the new covenant is the Cross of Jesus Christ. Christ spoke of this new covenant at the Last Supper.

* 1 Corinthians 11:25- After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

The word Paul uses for “new” when he speaks of the new testament is the same as Jesus used and it is very significant. In Greek there are two words for “new.” First, there is neos, which means “new in point of time and that alone.” For example, a young person is neos because he is a newcomer into the world.
A second word for "new" is the Greek word *kainos* {ki-nos} which means "not only new in point of time, but also new in quality." It is the word *kainos* that both Jesus and Paul use of the new covenant. The significance of this word is that the new covenant is not only new in point of time; it is quite different in kind from the old covenant. It produces between man and God a new relationship of a totally different kind than the old testament.

How are the old and new covenants different? The difference is seen when they are contrasted side-by-side.

1. The old covenant was based on a written document. Moses took the book of the Law and read it to the people and they agreed to it. On the other hand the new covenant is based on the power of the life-giving Spirit of God. A written document is always something that is external. The work of the Spirit of God, on the other hand, changes a man's heart. A man may obey written commands while all the time he wishes to disobey them. When the Spirit of God, however, comes into his heart and controls it, he does not even wish to break those commands because he is a changed man. He wants to obey the Lord.

2. Paul said the old letter of the law of Moses "killeth." What did it kill?
* **It killed hope.** There was never any hope that any man could keep it, human nature being what it is. It therefore could issue nothing but frustration and fear.
* **It killed life.** Under it a man could earn nothing but condemnation, guilt, and dread. This condemnation meant death.
* **It killed strength.** It was perfectly able to tell a man what to do, but it could not help him do it. The Law identified and pointed out man’s problem of sinfulness. It did not provide the solution. It did not offer pardon, relief, peace, or joy. God used the Law to bring us to Christ and show us our need for Him.
* Galatians 3:24 - *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

D. M. Stearns was preaching in Philadelphia. At the close of the service a stranger came up to him and said, "I don't like the way you spoke about the cross. I think that instead of emphasizing the death of Christ, it would be far better to preach Jesus, the teacher and example." Stearns replied, "If I presented Christ in that way, would you be willing to follow Him?" "I certainly would," said the stranger without hesitation. "All right then," said the preacher, "let's take the first step. He did no sin. Can you claim that for yourself?" The man looked confused and
somewhat surprised. "Why, no," he said. "I acknowledge that I do sin." Stearns replied, "Then your greatest need is to have a Savior, not an example! Beloved, the Law showed us we need a Savior. Do you know Him? Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ?

3. Paul went on to say that the “spirit giveth life.” The spirit is a reference to the new covenant or new spiritual system of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Men are saved by grace through faith in Christ. This new testament offers the solution to man’s need for salvation and deliverance. Its effect brings love, joy, and peace because it is a relationship of love. It came into being because God loved the world. The impact of the new covenant is it changes a man’s life, not by imposing a new code of laws on him, but by changing his heart. It therefore not only told a man what to do but gave him the strength to do it. With its commandments it brought power to obey the Lord and do what was right.

We are living letters of the Lord because He has enabled us and given us the power to be like Christ and live for Him. We have a purpose for living and that purpose is to bring honor and glory to our Heavenly Father.

* John 1:12- But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

People are reading your life. What is it saying to them? Remember, you are a living letter that is revealing what is written on the pages of your heart. Annie Johnson Flint put it this way in a poem she wrote entitled, “Hands and Feet for Him.”

_We are the only Bible the careless world will read,_
_We are the sinner’s gospel, we are the scoffer’s creed;_ 
_We are our Lord’s last message, written in deed and word;_ 
_What if the type be crooked? What if the print be blurred?_
Chapter 8
The Ministry of Your Life
2 Corinthians 3:7-4:6

We have addressed the issue of the importance of the fragrance of your life and the fact that you are a living letter of the Lord. Now we will dig into the issue of the ministry of your life. The principles that are displayed on the table of Scripture apply to the individual and to the church. As the sands of the hourglass continue to flow through time and the heartbeats of your life day by day, these principles remain concrete. They have not changed, but remain the same for all believers as the second hand of your life continues its circular race.

In the last part of chapter three of 2 Corinthians, beginning with verse seven, Paul continues the contrast between the old covenant of the law and the new covenant of grace.

* 2 Corinthians 3:7- But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

The Ten Commandments were referred to as the ministration of death written in stones. This way led to death because no one could keep them. Disobedience brought condemnation and judgment. Yet, in the beginning it was glorious.

When Moses received the Ten Commandments, his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was fading away. The Law is good, even though it condemns us because it pointed out the fact that we all have a problem. The problem is not with God’s Law, it is with sinful man. The Law is a mirror that shows all of us how dirty we are and the fact that we are sinners that need a Savior. The mirror cannot cleanse you. You cannot clean yourself up spiritually. Only the Lord can cleanse and forgive you of the bad you have done.
* Galatians 2:21- I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Notice verses eight and nine.

* 2 Corinthians 3:8-9... How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? [9] For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

Paul was saying in verses eight and nine, if the Law which condemned us to death was glorious, how much more glorious is the new testament which give us life through the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The ministration of righteousness (vs.9) is the righteousness that Christians have in Jesus Christ. His righteousness was imputed to us or put on our spiritual account when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

* James 2:23- And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Now look at verses ten and eleven.

* 2 Corinthians 3:10-11... For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. [11] For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

Verses ten and eleven confirm the fact that the initial glory of the reception of the Ten Commandments was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of God’s new covenant with us of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. For example, if the sun comes up in the morning, the brightness of the moon is no longer bright in comparison. The great brilliance of the sun obscures the lesser light of the moon. When the old covenant is compared with God’s new covenant with us, there is no comparison. The new testament or covenant is much more wonderful and eternal. As the glory on the face of Moses was fading, the glory of the old covenant was also fading.

Notice verse twelve and thirteen.

* 2 Corinthians 3:12-13.... Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: [13] And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

These two verses reveal the impact of God’s new covenant of grace. We have confidence, hope, plainness of speech, assurance, or boldness to approach the Lord in prayer because of His salvation and grace. We
are His children and have assurance that we belong to Him and have eternal life because of His promises. We have access to our Lord in prayer. In fact, we are urged to pray with confidence, assurance, and boldness.

* Hebrews 4:16 - Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.
* Hebrews 10:19-20... Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, [20] By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

Moses veiled his face to hide the fading radiance and glory of God upon it. Verses 14 through 17 show us that unfortunately, the minds of the Jewish people are still veiled.

* 2 Corinthians 3:14-17... But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. [15] But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. [16] Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. [17] Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Because of their hardness toward Jesus Christ, the Jews do not see that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness. They do not understand that He is the fulfillment of the entire Law. They are still spiritually blind. They cannot understand God's new covenant and truth because they have rejected the Truth, the Lord Jesus Christ.

* 1 Corinthians 2:14- But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Faith in Christ is the key to understanding God's truth and removing the veil of ignorance and darkness. It is the Spirit of God that lifts the veil on our heart and helps us to see Christ as our Savior. Through Christ, we are delivered from the bondage and shackles of sin. Chapter three of 2 Corinthians curtains with a great truth in verse 18.

* 2 Corinthians 3:18- But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

We are not only liberated by the Holy Spirit, we are transformed. We become new creatures in Christ. Nathaniel Hawthorne tells a story about a great stone face: A little lad lived in a village where there was a mountain with a rock formation which they called "the great stone face." The people had a legend that someday someone would come to the
village who would look like the great stone face. He would do wonderful things for the village and be a means of great blessing. That story really took hold of the lad. During his lifetime he would gaze at the great stone face at every opportunity that he had, and he would dream of the time when someone looking like the great stone face would come to the village. Years passed and as time went by, he became a young man, then an old man. He was tottering down the street one day when someone looked up and saw him coming and shouted, “He has come. The one who looks like the great stone face is here!” This man had looked at the great stone face for so long that now he bore its image.

Beloved, in the same manner, if you want to be like Jesus Christ, then spend time looking at Him. When you put your faith in Christ, the veil is removed from your heart and spiritual eyes. You can see and reflect the true glory of our Lord just as you would see yourself in a mirror. If you want to behold the Lord today, you can see Him in the lives of godly Christians and in the Word of God. The Bible is the mirror of Jesus Christ. God uses His Word to redeem us and change our lives, making us more like His Son.

This word “change” in verse 18 is from the Greek word *metamorphoo* {met-am-or-fo'-o} which forms our English word *metamorphosis*. Metamorphosis describes the process that changes an insect from a larva into a pupa and then into a mature insect. The changes come from within. The Spirit of God through the Word of God changes us from within, which changes us outwardly by the way we behave. As God’s grace changes us, we become more like Christ and reflect His glory in our lives. One day, we will be like Him completely.

* 1 John 3:2- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

With verses seven through eighteen as a background, Paul opens this section in chapter four with the word “Therefore.” When you see the word “therefore” find out what it is there for. Why is it here? Because we enjoy a more glorious new covenant with Christ, because we are saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus, because the Spirit of God has broken the shackles of sin and made us free, because the Lord is changing us and making us more like Him when we yield to Him, we therefore have a ministry. What we have taken in and received from the Lord needs to be given out or shared with those who do not know Him. We are all to be “ministers” of Christ that are to use our lives to serve
Christ and influence others to the Lord. Let's find out what is involved in the ministry of our life.

I. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OUR MINISTRY TO OTHERS  4:1

Thereof seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

All Christians have the responsibility or ministry to share the Gospel with a lost and dying world. The word “ministry” is from the Greek word *diakonia* (*dee-ak-on-ee'-ah*) which means “service, executing the command of others.” Because of the work of God’s grace and mercy in our own lives, we are to serve the Lord and obey His commands by doing His will. We are to tell others about Christ and how to be saved. This is our responsibility.

Because of God’s mercy, we do not have to faint. This word “faint” is from the word *egkakeo* (*eng-kak-eh'-o*). When Paul uses this word “faint” he means “to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted, to turn out a coward or lose one’s courage.” Beloved, we are not to be having spiritual fainting-fits or be a bunch of quitters when it comes to living for the Lord. We have at our disposal the power and grace we need to face problems, persecutions, peevish or angry people, perplexity, and being pooped out. Satan has a lot of weapons in his arsenal to try to get Christians to faint and lose heart. Here are a few of his weapons and God’s solution.

* Satan’s Arsenal to Get Christians to Quit

1. Fear

People fear men and fear to trust God at His Word.

* 2 Timothy 1:7- For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

* Psalm 56:3- What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

2. Fatigue

* Isaiah 41:10 - Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.
Chapter 8...The Ministry of Your Life...3:7-4:6  119

3. Frustration

A writer in his 50's had written a manuscript for a book, and had sent it to several publishers without success. He grew so discouraged that he threw the manuscript into the wastepaper basket. His wife tried to salvage the manuscript, but he told her sternly: "We've wasted enough time on it. I forbid you to remove it from the wastebasket!"

Undeterred, she decided to show the manuscript to at least one more publisher. When she arrived at that publisher's office, she pulled out the most unusual looking proposal that the publisher had ever received. Underneath a wrapping of brown paper was a wastepaper basket still holding the writer's manuscript. This way, she reasoned, she was not technically going against her husband's wishes. She did not remove the manuscript from the wastebasket. The publisher did it for her. And when he read it, he loved it. The writer in this story was a guy named Norman Vincent Peale; the manuscript was The Power of Positive Thinking. The book that Peale tossed in the trash can eventually sold 30 million copies.

Frustration can cause us to quit, when blessings are just around the corner. Don't quit. Wait for God's blessings.

* 2 Corinthians 4:8- We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.

The word "perplexed" is from the Greek word aporeo {ap-or-eh'-o} which means "to be without resources, to be in straits, to be left wanting, to be embarrassed, to be in doubt, not to know which way to turn; to be at a loss with one's self; to not know how to decide or what to do, to be perplexed." Paul faced these emotions and circumstances, but was not in despair. God gives us the strength to face our frustrations.

4. Fleshy Fun and Fornication

The love for carnality can get a believer side-tracked. The desires of the flesh should never be underestimated. If you do not keep them in "check" then those desires can grip your entire life. Sexual sins have knocked many Christians out of service for the Lord.

* 2 Timothy 4:10- For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; ...

This word "forsaken" is a very strong word. It is from the Greek word ekkataleipo {eng-kat-al-i'-po} and means "to totally abandon or utterly forsake, to desert, leave in straits, leave helpless." This is what Demas did with Paul.

* 1 Corinthians 9:27- But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I
myself should be a castaway. The word “subjection” is from the word *doulagogeo* {doo-lag-og-eh'-o} which means “to lead away into slavery or to treat as a slave with severity, to subject to stern and rigid discipline.” This is what Paul did with his body. He made it a slave to his will, not his body’s will.

*1 Corinthians 6:18-* Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body: but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

5. Fury

Many believers quit because of their anger and bitterness toward the Lord or other people.

*Ephesians 4:31-32.*... *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:* [32] *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*

6. Focus upon Self

When we become selfish, then our focus is shifted from the Lord and people to ourselves. The premise for our decisions becomes our will instead of God’s will. When our comfort zone gets shaken, then the decision is made to quit serving the Lord in order to get the comfort back. People find out eventually that you lose comfort, peace, and joy when you turn your back on the Lord.

*Isaiah 57:21-* There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

*Philippians 2:4* - Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

*Matthew 6:33-* But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

7. Finances

Greed and covetousness are effective weapons in getting people to quit serving God. The love for money or things, get people distracted from that which is really important.

*1 Timothy 6:10-* 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.

*Luke 6:38-* Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.
8. The Feeling You are Wasting your Life or Time

Many have quit church or serving the Lord because they feel it is a waste of time to serve him. Dedication has been replaced with doubt or discouragement. The Lord assures us, however, that living for Him is not a waste.

* 1 Corinthians 15:58- Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Our responsibility is to put our trust and faith in the Lord to help us in those times that are especially difficult. Trust the Lord.

* Hebrews 11:6- But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

* Proverbs 3:5-6...Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

II. THE RUDIMENTS OF OUR MINISTRY WITH OTHERS  4:2

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

What are the elements of ministering to other people? How are we to behave and what are we to do and not do? Those answers are here.

A. The Renunciation of Dishonesty: “But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty...”

We are to “renounce” the hidden things of dishonesty. What does Paul mean by this word “renounce?” It is derived from the word *apeipomen* {ap-i-pom-′-ane} which means “to speak out, to forbid, to refuse or deny, to give up or renounce.” We are to give up, forbid, disown or renounce hidden things of dishonesty.

We are to renounce “dishonesty.” This word “dishonesty” is from a word that means “the confusion of one who is ashamed of anything, a sense of shame, disgrace, scandal, dishonor.” These are the things we are to renounce. The secret things that people do under concealment but
would be ashamed or disgraced if exposed are to be renounced and forsaken. Underhanded dealings with others and deception are to be avoided like the plague. We are to live an open and above-board life, a life of honesty and integrity. This was a problem in Corinth as false teachers were deceiving the people and living shamefully.

* Job 11:14 - If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.
* 1 Peter 2:11 - Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

If we are going to have a ministry with others, then our life needs to be characterized by a renunciation of dishonesty and secondly, a rejection of deception.

B. A Rejection of Deception: “...not walking in craftiness,...”

The Christian is not to "walk in craftiness." This means he is not to be walking in “trickery, cunning, cleverness, shrewdness, or with evil design.” Craftiness has the idea of a man who will do anything and use any means to get what he wants. He believes the end justifies the means. We are not to behave this way. We are not to use, misuse, or take advantage of people.

These guys who tell you to send in $25 to get a holy hanky, a bottle of holy water from the Jordan River, or will send you a splinter of the cross of Jesus are walking in craftiness. They should be ashamed. Sooner or later their trickery will be exposed and their credibility will be ruined. In our personal business dealings with people, we are to be open and above-board with people when we are selling something. Honesty develops trust.

* 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5... For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: [4] But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. [5] For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness:

C. The Refusal to Distort the Scripture’s Message: “...nor handling the word of God deceitfully...”

Christians are not to tamper, falsify, corrupt, or water down the message of God’s Word. This is the idea behind the
word “deceitfully.” This word was used to describe the adding of ingredients to gold or wine in ancient Greece. We are to share with others exactly what it says and not be embarrassed or ashamed for what it says, even when it goes against our precious traditions or opinions. If it speaks about the judgment of Hell, then tell the truth. If it warns against sin, then speak the truth about those sins. Don’t get in the mold of worrying about offending people with Bible truths. Just tell them the truth, starting with the matter of salvation.

Scriptures are not to be taken out of context to prove something the Bible does not teach. Any verse taken out of context can be used to promote false teaching. The Bible should be studied in the context of its passage. This requires time, study, and hard work, but this is Paul’s challenge to all Christians, not just preachers.

* 2 Timothy 2:15- Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The words “rightly dividing” are from the Greek word orthotomeo {or-thot-om-eh’-o} which means “to cut straight, to proceed on straight paths or hold a straight course, to doing right, to handle aright, to teach the truth directly and correctly.” We are to study or do our very best to share the truth of the Bible without deviation. It is to be presented straight, and undiluted. We first of all are to get it straight and then give it straight to others.

If we are going to reach others, then our life needs to be characterized by a renunciation of dishonesty, a rejection of deception, the refusal to distort the Scripture’s message, and last of all, the reach for the disposition and conscience of men.

D. The Reach for the Disposition and Conscience of Men: “...but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

By the open statement of the truth we are to commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. We are to try to reach the hearts and minds of people. Our conscience is that faculty of the mind which distinguishes between right and wrong, and which prompts us to choose what is right and avoid that which is wrong. We are to speak the truth so that every man’s conscience shall approve the Bible as truth and know what we are saying is right. This is why we are to flush any kind of dishonesty from our lives so as to not distract
others from the truth by our inconsistencies.

Men may not love God’s truth, but they may see that it is true. Men are capable of seeing the truth, and even when they do not love it, they can perceive that it has demonstrated that it is from God by its prophecies that have already been fulfilled and its power to change men’s lives. The world may hate the truths of Scripture, but people may see that the truths which condemn their practices are from Heaven.

If we are to share God’s truth, then we must know it. This is why it is vital that we read and study God’s Word.

* 1 Peter 2:2- As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

We have seen so far our responsibility for ministry and the rudiments of our ministry with others in verses one and two. We will direct our attention now to the restraint of Satan.

III. THE RESTRAINT OF SATAN  4:3-4

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: [4] In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Every Christian needs to understand that Satan is opposing his ministry with others. He is in the concealment business. The Gospel is hid or veiled to those who are “lost.” This word is from the Greek word apollumi (ap-ol'-loo-mee) which means “destroyed, to put out of the way entirely, rendered useless, to be in the process of being ruined, corrupted, and put to death.” The lost are in the process of being ruined and spiritually destroyed unless they turn to Christ. They are lost to virtue, to piety, to happiness, to hope, to God’s salvation.

Men without Christ have turned away from God and are traveling in the opposite direction along the road that leads to perdition. Therefore the unsaved person cannot see God, nor the things of God. His face and eyes are not turned toward the Gospel, but toward the world that perishes. This is not the fault of the Gospel. It is not the fault of the sun where men shut their eyes and will not see the light of day. It is not the fault of a running stream, or a bubbling fountain, if men will not drink of it, but rather choose to die of thirst. The Gospel does not obscure and conceal its own glory any more than the sun does. It is in itself a clear and full revelation of God and His wonderful grace, and that glory is adapted to
shed light upon the benighted minds of men.

Satan has spiritually blinded those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. The question is, “How does he do this? How does he blind the minds of men?”

* How Does Satan Blind the Minds of Men?

1. The Focus Upon One’s Own Beliefs

Some people will not turn to Christ because they have their own concepts about God and Heaven.

* Romans 1:21-22... Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. [22] Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

2. The Frivolity and Flaming Passion of the Flesh

Billy Sunday said, “This Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book,” referring to the Bible. Men are blinded by their love for their sin.

* Mark 4:19- And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

* Psalm 52:3- Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.

* Jeremiah 14:10- Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them: he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

3. Fables and Foolish Philosophies of the World

People are blinded by anti-God philosophies that are promoted through such teachings as Humanism and Evolution, which leave God out of the equation of creation and the need of His saving grace. God’s authority for salvation is rejected because God is not even acknowledged.

* 2 Timothy 4:4- And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

* 1 Timothy 1:4- Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.


People are blinded by idolatry. They believe in a god, but not the true and only God. In their idolatry, they feel they have security, but in reality, they are left in obscurity to the truth and lack the purity that
comes from Christ’s forgiveness and cleansing.
* Romans 1:23- And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.
* Psalm 106:36- And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

5. The Flurries or Distractions of Daily Living
Folks are also blinded by the distractions of their lives. They are so busy and going so fast that they fail to see their need for the Lord or listen to what He has to say to them.
* Matthew 13:22- He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

6. Finances
Men and women are spiritually blinded by their love for money and possessions. They feel they cannot have these things if they turn to Christ, which is not true. Money is a god to some individuals. Notice the middle portion of Matthew 13:22 again.
* Matthew 13:22b - He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word;..... and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word,.....
* 1 Timothy 6:10a- For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, ....
* Proverbs 1:32- For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

7. Friction toward God
Because of trouble or traumatic times, people vent their anger toward the Lord, blame Him for their pain, and will not give Him the time of day. Their bitterness toward God has become a barrier to learning the truth and accepting His love because their heart has become hardened.
* Proverbs 28:14- Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.
* Hebrews 4:7b-.... To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Satan is the god of this age that blinds men’s hearts. The name "god" here is given to him, not because he has any divine attributes, but because he actually has the homage of the men of this world as their god, as the being who is really worshiped, or who has the affections of their hearts in the same way as it is given to idols. By "this world" is meant
the wicked world or the mass of men. He has dominion over the world. They obey his will; they execute his plans; they further his purposes, and they are his obedient subjects.

We have seen so far our responsibility for ministry and the rudiments of our ministry with others in verses one and two. In verses three and four we examined the restraint of Satan. Now we will focus on the regard for the Lord.

IV. THE REGARD FOR THE LORD  4:5
For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

The focus of our life should be not ourselves, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is to be exalted in our lives. We are to have a servant attitude toward Him. When you lift up Christ, you are ministering to others. Some may not listen to what you are saying, but you are still serving Him.

There has been no church amongst the Kurds of Northern Iraq in recent history. In the 1920's and 1930's there was intense missionary work, many seeds were sown, and a price was paid: a missionary and his daughter were killed by locals in Dohouk.

After the war with Iraq, when the Kurds were being pushed out by Saddam Hussein, Christian agencies offered them food and shelter. The Kurds were amazed that help came from Christians and not people from their own religion. None of this work or sacrifice has been in vain. There are now small groups of Kurdish Christians in northern Iraq. The church has been born in this region.

One convert was Mansour Hussein. He was born in Baghdad in 1954, into a Muslim Kurdish family. As a young man he became a Communist and rejected all belief in God. In January, 1996, Mansour became a believer in Christ, mainly through the witness of another believer in Arbil. A few months later he began to work in a small Christian bookshop. Mansour was very active in teaching others the truth he had found in Christ. Not surprisingly, he and his Christian friend often received threats.

On the morning of April 21, 1996, his friend walked into the bookshop and saw Mansour lying on the floor. Blood was flowing from his head. On the floor beside the body was Mansour's personal pocket New Testament. It appears that Mansour was cleaning the floor of the
shop when someone came to return this book. As Mansour went to get the record of loaned books, the visitor shot him in the head with a pistol equipped with a silencer. The police realized he was killed by an extreme Moslem group. The impact of his life, however, continues to live on. He exalted Christ by his life and his death.

V. THE RADIANCE OF CHRIST IN OUR LIFE 4:6

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The light of God’s creation has made us new creations in Christ. The presence of Christ, the Light of the world, shines in our heart enabling us to understand and know Him. This was Paul’s desire and should be ours too.

* Philippians 3:10- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

The more we know the Lord, the greater will be our fellowship with Him and ministry with others. Don’t throw your life away. Make your life count for Christ!
Chapter 9
Treasure in Cracked Pots
2 Corinthians 4:7-12

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. [8] We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; [9] Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; [10] Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. [11] For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. [12] So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

There are many people who go through life feeling unimportant, unnecessary, unnoticed, unproductive, and unsuccessful. They feel that their life has no meaning at all and may feel, “What is the purpose for living?” Can you relate to these folks or have you encountered them? Unfortunately, there are some Christians that have adopted these attitudes. In this section of 2 Corinthians, Paul reveals to us phenomenal, powerful truths. He clarifies the fact that Christians may be like clay pots that are cracked or chipped, but they have within them a valuable treasure that gives their life great importance, necessity, productivity, and purpose.

When God made you, beloved, He did not waste His time or the dust of the earth. If you have put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you have been entrusted with the Lord’s treasure. That seems pretty important to me. In this passage we will look at the treasure and how it affects our lives and our purpose for living. Paul will show us that no matter how difficult, discouraging, or distressful our lives may be, we do
not have to be defeated or down in the dumps. We have a treasure entrusted to us.

1. THE CONTENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN VESSEL 4:7

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

Craig Randall drives a garbage truck in Peabody, Massachusetts. In a garbage container one day, he noticed a Wendy's soft drink cup bearing a contest sticker. Having won a chicken sandwich the week before, Randall checked it, hoping for some french fries or a soft drink. Instead, he peeled a sticker worth $200,000 toward the construction of a new home, reports U.S. News and World Report (11/6/95). What we get out of life depends a lot on what we are looking for or recognizing the treasures and blessings we have right under our nose.

Paul says here that we have a treasure. What treasure? It refers back to the previous verse. Notice verse six.

* 2 Corinthians 4:6* - **For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

The treasure is the power of the Gospel and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may not recognize these things as valuable, but they are so precious and powerful that they changed the Roman empire. When a person puts his faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells that individual. It is through the help of the Holy Spirit that we are able to know Christ and learn more about Him.

* Romans 8:9-* - **But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**

* John 14:26-* - **But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.**

Paul compares us to earthen vessels. Earthen vessels or clay jars were the disposable containers of Bible days, so that their life spans were generally a few years at the most because they were so fragile and broke so easily. These clay jars were a part of everyday living as they were used for cooking, eating, drinking, and storing leftover food. They were used to store and transport water, olive oil, wine, grain, garbage, and even
family treasures.

These pots were called *ostraca*, which is from the Greek word for "pottery." These vessels were made of shells which are very brittle or clay that was fired in a kiln. No one took note of clay jars any more than we would of a plastic container. They were simply there for convenience. They were, in a way, "servants" to the ones who used them. It was no great tragedy when such vessels were broken. These jars were cheap and easy to replace.

Paul compares us to these simple clay pots that were many times chipped and cracked. When they were used, the focus was not on the clay pots, it was upon the splendor of what was within them, especially if the contents of the earthen vessels were treasures or delicious foods.

The content of the vessel gives it its value. For example, when I microwave a bowl of stew or chili, I don’t “Ooh” and “Aah” over the bowl, I am looking and smelling what is in it. God has entrusted the believer with the treasure of His truth about salvation. Our focus is not to be self glory, but on Him and what He has done for us on the cross. He has entrusted us with the treasure of the Gospel.

* 1 Timothy 1:11-According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.
* 1 Timothy 6:20- O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

The picture of the believer as a vessel is common in the Bible. The Bible emphasizes to us that we are to be a vessel that the Lord can use. We are to be clean, empty, and available for service.

* 2 Timothy 2:21- If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.
* 1 Thessalonians 4:4-That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

This is what I am looking for when I choose a bowl to cook my chili. Is it clean, empty, and in the cabinet even though it might have flaws, nicks, and chips in it? In fact, its imperfections show that it has most likely been used a lot. I’m not looking for Christmas china, I’m looking for a bowl that will get the job done for me. The Lord is looking for a useable vessel too. Let me ask, “Are you empty of yourself and your will? Is your life clean before the Lord? Are matters right with Him? Are you available to the Lord Jesus Christ?”
Some Christians use the excuse that the Lord cannot use them. They claim they have nothing to offer. Beloved, realize that the Lord has made you the way you are in order to do His will. He has a plan or task for you that is different from others. You responsibility is to find out from Him what He wants you to do with your life. Notice what the Lord stated to Ananias in Acts 9.

* Acts 9:15- But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: No Christian should ever complain to God because of his lack of abilities, because of his limitations or handicaps. The creation of your life was in the hands of the Lord. God wants you to accept yourself and be yourself.

* Psalm 139:13-16... For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. [14] I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. [15] My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. [16] Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

Why did the Lord entrust His treasure with earthen vessels? He did it so that we might have the joy of being used by Him and that we might depend on God’s power and strength, and not our own. Our suffering not only reveals our own weaknesses, but also the power, strength, and glory of God. God permits and controls our trials. The Lord uses our trials for His own glory. He uses us... weak, cracked, clay pots, so that He will get the glory for the great things that are done through us. He is teaching us that power is from Him and not from us. Missionary to China, J. Hudson Taylor used to say, “All God’s giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on Him being with them.”

Sometimes your medicine bottle has on it, "Shake well before using." That is what God has to do with some of His people. He has to shake them well before they are ever useable. He permits our clay pot to be knocked around by trouble so that some of the treasure within us will spill out and strengthen other people. Our Lord uses our trials to benefit the lives of people who are watching our life. When we respond to trouble and pain with calm, confidence, and a Christ-like attitude, then others are touched by our life. The treasure of God’s grace enables us to cope with our complications.
* 2 Corinthians 1:4- Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.
* 2 Corinthians 9:8- And God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: Because of God's grace working in our lives, we can have calm in our conflicts.

The Lord not only shakes us, sometimes He may break us. Like the expensive perfume that belonged to Mary, the fragrance of Christ inside of our heart cannot be experienced by others until it is poured out. Many times, God’s way of pouring is to crack or break the clay pot that holds His treasure. This is why He may allow trials and heartaches in our lives. Our “breaking process” draws us closer to Him. Christ’s power flows through our weakness. Notice verses eight and nine.

II. THE CALM IN OUR CONFLICTS  4:8-9

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; [9] Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

Christians have problems just like everyone else. In fact, there are times that our lives may be like a war zone. Such was the case with Paul. In fact, the terminology he uses in these verses speak of combat or wrestling with each one seeming to increase in intensity. Paul speaks of the conflicts we all face. We are pressured, perplexed, persecuted, and plummeted, yet we are still more than conquerors through Him who loved us. The supreme characteristic of the Christian is not that he does not fall, but that every time he falls he rises again. It is not that he is never beaten, but he is never ultimately defeated. He may lose a battle, but he knows that in the end he can never lose the war. Let’s look at each battle we face.

A. We are Pressured: Squeezed but not Squashed!

Paul said, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.” What does he mean, “We are troubled?” The word “troubled” is from the Greek word thlibo {thlee'-bo}. This word means “to be squeezed, compressed, pressured.” It was used to describe the crushing or pressing of grapes or to suffer tribulation. It was also used to describe the pressing of a crowd or a wrestler that would press against
his opponent. Paul was troubled on “every side” which means “in every imaginable way, place, and occasion.” He suffered from the pressure exerted by mean, caustic people.

Life is full of pressure that comes from finances, family, frustrations, fear, furious people, and fighting. Paul definitely had his fill of pressure.

* 2 Corinthians 7:5- For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

* 2 Corinthians 1:8-9.... For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: [9] But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

**There may be times that our trials pressure us to the point that we can’t bear any more problems.** We feel as if a heavy weight is crushing us, but then, God intervenes on our behalf and delivers us from our calamity. His grace, His power, and His presence sustains us. This is what happened to Paul. In spite of being surrounded by pressure and trouble, Paul confidently says that he was not “distressed.” This word is derived from the Greek word *stenochoreo* (sten-okh-o-reh’-o) which means “to be confined in a narrow, tight place with no way out, crushed, cramped, cramped, distressed or anguish.”

There may be times we are squeezed, but not squashed. We might be compressed, but not crushed. There are all kinds of pressure on us, but we are never in so tight a corner that there is no way out. It is characteristic of the Christian that, even if his body be confined in some difficult environment or some narrow circumstance, there is always an escape route for his spirit to the spaciousness of God. With Paul there was always the upward look. Even though he was hard pressed and cramped, he was not boxed in with no escape. He found emotional and spiritual freedom in Jesus Christ, even if he was imprisoned.

The nuclear submarine *Thresher* had heavy steel bulkheads and heavy steel armor, so it could dive deep and withstand the pressure of the ocean. Unfortunately, on a test run in 1963, the *Thresher’s* nuclear engine quit, and it could not get back to the surface. It sank deeper and deeper into the ocean. The pressure became immense. The heavy steel bulkheads buckled and the *Thresher* was crushed with 129 people inside. The Navy searched for the *Thresher* with a research craft that was much stronger
than submarines. It was shaped like a steel ball and was lowered into the ocean on a cable. They finally located the Thresher at a depth of 8,400 feet: one and a half miles down. It was crushed like an egg shell. That was not a surprise, for the pressure at that depth is tremendous—3,600 pounds per square inch.

What was surprising to the searchers was the fact that they saw fish at that great depth, and these fish did not have inches of steel to protect them. They appeared to have normal skin, a fraction of an inch thick. How can these fish survive under all that pressure? Why are they not crushed by the weight of the water? They have a secret. Their secret is that they have the same pressure inside themselves as they have on the outside.

Beloved the same principle applies to the Christian. The treasure of the presence of the Holy Spirit and His grace within us, enables us to cope with life and not be squashed when we are squeezed.

* 1 John 4:4- Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

When we are truly God-dependent, He will make a way for us in our wilderness. That is His promise to us. What a blessing! What a treasure!

* Psalm 32:8 - I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

* Isaiah 48:17- Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. {The word “profit” can also be translated “to benefit or set forward.”}

B. We are Perplexed: Confused but not Confounded

Paul continues to describe the conflicts we all face and says, "We are perplexed, but not in despair." What is he saying to us here? This word “perplexed” is from the Greek word aporeo {ap- or-eh'-o} which means “to be without resources; to be left wanting; to be embarrassed; to not know which way to turn or what to do; to hesitate or to be in doubt.” Paul admitted he faced these circumstances. There were evidently times he did not know what to do. He faced circumstances of great embarrassment, want, perplexity, and pressure by foes. We all have been in that boat!
We may be at our wit's end sometimes, but never at our hope's end. There are times when the Christian does not know what is to be done, but even then, he never doubts that something can be done. There are times when he cannot well see where life is going, but he never doubts that it is going somewhere. A man may be at his wit's end but he can never be at his hope's end while he has the presence of Christ. This is what Paul confirmed for us.

Paul said there were times when he was perplexed and bewildered, but he was not befuddled. He was not in despair. The word “despair” is from the Greek word *exaporeomai* {ex-ap-or-eh'-om-ahee} which means “to be utterly at loss; to be utterly destitute of measures or resources, to renounce all hope, to be in despair.” Paul was at a loss but not at a total loss. He was at his wit’s end, but there was still a way out; he was at the brink of defeat but not defeated. The apostle was destitute, but not utterly destitute. The wants of Paul were provided for; his embarrassments were removed; his grounds of perplexity were taken away; and unexpected strength and resources were imparted to him. He faced extreme difficulties, but was not without hope, confidence, and security because he found these strengths in the Lord who never failed him.

If you are full of doubt, hopeless, and insecure, then place your trust in the Lord and put your life in His caring hands. If you will let Him, He will never allow you to be overwhelmed by despair. This is why Paul was able to keep going forward for Christ in the face of overwhelming obstacles. He was left for dead outside the city of Lystra after being stoned, but the next day he went right back into the city again.

* Acts 14:19-20...And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. [20] Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Paul was perplexed at times, but not in despair. He kept his head and served the Lord as a good soldier of Christ.

* 2 Timothy 4:5-But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. This word “watch” is from the word *nepho* {nay'-fo} which means “to be calm and collected in spirit; to be sober and self-controlled.” We are to endure afflictions, hardships, trouble and fulfill the ministry the Lord has for us. We are to be cool and calm and place our hope in Him.
Many years ago, King George VI of England addressed the British commonwealth on New Year’s Eve at a moment in history when the whole world stood on the brink of uncertainty. Despondency and uncertainty filled the air. You could say it was a time of perplexity. The king’s own body was racked by cancer. Before that year was over, his life ended. Unaware of his own physical maladies, he uttered these memorable words: "I said to the man at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I might walk safely into the unknown.' And he said to me, 'Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God. It shall be to you safer than the light, and better than the known.' " Beloved, put your life in God’s hands.

C. We are Persecuted: Harassed but not Helpless

Paul addresses a third conflict that we may face, “We are persecuted, but not forsaken.” This word “persecuted” comes from the word *dioko* *(dee-o’-ko)* which means “to make to run or put to flight; to pursue in a hostile manner; to harass, mistreat, or persecute.” Paul was no stranger to people who were trying to harm him.

*Acts 9:23-24... And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: [24] But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.*

You may face the same problems of people harassing you or trying to destroy you with their tongues or hands. Hostilities today take many forms including *derision, defamation, denigration, denunciation, condemnation, confrontation, humiliation, inattention, incarceration, intimidation, isolation, imposition, and persecution.* In spite of the pain of persecution, Paul made it clear he was not “forsaken.” He was not abandoned, deserted, left behind or helpless.

One of the most notable things about martyrs is that it was amidst their sorest times that they had their sweetest times with Christ. As Joan of Arc said when she was abandoned by those who should have stood by her, "It is better to be alone with God. His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love. In His strength, I will dare and dare and dare until I die." God promises to never abandon us. God’s companionship and presence are always with the believer. Even during the dreadful agonies of death, He sustains the Christian with His comfort and grace.

*Hebrews 13:5- Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*
* Psalm 27:10- When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.
* Psalm 23:4- Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

What a treasure we have in the fact that as Christians, we are never alone or abandoned. Our Lord is ever with us. Aberra Wata worked with Christian youth in the southern part of Ethiopia during the time of Communist rule (1974-1991). He reported the following story to fellow missionary John Cumbers, who served in Ethiopia during the Communist years. Here is what Aberra reported:

Word came from the commandant that the Party leaders had studied my report about the work among the Christian young people. The authorities decided I had to be executed because of my "treasonous" words. "The only way you can overturn this sentence," said the commandant, "is for you to deny that you are one of the believers." What could I say? I told the commandant, "If they execute me, I will be immediately with the Lord." The commandant replied, "That's what I expected you to say."

As I awaited execution in prison, my Savior gave me songs to sing I had never heard before. He turned me into a composer. [My fellow prisoners and I] reveled in the joys of praise to our God. The guards kept trying to silence us, but with the threat of execution hanging over us, why should we keep quiet? Seven men had come to Christ in that prison, and we all sang together. One particular guard took delight in mocking us, yelling at us, and insulting us. He would put filthy words to the tunes we sang. One night he patted his revolver and promised, "Tomorrow morning at this time you won't be in the land of the living."

Just after midnight that evening a tremendous storm burst on the town and the prison. Huge hailstones fell, wrecking several roofs, including the one where the insulting guard was sleeping. He became terrified, pulled out his revolver, and shot at random into the darkness, using up all the bullets he had promised would finish us off the next day.

One by one the roofs were taken off the commandant's house and the offices of the chief judge, the administrator, and his deputy. The prisoners in cells three, four, and five got a soaking from the rain too. We were in cell one and were kept dry. There were a lot of wet and unhappy people in Yavello that night.
At nine o'clock the next morning, while expecting the cruel guard to fulfill his promise to shoot us, we observed a remarkable sight. That same guard was pushed into our cell, without his uniform, by the commandant, who was whipping him with his belt. Other people in the background were yelling, "We told this man to leave the believers alone, but he refused, and so God has sent this terrible punishment on the town and prison. He deserves to be given some of his own medicine."

After some time the guard was released and given back his uniform. He told us, "I know that the Lord was with you. I know the way I should have treated you, but Satan persuaded me otherwise. Please forgive me." We did, and several more men trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior in the prison. Beloved, God cares for us in His own way. He will not abandon us, even in death.

At this point, we have examined three forms of conflicts that Christians may face.

* We are Pressured: Squeezed but not Squashed!
* We are Perplexed: Confused but not Confounded!
* We are Persecuted: Harassed but not Helpless!
* Next, we are Plummeted: Knocked down but not Knocked Out!

D. We are Plummeted: Knocked Down but Not Knocked Out!

Paul said, "Cast down, but not destroyed." The words "cast down" were used to describe the activities of gladiators or wrestlers. It is from the word kataballo {kat-ab-al'-lo} which means "to cast down or throw to the ground." The allusion is to combat or wrestling. Paul was not only persecuted or pursued by his enemies, but actually overtaken by them. He was cast to the ground, but not killed or destroyed. He was knocked down over and again, but not knocked out.

When his enemies seemed to have him in their power, God delivered Paul and strengthened him to get back up. This occurred so often, and in cases so extreme, as to make it obvious that the power of God was exerted on his behalf. No man from his own resources could have endured or escaped so much. Even though he was imprisoned in Jerusalem, Philippi, Caesarea, or Rome, he learned to be content. When he was beaten, he sang and praised God. When imprisoned, he won prisoners and guards to Christ. When he was driven out of town, he entered another one. He may have been knocked down, but this guy was not knocked out!
Paul has painted a picture of a wrestler who is first, hard pressed, then hemmed in, then pursued, then actually thrown down. This did not happen just once in a while. Instead, his life was like that of the Lord's, an uninterrupted succession of indignities and suffering. In spite of the weaknesses he faced, God strengthened Paul.

We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. The God of the man is glorified, not the man of God. It wasn't that Paul in each case reached down into his soul, sucked it up, and became Super Christian. It was never his strength. It was God's. The apostle's weakness was the occasion and opportunity for God's power to be given and demonstrated. Paul remained a cracked, earthen vessel, but his crumbling flesh allowed the power of God to shine through him.

You may be knocked down right now, but you are not knocked out. Get back up! You have the energy of the Creator of the universe to energize, encourage, and excite you. Don't make excuses looking for reasons why you cannot obey the Lord or do His will. Instead, look for a way to fulfill the purpose of your life and God's plan for you.

I think of the woman who emigrated from Mexico to the United States with her husband and children. On their way to "paradise," at the border in El Paso, Texas, her husband deserted her, leaving her stranded with the children. A divorcee, twenty-two years of age with two kids, she was poverty-stricken. She was knocked down but not knocked out. With the few dollars in her pocket, she bought bus tickets to California. There she was sure she could find work. She did find a job -- an awful job, working from midnight until six o'clock in the morning, making tacos. She earned only a few dollars, but she ate meagerly and saved a dime from every dollar she earned.

Why did she save? She saved because she was visualizing a dream. She wanted to own a taco shop. One day she took the few dollars she'd managed to save, went to a banker, and said, "There's a little place I'd like to buy. If you'd loan me a few thousand dollars, I can have my own taco shop."

The banker, impressed by her, decided to take a chance and loaned her the money. She was twenty-five years old and the owner of a little taco shop. She worked hard at it, and eventually, she expanded and expanded until, fifteen years later, she had the largest wholesale business of Mexican products in America. She went on to become the treasurer of the United States. Her name is Ramona Banuelos. Beloved, God wants
us to have the same kind of persistence and determination when it comes to living for Him. Make up your mind to live for Christ and watch what He will do for you. You are a cracked pot entrusted with a great treasure. You have a purpose and reason for living.

* Romans 8:36-37... As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Things were pretty rough for Paul, but he does not make excuses. Notice his positive attitude, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

We have seen so far...

* The Contents in Christian Vessels (vs.7)
* The Calm in our Conflicts (vss. 8-9)
* Next, the Clarity of Christ in our Sufferings (vss.10-11)

III. THE CLARITY OF CHRIST IN OUR SUFFERINGS  4:10-11

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. [11] For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Paul continues to remind us of the fragileness of our earthen vessel. He was constantly in danger of dying in the same violent way Jesus was put to death. He said he was “bearing about” in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. These words are from the Greek word periphero {per-ee-fer'-o}. This word occurs in two other verses in the New Testament.

* Mark 6:55- And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.
* Ephesians 4:14- That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Periphero means “to carry around.” It does not mean that Paul was a pallbearer who carried the body of Jesus to the tomb. No, he meant that he always, in season and out of season, proclaimed Jesus’ death. The sacrifice and suffering of Christ were ever with him. He did not forget what the Lord did for him. At the same time, Paul demonstrates his willingness to suffer physically for his Lord. The apostle’s scars were convincing proof of his suffering.
The word “dying” is not the usual word that Paul used for “death” which was the word thanatos. Thanatos speaks of death as a fact or an event. Paul uses a different word here. It is the word necrosis {nek'-ro-sis} which describes the “process of dying.” Paul constantly faced death, which led him to write, “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). He knew well what it was to deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow the Lord. To be what the Lord wanted him to be and do what He wanted him to do, Paul had to come to a point where he died to “self” and was willing to lay down his life for the Savior. The scars on his beaten body attested to the fact of his willingness and obedience.

* Galatians 6:17- From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

The Bible challenges us over and again to die to self.

* Galatians 2:20- I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

* Luke 9:24- For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

* Romans 6:11- Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

* Galatians 5:24- And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

* Philippians 3:8- Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

The suffering we encounter for Christ and dying to our self is for the purpose of others being able to see the life of Jesus Christ in us. Christ is to be manifested and magnified in our body. Paul could go through suffering and trials because he knew that they were not a waste or futile drain on his life. He knew that his pain was for the purpose of bringing others to Christ. When a man has the conviction that what is happening to him is happening literally for Christ's sake he can face just about anything.

*Colossians 1:24- Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:
IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR CONFLICTS  4:12

So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

We are exposed to death just as Paul. The preaching of the Gospel exposes us to trials which may be regarded as death working in us. Paul lived in the face of death so that those he tried to reach for Christ would have eternal life by trusting in Christ.

Jesus did the same thing for us. He died that we might live. Our Lord gave His life for ours. Those who are used most to spread the good news of Christ embrace death as the operational principle of ministry. When George Muller, pastor and provider for thousands of children, was asked his secret, he hung his head and said, “There was a day when I died.” Then he hung it lower and said, “Died to George Mueller.” Mueller understood the concept of John 12.

* John 12:24-26... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. [25] He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. [26] If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Paul said, “Death works in us, but life in you.” Those who were saved “lived” because Paul was constantly exposed to death. Others reaped the advantage of his suffering and trials. His dying to self was for the good of others.

* 2 Corinthians 4:15- For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

The same truth applies to us. The sacrifices you make for Christ, the suffering you may endure for Christ’s sake, are for the benefit of reaching others for Him. They are benefitted by being saved and by growing in spiritual maturity and their knowledge of Jesus Christ.

As fragile, cracked pots, the Lord can take the treasure of eternal life and the Gospel that He has entrusted to us and use us to change the lives of people who do not know Him. Clay pots that know they are fragile and are dependent upon God’s power, will be used by the Lord and He will be glorified by what is accomplished. Beloved, any power that you have in your life is not from your pursuit of power, it is from yielding to Him. Are you yielded to Christ? Do you realize that you are just a cracked pot that has a wonderful treasure entrusted to you?
Chapter 10
Seeing Him Who is Invisible
2 Corinthians 4:13-18

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; [14] Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. [15] For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. [16] For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. [17] For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; [18] While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The first dozen verses of the fourth chapter reveal to us that we have treasure that has been entrusted to us, even though we are earthen vessels or cracked pots. Though knocked down, we are not knocked out. Though pressed, we are not pinned. In spite of our suffering, Christ is manifested in our life for the purpose of reaching others with the Gospel. This is the ultimate purpose of the life of the Christian. It’s not to be number one, not to be the greatest, not to be the richest, not to be the most popular, not to be the most beautiful or the strongest, it is to glorify God and point others to the Altogether Lovely One, the Lord Jesus Christ so they might put their faith in Him.

If we are going through trials, how do we keep our sanity and serenity when we are suffering? How did Paul do this? The answer is by seeing Him who is invisible. It is by having eyes of faith that are firmly focused on our fantastic Savior. We are confronted with invisible things every day. The wind, air, smell, bacteria, sound, atoms, or thoughts are
all invisible to the naked eye, yet we see the impact they have on us and others. Though invisible, the things that God has made point to His power and glory.

* Romans 1:20- For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

We cannot see the Lord right now, but we see the impact He is making in our own life and in the lives of other Christians.

* Colossians 1:15- Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

* 1 Timothy 1:17- Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Moses endured the severe trials he faced by having eyes of faith, by seeing Him who is invisible.

* Hebrews 11:27- By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

This is the theme of this section of 2 Corinthians. Paul’s message is a challenge for us to endure our troubles, trials, testings, tribulations, and trauma by seeing Him who is invisible. This is what faith is all about.

* Hebrews 11:1- Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

* Hebrews 11:6- But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a recharger of them that diligently seek him.

We will address several thoughts in this portion of 2 Corinthians that deal with the issue of “Seeing Him who is Invisible.”

* The Reason for Steadfastness ...vs. 13
* The Resurrection in Sight ....vs. 14
* The Reason for Suffering ....vs. 15
* The Rejection of Stopping or Quitting.... vs.16a
* The Revival or Renewal of our Strength .... vs. 16b
* The Results or Ramifications of our Sufferings .... vs. 17
* The Regard for Spiritual, Eternal Matters .... vs. 18
I. THE REASON FOR STEADFASTNESS  4:13

*We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;*

A biography of Thomas Edison was written by his son. What an amazing man he was! Thanks to the genius of Thomas Edison, we enjoy the microphone, the phonograph, the incandescent light, the storage battery, talking movies and more than a thousand other inventions. But beyond all that, Edison was a man who refused to be discouraged or overwhelmed by his circumstances. His contagious optimism affected all those around him.

His son recalled a freezing, December night in 1914. Unfruitful experiments on the nickel-iron-alkaline storage battery, a 10-year project, had put Edison on a financial tightrope. He was still solvent only because of profits from movie and record productions. On that December evening, the cry "Fire!" echoed through the plant. Spontaneous combustion had broken out in the film room. Within minutes, all the packing compounds, celluloid for records and film, and other flammable goods were burning. Fire companies from eight surrounding towns arrived, but the heat was so intense, and the water pressure was so low, that attempts to douse the flames were futile. Everything was being destroyed.

When he couldn't find his father, the son became concerned. Was he safe? With all his assets being destroyed, would his spirit be broken? Soon he saw his father in the plant yard running toward him. "Where's Mom?" shouted the inventor. "Go get her, son! Tell her to hurry up and bring her friends! They'll never see a fire like this again!" Early the next morning, long before dawn, with the fire barely under control, Edison called his employees together and made an incredible announcement. "We're rebuilding!" He told one man to lease all the machine shops in the area. He told another to obtain a wrecking crane from the Erie Railroad Company. Then, almost as an afterthought, he added, "Oh, by the way, does anybody know where we can get some money?"

Later, he explained, "We can always make capital out of a disaster. We've just cleared out a bunch of old rubbish. We'll build bigger and better on the ruins." Shortly after that, he yawned, rolled up his coat for a pillow, curled up on a table and immediately fell asleep.

This story illustrates the same kind of resolve and confidence that the Apostle Paul had in the Lord and the type of fortitude we are to have
in our own life. In spite of his troubles, trials, and tribulations, Paul continued to preach the Word because he had the same kind of faith that the psalmist had. Just as the psalmist, Paul believed in God and he spoke up about it. He could not keep his mouth shut about the Lord. Paul remained true to his convictions and boldly preached what he knew to be true. The fire of God’s Word burned in his soul, just like the heart of Jeremiah.

*K Jeremiah 20:9 - Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.*

Your faith and trust in the Lord will help you to see Him who is invisible and remain steadfast when you are struggling or stressed to the limit. Faith sees God’s hand of blessing when others are blinded by the smoke from the flames of their trials. Faith in the Lord finds comfort in the midst of conflict and overwhelming circumstances. Faith in Christ defies the muzzle that society wants to put on the mouth of the believer. This wicked world endeavors to suppress the Scriptures, restrain righteousness, censor the very name of Christ, and fetter faith in the Son of God. Seeing Him who is invisible strengthens the Christian to confidently overcome the intimidation of the indecent, and unashamedly share with others the wonders of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

*Romans 1:15- So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*

*1 Corinthians 9:16- For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

True belief impels strong, consistent, unwavering testimony to the truth. On trial for his faith in Christ before the Diet of Worms, it was Martin Luther who defiantly declared, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God. Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds and reasoning, then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against my conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen.”

Do you believe in the Lord? Then have you spoken? Have you openly and unashamedly declared to others your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, why not? The challenge of the Scriptures is to speak up!
* Psalm 25:2- O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.
* Romans 10:11- For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.
* 1 Peter 4:16- Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God on this behalf.
* 1 John 2:28 -And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. Have you been muzzled by the intimidation of society?

II. THE RESURRECTION IN SIGHT  4:14

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Paul knew that God the Father raised up Jesus and He will also raise us up too. The fact of the resurrection keeps us going and gives us hope. When we physically die, we will be resurrected in Christ. The resurrection is the backbone of the Christian faith. It is the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence of Christianity. It is our Rock of Gibraltar and the Waterloo of Infidelity, Liberalism, and Atheism. The sign of Christianity is not the Cross, but the empty tomb. From Genesis to Revelation, the death knell sounds. You and I have an appointment with death. Because of the resurrection, the sting has been taken out of death.

* 1 Corinthians 15:55,57- O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians have the only living originator of faith. Buddha is dead; Brahma (Hinduism) is dead; Mohammed (Islam) is dead; Marx (Communism) is dead. They are all DEAD! We serve a living Savior and this gives us hope. It is our hope and reason for peace and joy. The resurrection removes the mystery of death and what is beyond. It flushes the fear of the unknown because the resurrection enables us to see Him who is invisible. The Lord has given us a small glimpse of what is beyond our earthly shore.

A few hours before Dwight L. Moody died, he caught a glimpse of the glory awaiting him. Awakening from a sleep, he said, "Earth recedes, heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go!" His son who was standing by
his bedside said, "No, no father, you are dreaming."  "No," said Mr. Moody, "I am not dreaming; I have been within the gates; I have seen the children's faces."  A short time elapsed and then what seemed to the family to be the death struggle, Moody spoke again: "This is my triumph; this my coronation day! It is glorious!" Moody rejoiced and was at peace at the hour of his death because he saw Him who was invisible. The whole fabric of Christianity rests upon Christ's resurrection.

* The Resurrection of Christ
* It is the foundation to faith in Christ.
* Romans 10:9,10- That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
* Romans 4:25-Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Justification deals with our standing before God. It means "JUST-AS-IF-I" never sinned. Christ paid for the sins of the world with His death on the cross. With the sin debt paid, it freed God to forgive those who sought God's forgiveness by faith and trust in the provision of Jesus Christ. The resurrection shows God the Father's acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice. Because Christ lives, God can credit the provided righteousness of Christ to the spiritual account of every person who responds by faith to that offer. Justification is by faith in Christ, not our works.

* It is the Focal point of the Gospel.
* 1 Corinthians 15:3,4... For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:
* It is the Fountain of our joy and hope of future reunion with Christ and saved loved ones.
* 1 Thessalonians 4:13,14... But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Winston Churchill chose to believe in the Lord. Churchill arranged his own funeral. There were stately hymns in St. Paul's Cathedral and an impressive liturgy. But at the end of the service, Churchill had an unusual
event planned. When they said the benediction, a bugler high in the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral on one side played Taps, the universal signal that the day is over. There was a long pause. Then a bugler on the other side played Reveille, the military wake-up call.

It was Churchill’s way of communicating that, while we say "Good night" here, it’s "Good morning" up there. Now why could he do that? The answer is, “He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who said ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me though he were dead, yet shall he live.’”

* 1 John 3:2- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

* It is the Force for holy living.

* Romans 6:4-6… Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: [6] Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

* It is the Footing of our assurance and security in Christ.

* Romans 8:33-34….. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. [34] Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

If the Resurrection is not true, the martyrs who died singing to lions that crushed them with their teeth, and the missionaries who gave their lives in the jungles of Ecuador or the Congo were poor, deluded fools. Notice what Paul said in the first letter to the Corinthians. They threw away their lives.

* 1 Corinthians 15:12-19…. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: [14] And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. [15] Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. [16] For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: [17] And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. [18] Then they also which are fallen asleep
in Christ are perished. [19] If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Paul made it clear that if there were no resurrection, then Jesus is dead, and our faith and preaching are useless. We would be liars and still guilty in our sins. Those who have died believing in the Lord have perished forever. If our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are to be pitied more than anyone else in the world.

There is no reason for us to be pitied, however, for we serve a LIVING savior. The resurrection enables us to see Him who is invisible. The hope and truth of the resurrection gave peace to John and Betty Stam. As John and Betty Stam, early missionaries to China, were led to certain execution by their communist captors, someone asked, "Where are you going?" His reply was, "I don’t know where the guards are going, but we are going to Heaven." Shortly thereafter, the communist soldiers beheaded John and Betty in the streets of the city. They saw Him who was invisible and now are in His presence.

Beloved, we will be physically resurrected after we die. We are resurrected another way figuratively speaking. When you die to yourself and invest your life in others, helping and loving them, you will be resurrected in their lives. As your life touches the lives of others, in a way you are resurrected in them. The life of a teacher is resurrected in his or her students. The life of a pastor is resurrected in his church family. The lives of parents are resurrected in their children. Invest your life into the lives of others. Find passion and a purpose for living by seeing Him who is invisible.

III. THE REASON FOR THE ENDURANCE OF SUFFERING 4:15

For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

Paul reveals the reason he endured the suffering he encountered. There were two things he mentioned here.

A. The Reception of Grace for Believers: “For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many...”

Paul endured suffering so that the lost might be saved by God’s wonderful grace and that these believers would grow in the
grace and knowledge of the Lord.

* 2 Peter 3:18- But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Those who came to Christ would bring glory and praise to God. This is the second reason for the endurance of suffering.

B. The Reception of Glory for God: "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

Paul saw Him who was invisible. It was his desire that the Lord Jesus be glorified by his life and the lives of other believers. This was a key reason why he endured the suffering he encountered. He desired that people be grateful to the Lord and that thanksgiving would "redound" to God's glory. This word "redound" is from the Greek word perisseuo (per-is-syoo'-o) which means "to exceed a fixed number of measure, to be left over and above a certain number; to overflow." It was used to describe a flower that went from a bud to full bloom. It was the same word that was used to describe the leftovers of the little boy's lunch after Jesus fed the multitudes.

* Matthew 14:20- And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

Paul's challenge to us was to bring glory to the Lord and not be cheap with our praise. It was his desire that God be abundantly glorified.

* 1 Corinthians 10:31- Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

* Philippians 2:11- And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We have seen so far....

* The Reason for Steadfastness ...vs. 13
* The Resurrection in Sight ....vs. 14
* The Reason for Suffering ....vs. 15
* Next, the Rejection of Stopping or Quitting....vs.16a
IV. THE REJECTION OF STOPPING OR QUITTING 4:16a
For which cause we faint not;....

In his old age, Pierre Auguste Renoir, the great French painter, suffered from severe rheumatoid arthritis, which twisted and cramped his hand. Henri Matise, his friend who was also an artist, watched sadly while Renoir, grasping a brush with only his fingertips, continued to paint, even though each movement caused stabbing, excruciating pain. One day, Matise asked Renoir why he persisted in painting at the expense of such torture and suffering. Renoir replied, "The pain passes, but the beauty remains."

Such was the case with Paul. The pain of suffering passed but the beauty of the salvation of the lost and their praise for God motivated Paul to be steadfast in his service for Christ. This is the "cause" he is referring to in this passage. Paul said, "We faint not." We are not utterly spiritless. We are not in despair and are not giving up. To the Galatian Christians he said, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Galatians 6:9) Beloved, being faithful not only involves starting well, but also ending well. We are to cross our finish line for Christ going full speed. This is what Paul did with his life. He did not fade in the final stretch of his life.

* 2 Timothy 4:7- I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Suffering, strain, and stress, tend to bring people to the end of their rope and bring them to a point of quitting or throwing in the towel. Perhaps, you have been there. Such was not the case with Paul. Paul saw Him who was invisible and it kept him from quitting. His eyes were on the Lord and ought to be where we focus our eyes too.

* Hebrews 12:2a- Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;....

The word "looking" is an interesting word. It is from the Greek word aphorao {af-or-ah'-o} which means "to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on something." The idea here is we are not to be distracted from keeping our focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what is taking place in our life. We are citizens of Heaven and are to be looking for His return.

* Philippians 3:20- For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:
Margaret Sangster Phippen wrote that in the mid 1950's, her father, British minister W. E. Sangster, began to notice some uneasiness in his throat and a dragging in his leg. When he went to the doctor, he found that he had an incurable disease that caused progressive muscular atrophy. His muscles would gradually waste away, his voice would fail, his throat would soon become unable to swallow.

Sangster threw himself into his work in British home missions, figuring he could still write and he would have even more time for prayer. "Let me stay in the struggle Lord," he pleaded. "I don't mind if I can no longer be a general, but give me just a regiment to lead." He wrote articles and books, and helped organize prayer cells throughout England. "I'm only in the kindergarten of suffering," he told people who pitied him.

Gradually Sangster's legs became useless. His voice went completely, but he could still hold a pen, shakily. On Easter morning, just a few weeks before he died, he wrote a letter to his daughter. In it, he said, "It is terrible to wake up on Easter morning and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!'--but it would be still more terrible to have a voice and not want to shout."

Beloved, let me ask, "Do you have a voice, but have lost the desire to shout and praise the Lord?" Don't be in despair. Don't let fatigue, pain, or criticism force you off the job. Renew your commitment to serving Christ. Don't forsake your eternal reward because of the intensity of today's pain. Don't quit and give up on God. Your very weakness allows the resurrection power of Christ to strengthen you moment by moment. See Him who is invisible just like this missionary.

V. THE REVIVAL OR RENEWAL OF OUR STRENGTH  4:16b
"... but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

Our "outward man" or our body is slowly consumed by everyday life. The trials, afflictions, disappointments, defeats, setbacks, pressure and persecution take their toll on us physically. They are like sandpaper that wear us down. They cause us to "perish." This word is from the Greek word *diaphtheiro* {dee-af-thi'-ro} which means "to change for the worse, to ruin, to destroy, to consume bodily strength." It was the same word that was used to describe a moth that consumes clothing. Physically we may be wearing down, but inwardly we are being renewed day by day through the person of the
Holy Spirit.

Our soul, our inward man, that which cannot be felt or seen by others, is renewed and revived by the Lord, so that we grow more holy, more happy, and more like Christ each day as we yield to Him. The Spirit of God is in the reviving business. The strength that we receive from the Holy Spirit enables us to see Him who is invisible.

*Lamentations 3:22-23... It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. [23] They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

* Isaiah 40:31- But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

How are we revived or renewed? The Bible provides some answers.

* Elements of Renewal

1. The Removal of Sin
* Psalms 51:10- Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
* Ezekiel 18:31- Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

2. The Reception of the Savior
* 2 Corinthians 5:17- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
* Titus 3:5- Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

3. The Response of Submission
* 1 Peter 1:14- As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: We are not to slip back into the old, sinful lifestyle to satisfy our carnal cravings. Instead, we are to be obedient to the Lord.

4. The Renovation of the Spirit of Your Mind
There is a need for a change in attitude and thinking. It is the Lord that helps us in this area.

* Ephesians 4:23-And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
* Romans 12:2- And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
5. The Reconstruction of the Spirit of God in our Life.

The Spirit of God changes a man when he puts his faith in the Lord.
* Philippians 2:13- For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.
* Philippians 1:6-Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:
* 1 Samuel 10:6- And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

VI. THE RESULTS & RAMIFICATIONS OF OUR SUFFERING 4:17

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:

Paul refers to his trials as "light afflictions." This word "affliction" is from the word *thlipsis* {thlip'-sis} which means "a pressing together, pressure, oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress." He considered his distress and tribulations as light. He adds that they are for a moment. They pass quickly and leave little impression.

Earlier, when Paul began this letter, he stated that the “affliction” he had experienced in Asia had left him “pressed or weighed down beyond measure” (2 Corinthians 1:8). The weight of his affliction was real and, in fact, almost killed him. However, here in this verse, Paul minimizes the deadly weight of affliction he had experienced in Asia. Instead of the weight of affliction, there is now the “weight of glory.” For Paul, the affliction which once felt like a lethal weight around his neck now seems weightless in comparison to his eternal load of glory. The apostle had a positive outlook about his afflictions because he saw Him who is invisible.

Beloved, our troubles should not diminish our faith or disillusion us. We should realize that there is a purpose in our suffering. Paul said that our trials and troubles work for us. They produce eternal glory beyond comparison and maturity in our life.
* James 1:3-4... Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. [4] But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

How does this happen? How do our trials produce eternal glory and maturity for us?
* How do Our Trials Produce Glory and Maturity?

1. **By preventing pride** from gripping our heart. Problems have a humiliating effect on people.

2. **By purifying our heart,** enabling us to break off from the sins for which God afflicts us.
   * Isaiah 48:10- Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

3. **By proving our faith** to other people. The trial is a test for us and an opportunity for others to view what we will do and how we will respond to it. For some people, they will not listen to what you have to say until you are or have been in the fire of adversity. King Nebuchadnezzar did not listen to the three Hebrews until they came out of the fiery furnace.

4. **By pointing to the power of God** which is demonstrated in our ordeal. Our troubles are God’s opportunity to show Himself strong.
   * 2 Chronicles 16:9- For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

5. **By our panting** and dependence upon the Lord for strength and help. Dependence upon the Lord develops trust and intimacy with Him.
   * Psalm 56:3- What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.
   * Psalm 56:11- In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

6. **By our pining for Heaven** and the Prince of Peace. Trials change our focus from earthly matters to eternal matters. They remind us of the sufferings of Christ and develop a desire to go home to be with the Lord.
   * Philippians 1:23- For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

7. **By the promises of God** to reward His people in Heaven as the result of their bearing trials in this life.
   * 1 Peter 1:7-That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:
   * James 1:12- Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
We have seen so far in this section....
* The Reason for Steadfastness ...vs. 13
* The Resurrection in Sight ....vs. 14
* The Reason for Suffering ....vs. 15
* The Rejection of Stopping or Quitting.... vs.16a
* The Revival or Renewal of our Strength .... vs. 16b
* The Results or Ramifications of our Sufferings .... vs. 17
* Next, The Regard for Spiritual, Eternal Matters .... vs. 18

VII. THE REGARD FOR SPIRITUAL, ETERNAL MATTERS 4:18
While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

I like the story about what happened on a balmy October afternoon in 1982. Badger Stadium in Madison, Wisconsin, was packed. More than 60,000 die-hard University of Wisconsin supporters were watching their football team take on the Michigan State Spartans. It soon became obvious that Michigan State had the better football team.

What seemed odd, however, as the score became more lopsided, were the bursts of applause and shouts of joy from the Wisconsin fans. How could they cheer when their team was getting clobbered? It turns out that seventy miles away, the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team was beating the St. Louis Cardinals in game three of the 1982 World Series. Many of the fans in the stands were listening to the baseball game on portable radios, and were responding with joy to something other than their immediate circumstances. Their focus was upon the delights of that which was unseen, instead of their difficult, discouraging circumstances that were seen. This is what Paul did.

The focus of Paul’s life was not on that which is seen, but on that which is not seen. He lived his life with eternity in view. The apostle saw Him who was invisible. The things that are seen refer to his suffering. They also include the idols of mankind: wealth, pleasure, fame, and power. These will all fade away into oblivion one day. That which you might think is so important now will turn to dust or be enjoyed by another while you rest in the grave. Thank God, the same holds true for our pain, sorrows, and tears. All that we suffer here will soon vanish
and disappear.

On the other hand, that which is done for Christ is eternal and cannot be destroyed. Your service to Christ, the souls that are won to Him, will count for eternity. That which you give to the Lord will not rot or be stolen. This is why the Lord challenged us to lay up our treasures in Heaven.

* Matthew 6:20- But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Let me ask, “Are you investing your life in eternal matters? Do you live your life with eternity in view? Do you see Him who is invisible?” If not, change the focus of your life. See Him who is invisible. Spend time in the Word and call upon Him in prayer and you will see Him who is invisible.

* John 5:39- Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

* Jeremiah 33:3- Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.
Chapter 11
Living with One Eye on Eternity
2 Corinthians 5:1-10

For many centuries the men and women in Europe looked out upon the western sea, what we call the Atlantic Ocean, and they saw the sun coruscating upon the glittering surface of the waters and they wondered. They wondered if there was anything beyond. Scholars said that you could sail off the edge of the world--there was nothing out there at all. In fact, when the country of Spain had extended her conquests to the ends of the then-known world, and controlled both sides of the Mediterranean Sea at the Straits of Gibraltar, which were known as the fabled Pillars of Hercules, her coins proudly pictured these Pillars framing a scroll inscribed with the Latin words Ne Plus Ultra—“No More Beyond.” The Pillars were considered to be the gates of the end of the earth.

This kind of thinking changed, however, in 1492, from the adventures of a guy named Christopher Columbus who discovered the New World. Columbus went westward on the shiny waters of the Atlantic Ocean. He sailed off into the sunset as people waited expectantly, and finally after a long time, the sails reappeared and the crowds went crazy. They shouted with joy, and Columbus announced that there was a land beyond the sea that was rich beyond their dreams. It was a glorious paradise. The king of Spain changed the motto of that land. Spain admitted her ignorance and struck the word Ne “No” from her coinage, leaving the words Plus Ultra which mean “More Beyond.”

This change in philosophy to “There is More Beyond” affected a revolution in world culture, global economy, and geopolitics. The change also serves as a handy example of what is needed in the spiritual geography of modern men and women, because so many live in the stifling delusion that there is no more beyond the grave. Unfortunately, some Christians act like there is no more beyond. When it comes to the
matter of living for Christ they are indifferent, inaccessible, inaccurate, inactive, inadequate, inappropriate, inattentive, incomplete, inconsistent, incorrect, indecisive, inflexible, insecure, insensitive, and in trouble.

These words Plus Ultra, “More Beyond,” perfectly describe the focus of the this portion of 2 Corinthians. Paul shares with us the hope of our heavenly body that we will receive from the Lord. The anticipation of Heaven and all that it entails kept Paul going for Christ and helped him to not give up or quit. Because there is “More Beyond” we are to live our lives in such a way with one eye on eternity. How do we do this? What is involved in living with one eye on eternity? This portion provides some answers.

I. IT INVOLVES THE PROMISE OF A NEW BODY 5:1

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Paul closed chapter four speaking about looking at those things that are not seen that are eternal. He continues this train of thought in this portion as indicated by the first word “For.” What he shares with us he “knows.” This is for certain. He lives with one eye on eternity by finding comfort in the promise of a new heavenly body.

He describes our earthly bodies or house as a “tabernacle.” The word “tabernacle” is from the Greek word skenos {skay’-nos} which means “a tent or tabernacle.” This word conveys the idea that our body is like a tent, set up for a temporary purpose and is easily taken down for the purpose of traveling from one place to another. It refers here to the body as the frail and temporary abode of the soul.

Tents are a fun place to sleep in when camping, but they are not home. They don’t have the comforts of our home. They get cold, hot, and wet when they leak. They eventually wear out as they fray, tear, and rot. Our bodies wear out too. A tent is not a permanent dwelling or a fixed habitation, but is liable to be taken down at any moment. This is the idea behind the word “dissolved.” It means “to tear down, to set loose.” Our tent is taken down at the time of our death. This could happen to us at any moment. The body goes into the grave, whereas the spirit and soul of the believer go to be with the Lord. The term “tent” also reminds us that we are pilgrims in this life, just passing through this world. This is what Peter tried to get across to us.
*1 Peter 2:11- Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

This world is not my home, I am just a passin' through,
My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue,
The angels beckon me from Heaven's golden shore,
And I can't feel at home in this world any more.

When it comes to the issue of death, people often use words like "I believe....I hope...I think. The Christian, however, can use the words "I know." We know what is in store for us after we die. Death is a reality of life. There is no escaping it. The door of the hearse is never closed it seems. The shadow of death hovers over the president, the prostitute, the police officer, the preacher, the parent, and precious children. The hearse awaits the arrival of every one of us. In time, the strongest body throws up the white flag of surrender to war, killers, executioners, disease, decay, old age, or accidents. The grave calls out to us to fill its void. Solomon told us that the grave is never satisfied (Proverbs 30:15-16).

Don't be fooled by the foolish fables that float around the world today. Death does not move you to a temporary place called "Purgatory" where others can pray for you and free you from this place. It does not exist. When you die, you are not recycled and enter into another body to live another life on earth. The Bible says we die once.

*Hebrews 9:27- And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Don't be duped by the deception that says, "When you die, that's it. There is nothing else beyond the grave." You will be in for a rude awakening if you do for there is a Heaven and there is a Hell where those who die without trusting Jesus Christ as their Savior will be tormented for eternity in the Lake of Fire.

The reality of our death, the frailty and brevity of our lives should motivate us to keep one eye on eternity. James challenged us to do this.

*James 4:14- Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Paul also had one eye on eternity because we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It's not a tent, indicating something that is temporary. It is a building, indicating something more permanent and enduring. The building is a reference to
our new body that we receive from the Lord. It is not made with hands or is not of this creation. It will be a body that is designed for life in Heaven and for eternity for it is eternal in the heavens. It is a body that will no longer be subject to disease, decay, and death, but one that will endure forever in our heavenly home.

God's promise of a glorified body gives hope and peace to the believer. It gives the Christian hope in the sense that his home is not here, it is in Heaven. For many centuries innumerable people stood beside the dark hole that we call a grave and watched the remains of their loved ones lowered into the earth, and they wondered: Beyond the dark waters of death, is there anything beyond or is this it? Is life *Ne Plus Ultra*... "No More Beyond?" Then one day, a young explorer went westward into the setting sun and descended into the blackness of the pit of death. People waited expectantly to see if he would keep his promise and come back. On the third day, as the sun arose in the East, the Son of God stepped forth from a grave and declared, *Plus Ultra*, "There is something more beyond. There is a paradise beyond your greatest expectations. And there awaits a heavenly Father, waiting with outstretched arms to wipe away every tear from your cheek." This truth helps us to keep one eye on eternity.

Eric Barker, a missionary from Great Britain, spent over 50 years in Portugal preaching the Gospel, often under adverse conditions. During World War II, the situation became so critical that he was advised to send his wife and eight children to England for safety. His sister and her three children were also evacuated on the same ship. Although his beloved relatives were forced to leave, he remained behind to carry on the work.

On the Lord's Day following their departure, Pastor Barker stood before his congregation and said, "I've just received word that all my family have arrived safely home!" He then proceeded with the service as usual. Later, the full meaning of his words became known to his people. He had been handed a wire just before the church service informing him that a submarine had torpedoed the ship, and everyone on board had drowned. He knew that because all were believers they had reached a more "desired home." Although overwhelmed with grief, he managed by the grace of God to live above his circumstances and to stay on the firing line for Jesus Christ. The knowledge that his family was enjoying the bliss of Heaven comforted his heart and helped him to keep one eye on eternity.
Keeping one eye on eternity involves the promise of a new body. Secondly, it involves pining for our new body. Notice verses two through four.

II. IT INVOLVES THE PINING FOR OUR NEW BODY  5:2-4

*For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: [3] If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. [4] For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*

What is Paul saying here? This section is a very difficult one to understand and there are a variety of opinions about it. Here is my opinion. The promise of a heavenly body caused Paul and other believers to groan for it. What an appropriate description ... "groan." Doctors today make their living listening to groaning tents. A dermatologist tries to keep the canvass of our tent in good shape. The family doctor spends his life patching up and stitching up this tent of ours. The orthopedic doctor tries to keep our tent legs from pulling loose. Someone once asked John Quincy Adams how he was personally doing. Adams replied, “I am very well, thank you. However, the house in which John Adams lives, is growing old. The thatch is wearing thin, and it trembles in every gale. I think John Quincy Adams will have to soon move out, but he himself is very well, sir.”

We groan, especially as we get older. Why do we groan? We groan today, as they did back then, because we feel the pains associated with mortality, namely our physical limitations, sickness, heartaches, and the increasing disabilities that accompany advancing age. We groan also because of the stress, mess, tests, unrest, and distress of this life. How many times in frustration or great stress have we said or felt, “Lord, just go ahead and take me home! Lord, please come today and get me out of here!”

The Christian does not groan in his or her present body because he or she wants to get rid of it. We really are not going around hoping, begging, or longing to die today! We groan because we long to receive the immortal heavenly bodies that God has promised us. God’s promises of something better make us dissatisfied with what we have now. We are yearning and pining for what we don’t have right now, but what we will have someday.
Paul said he “earnestly desired” his glorified body. He longed or pined for it. Having put on our heavenly bodies, we will not be naked. In other words, we will not be spirits without bodies. In this body that we have, we groan because we are burdened, weighed down or pressed by the pressures of this life.

We groan, not because we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us now. We groan because we want to put on our new glorified body so that our earthly decaying body will be swallowed up by life eternal in Heaven. Not only the promise of a glorified body, but pining for it and the blessings of Heaven will help us to keep one eye on eternity.

III. THE PLEDGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT 5:5

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit that helps us to keep one eye on eternity. The focus of this verse is the Lord. Paul describes two things the Lord has done for us. He has “wrought” us. What does this mean? This word is from the Greek word katergazomai {kat-er-gad'-zom-ahee} which means “to perform, accomplish, achieve, to prepare or fashion one fit for a thing.”

God prepared Paul for missionary service by giving him an education, a conversion experience, faith in Christ, and numerous hardships and trials. He does the same for you. God has prepared you throughout your life to serve Him in one way or another. The experiences you have had and the people you have encountered can be used by the Lord to serve Him. There are so many different ways to serve Jesus Christ and reach the lost.

God’s purpose for preparing us and working in our life is that we will be covered with a resurrected body and with the future glory that God already has prepared for us. We are His bride and He is looking forward to the time when we will all be with Him in glory, worshiping and praising Him. The Lord has in store for us an existence of which the pristine life of Adam and Eve in paradise is a reflection. This existence is what God had originally designed before sin entered the world and now has planned for us. We are going to be changed and be like Him.

* 1 John 3:2- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we
shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

The Lord has guaranteed that we will be changed and have a new body. The Holy Spirit is His guarantee. God calls it the “earnest” of the Spirit. This word is from the word arrhabon (αρ-ηραβ-ον) which means “money which is used in purchases and is given as a pledge or down-payment that the full amount will subsequently be paid.” It has also been translated “engagement ring” which is a pledge or promise to a woman, that you will marry her. The Holy Spirit is our engagement ring from the Lord.

God has given us the Holy Spirit as a pledge concerning matters that will be revealed in the future. The Spirit is a down payment of our future inheritance in Christ. Now we are receiving a foretaste of the Spirit. The love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and faith that the Holy Spirit gives to us are partial payments of His blessings. They point to the best which is yet to come. If the Holy Spirit is just the down payment, just imagine what the full payment will be.

* 1 Corinthians 2:9- But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

In his book Dare to Believe, Dan Baumann illustrates the unique experience of knowing that something is ours, yet longing to enjoy it more fully. He explained that at Christmas time he would always do a lot of snooping, trying to find the gift-wrapped presents, and figure out what was in them. One year he discovered a package with his name on it that was easy to identify. There was no way to disguise the golf clubs inside. Baumann then made this observation: "When Mom wasn’t around, I would go and feel the package, shake it, and pretend that I was on the golf course. The point is, I was already enjoying the pleasures of a future event; namely, the unveiling. It had my name on it. I knew what it was, but only Christmas would reveal it in its fullness. Beloved, Heaven will reveal the fulness that God has for us, but we can now begin to enjoy and be excited about what we will receive in glory.

The glories that await the Christian defy our comprehension. What we can grasp about them, however, fills us with great anticipation. We look longingly to that day when we shall enjoy Heaven in all its fullness. When we get to Heaven, we will receive the full allotment that God has in store for us. We have the assurance that the Spirit, who is with us, will lead us safely into God’s presence at the time of our death. The Spirit of God is Himself a guarantee that what God has already given to us in part,
will one day be ours in full. Peter spoke about our inheritance in Christ.
* 1 Peter 1:4- To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

The Holy Spirit also generates our longing to be with the Lord Jesus. He, who lives within us, helps us to live with one eye on eternity. Paul spoke of his longing to be released from sin and suffering even though the Holy Spirit lived within him and us too. He longed for the day when we the Lord would give us our full rights as His adopted children which included his new body.
* Romans 8:23- And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Living with one eye on eternity involves several principles. We have seen three so far.
1. It involves the promise of a new body.
2. It involves pining for our new body.
3. It involves the pledge of the Holy Spirit.
4. Next, it involves the pace or plodding by faith.

IV. IT INVOLVES THE PERSUASION & PLODDING BY FAITH  5:6-7

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: [7] (For we walk by faith, not by sight:

When you see the word “therefore” find out what it is there for. Because the Holy Spirit is the down-payment of all that God has promised to us, we are “always confident.” This word “confident” is from the word tharrheo ἑθαρρύη'ο which means “to be of good courage, be of good cheer; to be bold.” The Spirit of God gives us courage, boldness, and joy to live for Christ. He gives us joy from the promises that God has made to us and boldness to believe those promises. The Spirit of God gives us courage to trust God and His Word and walk by faith.

The confidence that we have in the Lord and His promises enable us to live with one eye on eternity. We can look forward to Heaven because we believe what the Lord has said about Heaven and how to go there. We believe His promise of eternal life through His Son Jesus Christ. Thank God we are “always” confident of this truth. I believe this
on Sunday, but also on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. We are always confident in God’s Word because it is His Word. He never lies, fudges, or back-tracks on His promises.

While we are here in this body, we are absent from the Lord. We know we are going to be with Him one day because we trust the Lord by faith. We cannot see the Lord now, yet, we believe He is real and very much alive. By faith, we know that we will be with Him one day and be re-united with loved ones who knew Christ as their Savior. Our confidence in Christ and living by faith help us to live with one eye on eternity. Jim Hill put it this way in the song that he wrote.

*What a day that will be, when my Jesus I will see
When I look upon His face, the one who saved me by His grace.
When He takes me by the hand, and leads me through the Promised Land,
What a day, glorious day, that will be.*

V. IT INVOLVES THE PREFERENCE FOR BEING WITH THE LORD 5:8

_We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord._

Paul was not only confident of God’s promise of a glorified body, he was confident and even willing to be absent from his body and be at home with the Lord.

*Philippians 1:23-24... For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: [24] Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*

Remember that the soul does not die. The soul never dies; the soul goes to be with Christ. It is the body that is put to rest. It is the body that must be changed. Because of the Rapture, there will be a generation that will not go through death, but their bodies will be changed by the Lord.

*1 Corinthians 15:51- Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

*1 Corinthians 15:53- For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

The willingness to depart this world and to be at home with the Lord will help you to live with one eye on eternity. This world is not our final home. We are citizens of Heaven.
*Philippians 3:20- For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: The word “conversation” means “citizenship.”

Edith Schaeffer, the wife of Francis Schaeffer, chose to have her husband brought home from the hospital for the final days of his life. She said, "I believe when my husband leaves his body, he will be with the Lord. I don't want him to leave me until he's with the Lord. Therefore, I am sure he would want to go to the house he asked me to buy and be there for the time he has left."

The doctors agreed with her and told her they wished more people would do things the same way. Francis Schaeffer was taken home, and Edith surrounded his bed with the things he loved, and had music playing in his room. She said, "One after another, we played his favorite records: Beethoven, Bach, Schubert, and Handel. Ten days later, on May 15, 1984, with the music of Handel's Messiah still in the air, Francis Schaeffer breathed his last breath and entered the gates of Heaven."

The Spirit of God and the Word of God gave Edith Schaeffer confidence, calm, and comfort of the destiny of her husband. He does the same for us too. Our preference for wanting to be with the Lord motivates us to live with one eye on eternity. This involves several principles. We have examined five of them.

1. It involves the promise of a new body.
2. It involves pining for our new body.
3. It involves the pledge of the Holy Spirit.
4. It involves the pace or plodding by faith.
5. It involves the presence for being with the Lord.
6. Next, it involves the purpose of pleasing the Lord.

VI. IT INVOLVES THE PURPOSE OF PLEASING THE LORD 5:9

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

Paul’s love for the Lord motivated him to labor for Christ. This word “labor” is from the Greek word *philotimo* which means “to be motivated and fond of honor; to be ambitious; to strive earnestly; to make something your goal.” Paul is not expressing the ambition to be somebody who is great or famous. He esteemed it an honor and made it the goal of his life to be well-pleasing
or accepted of the Lord. He was not seeking ambition to glorify himself. Jeremiah warned us about doing this.

* Jeremiah 45:5a- And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not:

* Romans 12:16- Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. We are to live in harmony with others and are not to be so proud that we cannot enjoy the fellowship of ordinary, simple people. We are not to think we know it all and have an inflated opinion about ourselves.

    God wants us to have the attitude of glorifying and pleasing Him. It should be our desire to hear His “Well Done!” He has not called us to be successful or number one, He has called us to be faithful servants to Him. The desire to please the Lord Jesus Christ will help you to live with one eye on eternity for you know that one day you will see Him. This brings us to an important question, “How do you please the Lord? What is involved in pleasing the Lord Jesus Christ?”

* Pleasing the Lord with Your Life
1. DO not entangle yourself in worldly affairs.
   * 2 Timothy 2:3,4- Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.
2. It DEMANDS we have faith in the Lord.
    * Hebrews 11:6- But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
3. It involves DOING what is good & DISTRIBUTING or sharing with others.
   * Hebrews 13:16- But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. The word “communicate” means “to share.”
4. A DAILY walk with the Lord is very important.
   * Hebrews 11:5- By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.
   * Genesis 5:24- And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.
5. It’s the DUTY of all Christians.
   * 1 Thessalonians 4:1- Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

6. It should be the DESIRE of all servants of God.
   * 1 Thessalonians 2:4- But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

7. DEFERENCE & DOCILITY to parents pleases the Lord.
   * Colossians 3:20- Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

8. The DUMBNESS of preaching pleases God. (Dumbness to the world)
   * 1 Corinthians 1:21- For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

9. The DEVELOPMENT of a broken, contrite heart pleases Him.
   * Psalm 51:17- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

10. DECLARING praise to the Lord pleases our king.
    * Psalm 69:30,31- I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

11. DISCERNING & DOING the will of God & DEEDS that are fruitful please God.
    * Colossians 1:9-10... For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; [10] That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

12. DECENCY or purity in our lives pleases God.
    * Malachi 3:3-4... And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. [4]Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

13. The DESIRE for God’s Wisdom pleases Him.
    * 1 Kings 3:9-10... Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is
able to judge this thy so great a people? [10] And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. God is willing and ready to give us His wisdom if we will seek it from Him.

* James 1:5a- If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,.....

14. The DELIGHT, DISPASSION, & prosperity of those that serve the Lord delights Him.

* Psalm 35:27- Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

15. DEVOTION to the Lord & DEPENDENCY upon His mercy brings pleasure to Him.

* Psalm 147:11- The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

16. DIVINE answers to prayer are the result.

* 1 John 3:22- And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

17. It DEVELOPS peace with enemies.

* Proverbs 16:7- When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Do you please the Lord with your life? I hope so. The goal and passion for pleasing Him will help you to live with one eye on eternity. You will look forward and not dread the day when you meet Him face to face.

Dear Master for this coming year
   Just one request I bring:
   I do not pray for happiness
   Or any earthly thing --
   I do not ask to understand
   The way Thou leadest me,
   But this I ask: Teach me to do
   the thing that pleaseth Thee.
I want to know Thy guiding voice,
   To walk with thee each day.
Dear Master make me swift to hear
   And ready to obey.
   And thus the year I now begin
   A happy year will be --
   If I am seeking just to do
   the thing that pleaseth Thee.
VII. IT INVOLVES PLANNING FOR THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST  5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The sobering fact that we will give an accounting of our life to the Lord and stand before Him in judgment is a huge catalyst for us to live our life with one eye on eternity. Paul addresses our appointment with the Lord in this verse. The Christian faces several types of judgements in his life.
1. We are to judge our own selves frequently.
   * 1 Corinthians 11:31- For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.
   * 2 Corinthians 13:5- Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?
2. We are chastened by the Lord. We are taken to God’s woodshed when we are disobedient or wayward.
   * Hebrews 12:6- For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
3. Our works will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ for the purpose of rewards, not salvation.

The Judgment Seat of Christ might be compared to a commencement ceremony. At graduation there is some measure of disappointment and remorse that one did not do better and work harder. However, at such an event the overwhelming emotion is joy, not remorse. The graduates do not leave the auditorium weeping because they did not earn better grades. Rather, they are thankful that they have graduated, and they are grateful for what they did achieve. To over-do the sorrow aspect of the judgment seat of Christ is to make Heaven like Hell. To under-do the sorrow aspect is to make faithfulness inconsequential.

It is one thing to appear in a doctor’s office and quite another thing to be X-rayed by him there. The judgment seat of Christ will reveal our lives of service for Christ exactly as they have been. Not only the amount of our service, but also its quality, and even the very motives that prompted it will be brought into review. Let’s look at this verse and squeeze the goodies out of it.
A. "For We Must All Appear"

It is an appointment we must keep. There is no getting out of this judgment or delaying it. We will be face to face with Christ. There will be no concealment or hiding; no pretending or excuses; no spin or attorneys. The look in His eyes will say it all. This word "appear" means "made manifest, turned inside out." We will be under the scrutiny of Jesus Christ. He will see us as we really are and deal with issues that need to be dealt with in our lives.

B. "Before the Judgment Seat of Christ"

The word "seat" is the word bema. Every three years the Corinthians had contests in the stadium outside Corinth known as the Isthmian Games. They lasted for weeks. The contestants were professional athletes. Upon entry, they had to certify they had been in training twelve months and had followed rigid rules and guidelines. The contestants were under the supervision of many judges.

If a person appeared to be the victor in an event, he was not declared victorious until the judges met and agreed that no rules had been broken. If they agreed, the judge led the athlete to the middle of the city square of Corinth. In the center of the square was a stone platform that was 40 feet long, 20 feet wide, and about 8 feet above the ground. This stone was called the "Bema." Athletes were awarded with laurel wreaths called the "victor's crown." The Bema did not conjure up ideas of guilt and punishment, but insisted on victory, reward, and honor.

C. "That Everyone May Receive the Things Done in His Body, according to what He hath done, whether it be Good or Bad"

The terms "good or bad" do not mean righteous or sinful. Our sins were dealt with at the cross and are under the blood. "Good or bad" means "acceptable or worthless" (unacceptable). Chapter five, verse nine says, "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

Our goal is that our service for Christ is acceptable to Him. Every one of us has the opportunity for the "Well Done" of Jesus Christ. Christ will examine our motive of service and our faithfulness. That which is done with the wrong motives such as glorifying self instead of Christ, unfaithfulness, neglect of duty or opportunities, will be considered unacceptable, worthless, labor and un-rewardable.

The loss of reward, the loss of His "Well Done," the loss of crowns and opportunities to rule in His kingdom will be a painful reprimand to us that will last for eternity. The sting from our lack of an answer will be
very painful if the Lord should ask, "Why did you not serve me?" Little rewards or a lack of any rewards will be a shameful rebuke to how we lived our life. Having nothing to show for how we lived our lives will reveal our character and the quality of our faithfulness. Could we feel shame and sadness at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Yes! Many will feel shame because they wasted their lives on themselves. There will be tears at this judgement, but the Lord will wipe them away.

* 1 John 2:28- And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

* Revelation 21:4- And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

The rewards, or lack of them, will tell all about our lives, our service, our faithfulness or unfaithfulness. They will honor us or rebuke us.

* 1 Corinthians 4:5- Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

If there have been any false accusations brought against us, they will be brought to light. All wrongs and injustices against us will be made right. Misunderstandings will be cleared up. If we need vindication, the Lord will take care of it.

* Romans 12:19- Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Earl Radmacher said, "The person I am becoming today is preparing me for the person I shall be for all eternity." The person you are today will determine the rewards and responsibilities of tomorrow. Your life now will impact your responsibilities in eternity. I have had a number of Christians tell me, "I don’t care about eternal rewards." That is a bunch of hog wash! Those same people are killing themselves trying to accumulate great rewards now! They profess they will be content with a shack in Heaven, but want a big home here on earth. If reward, recognition, or position is important now, it will be in eternity too, but it will be too late. Your chance to serve the King of kings is now! The Judgement Seat of Christ will help us to live with one eye on eternity.
What is the Lord looking for at this judgment? What is God going to scrutinize and reward? The Bible provides some answers.

* **Checklist for the Judgment Seat of Christ**

1. **Joyful acceptance of injustice.** Bearing the insults of the world for the sake of Christ will be rewarded. Being harassed for taking a stand for what is right or refusing dishonesty will be rewarded. God is looking for this joyful acceptance.
   * Matthew 5:11,12- Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

2. **Your financial generosity will be examined.** God will look at what you do with what you have.
   * Matthew 6:3,4- But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.
   * Matthew 6:19–21... Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: [20] But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: [21] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

3. **Your hospitality to others will be examined.** Do you welcome people into your life or shut them out.
   * Matthew 10:40,41- He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

4. **Secret prayer will be looked at by the Lord.**
   * Matthew 6:6- But thou, when thouprayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

5. **He will inspect our faithfulness in our vocation.**
   * Colossians 3:23-24... And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; [24] Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.
6. **Loving the unlovable will be rewarded.**
   * Luke 6:27,28,35- But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do
good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for
them which despitefully use you. But love ye your enemies, and do good,
and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and
ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful
and to the evil.

7. **Investing our lives into people with the gifts and the abilities that**
   **God has given us will be examined.**
   * 1 Corinthians 3:6-8... I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave
the increase. [7] So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he
that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. [8] Now he that planteth
and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own
reward according to his own labour.

8. **Watching for Christ’s return will be rewarded.**
   * 2 Timothy 4:7-8.... I have fought a good fight, I have finished my
course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a
crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give
me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his
appearing.

9. **Our acceptance of suffering and trials will be rewarded.**
   * 1 Peter 1:7- That the trial of your faith, being much more precious
than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found
unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

10. **Obeying God’s Word will be rewarded.**
   * Psalm 19:9-11...The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the
judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. [10] More to be
desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than
honey and the honeycomb. [11] Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
and in keeping of them there is great reward.
   * Proverbs 13:13- Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he
that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

11. **Preaching the Gospel willingly will yield God’s approval.**
   * 1 Corinthians 9:16-17... For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing
to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach
not the gospel! [17] For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but
if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.
12. Our words will be judged.
* Matthew 12:36 - But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

13. Our motives will be scrutinized.
* 1 Corinthians 4:5- Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

What are the rewards for believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ? The Bible tells us that God will reward His children with crowns.

* The Crowns for Believers

A. A Crown for Self-control
* 1 Corinthians 9:25 - And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

B. A Crown for Soul-winning
* 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20... For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? [20] For ye are our glory and joy.

C. A Crown for loving the Second Coming
* 2 Timothy 4:8- Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

D. A Crown for Serving the Lord as Shepherds or Pastors
* 1 Peter 5:2-4...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; [3] Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. [4] And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

E. A Crown for Suffering Persecution or being Martyred for Christ
* James 1:12- Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Will you have any crowns when you stand before the Lord? Will you be ashamed after realizing what you might have done for God if only you had been obedient to His will? Will you stand before Him empty handed?
When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ
   And He shows me His plan for me.
The plan of my life as it might have been
   Had He had His way, and I see.

How I blocked Him here, and I checked Him there,
   And I would not yield my will --
Will there be grief in my Savior's eyes,
   Grief, though He loves me still?

He would have me rich, and I stand there poor,
   Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing
   Down the paths I cannot retrace.

Then my desolate heart will well-nigh break
   With the tears that I cannot shed;
I shall cover my face with my empty hands,
   I shall bow my uncrowned head...

Lord of the years that are left to me,
   I give them to Thy hand;
Take me and break me, mold me to
   The pattern Thou hast planned!

**Author Unknown**

Beloved, may we all live our lives with one eye on eternity and make each day count for Christ. May we be faithful so that we will look forward to His return and not be ashamed at His coming.
Chapter 12

The Grip of a Great God

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

When I was in high school, we would wrestle in our P.E. classes in the winter time. Our football coach and wrestling coaches were also our P.E. teachers. They would divide our class into weight classifications. I was in the 145 to 155 pound weight class and wrestled guys that were my weight. I was able to beat those in my weight range, so the coach decided to make the matches more interesting. He matched me against Kenny Schmidt who happened to be in the 155 to 165 pound weight range.

He was not only heavier and bigger than me, he was also the school pole vaulter, which means this guy was extremely flexible and very strong. The first time I wrestled him, I didn’t know what hit me. I was able to survive the first round of three 3 minute rounds. He pinned me to the mat in the second round. Evidently, the coach liked the entertainment he got from our match so he put me with Kenny again on another day. Oh, great! This time I lasted close to the end of the second round, but he still pinned me to the mat.

Several days later, the coach matched us up again. This time I was ticked. I was tired of losing to this guy, even though we were friends. I gave him a run for his money. I stayed with him the first two rounds. In the third round, however, I was getting tired. The guy was too strong and heavy. He finally pinned me with about a minute to go in the third round. He got a grip on me like a vice. No matter how or where I turned, I couldn’t get loose. I couldn’t shake him off. (If you have clostraphobia, I would not recommend wrestling) The grip he had, left him in control and I was out of control. The only way I could end the struggle was to yield.

Paul found himself in the same type of situation in a way. He was in the grip of a great God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He had ceased to
struggle against God and was struggling for the Lord because he had yielded to the Lord’s control of his life. The grip of God had a drastic impact upon him that changed his life in many ways. That same grip changes us too. This portion of 2 Corinthians reveals the impact that God’s grip has on our life when we stop wrestling with the Lord and are truly, genuinely, yielded to Him and completely surrendered to His control. We will find that the grip of a great God:
1. Makes us Mindful of our responsibility to the Lord.
2. Motivates us to glorify God and reach others.
3. Moves us to live our lives for the Lord and not ourselves.
4. Molds us into new creations in Christ.
5. Mollified our Relationship with God the Father
6. Mandated us with the Ministry of Reconciliation
7. Make us Ambassadors of Christ

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

I. THE PERSUASION OF MEN  5:11
Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

Paul says he persuades men, knowing the terror of the Lord. What does he mean by this? Was he terrified of Jesus Christ? Was he terrified of God’s grip on his life? No. This type of fear would not result in peace, comfort, and joy. The word “terror” is from the Greek word phobos {fob’-os}. It forms our English word “phobia.” It means “fear, dread, apprehension, and also reverence.” Paul is referring to a deep reverence and respect for the Lord which results in worship, adoration, submission to Him, and service.

The apostle had a holy fear that relates to the Judgment Seat of Christ (v. 10). He is not speaking about overwhelming dread but rather a reverent, sobering fear of divine judgment and accountability. He was awed by the thought of standing before a person so holy, so morally superior, so removed from evil, that in His majestic presence, all human boasting, pride, and arrogance would vanish like mist as he stands in speechless humility before the Lord, and with trembling lips gives a full account of himself. We too, are to have the same type of reverence for the Lord and a sober attitude about the accounting of our life at the Judgment Seat of Christ. When you are gripped by a great God, you will
have this kind of attitude.

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

He also wanted to persuade his hearers of his integrity of ministry. He tells them that they should have no qualms about his honesty. The apostle sought a favorable judgment from the Corinthians on his integrity since it was under attack. If Paul's character was discredited, his enemies could then discredit his message. His knowledge that his life was an open book to God led him to voice the hope that it would be transparent to all the Corinthians too. At all times he demonstrated his integrity and responsibility as God's servant. His conscience was clear with God and it was his hope that his integrity and sincerity were obvious or manifested to the Corinthians. Having integrity as a Christian and a right relationship with God and men was a priority of Paul and will be a priority of a person who has been gripped by a great God.

* 2 Corinthians 1:12- For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

* Acts 23:1- And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

* Acts 24:16 - And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Like Paul, we are to persuade men that what the Lord has done in our life is genuine and real. The grip of a great God makes us mindful of our responsibility to the Lord. By our conduct, conversations, and character, our life should prove that Jesus Christ lives within us and that we have been gripped by a great God. Our testimony and example should be important to us and carefully guarded against temptations and sin that will hurt our testimony. If we can establish credibility in our behavior, then it will give our beliefs credibility to a skeptical, pessimistic world that tends to doubt or disbelieve what the Bible has to say because of inconsistency and hypocrisy in the lives of people claiming to be Christians. A clear conscience will give you more power in persuading men because it will show you have been truly gripped by a great God.
II. THE PURPOSE OF OUR LIVES 5:12-13

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. [13] For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.

Paul reveals the purpose of our lives here. He states that he was not trying to glory in his credentials or commend himself to the Corinthians. What he was trying to do was to give them a reason to have confidence and even pride in what he was doing for the Lord and also what the Lord was doing in their own lives. They had no reason to be ashamed for what the Lord had done for them and through Paul. The same holds true for you. You have no reason to be ashamed for being a Christian or for living a godly life. When you have been gripped by a great God, you won’t be ashamed. The grip of a great God motivates us to glorify God and reach others.

* Romans 10:11- For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The problem in Corinth was the fact that the Corinthians were having to deal with people that placed great emphasis on outward appearances or spectacular results instead of spiritual matters of the heart that involved holiness, honesty, integrity, love, and compassion. Outward appearances were more important than spiritual character and purity. We find that same type of philosophy today among people. They base their opinion of a preacher by the size of his church, the car he drives, the house he lives in, the beauty of his wife, or how handsome he looks. A church is judged by its size. If it is big, it must be good. The standard of acceptance in these matters is based on outward appearances.

Beloved, God’s standard for success is based on a different standard. He is looking at our hearts. No matter what size the church, if the people love God and have a pure, surrendered heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and are doing their best to put Him first and serve Him, that’s a good church. If the pastor looks like the Hunch-Back of Notre Dame but is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is a good man. God is looking at your heart. Do you recall the words of the Lord when Samuel was seeking to anoint the next king of Israel? Samuel looked at David’s brother Eliab and thought, “He must be the one.” The Lord had a different opinion.
* 1 Samuel 16:6-7... And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. [7] But the Lord said unto 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. When the Lord looks at your heart, what does He see? Does the Lord have a grip on you?

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

A.W. Tozer put it this way in his book The Root of the Righteous: A real Christian is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen, talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see, expects to go to Heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself in order to be full, admits he is wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, and happiest when he feels worst. He dies so that he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and knows that which passeth knowledge. Perhaps, you can understand why this world thinks we are nuts. They just don't understand, do they?

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

* Mark 3:21-22... And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. [22] And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

* John 10:20- And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

Festus thought Paul was nuts or completely mad.

* Acts 26:24- And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

No matter what people thought about Paul, whether they thought he was a nut or crazy or of a sound mind, his purpose was to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and reach others for Him. He was gripped by a great God. The way Paul lived was for their benefit.
People today think it is crazy to live for Christ and serve Him. Some may think it is foolish to believe the inerrancy and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth, the resurrection, the return of Christ. They may think that going to church on Sunday and on Wednesday, giving to the Lord, and living a godly life instead of living it up is crazy. Go ahead and serve the Lord anyway and honor Him with your life. Allow the Lord to grip your heart and life.

Have you ever heard of a guy named D.L. Moody? Did you know that the people of Chicago had a nickname for him? When Dwight L. Moody was ministering at his large Sunday School and church in Chicago, people often called him “Crazy Moody.” In the eyes of the unsaved world, Moody was “crazy” to have given up a successful business career to become a Sunday School worker and evangelist, but time has proved his decision to be a wise one. Today, we don’t know the names of the people who laughed at him and called him names, but we do know—and honor—the name of D.L. Moody.

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

*John 15:18-21... If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. [19] If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. [20] Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. [21] But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.

*1 Corinthians 4:10-13... We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. [11] Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; [12] And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: [13] Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

What does Paul mean by this word “offscouring”? The word “offscouring” is from the Greek word peripsema (per-i-p’say-mah) which means “what is wiped off, scrapings, dust from the floor.” It was the garbage that was collected from cleansing. In Greek history, this word was used to describe a worthless person who was sacrificed as an
offering for the people. It was the custom in Athens during a plague to throw to the sea some wretch in the hope of appeasing the gods. The Athenians, in order to prevent public calamities, yearly threw a criminal, someone they considered worthless, into the sea as an offering to Poseidion, a Greek god of the sea. Later on, this word *peripsema* came to have a complimentary sense for the Christians, who in a plague, gave their lives in treating the sick. It was used of a man who in behalf of religion undergoes dire trials for the salvation of others. This is what Paul did. He endured suffering so that others could be reached for Christ.

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

* 1 Corinthians 1:23- But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

* 1 Corinthians 2:14- But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. No matter what the opinion of others may be about you and the Lord, go ahead and serve Him anyway. His opinion is the most important. Make Him your master. You can only serve one.

* Matthew 6:24- No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Henry David Thoreau said, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." You will find that if you are gripped by a great God and if the purpose of your life is to live for Him, He will guide and direct your life as you march to the drum beat of a different drummer. He will watch over you and care for you until the day you die.

On January 8, 2008, a 55- year- old college instructor and part-time paramedic, who was used to saving the lives of others, found himself in the fight of his life. Ken Hildebrand of Fort McMurray was riding his all-terrain vehicle as he collected his animal traps about 80 miles southwest of Calgary. Suddenly, the ATV rolled after hitting a rock and trapped him underneath in the Canadian wilderness. Hildebrand, who has a weak leg due to polio, ended up face down on the snowy ground with his machine pinning his strong leg. He had food, water and a first aid kit, but it was out of his reach.
Troy Linderman, director of Crowsnest Pass emergency medical services said, "He was stuck there for four days and three nights — almost 96 hours straight." Hildebrand's injuries aren't described as life-threatening, but there is a chance his right foot might have to be amputated. Hildebrand said he kept himself alive by eating the rotting meat of the dead animals he had collected in his traps. He would chew it, but it made him sick. He said he faced constant harassment from coyotes who were growling and fighting each other a few feet away, but was able to keep them at bay by constantly blowing a whistle he had with him.

He kept himself warm by using the carcasses of the beavers he had trapped to cover parts of his body. With no water or food with him, no snow close by and nothing but dirt around him, he quickly became dehydrated. He pulled some surveyor's tape through his teeth to get a little bit of the dew that dropped onto it. He sucked on dirt that he dug from the ground to get the moisture from the frost that was in it.

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

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

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

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

* The Persuasion of Men
* The Purpose of our Lives
* Next, the Power of Christ's Love
III. THE POWER OF CHRIST’S LOVE  5:14-15

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: [15] And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Paul was gripped by a great God. God’s grip moves us to live our lives for the Lord and not ourselves. Paul said the love of God constrained him. “Constraineth” is a phrase that has been misunderstood. The thought has been that the love of Christ restricts us or straps us down. That is not the meaning of the word that Paul is using here. This word “constraineth” is from the Greek word *sunēcho* (soon-ekh'-o) which means “to hold together with constraint, to control, to overwhelm, to press on every side.” It was used to describe cattle being pushed on each side into a position where they can be medicated or a strait of water that forces a ship into a narrow channel.

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

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

*Galatians 2:20- I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

In 1864, when William Featherstone was 16 years old, he penned the passion for the Prince of Peace in his soul. The words of the hymn that he wrote have echoed off the walls of our church through the years. They reflect the heart of a teenager that was gripped by a great God.
My Jesus, I love Thee,  
I know Thou art mine;  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer,  
My Savior art Thou;  
If ever I loved Thee,  
My Jesus, 'tis now.

Paul continues by saying, “because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” What does Paul mean, “if one died for all, then were all dead.” The statement speaks of mankind’s sinfulness. Christ died for us all because we are all sinners. We are all dead in trespasses of sin and needed someone to pay the price for our sins.

* Romans 5:12- Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

The Lord died for the sins of the entire world so that man could have eternal life by putting his faith in Christ. The payment is not enough, the payment must be accepted by faith. When the death angel went through Egypt, knowing about the protection of the blood on the doorposts was not enough. The blood had to be applied to the post indicating obedience and faith in God’s instructions. Those who put their faith in Christ are to live their lives not for themselves, but for the one who died and rose again. When you are gripped by a great God, that is what you will do.

* Romans 14:8- For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.
* Philippians 1:21 - For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
* Philippians 3:14 - I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
IV. THE PERCEPTION OF MEN  5:16-17

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. [17] Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

These two verses define when Paul’s burden for the lost began. God’s grip on Paul changed his outlook on life and his view of men. The word “wherefore” points back to verses 14 and 15, which describe salvation. Paul did not know men after the flesh. What does he mean?

After his conversion, the way Paul viewed people changed radically. He no longer evaluated people based on external, worldly standards, and human distinctions. The proud Pharisee, who once scorned Gentiles, and even those Jews outside of his group, now looked beyond mere outward appearances. His prejudice and hatred gave way to a love for all, whether they were Jew or Gentile, slaves, freemen, or barbarians. Christians are not to evaluate men according to their racial background, their social background, or their color. We know that according to the old nature, all men without Christ are lost in sin, but Christ died for all of them. Whether the person is a princess or a prostitute, a Wall Street Tycoon or a man in the gutter, a grandchild or a grandparent, Jesus died for them all.

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

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

* Ephesians 4:22-24 ...That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; [23] And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; [24] And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
The transformation that is brought about by the new birth is not only an instantaneous miracle but also a lifelong process of sanctification. For those so transformed, everything changes; the old things have passed away. All things “become” new. The word “become” is in the perfect tense indicating a past act with continuing results. God is continually working in our lives. When we are gripped by a great God, old values, ideas, plans, loves, desires, and beliefs vanish, replaced by the new things that accompany salvation. So what is new in our life?

* New Things for Christians

1. A New Birth
   * John 3:3- Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. We have been spiritually changed.

2. A New Heart & Spirit
   * Ezekiel 36:26- A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

3. A New Man
   * Ephesians 4:24- And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

4. A New Song
   * Psalm 40:3- And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

5. A New Name
   * Isaiah 62:2- And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.
   * Revelation 2:17- He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

6. A New Home
   * John 14:1-2... Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. [2] In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. The word “prepare” is from the Greek word *hetoimazo* {het-o-y-mad’-zo} which means “to make ready, to prepare.” It is drawn from the oriental custom of sending on before kings on their journeys persons to level the roads
and make them passable. The Lord is preparing our homes for us.

7. A New Body

*2 Corinthians 5:1* - For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

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

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

V. OUR POSITION IN CHRIST 5:18-20

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. [20] Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

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

*John 1:12* - But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
The key idea in this verse is the truth of *reconciliation*. Both the verb *katallassō* (reconciled) and the noun *katallagē* (reconciliation) appear in the New Testament only in Paul’s writings. The terms always portray God as the reconciler, and sinners as the ones reconciled, since it was human sin that ruptured the relationship between God and man. Because of his rebellion and sin, man became the enemy of a holy God and was out of fellowship with Him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 1936, a radio broadcast was transmitted to America from England. Just before the voice of King Edward VIII was to be heard, someone stumbled over a wire in the control room of WIZ (now WABC, New York) and snapped the only line of communication between the two great countries. The engineers were frantic. Then, with only a few moments remaining before air time a quick-thinking apprentice grasped the two broken ends of the wire and bridged the gap. Seconds later the King addressed the nation. In a real sense, his words were being transmitted through the body of that man! The words of Christ are to be transmitted through us as His ambassadors.

Now what does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ? A look at the history of a Roman ambassador will shed some wonderful insights. In the Roman Empire, there were two kinds of provinces: senatorial provinces and imperial provinces. The senatorial provinces were made up of people who were peaceful and not at war with Rome. They had surrendered and submitted. On the other hand, the imperial provinces were not peaceful at all. These provinces were dangerous because they would rebel against Rome if they could. It was necessary for Rome to send ambassadors to the imperial provinces to make sure that rebellion did not break out.

Since Christians in this world are the ambassadors of Christ, this means that the world is in rebellion against God. This world is an "imperial province" as far as God is concerned. He has sent His ambassadors into the world to declare peace, not war. Our message as ambassadors is, "Be ye reconciled to God!" We represent the Lord Jesus Christ. If sinners reject us and our message, it is Jesus Christ who is actually rejected. What a great privilege it is to be Heaven's ambassadors to the rebellious sinners of this world!

Being an ambassador in ancient times was an important and highly regarded duty. An ambassador was both a messenger for and a representative of the one who sent him, and believers are messengers and
representatives of the court of Heaven. Just as an ambassador lives in a foreign land, so do believers. Though citizens of Heaven, they represent their King in this world, where they live “as strangers and pilgrims.”

*Philippians 3:20- For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

* 1 Peter 2:11- Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

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

When one government sends an ambassador to another government, it means they are on friendly relations. God is still friendly with this world. He has sent us as His ambassadors. Ancient ambassadors gave the specific message of those who sent him. This is what we are to do too. One day He will call His ambassadors home at the Rapture. Then judgment will begin, just as a nation pulls out its ambassadors on the verge of war with another nation.

Until we are called home in death or at the Rapture, we are to consider our position as ambassadors for Christ seriously. The honor of a country is in its ambassador's hands. His country is judged by him. His words are listened to, his deeds are watched and people say, "That is the way such-and-such a country speaks and behaves." As Christians, we represent the Lord Jesus Christ and need to act like it. When we don’t behave, we become a hindrance to the Lord’s work.

*Romans 14:13- Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

* 1 Corinthians 8:9- But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

The Christian who is gripped by a great God will do his best to be a godly ambassador for Christ. What kind of ambassador are you?
VI. THE PAYMENT FOR OUR PURITY  5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Christ took the sins of the world upon Himself so that we could be saved and be reconciled to the Lord. He was able to be our Savior because He was absolutely sinless. He made the payment for our purity. In the process of God’s imputation, our sins are not imputed or credited to our spiritual account, they are put on Christ. The righteousness of Christ is imputed or credited to us. When God looks at the Christian, He sees the righteousness of His Son. This is why we have eternal life. Have you been gripped by a great God? Have you put your faith in Christ? If so, have you yielded your life to Him to do His will?

Have you ever heard of the term “posthaste?” This term goes back to the time of Henry VIII. Postmasters were given relays of horses to carry messages for the king to important cities in England. Because some couriers were irresponsible and wasted time in taverns and inns on the way, a drastic law was put into effect demanding that every dispatch carrier should "ride for his life." The king’s edict meant that anyone caught delaying his messages would be publicly hanged.

Often there was drawn upon important letters the figure of a man suspended from a gallows. Beneath was this ominous warning: "Haste, post, haste! Haste for thy life!" A number of men did suffer death because of their inefficiency, but in the 19th century the practice was discontinued. However, the old expression still remains as a reminder that the utmost speed and urgency is required when the king's business is involved! The business of the King of Kings is an urgent matter. May we not forget it.
Chapter 13
A Concern for Consistency
2 Corinthians 6:1-10

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. [2] (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) [3] Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: [4] But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, [5] In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in matchings, in fastings; [6] By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, [7] By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, [8] By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; [9] As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; [10] As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

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

One of the key conflicts that most, if not all Christians face, is the issue of being a consistent Christian day after day. The reason
consistency is a conflict is because we continue to have to deal with our flesh which pulls us in a different direction than the Holy Spirit. The reason for the conflicts is because the natural inclinations of our flesh toward godly matters tend to be indifferent in attitude, immoral in actions or aspirations, inundated with avarice, influenced by our arrogance, impetuous to anger, irrational in arguments, and ignorant about the actuality of God’s power, presence, and promises. Paul was frustrated about this conflict because he was concerned about being consistent as a Christian.

* Romans 7:18-24... For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. [19] For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. [20] Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [21] I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. [22] For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: [23] But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [24] O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

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

* 1 Corinthians 11:1- Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Notice verse one.

I. THE CAUTION ABOUT GOD’S GRACE 6:1

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

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

* 1 Corinthians 3:9- For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

Serving the Lord is a team effort. We need each other’s help and encouragement as we endeavor to live for Christ and reach others for Him. There are so many things that can discourage us. Yet, the love,
prayers, and encouragement we get from other Christians helps us to keep going for the Lord.

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

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

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

There is a two-fold aspect of this caution. First of all, he did not want those who were perhaps religious, but lost, to reject God's grace in salvation. There were folks like this in the Corinth church as well as in many churches today. They heard the truth of how to have eternal life through Jesus Christ, but the head knowledge of this truth would be irrelevant if they did not act upon it. Salvation must be embraced by faith in Jesus Christ if they wanted to go to Heaven. If they rejected God's grace of salvation, and died without Christ, their opportunity would end up being in vain. This is what Paul did not want to happen and pleaded with them to not reject God's grace. If you do not know the Lord as your Savior, don't waste your opportunity to be saved. God's grace is being extended to you.

A second application is seen in this caution. Paul did not want the Corinthian Christians to waste what God had done in their lives. They received God's grace and were saved, but this was their starting point of spiritual growth. The same holds for us too. He wanted to see these Christians become consistent in Christlikeness. Beloved, it is God's grace that enables us to live the Christian life and serve Him. His grace is our rope of redemption. It helps us to cope with conflicts, hope for
Heaven, lope or walk with God, scope our sights on the Savior’s will, to say “Nope” to temptation, and not grope through life, wandering if we will go to Heaven when we die. We can know with certainty we are saved.

*I John 5:13-* These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

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

George was killed while serving with the Central African Mission. There were no witnesses, but the evidence indicates that Atley was confronted by a band of hostile tribesmen. He was carrying a fully loaded, 10-chamber Winchester rifle, and had to choose either to shoot his attackers and run the risk of negating the work of the mission in that area, or not to defend himself and be killed. When his body was later found in a stream, it was evident that he had chosen the latter. Nearby lay his rifle with all 10 chambers still loaded. He had made the supreme sacrifice, motivated by his burden for lost souls and his answering devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. With the apostle Paul, he wanted Christ to be magnified in his body, "whether by life or by death."

*Matthew 5:16-* Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

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

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

*(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)*

This verse is a very special one to me. The very first sermon that I ever preached at the age of 16 was from this text. I entitled it “The Tick of Time.” We find here that Paul has appealed to the Corinthians to not receive the grace of God in vain. If they had not put
their faith in Christ, then the time to make that decision was immediately. The Messiah had come, the sin debt had been paid, and all that was left was for men to accept the payment of Christ by putting their faith in Him. If you have never been saved, now is the time to make that decision. The matter of salvation is an urgent matter because you never know when death will strike your life. The opportunity to be saved is today. Now is the accepted time.

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

* Isaiah 55:6-7... Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: [7] Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

If men grieve away the Holy Spirit; if they continue to reject the Gospel and become hard hearted; if they go unprepared into eternity, the day of salvation for them will be gone forever and no mercy will be found. God does not design to pardon men beyond the grave. There is no forgiveness for your sins after you are dead. Those who are not pardoned in this life must be unpardoned for ever in an eternal Hell. Along the same lines, if you are a Christian, the opportunity to serve Christ and tell others is now. Don’t throw your opportunities away. Now is the acceptable time to serve the Lord. Make your time count for Christ.

* Ephesians 5:15-16... See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, [16] Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Dwight L. Moody, by his own admission, made a mistake on the eighth of October, 1871. It was a mistake he determined never to repeat again. He had been preaching in the city of Chicago. That particular night drew his largest audience yet. His message was "What will you do then with Jesus who is called the Christ?" By the end of the service, he was tired. He concluded his message with a presentation of the gospel and a concluding statement: "Now I give you a week to think that over. And when we come together again, you will have opportunity to respond." A soloist began to sing, but before the final note, the music was drowned out by clanging bells and wailing sirens screaming through the streets of Chicago. The great Chicago Fire was blazing.

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

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

III. THE CONCERN FOR OUR TESTIMONY  6:3

_Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:_

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

* Romans 2:21-24... Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? [22] Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? [23] Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? [24] For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

Beloved, we all need to be concerned about our testimony and example. We are to give "no offense" in anything we do. The negative adjective "NO" is from the word _mêdenian_. It is a strong term and could be translated "no, not at all." It is followed by another strong negative term, _mêdeni_, which means, "not anything." Those two terms leave no room at all for an offense.

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

* Romans 14:13- Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

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

* 1 Corinthians 9:27- But I keep under my body, and bring it into
subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I
myself should be a castaway.

The Apostle Paul would avoid anything that would bring disgrace
on Christ or cause someone to find fault with the truth and purity of the
Gospel. His own integrity was crucial in protecting his credibility and the
credibility of his message. Beloved, we need to be concerned about
consistency because our actions can influence someone to either accept
or reject Christ. Some Christians have difficulty in reaching people for
Christ because of the bad example of other Christians. A skeptical world
will focus on the faults of foolish believers and group all believers into
the same barrel. They will say, “All Christians are a bunch of fakes!”
That is not true, but some people do believe it is true because of the
example of inconsistent Christians.

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

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

IV. A CHECKLIST OF CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER 6:4-10

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in
much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, [5] In stripes,
in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; [6]
By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy
Ghost, by love unfeigned, [7] By the word of truth, by the power of God,
by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, [8] By
honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true: [9] As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; [10] As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

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

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

* A Checklist of Consistency

A. Consistent in Diligence: "in much patience" vs. 4

Paul begins his checklist with a powerful and triumphant word....patience. What does he mean by this? This powerful word is from the Greek word hupomone {hoop-on-om-on-ay'} which means "steadfastness, endurance, diligence or triumphant patience" It describes the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings. It does not describe the frame of mind which can sit down with folded hands and bowed head and let a torrent of troubles sweep over it in passive resignation. It describes the ability to bear things in such a triumphant way that it transfigures them.

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

The Lord often places Christians in circumstances of peculiar trial, among other reasons, in order that they may illustrate the power of Christ by their example and show others with what temper and spirit they may be able to endure suffering. Christians often do a great deal more good by their example in suffering than they do in their witnessing. It is easy to speak to others; it is not so easy to manifest just the right spirit in time of persecution and trial. Men and women can resist our witness to them, but they find it difficult to resist the effect and power of a good example in times of suffering. When we are consistent in Christlikeness while going through trials, Christ is glorified.

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

* 2 Corinthians 4:8-11.... We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; [9] Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; [10] Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. [11] For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

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

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

They might be gone for days, but eventually they would come back. The little burro would be seen first, trotting back across the horizon,
leading the submissive steed in tow. Somewhere out there on the rim of the world, that steed would become exhausted from trying to get rid of the burro, and in that moment, the burro would take mastery and become the leader. "And that's the way it is with the kingdom and it's heroes, isn't it? The battle is to the diligent and the determined, not to the outraged; to the committed, not to those who are merely dramatic." Paul was consistent in diligence.

2. Consistent in Detrimental and Damaging Treatment: "...in afflictions" vs. 4

Paul was consistent for Christ, even though he faced "afflictions." This word is from the Greek word thlipsis {thlip'-sis} which originally expressed oppression, distress, tribulation, or sheer, physical pressure on a man. It described the process of crushing or pressing something together. There are things which weigh down a man's spirit like the sorrows which are a burden on his heart and the disappointments which are like to crush the life out of him. We all face pressure, strain, and tension that come both from within and without.

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

* Philippians 4:13- I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

3. Consistent in Difficulties: "...in necessities" vs. 4

What does Paul mean by this word "necessities?" It is from the word anagke {an-ang-kay}' which means "distress, calamity, great needs." This is a stronger term than afflictions, and denotes the difficulties which arose from want of the necessities of life. He everywhere endured adversity, hardships, and unavoidable difficulties and calamity. Whether life for us is up or down, in or out, back or forth, rich or poor, have or have nots, God wants us to be consistent for Christ in serving Him. This is what Paul did in his own life because he relied upon the Lord and was truly concerned about being consistent. He learned to be happy no matter what circumstances he faced.
*Philippians 4:11- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

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

Once upon a time, there was a man who lived with his wife, two small children, and his elderly parents in a tiny hut. He tried to be patient and gracious, but the noise and crowded conditions wore him down. In desperation, he consulted the village wise man. "Do you have a rooster?" asked the wise man. "Yes," he replied. "Keep the rooster in the hut with your family, and come see me again next week." The next week, the man returned and told the wise elder that living conditions were worse than ever, with the rooster crowing and making a mess of the hut. "Do you have a cow?" asked the wise elder. The man nodded fearfully. "Take your cow into the hut as well, and come see me in a week."

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

4. Consistent in Distresses: "... in distresses" vs. 4

What is Paul talking about when he speaks of "distresses?" It is a stronger word than either of those which he had before used. This word is from the word *stenochoria* {sten-okh-o-ree'-ah} which means "narrowness of place; extreme affliction; cornered or confined to a narrow place; hemmed in on every side, as the Israelites were at the Red Sea. The sea was before them, and Pharaoh and his host behind them." It describes trials and difficulties from which there is no escape. It might be used of an army caught in a narrow, rocky ridge with space neither to manoeuvre nor to escape. This word might also be used of a ship caught in a storm with no room either to ride it or to run before it. It has the idea of being trapped.

There are moments when a man seems to be in a situation in which the walls of life are closing round him. Paul faced those times when he
was surrounded and there was nothing he could do. He was out of control, but God was still in control. Though cornered and surrounded by problems, he remained consistent for Christ. He did not let his circumstances overwhelm or control him. They don’t have to overwhelm us either. What was one of Paul’s secrets in facing distress and staying close to the Lord? He believed he was a conqueror and that nothing could defeat him because of the Lord’s help. He was dependent upon the Lord. We need to have the same attitude too.

* Romans 8:35-39...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [36] As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. [37] Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. [38] For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

5. Consistent in Drubbings and Damage to the Body: “... in stripes” vs.5

Paul was concerned about consistency even in the face of being tortured, stoned, beaten up, drubbed, or whipped. These are the meanings behind the word “stripes.” This was a savage, excruciating punishment. The whip was made of leather straps with two small balls attached to the end of each strap. The balls were made of rough lead or sharp bones or spikes, so that they would cut deeply into the flesh. Paul's hands were tied to a post above his head and he was scourged. It was the custom for the prisoner to be lashed until he was judged near death by the presiding centurion (Jewish trials allowed only forty lashes.) The criminal's back was nothing more than an unrecognizable mass of shredded tissue and flesh.

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

* 2 Corinthians 11:23-25... Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. [24] Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. [25] Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I
stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

The shadows of Christian history reveal the courage and consistency of Christians who were willing to be martyred for Christ rather than deny Him. It is the simple fact that if there had not been those who were ready and able to bear the torture of the fire and the wild beasts, we might not be Christians today. The blood of martyr's is the seed of the church. There are still some for whom it is physical agony to be a Christian. In fact, 160,000 Christians are put to death every year right now across the world.

Thomas Hauker was a sixteenth-century English martyr who proved that Jesus supplies the strength needed by Christians who trust in Him. Mr. Hauker was sentenced to be burned to death in 1555, because of his belief in the gospel of Christ. His friend in the cell next to him asked Mr. Hauker to give him a sign if God's grace was sufficient during the fire. Perhaps, he feared that he too, might be called upon to suffer for Jesus someday. He said, "Thomas, I have to ask you a favor. I need to know if what others say about the grace of God is true. Tomorrow, when they burn you at the stake, if the pain is tolerable and your mind is still at peace, lift your hands above your head. Do it right before you die. Thomas, I have to know."

The next day, Thomas Hauker was tied to a stake and pieces of wood around him were set on fire. He prayed for a while, but fell silent as he grew weaker. The fire burned a long time, but Hauker remained motionless. His skin was burnt to a crisp and his fingers were gone. Everyone watching supposed he was dead. But suddenly, Thomas Hauker, who was still on fire, raised his fingerless hands over his head to the Lord of Heaven and joyfully clapped them three times, signifying to all that Jesus had given him the strength to suffer for His name. The people there broke into shouts of praise and applause. Hauker's friend had his answer. God's grace is sufficient for any need or circumstance.

* 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.... And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Paul was concerned about being consistent for Christ. We have seen so far that he was consistent in diligence, detrimental and damaging
treatment, difficulties, distresses, in drubbings and damage to the body. Next, we will see he was consistent during detentions in prison.

6. Consistent in Detentions in Prison: "...in imprisonments" vs. 5

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

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

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

* Philippians 4:4- Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.  
* Philippians 4:11- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

7. Consistent in Disarray, Disorder, & Disturbances from Angry Mobs: "...in tumults" vs. 5

Paul was consistent for Christ when he faced tumults. This word is from the Greek word akatastasia (ak-at-as-tah-see'-ah) which means "instability, confusion, a state of disorder, commotion, or disturbances." Akatastasia is used here in connection with the preaching of the Gospel. Such tumults were excited at Corinth, (Acts 18:6;) at Philippi, (Acts 16:19,20;) at Lystra and Derbe, (Acts 14:19;) at Ephesus, (Acts 19;) and in various other places. Preaching does get people stirred up sometimes. People do get angry at Bible preaching. Truth does sting, especially when you expose a teaching or tradition that is unscriptural, unbiblical, and historically inaccurate.
Chapter 13...A Concern for Consistency...6:1-10

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

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

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

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

We don't face as much violence today as in years gone by. The intimidation tactics that are used today in this country are contempt, derision, threats, and mockery. In the face of these darts, we are to be resolved in following Christ and consistent in our Christlikeness. The tendency is to take revenge and fight back because we are hurt, misrepresented, or unfairly treated, but God urges restraint and tells us that revenge is His responsibility. He warns us that if we live godly lives, we will suffer persecution.

* Romans 12:19- Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
* Matthew 5:11- Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
* 2 Timothy 3:12- Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

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

* Proverbs 13:5 - A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame. The life of a wicked man stinks. His lifestyle brings shame and embarrassment.

8. Consistent in Debilitation: “...in labors.” vs. 5

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

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

* Romans 12:11- Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

9. Consistent in Deficiency of Sleep: “...in watchings” vs. 5

This word “watchings” is from the Greek word agrupnia (ag-roop-nee'-ah) which means “sleeplessness.” Paul was consistent even though he lost sleep. Some of his nights were spent in prayer, in peril, or in pain from persecution or imprisonment.
There will be times in your life that your service for Christ or your burden for people will rob the rest from your eyes. I still vividly remember my years in Bible college. Many of us worked through the night hours and got about two hours of sleep before we headed to class the next morning. In the afternoons, we got a couple of more hours of sleep, studied, and then were off to work in Chicago 35 miles away.

On Sunday morning, we got up at 3:30 a.m., got dressed, ate breakfast at the college, and then went to our Sunday School busses 30 minutes away. Our bus routes were in Chicago, about 40 minutes from church. Much of the day was spent on the buses. It was a long day. By Sunday night after church, I was exhausted. I was drop-dead tired. It was good training. My typical work week now is about 65 to 70 hours...sometimes more and sometimes less. Paul knew what it was like to be exhausted too. Beloved, be faithful in serving Him. An old German proverb says, “If you would have your lamp burn, you must pour oil into it.” If we are going to burn for Christ, then we need the oil of the Holy Spirit empowering our lives.

One of the major components of men who accomplished great works of knowledge seems to be hard work and going without sleep sometimes. Noah Webster worked 36 years on his Dictionary, while Gibbon labored 26 years on his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. When Milton was writing Paradise Lost, he rose at 4:00 a.m. every morning to begin work. Men who have accomplished great goals knew how to work hard and do without rest. Are you willing to lose some rest in order to serve the Lord? Paul was such a man.

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

* Consistent in Diligence: “in much patience” vs. 4
* Consistent in Detrimental & Damaging Treatment: “...in afflictions” vs. 4
* Consistent in Difficulties: “...in necessities” vs. 4
* Consistent in Distresses: “... in distresses” vs. 4
* Consistent in Drubbings and Damage to the Body: “... in stripes” vs. 5
* Consistent in Detentions in Prison: “...in imprisonments” vs. 5
* Consistent in Disarray & Disturbances from Angry Mobs: “...in tumults” vs. 5
* Consistent in Debilitation: “...in labors.” vs. 5
* Consistent in Deficiency of Sleep: “...in watchings” vs. 5
Paul continues his checklist of consistency by listing inner qualities where he remained consistent for Christ.

10. Consistent in Deprivation of Food: "...in fastings" vs. 5

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

11. Consistent in Decorum, Deportment, or Demeanor: "...by pureness" vs. 6

Paul was consistent in purity. The word "by" can also be translated "in." He proved his integrity and consistency by being pure under all circumstances. The word "pureness" is from the word hagnotes {hag-not'-ace} which means "purity, chastity, or uprightness of life." This word was defined by the Greeks as "the careful avoidance of all sins which are against the gods; the service of the honor of God as nature demands", as "prudence at its highest tension" and as "freedom from every stain of flesh and spirit." It is in fact the quality which enables a man to enter into the very presence of God. This is the meaning the Greeks gave to this word and how they applied it in their relationship with their Greek gods.

In the forests of Northern Europe lives the ermine, a small animal known best for its snow-white fur. Instinctively, this animal protects its glossy coat of fur with great care lest it become soiled. Hunters often capitalize on this trait. Instead of setting a mechanical trap to catch the ermine, they find its home in a cleft of a rock or a hollow tree and daub the entrance and the interior with tar. Then their dogs start the chase, and the frightened ermine flees toward its home. But finding it covered with dirt, he spurns his place of safety. Rather than soil his white fur, he courageously faces the yelping dogs who hold him at bay until the hunters capture him. To the ermine, purity is dearer than life! We too, should have this same kind of attitude. The Lord wants us to be a people who will keep ourselves "unspotted from the world."

Passion for purity will go a long way in your quest to be consistent for Christ. The exhortation of Scripture is to be pure.
* Philippians 2:15- That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

* 2 Peter 3:14- Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

In his earlier life, Dannecker, the sculptor, gained for himself a wonderful reputation for his statues of Ariadne and the Greek goddesses. Approaching his prime he felt he ought to devote all his strength and time to the creation of a masterpiece, so he set about to carve a figure of the Jesus Christ. Twice he failed in his purpose, but finally he carved an image of Christ so perfect, so exquisitely beautiful that when people gazed upon it, they could only love and adore. Later Napoleon sent for him. "Come to Paris," he said, "and make for me a statue of Venus for the Louvre." But no such offer could tempt the heart of Dannecker. His reply was simple. "Sir, the hands that carved the Christ can never again carve a heathen goddess." Beloved, may we use our lives for the cause of Christ and shun using it for carnal, evil purposes.

12. Consistent in Discernment: "by knowledge".....vs. 6

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

The idea here is, that the Christian should not be ignorant. Believers ought to be well-informed about issues of the day and have common sense. We also should be knowledgeable about the Word. This is an important point because in some Christian circles, getting an education or training in the study of the Word of God has been mocked and belittled. It is from these same circles that bizarre or unscriptural doctrines have been birthed or promoted. From these folks, the phrase "getting deep into the Word" is scoffed. I guess that makes me an idiot because I love digging deep into the wonderful truths of Scripture and I am not ashamed for doing so. That’s where I find many of its treasures.

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

* Proverbs 10:14- Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.
* Proverbs 14:7- Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge. Stay away from fools. You won’t find knowledge on their lips and you won’t understand wise counsel when you do hear it. The influence of fools will hurt you.
* Proverbs 14:18- The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
* Proverbs 15:7 - The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.
* Proverbs 15:14- The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.
* Proverbs 18:15- The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

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

* Proverbs 1:7- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

13. Consistent in Durability and Determination: “...by longsuffering”

vs. 6

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

People with longsuffering are slow in avenging wrongs. Chrysostom said that it is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and does not, the man who is slow to wrath. It describes a person who remains calm and tranquil while awaiting the outcome of a matter or is being provoked. This word describes the spirit which never grows irritated, never despairs and never regards any man as beyond salvation. The
Christian patiently believes in men because he unconquerably believes in the changing power of Christ.

Paul was consistent in his durability and determination to reach men and be patient with them even though they persecuted him. He knew what was at stake if they did not trust in Christ. This is why he was longsuffering. All I can say is, "Wow!" This is not easy to do, especially when people are vicious or attacking you and you are trying to help them. Have you been in that boat? Paul knew what it was like to be long-bothered and was long suffering. This is a trait we are to have in our life. It is a trait of the Holy Spirit.

* Galatians 5:22- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, *
* Colossians 3:12- Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; *

Known as the "Bishop of the South Pacific," John Selwyn had at one time been recognized for his boxing skill. Touched by the Holy Spirit's convicting power, however, he later became an outstanding missionary. A magazine reports that one day this saintly leader reluctantly gave a stern but loving rebuke to a man who regularly attended the local church. The disorderly one resented the advice and angrily struck Brother Selwyn a violent blow in the face with his clenched fist.

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

Years afterward, the man accepted the Lord as his Savior and gave his testimony before the church. It was customary at that time for a believer to choose a Christian name for himself after he was saved. When asked if he wished to follow this practice, he replied without hesitation, "Yes, call me John Selwyn! He's the one who taught me what Jesus Christ is really like!" This brought real joy to the missionary's heart, for he saw that heeding the Savior's admonition to suffer wrongfully for His sake had resulted in making his witness effective for the Lord Jesus Christ.
14. Consistent in Dignity and Decency: "...by kindness" vs. 6

Paul was consistent in "kindness." This word is from the Greek word *chrestotes* (*khray-stot'-ace*). It has the idea of "moral goodness, integrity, gentleness, decency, dignity, and kindness." This word is the very opposite of severity. It is the sympathetic kindliness or sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain. The great example is in Genesis 26 which tells how Isaac would not fight or strive with the men that were filling the wells that he dug in the desert.

Kindness is the quality which thinks far more of others than of itself. When Paul was ill treated, he was not only longsuffering, but remained kind to those who abused him. "Ouch!" That is not easy to do either, but it is what we are supposed to do. As you can see up to this point, you are not going to be able to live the Christian life without the help of the Holy Spirit.

* Romans 12:10- Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another. Kindness goes a long way. Never underestimate its power.

Miss Thompson was a schoolteacher who every year would say to her students, "Boys and girls, I love you all the same. I have no favorites." Of course, she wasn't being completely truthful. Teachers do have favorites and, what's worse, most teachers have students that they simply don't like, especially when they cause trouble in the class. Teddy Stallard was a boy that Miss Thompson simply didn't like, and for good reason. He didn't seem interested in school. He wore a deadpan, blank expression on his face, and his eyes were glassy and unfocused. When she spoke to Teddy, he merely shrugged his shoulders in an uncaring fashion. His clothes were mussed and his hair unkept. He wasn't an attractive boy, and he certainly wasn't likable.

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

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

At Christmas, the boys and girls in Miss Thompson’s class brought her presents, piled them on her desk, and crowded around to watch her open them. Among the presents was one from Teddy Stallard. She was surprised that he had brought her a gift. Teddy’s gift was wrapped in brown paper and held together with Scotch tape. On the paper were written the simple words, “For Miss Thompson. From Teddy.” When she opened Teddy’s present, out fell a gaudy rhinestone bracelet, with half the stones missing, and a bottle of cheap perfume.

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

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

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

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

Four years later, another note came: Dear Miss Thompson, they just told me I will be graduating first in my class. I wanted you to be the first to know. The university has not been easy, but I have had a good four years. Love, Teddy Stallard
Four years later: Dear Miss Thompson, as of today, I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that? I wanted you to be the first to know. I am getting married next month, the twenty-seventh to be exact. I want you to come and sit where my mother would sit if she were alive. You are the only family I have now. Dad died last year. Love, Teddy Stallard.

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

15. Consistent in the Dwelling of the Holy Spirit: “...by the Holy Ghost” vs.6

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

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

* Ephesians 5:18- And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

* Ephesians 4:30- And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

It is said that a certain guide lived in the deserts of Arabia who never lost his way. He carried with him a homing pigeon with a very fine cord attached to one of its legs. When in doubt as to which path to take, he threw the bird into the air. The pigeon quickly strained at the cord to fly in the direction of home, and thus led the guide accurately to his goal. Because of this unique practice he was known as "the dove man." So, too, the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Dove, is willing and able to direct us in the narrow way that leads to the more abundant life if in humble self-denial we submit to His unerring supervision, guidance, and direction.
16. Consistent in Deep Devotion or Love: "...by love unfeigned" vs. 6

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

* 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a... Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, [5] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; [6] Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; [7] Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [8] Charity never faileth;...

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

(a) Eros means the love of a man for a maid; it is the love which has passion in it. It is never used in the New Testament at all.

(b) Philia is the warm love which we feel for our nearest and our dearest; it is a thing of the heart.

(c) Storge rather means affection and is specially used of the love of parents and children.

(d) Agape, the Christian word, means unconquerable benevolence and good will. Agape love does not mean a feeling of the heart, which we cannot help, and which comes unbidden and unsought.

* It means that no matter what a person may do to us by way of insult, injury, or humiliation, we will never seek anything else but highest good of that person.

* It is therefore a feeling or determination of the mind as much as of the heart; it concerns the will of the person as much as the emotions.

* It describes the deliberate effort, which we can make only with the help of God, never to seek anything but the best even for those who seek the worst for us.

With this kind of love, the person does not seek revenge, but instead, will meet all injuries and rebuffs with undefeatable good will. Ouch! This is not easy to do is it? In point of fact we can only have agape when Jesus Christ enables us to conquer our natural tendency to anger and to bitterness, and to achieve this invincible goodwill to all men. Paul had this kind of love and it was sincere and real. It was not hypocritical. This kind of deep devotion or love for others can have a drastic impact upon their lives.
Some years ago, Dr. Karl Menninger, noted doctor and psychologist, was seeking the cause of many of his patients' ills. One day he called in his clinical staff and proceeded to unfold a plan for developing, in his clinic, an atmosphere of creative love. All patients were to be given large quantities of love; no unloving attitudes were to be displayed in the presence of the patients, and all nurses and doctors were to go about their work in and out of the various rooms with a loving attitude. At the end of six months, the time spent by patients in the institution was cut in half. The love that was expressed for their patients gave them encouragement to get well.

17. Consistent in the Deliverance of a Truthful Message: \textit{...by the word of truth} \textit{vs. 7}

In spite of what he faced, Paul was consistent in sharing the truth of God’s Word with others. He was not \textit{intimidated} into silence, \textit{inflated} with his own ego or pride, \textit{inactivated} by imprisonment, \textit{infuriated} with bitterness, or \textit{incapacitated} by difficulties and distress. Paul knew that Jesus had not only given him a gospel to proclaim but the strength and the ability to proclaim it. To God he owed both the word and the door of utterance that had been opened for it. Are you consistent in speaking to others about the Lord? Do you share with people what the Lord has done for you? Do you share the Gospel with those who have not trusted in Christ?

18. Consistent in the Dominance or Power of God: \textit{...by the power of God} \textit{vs. 7}

Being consistent in the power of God was vital to being an effective witness for Christ. It was the only power that he really had in his life. Paul would never have said in pride, "I did this," but always in humility, "God enabled me to do it." Beloved, if we are going to be effective in our service for Christ, we need His power. It takes God’s power just to live the Christian life and conquer our flesh and selfish will. Paul was an outstanding Christian because he was consistent in having God’s power in his life.

\textit{* 1 Corinthians 2:4-5...And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*}
* Ephesians 3:16-That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man*  
* Ephesians 3:20- Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.*

One day during his great mission in London, Mr. Moody was holding a meeting in a theater packed with a most select audience. Noblemen and noblewomen were there in large numbers, and a prominent member of the royal family was in the royal box. Mr. Moody arose to read the Scripture lesson. He attempted to read Luke 4:27: "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet." When he came to the name of Eliseus he stammered and stuttered over it. He went back to the beginning of the verse and began to read again, but when he reached the word "Eliseus" he could not get over it. He went back the third time, but again the word was too much for him.

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

In 1882, Moody, at the age of 45, conducted a campaign through England. On September 26th, he preached from Genesis 3:9, “And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” In that service was a 14 year-old teenager, Tommy Bewes, youngest of 12 children in a lawyer’s family. He was glued to his seat and hanging on Moody’s every word. Three days later, he wrote his sister Evie and told her that he went to Moody’s revival meeting and trusted Christ as his Savior. He told her that Moody spoke from Genesis 3:9... “Where art thou?” He told his sister that this was the first question God ever asked man in the Bible and that is the first question that people ought to be asking themselves.

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

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

* Isaiah 55:11- So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

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

* Consistent in Diligence: “in much patience” vs. 4
* Consistent in Detrimental and Damaging Treatment: “....in afflictions” vs. 4
* Consistent in Difficulties: “...in necessities” vs. 4
* Consistent in Distresses: “... in distresses” vs. 4
* Consistent in Drubbings and Damage to the Body: “... in stripes”
* Consistent in Detentions in Prison: “...in imprisonments” vs. 5
* Consistent in Disarray & Disturbances from Angry Mobs: “...in tumults” vs. 5
* Consistent in Debilitation: “...in labors.” vs. 5
* Consistent in Deficiency of Sleep: “...in watchings” vs. 5
* Consistent in Deprivation of Food: “...in fastings” vs. 5
* Consistent in Decorum, Deportment, or Demeanor: “...by pureness”
* Consistent in Discernment: “by knowledge”.....vs. 6
* Consistent in Durability & Determination: “...by longsuffering” vs. 6
* Consistent in Dignity and Decency: “...by kindness” vs. 6
* Consistent in the Dwelling of the Holy Spirit: “...by the Holy Ghost”
* Consistent in Deep Devotion or Love: “...by love unfeigned” vs. 6
* Consistent in the Deliverance of a Truthful Message: “by the word of truth” vs.7
* Consistent in the Dominance or Power of God: “...by the power of God” vs.7
19. Consistent in the Defensive and Offensive Weapons of Truth: "...by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and left" vs. 7

Interpreters have varied much in the exposition of these words. Grotius says that it refers to the manner in which the ancient soldiers were armed. They bore a spear in their right hand, and a shield in the left. With the right hand they attacked their foes, with the latter they made their defense. Some have supposed that it refers to the fact that they were taught to use the sword with the left hand as well as with the right. The simple idea is, that they were completely armed. To be armed on the right hand and on the left, is to be well armed, or entirely equipped. Soldiers went forth to the conflict ready for battle.

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

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

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

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

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

* Genesis 2:21- And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof:

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

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

* Hebrews 4:12- For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

20. Consistent in Dignity and Dishonor: “...by honor and dishonor” vs. 8

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

* 1 Corinthians 1:31- That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Paul did not need recognition in order to serve the Lord. He did receive honor from the churches he ministered too, but it did not go to his head. He knew the purpose of his life and it wasn’t to glorify himself, but Christ. Paul was dishonored too. The word “dishonor” is from the word *atimia* {at-ee-mee'-ah} which means “dishonor, ignominy, or disgrace.” This word was normally used in Greek culture for the loss of
rights as a citizen. Paul says, "I may have lost all the rights and privileges which the world can confer but I am still a citizen of the Kingdom of God." In spite of the garbage, grief, and gloom that the enemies of the Gospel hurled at Paul, he was consistent for Christ and still was reaching out to those who did not know the Lord.

* 1 Corinthians 4:13- Being defamed, we intreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

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

* Matthew 6:24- No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

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

Things didn't improve much for the first two years, in fact. He felt his prospects of winning converts "as dark as midnight." After three years into the work, he finally witnessed a revival among the Indians of Crossweesung in New England. After another year and a half, the number of converts numbered 150 which is not much by today's mass evangelistic standards, but profoundly significant in his day. Unfortunately, Brainerd died after only five years on the mission field, at young age of 29. The man who felt he was a failure, ended up bringing great honor to Christ and to his own life by being faithful.

After Brainerd's death, Jonathan Edwards—whom some consider America's greatest theologian—published David Brainerd's journals. These were read widely in America and Europe. In fact, William Carey, the "father of modern missions," the man who ignited the modern Protestant missionary movement, which has been responsible for millions upon millions of conversions worldwide, pointed to Brainerd's journals as a key source of his inspiration to take up the missionary life.
Who, then, can judge whether our work is worthwhile? Certainly we cannot when we’re in the midst of discouragement. Our responsibility is to just be faithful to Christ whether we are honored or dishonored.

21. Consistent in Defaming and Decent Reports: “...by evil report and good report” vs. 8

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

The phrase “evil report” is from the word *dusphemia* {doos-fay-mee'-ah} which means “disgraceful language; reproach, slander, or defame.” Paul knew what it was like to have his motives called into question and to have mud thrown on his name and character. When thus assailed and reproached, Paul and the early Christians endeavored to commend themselves as the ministers of God. Evidently they endeavored to do this by not slandering or reviling in return. Instead, they maintained a Christian spirit, they proved the accusations were wrong by the way they lived, and demonstrated patience and love to their attackers. Paul’s consistency when he was slandered demonstrated that he had one master and it was the Lord. He was not living for the accolades, applause, and admiration of this world.

* Matthew 6:24- No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

* Romans 12:2- And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

When praised by men with good reports, Paul was still focused on Christ. Folks don’t realize that when you are applauded by people, you face entirely different forms of testings and temptations. Your guard must be shifted from outward attackers who slander you to guarding against inward pride and an inflated ego which can weaken you just as effectively as the slander of men. Pride can cause you to become independent of God and have an “I don’t need the Lord’s Help” or a “Look at me!” mentality. This kind of thinking will lead to foolish decisions and stupid behavior. We are warned of our need for Christ and the destructiveness of our pride.
* John 15:5- I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
* Proverbs 16:18- Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.
* Proverbs 29:23- A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

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

* Proverbs 26:28- A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.
* Proverbs 29:5- A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

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

22. Consistent when Denounced as Deceivers, yet Dependable or truthful: "...as deceivers, and yet true;" vs. 8

Paul was faithful and consistent for Christ even though people accused him of being a deceiver. This word “deceiver” is from the word planos which forms our English word “planet.” Planets wander the universe. This word means “a wandering quack or imposter.” They claimed he was a fraud and his message was fraudulent. Paul, however, knew his message was the truth and he was an ambassador of the Lord, sharing the truth with a lost world that needed to hear what he had to say. In spite of these taunts, he patiently continued to preach the truth and reach people for Christ.

We know that our message today is true because it comes from the Word of God. The standard for our beliefs are not to be based on traditions or opinions, but on what the Scriptures say. Why? Because the Scriptures are the standard for truth. They define the boundaries for what is right and wrong. For this reason, we are to study them. Never underestimate the power of the truth of God’s Word and never undervalue your service and giving for Christ.
It was at a missionary committee meeting in England that the chairperson startled the people by claiming he had founded a growing Christian group in India. They knew he had never been outside of England. He explained that when he was five years old, he had been impressed by a story of missions in India. He didn't want to just put his penny in the box. The pastor had a friend who was a missionary. The little boy bought a Bible, put his own name on the flyleaf, and mailed it to India. The missionary gave it to a poor man who had walked miles to ask for a Bible. Twenty years passed, and a visitor to a remote Indian village found the people there were Christians. No missionary had ever visited them, but they showed him a well-used New Testament with a boy's name on the flyleaf. Beloved, God's Word is powerful.

23. Consistent though Disregarded, yet Distinguished: "...as unknown, and yet well known" vs.9

Even though Paul was well-known by many, he was ignored or disregarded by men. Have you ever been ignored or rejected by people because of your faith in Christ? I faced this in high school many times in Sociology class. We debated a number of issues of the day in that classroom. It was good training for me. The situation I would face was moans and groans when I would offer a Biblical position on an issue. Many of the most popular kids in our graduating class were in that classroom and they did not like what I had to say. In other words, my position did not matter or count since it was based on the Bible. After this happened several times, I began to expect the resistance when issues were debated. It wasn't easy, but I kept speaking up.

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

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

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

Later my deacon insisted we go back. We did. "Jack, I know I offended you," he said. "I humbly apologize. But I want you to know I've been working since then. Your first problem is where your family will live after you die. A realtor in our church has agreed to sell your house and give your wife his commission. "I guarantee you that, if you'll permit us, some other men and I will make the house payments until it's sold. "Then, I've contacted the owner of an apartment house down the street. He's offered your wife a three-bedroom apartment plus free utilities and an $850 a month salary in return for her collecting rents and supervising plumbing and electrical repairs. The income from your house should pay for your daughter's college. I just want you to know your family will be cared for." Jack cried like a baby. He died shortly thereafter, so wrapped in pain he never accepted Christ. But he experienced God's love even while rejecting Him. And his widow, touched by caring Christians, responded to the Gospel message and trusted Christ as her Savior.

24. Consistent in Dying, yet Dynamic: "...as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;" vs. 9

Paul was faced with continual dangers, fatigue, and persecutions. Danger was his companion, and the prospect of death his comrade. He formed a path walking through the valley of the shadow of death. He was faced with it so many times, yet remained consistent for Christ. Paul was chastened but not killed. Yet, by the grace of God, he was triumphantly alive with a life that death could never kill. Things happened to him that might have chastened any man's spirit, but they could not kill the spirit of Paul. He remained consistent for Christ. Beloved, we are preserved by the mighty power of God in the greatest dangers and deaths. Nothing happens to us unless it is cleared by the Lord.

* Titus 2:14- Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
Notice the word "peculiar" in Titus 2:14. Christians are the peculiar people of God. We use the word sometimes when we speak of something odd or strange, but that is not its use here. The word is translated from a Greek word which is made up of two words, one which means "around," as a circle, and the other which means "to be." It can be charted by a dot within a circle. This will help us to understand the meaning of the combined word.

As the circle is around the dot, so God is around each one of His saints. The circle monopolizes the dot and has the dot all to itself. So God has His own all to Himself. They are His own private unique possession. He has reserved them for Himself. The expression in 1 Thessalonians 1:1, "The church of the Thessalonians in God," has in it the same idea, for the Greek case is locative of sphere which means it is in the sphere of God, circumscribed by God, surrounded by Him. We are under God’s care and He will bring us home to Glory when it is our time. Until then we are under His care. Paul rested in this truth.

* Psalm 17:8- Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

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

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

Just as the storming of the parliament appeared imminent, the Christians showed up with a truck loaded with New Testaments. These brave Christians went from soldier to soldier and from tank to tank, handing out the Scriptures and quoted Exodus 20:13, “Thou shall not kill.”
Chapter 13...A Concern for Consistency...6:1-10

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

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

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

25. Consistent when Distressed or Devastated, yet Delighting: "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing" vs. 10

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

* 2 Timothy 4:10a-11a... For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica;.... [11] Only Luke is with me......

* 2 Timothy 4:16- At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

* 2 Timothy 1:15- This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

In spite of his hurt, he was always rejoicing. The comfort that he received from the Holy Spirit enabled him to be consistent, to have joy, and to keep going forward for Christ in spite of a broken heart. If the Lord will do this for Paul, He will do this for you too. Faith or joy on a full stomach may be simply contentment—but if you have it when you're
hungry, it's genuine. Can you rejoice when your heart is broken. If you can, your joy will enable you to be consistent for Christ, just like Paul. *Philippians 4:4- Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*

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

But there were no tears in the eyes of this young Gallahad of the faith. "Trust in God!" he cried to the crowd as he marched past. "Trust in God." And then suddenly he saw a friend of his own standing on the edge of the crowd, and he shouted to him, "Good news; wonderful good news! I am within four days of enjoying the sight of Jesus, my Savior!" Hugh MacHale saw the future so powerfully that it was more real to him than death. When we look to the future we have in Christ, it will allow us to live faithfully for Christ today, even if it costs us. It will help us to be consistent when distressed or devastated.

26. Consistent when Destitute and in Distributing to Others: "...as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." vs. 10

No matter what his financial status was, Paul was consistent in serving the Lord and helping other people. He might seem to be penniless but he brought with him that which would enrich the souls of men. He might seem to have nothing, but, having Christ, he had everything that mattered in this world and the next. By dispensing to the lost, the treasures of salvation, he made them rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Those who put their faith in Christ were enriched with a treasure that could not be stolen by thieves, or corrupted by moths or rust. They were heirs of the inheritance of Christ. Nothing is more valuable than eternal life.

The people that Paul ministered to were enriched in another way. When the Gospel is faithfully preached and accepted, it improves the condition of those who are poor. It changes their lives and makes them sober. Money that would be spent on sinful living and substances such as illegal drugs, alcohol, gambling, or prostitutes, is now saved. Christ makes a man more responsible and diligent, causing him to use his time for constructive purposes instead of wasting away his life. Wise use of
time enriches anyone. If you are a Christian, you may own little, but you possess much. You are enjoying now and will continue to enjoy throughout eternity the wonderful riches and blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing and enjoying these blessings will help you to remain consistent for Christ.

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

After that, I’d stroll up them avenues where the children of God dwell, and view their mansions. Father Abraham, I’m sure he got a great palace. And David, and Paul, the mighty scholar, who got struck down on the Damascus Road, I want to see his mansion. Then I cuts around to the back streets and looks for the little home where my Savior set up my mother to housekeeping. I expect to know the house by the roses in the yard and the vine on the porch.

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

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

* John 14:1-3... Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. [2] In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. Are you concerned about being a consistent Christian?
Chapter 14
Some Rudiments for the Relationships of Christians
2 Corinthians 6:11-18

O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. [12] Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. [13] Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. [14] Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? [15] And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? [16] And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, [18] And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Paul has presented his case that he has been consistent for Christ in a host of circumstances. He has defended himself against the slander of false teachers that had tried to influence the Corinthians against Paul and his ministry. As he continues this letter, he continues to express his love for these people. In so doing, he reveals some important principles or rudiments for the relationships of Christians. The principles he reveals here in this section, address our relationships with other Christians, with unbelievers, and with God. Notice verse eleven.
I. THE REALITY OF PAUL'S SINCERITY AND CONCERN 6:11

*O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.*

Paul is still reaching out to those who are cool or indifferent toward him. He tells them his mouth is open to them and his heart is enlarged. What does this mean? It means that he has spoken without hesitation, freely, and honestly with these people and his heart was like arms that are open to embrace someone in loving affection. He had great affection for these folks and sincerely cared about them.

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

* 2 Corinthians 1:12- For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

* 2 Corinthians 1:17- When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

* Titus 2:7- In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

If you are going to build any kind of solid relationship with anyone, it is vital that you are honest, open, and truthful with that person. Your heart needs to be open and trusting, instead of guarded and skeptical. If skepticism has crept into your marriage, then as a married couple, you should discuss what is creating the rift, seek forgiveness for offenses, and endeavor to correct the mistakes and not make them again. If you are unable to do this on your own, then go ahead and bring in a pastor or marriage counselor to get the issues on the table.

There is a scientific law called the Second Law of Thermodynamics. This law states that any closed system left to itself tends toward greater randomness; that is, it breaks down. It takes an ordered input of energy to keep anything together. Although it is a law designed to describe material systems, the Second Law of Thermodynamics seems to describe other systems also. For example, consider the marriage relationship. It
must have a daily, monthly, and yearly investment of time and energy so that it is enjoyable to live in. If no energy is expended, eventually the relationship needs a complete overhaul, or else it is knocked down. It is a wise couple who will build, invest, and nurture their marriage continually—rather than waiting passively for a complete overhaul in the counselor’s office or a knockdown, drag-out fight in the courtroom. Now that you are married, don’t stop dating. Love notes, gifts, and dates with your husband or wife nurture the relationship.

II. THE RESTRAINT OF AFFECTION 6:12

*Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.*

Paul addresses the strain on the relationship with this church. He says, “You are not straitened in us.” What does this mean? The word “straitened” is from the Greek word *stenochrome* {sten-okh-o-reh’-o} which means “to be cramped in a narrow place, restricted, to lack room, pressed, or distressed.” Paul says there was no lack of room in his heart for the church; no restriction or lack of love against them. He held no grudges toward these folks. His heart was wide open in affection to receive them. His love was not narrow, confined, or pent up, but was full, ample, and free.

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

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

The hearts of the Corinthians were closed toward Paul. They had little room for any kind of love for him. A number of them had squeezed the apostle out of their lives and closed their hearts to him. Their hearts were divided by false teachers. They had believed lies about Paul and turned away from him to follow false teachers. As a result, they had left
their affection for him. Just think how painful and discouraging that must have been for Paul. He love and cared for them. He invested his life into them and they responded like The Church of the Deep Freeze pastored by Jack Frost.

In spite of their coldness, Paul never lost his love for them. Those who deserve love the least need it the most. What an example to us to love others even though they may be cool or unkind to us. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to do this. Speaking about love, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:7, “Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

* Matthew 5:44- But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; A little girl had the right idea about this verse. She wrote: Dear Preacher, I heard you say to love our enemies. I am only six and do not have any yet. I hope to have some when I am seven. Your friend, Love, Amy

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

* 1 Thessalonians 5:15- See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

There is another important lesson we will address here. Be careful about forming opinions about others without checking all the facts. In this day and age, there are so many character assassinations made on television and in the newspapers that are unfounded or are inaccurate. Even in everyday life, you may hear something that is told to you by someone about another individual. If you are going to form and opinion about a person or an issue, then research the matter for accuracy of the facts. This will help you in preventing damage in relationships with others and will also help you to not put your foot in your mouth.

* Proverbs 18:13- He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. Spouting off before listening or finding out the facts is foolish, and also disgraceful, shameful and confusing.
III. THE REQUEST FOR RECIPROCITY  6:13

Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

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

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

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

* Mark 12:30- And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.
* Joshua 23:11- Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.

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

* 2 Corinthians 5:14- For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

The love for Christ constrained Dr. Thomas Lambie (1885-1954). Dr. Thomas Lambie went to Ethiopia as a medical missionary and was a very godly man. He was the first American missionary to go this country. After some time he wanted to buy land for a mission station. An Ethiopian law said that no land could be sold to foreigners. Because Dr. Lambie had great love for Christ and the Ethiopians, he gave up his American citizenship and became an Ethiopian citizen. Then he bought the properties needed for his work. The United States, glad to honor him because of his great work in Ethiopia, restored Dr. Lambie’s American citizenship.
According to *Wikipedia Encyclopedia*, there is the legend of a dream Dr. Lambie once had. He had returned to Philadelphia from his first term as a medical missionary in Ethiopia, and received a lucrative offer to join a successful medical practice. Dr. Lambie had decided to accept the offer, when one night he had a dream. In it, a foul leprous hand arose out of the heart of Africa: "Take that hand!" he was ordered. Nauseated, even in his dream, he reluctantly took the hand. And as he did, it became the pierced hand of Jesus, leading him back to his calling to Ethiopia.

**IV. THE REVIEW OF AN OLD PRINCIPLE  6:14-16**


The Corinthians had a rotten attitude about Paul because they were hanging around the wrong kind of people. The influence of false teachers soured their attitudes toward God’s Word and God’s man. He reviews an old principle with these believers. He tells them to separate from the ungodly. Paul knows the influence of friends. Bad friends can lead to a bad attitude and actions. We see this repeatedly in the Bible.

* 1 Corinthians 15:33 - *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.* Bad companions can corrupt your character.

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

* 1 Kings 11:4- *For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

2. Samson’s taste for Philistine women led to his demise and destruction. They brought out the worst in Samson. His last woman, Delilah, plotted to find the secret of his strength to satisfy her lust for silver. She succeeded and Samson was bound, blinded, mocked, imprisoned, and destroyed.

* Judges 16:20-21.... And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. [21] But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of
brass: and he did grind in the prison house.

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

* 2 Peter 2:7-8. And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: [8] (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

Verse seven says Lot was “vexed” with the filthy lifestyle of the wicked. This word “vexed” is from the word kataponeo {kat-ap-on-eh'-o} which means “to tire or exhaust; to afflict; to trouble or treat roughly.” He was afflicted by the sin of the city. Peter continues in verse eight and says his righteous soul was “vexed” daily. This word for “vexed” is a different word. It is from the word basanizo {bas-an-id'-zo} and it means “to torture, torment, harass, or distress.” Living in this city was torture for Lot and it led to the death of his wife and the moral destruction of his daughters. They got out of Sodom before it was destroyed, but Sodom did not get out of them. After Sodom’s destruction, they got their father drunk and had sex with him.

* Genesis 19:32-35... Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. [33] And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. [34] And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also: and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. [35] And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

The influence of evil is destructive. It is for this reason we are to separate from those who are wicked. God's command of separation is found throughout Scripture. He warned Israel not to mingle with the pagan nations in the land of Canaan (Num. 33:50-56); yet they repeatedly disobeyed His Word and were punished because of it. The prophets repeatedly pled with the people to forsake their heathen idols and devote themselves wholly to the Lord. They failed to heed the warnings and God had to send Israel into Assyrian captivity and Judah into Babylonian
Captivity. The apostles in their letters to the churches also emphasized doctrinal and personal purity. The believer was in the world, but he must be careful not to become like the world.

* Romans 12:1-2... I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. [2] And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

* 1 Timothy 6:10-11.. 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. [11] But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

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

* 1 Corinthians 5:9-10... I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: [10] Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. Paul says that if we are not to associate with immoral, greedy, deceitful, cheating, idolatrous people, then we would have to leave this world. There were, however, people who claimed to be believers who were living in immorality. Fellowship with these folks was to be terminated.

We are all acquainted with people who do not know the Lord. In fact, we should use our acquaintance with the unsaved to try to reach them for Christ. How else are we going to reach the lost? What Paul is stressing here is a challenge for all believers to keep themselves unspotted from this world. We may be acquainted with unbelievers, but we do not have to live the same kind of lifestyle as they do. We do not have to live in sin. We are to be careful not to put ourselves into situations where we might compromise with sin and hurt our testimony for Christ. Christians are not to allow themselves to be influenced by the ungodly. The basis of Paul’s challenge is five-fold.
A. Saintliness demands Separation: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" vs. 16

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

* Deuteronomy 22:10- Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.

The ox was a clean animal to the Jews, but the ass was not. It would be wrong to yoke them together. The animals would be blistered by an uneven harness. They would be out of step and their plowing would tend to be crooked. Furthermore, they have two opposite natures and would not even work well together. It would be cruel to bind them to each other. In the same way, it is wrong for believers to be yoked together with unbelievers. The Christian possesses a divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and therefore he should want to associate himself only with that which pleases the Lord.

* 2 Peter 1:4- Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The phrase "unequally yoked together" is from the Greek word heterozugeo {het-er-od-zoog-eh'-oj}. It is from the Greek word heteros which means "another of a different kind." We are not to be yoked with another of a different kind. This word heterozugeo is a military term. The word signifies to leave one's own rank, place, or order, and go into another. Here, it must signify not only that these Christians should not associate with the unbelievers in their idolatrous feasts, but that they should not apostatize from Christianity. The questions which follow show that there was a sort of fellowship that some of the Christians had formed with the heathen, which was both wicked and absurd, and if not speedily checked, would infallibly lead to final apostasy.

The principle of "unequal yoke" applies to marriage and business partnerships. Believers are not to date, court, or marry unbelievers. If you want a Christian spouse, then date one. Don't use your dating to evangelize someone who is lost. Wait until they are already saved before you court them. Multitudes of Christians have gotten away from the Lord or out of church because they violated this principle.
Time magazine reported (1/22/95) that the earthquake in Kobe, Japan, occurred when two plates on a fault line fifteen miles offshore suddenly shifted against each other, violently lurching six to ten feet in opposite directions. The result was the worst Japanese earthquake since 1923. Thousands died. More than 46,000 buildings lay in ruins. One-fifth of the city’s population was left instantly homeless. The destruction unleashed by those two tectonic plates depicts what happens when a Christian bonds unequally with a non-Christian. Two people committed to each other but going in different directions can only lead to trouble and instability.

Some have spouses that are unsaved now because they did not know this truth, they rejected this truth, or were saved after they were married. If this is the case, stay with your spouse and endeavor to win them to Christ. Love them and live a godly life. Paul and Peter addressed this issue.

* 1 Corinthians 7:12-13.... But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. [13] And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

* 1 Peter 3:1-4... Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; [2] While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. [3] Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; [4] But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Christians are not to form business partnerships with unsaved people. We should not join in ungodly clubs, fellowships, agreements, or organizations which may lead to compromising our Christian testimony and jeopardize our walk with God. We are not to be bound to people in bondage, in lifestyles we can’t condone, in philosophies we are not in agreement, or in values we stand against. Christians are not to develop intimate friendships with unsaved people because the tendency of the intimacy leads to iniquity.

The carnal nature of unbelievers many times leads to a demand in compromise with something that is wrong or questionable in order to maintain the relationship. If there is no compromise, the relationship is
terminated or severely cooled. So the Christian is pressured to make a choice to compromise with carnality in some way or the other or to terminate the relationship, which God is talking about here. This may not happen in all relationships with unsaved people, but it does occur in a majority of situations. The stories are endless.

Every Christian that I know who has violated the principle of being unequally yoked in business partnerships has regretted their decision. Those who I know and didn’t heed this warning, formed business partnerships, and had to dissolve those partnerships within a year because of the compromises the other business partner was asking them to make. God knows what he is doing. When he tells us to not yoke up with unbelievers, He means it. He knows what He is talking about! Righteousness does not have anything in common with unrighteousness. Saintliness is contrary to sinfulness.

B. Substantiality demands Separation: “and what communion hath light with darkness?” vs.16

Can light and darkness co-exist? No. This is a substantial fact of life. There is no getting away from this fact. Substantiality, truth, or reality says that believers and unbelievers are not to be yoked together either. We have no communion with unbelievers. This word “communion” is from the word koinonia {koy-nohn-ee'-ah} which means “fellowship or intimacy; partnership and participation.” It means to be so closely bound together that there is open and mutual sharing: what one has belongs to the other. The point is clear. There is no such fellowship or union between light and darkness. On the contrary, light and darkness are mutually exclusive, of different natures entirely. They cannot coexist.

The same fact holds true between the believer and unbeliever. The unbeliever will not share or enjoy the blessings that God has for the Christian. The unbeliever will not share in eternal life, the inheritance of Jesus Christ, and the joys of Heaven and the Christian will not share in the torments of Hell that the unbeliever will face for eternity. There is no communion between light and darkness. Amos addressed this issue in the Old Testament.

* Amos 3:3- Can two walk together, except they be agreed?
C. The Sacrifice of Redemption demands Separation: “And what concord hath Christ with Belial?” vs. 15

The word “concord” is from the Greek word *sumphonesis* {soom-fo'-nay-sis}. It forms our English word “symphony.” This word means “agreement or unison” and it refers, properly, to the unison or harmony produced by musical instruments as in a symphony, where there is a harmonious chord.

Belial means “worthless” and is a term that refers to Satan and those who are under his control. So Paul is asking, “What harmony is there between Christ and Satan? There is none. There is as much that is discordant between Christ and Belial as there is between instruments of music that produce only discordant and jarring sounds. The redemption of Jesus Christ changes an individual. Because of God’s saving grace we are new creatures in Christ and thus, we are no longer in harmony with the direction the world is heading, its anti-God sentiment, or its ungodly lifestyle.

A Haitian pastor illustrated to his congregation the need for total commitment to Christ and the importance of total separation by telling them this parable: A certain man wanted to sell his house for $2,000. Another man wanted very badly to buy it, but because he was poor, he couldn't afford the full price. After much bargaining, the owner agreed to sell the house for half the original price with just one stipulation: he would retain ownership of one small nail protruding from just over the door. The man agreed.

After several years, the original owner wanted the house back, but the new owner was unwilling to sell the home. So the first owner went out and found the carcass of a dead dog, and hung it from the nail he still owned on the front door. Soon the house became unlivable and the family was forced to sell the house to the owner of the nail. The Haitian pastor's conclusion to the story was this: "If we leave the Devil with even one small peg in our life, he will return to hang his rotting garbage on it, making it unfit for Christ's habitation." Beloved, there is no room for Satan and his garbage in our lives.
D. Sense demands Separation: “what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” vs. 15

Common sense says that a believer has no part or share with an infidel. An infidel was a person who was without faith. He was an unbeliever whether he was an idolater, scoffer, philosopher, or a moral person. If he did not have faith in the Lord he was an infidel.

E. Spiritual Truth demands Separation: “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” vs. 16a

The word “agreement” is from the word sugkatatathēsis {soong-kat-ath'-es-is} which means “to deposit together with another person; to vote together with someone or to consent.” There is no agreement or unity between the temple of God and idols. Idols were considered an abomination in Bible days. When an idol was erected in the temple under Antiochus Ephiphanes and a pig was sacrificed on the altar, it was referred to as an abomination.

As idolatry conflicts with the temple of God, unbelievers have no unison with Christians over spiritual matters and many times in the way they live. Paul is trying to make it clear that we are not on the same wavelength with unbelievers. The desire to serve Christ and live a holy life will lead to separation in close friendships with unsaved people. The Christian will become uncomfortable with the unbeliever or the unbeliever will become uncomfortable with the Christian. The principle of separation is an important factor in developing relationships with other people.

V. A REMINDER OF AN IMPORTANT TRUTH 6:16b

“. . . for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

After speaking about the clash between the temple of God and idolatry, Paul reminds us of an important truth about our relationship with God. The believer is God’s temple. The Spirit of God indwells every Christian and will continue to dwell in them. The Lord is our God and we belong to Him.
* 1 Corinthians 3:16- Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?
* 1 Corinthians 6:19-20... What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Because the Lord indwells us and lives within us, He guides our way if we will let Him. He watches over us and cares for our needs. For example, Solomon Ginsburg seemed destined to follow in his father's footsteps as a rabbi to the oppressed community of Polish Jews. But during his early manhood, to his father's horror, Solomon put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and became a Christian. His conversion brought him intense persecution. On one occasion he was beaten unmercifully, kicked till unconscious, and left for dead in a garbage box, bones broken, clothing soaked with blood. "Oh, but those were glorious times," he later said.

Solomon became a fiery Bible evangelist across both Europe and South America. In 1911, needing rest, he decided to head to America on furlough. His route took him to Lisbon where he planned to cross the Bay of Biscay to London, then on to the United States. Arriving in Lisbon, Ginsburg found the bulletin boards plastered with weather telegrams warning of terrific storms raging on the Bay of Biscay. It was dangerous sailing, and he was advised to delay his trip a week. His ticket allowed him to do that, and he prayed about it earnestly.

But as he prayed, he turned to his prayer calendar and found the text for that day was in the second chapter of Deuteronomy.
* Deuteronomy 2:7, "For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing."

The Lord seemed to assure him that his long, worldwide travels were under divine protection. Ginsburg boarded the ship at once, crossed without incident, and caught the ship Majestic in London. His transatlantic voyage was smooth, peaceful, and restful. Only after arriving in the United States did Solomon learn that had he delayed his trip in Lisbon, he would have arrived in London just in time to board a big ship known as..... the Titanic which sank on its maiden voyage. Beloved, we should all thank the Lord for His care, protection, and direction.
* Psalm 37:23- The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.

VI. REMOVAL FROM EVIL INFLUENCES 6:17

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

The word “Wherefore” is a reference to what has just been said. Since we are the temple of the Lord, we are to come out from idolaters and unbelievers and be separated in the way we live. We are to avoid the path of the ungodly.

* Proverbs 1:10- My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.
* Proverbs 4:14-15... Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. [15] Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.
* Proverbs 13:20 - He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.
* Psalm 1:1- Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
* Psalm 26:4-5... I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. [5] I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked.

Time and time again in the early church the choice came to a man between the security of his job and his loyalty to Jesus Christ. It is told that a man came to Tertullian about this issue of separation and taking a stand. He told him his problem and then he said, "But after all I must live." Tertullian’s reply was, "Must you?"

Christians also gave up social occasions in New Testament times. They would pass on attending feasts that were held in the temple of a pagan god and refrained from eating food that was dedicated to these gods. Some folks did not understand why they did this and became angry, annoyed, or offended by the lack of the participation of the Christians. Many Christians paid a price for following Christ by being banned, shunned, rejected, or disowned by their unbelieving family members or friends. They may have been rejected by family, friends, or society, but the Lord said, “I will receive you.” Paul continues this thought in verse 18 as he focuses on the Lord’s relationship with us.
Beloved, these Christians went through terrible times, yet the Lord encouraged and enabled them to endure their suffering and He will help you to do this too. Several years ago a group of fledgling students sat around the old oak table in Ruth Bell Graham’s kitchen, listening to her stories. They were lonely and homesick. College life had been rougher than expected. Ruth’s eyes glowed as she told of her own bouts with loneliness and discouragement while a boarding student in Korea, and again during her husband’s extended absences while preaching. But the joy of God’s presence during Bible study helped ease the pain.

She showed them her little notebook, one she had worn out several times. “Here I jot journal entries, stories I hear, and spiritual lessons God teaches me. As you record your Bible studies, over the years you’ll actually be compiling your own personal Bible commentary.”

The next day, one of the students opened his heart to her in private, admitting defeat in his Christian life. The depth of her wisdom was veiled only by the simplicity of her response. She told him of the twelve spies in Numbers 13. They were sent by Moses to scrutinize the Promised Land. It was theirs for the taking, for God had assured them of His presence and of His conquering power. But ten of the spies lost their nerve, seeing only giants, walled cities, and strong defenses. Joshua and Caleb, on the other hand, were undaunted and full of faith. “Let us go up at once and possess the land,” they said, “for the Lord our God is with us.”

“Now,” asked Ruth, “what was the difference between the two sets of spies? Just this …” She paused for effect. “The ten compared themselves to their problems, but the two compared their problems with God!” Beloved, compare your problems to the Lord when you are facing difficulties and discouragement.

VII. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD 6:18

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The Lord is the Heavenly Father of the Christian. Those who know Christ as their Savior are referred to as the sons of God. *John 1:12- But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

The questions at this point are, “Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ?”
* 2 Corinthians 6:2- (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)
* Romans 10:13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

During the Battle of Murfreesboro, D.L. Moody visited the bedside of a dying soldier. Moody shared the gospel, but the man shook his head saying, “He can’t save me. I’ve sinned all my life.” Moody tried verse after verse, but nothing worked until he read from the third chapter of John. He said, “As I read on, his eyes became riveted upon me, and he seemed to drink every syllable. When I came to the words, ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life,’ he stopped me and asked, ‘Is that in there?’ Moody replied, ‘Yes it is!’ The soldier said, ‘Well, I never knew that was in the Bible. Read it again.’ Moody read it over and over, explaining how the brass snake in Numbers 13 foreshadowed the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

The next morning, Moody came to the cot where the soldier was but it was empty. The attendant told Moody the young man had died peacefully, repeating to himself that glorious proclamation: “Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Have you put your faith in Christ for salvation?” If not, put your faith in Him today. What you do with Christ matters more than any other decision you will make in your entire life.
Chapter 15
Fighting, Fear, and Friends
2 Corinthians 7:1-7

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. [2] Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. [3] I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you. [4] Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. [5] For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. [6] Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; [7] And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

Being falsely accused of wrong doing is very frustrating and can be very discouraging and depressing. Such was the case with one of the greatest Christians in the history of Christendom...the Apostle Paul. He addresses here the conflicts he faced externally and also internally. He knew what it was like to be depressed and disillusioned. Yet, he also enjoyed comfort in the face of his discouragement. How did this happen?

When Paul was cast down, how did he get back up? We find some answers here. This portion of Scripture will provide some practical answers for us on the ways that Lord comforts us when we are down in the dumps and how to spiritually cope with depressing circumstances. God has a way of bringing friends into our lives when we are facing
fightings and fears. This chapter begins with a challenge for us to get the garbage out of our lives. Notice verse one.

I. THE CHALLENGE TO CLEANLINESS 7:1

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

What promises is Paul talking about here? He is talking about the promises that were discussed at the end of the sixth chapter. Notice them again.

*2 Corinthians 6:16-18... And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. [18] And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

These promises refer to God’s assurances of His presence, friendship, and fellowship to those who obey Him. The Lord said that if we will obey Him, He will be a real Father to us, we will be real sons and daughters to Him, and He can deal with us in that relationship. This does not say that if we don’t come out and be separate, we will lose our salvation.

It does mean that if we do not lead a godly, clean life, God can’t treat us as a Father would want to treat His child. As a father of seven kids, it would be difficult for me to be tender and joyous with my kids if they were not obeying me and doing that which was wrong. The Lord is no different. He wants us to get rid of our filth.

*Proverbs 15:9- The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.*

*Isaiah 55:7- Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

*2 Timothy 2:19- Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Did you know that the Lord wants to be in sweet, close fellowship with you? This kind of relationship, however, is hindered by corruption
or disobedience in your life. It is essential then that we all clean up ourselves and remove from our life that which is offensive to the Lord. The promises of God are meant to lead us to purity of life, but they do not do so automatically. We have to appropriate them and access their power by choosing to use them as God intended. We must make the choice to do what is right or wrong. The Christian who expects to be made pure without any effort of his own, will struggle with impurity and his flesh.

The person who lives a holy live will do so in consequence of deliberate efforts to resist the evil of his own heart, and to become like Christ. The promises of God aid us in our quest to be Christlike. God wants us to be holy and has given us His power to live this way if we will use this power and yield to the Spirit of God.

* 1 Peter 1:15-16.... But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; [16] Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

We must make the choice to put the principles of God’s Word into practice. Obedience, holiness, and godliness are not automatic because we continue to struggle with our flesh. This is why we are challenged to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. We are the ones that have to throw out the garbage. If we don’t, our sin will rob us of our joy. This is why so many Christians have a chip on their shoulder today and gripe and complain about nothing. They have lost their joy.

When the Emperor arrested Chrysostom and tried to make him recant, he shook his head. The Emperor said to his guards, "Throw him into prison." "No," said one of them, "he will be glad to go, for he delights in the presence of his God in quiet!" "Well, execute him," said the Emperor. "He will be glad to die," said the soldier, "for he wants to go to Heaven. I heard him say so the other day. "There is only one thing that can give Chrysostom pain," said the guard. "That is, to make him sin; he said he was afraid of nothing but sin. If you can make him sin, you will make him unhappy." The guard was right on target. Sin will rob us of our joy.

The filthiness of the flesh is the sin which we commit in the body. This has to do with unholy lusts, unbridled appetites, drunkenness, glutteny, licentiousness, inordinate affection, etc. You and I need to be aware of the fact that we are living in a world today that is giving respectability to the sins of the flesh. Drunkenness, immorality, homosexuality, and drugs are glorified by many segments of society today, even by liberal churches. The challenge remains to get the garbage
out of our lives. How do we do this? How do we clean up our lives if we
are supposed to do this?

We cannot cleanse our own conscience from the guilt of sin. I am
unable to wash out the stain of a guilty conscience, but God has done that
through the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood.

* 1 John 1:7- But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have
fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son
cleanseth us from all sin.

As a father came home from his work, he saw his little daughter who
had been playing in the mud. He said to her, "My, you're pretty dirty." In
her childish way she replied, "Yes, I know daddy, but I'm prettier when
I'm clean." We are prettier too, when we are spiritually clean. After we
have been cleansed from our sins by the blood of Christ, our hearts still
need a daily cleansing from the contamination of each day and the defeats
we have suffered from yielding to temptation. The question is, "How?"
The Bible provides some steps for daily cleansing.

* Some Steps for Daily Cleansing

1. Confession and Clearing our Conscience lead to cleansing.

* 1 John 1:9- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us
our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

* Acts 24:16- And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a
conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. When you
clear your conscience and seek forgiveness for your offenses from God
or others, you remove a weight upon your soul and a hindrance to your
testimony.

2. The Concepts of the Word of God have a cleansing effect on us.

Just reading the Bible has a cleansing effect upon us, especially
when we have had a rough day or had to endure the "junk" behavior and
language of the world. The best bar of soap in the world is the Word of
God. It will really clean us up. The Holy Spirit enables us to deal with the
sin in our lives.

* Ephesians 5:26- That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the
washing of water by the word,

* John 15:3- Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken
unto you.

* John 17:17- Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

* Psalm 119:9- Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by
taking heed thereto according to thy word.
In the Old Testament we read of the Laver in the Tabernacle and Temple area for the purpose of cleansing the hands and feet of the priest. This is where the priest washed themselves. The Laver is a picture of the Word of God. No dimensions were given for the Laver reminding us that it was limitless in its applications. In the same manner, God has the power to cleanse and change any sinner. There are no limits to His power.

The laver stood between the brazen altar and the entrance into the Holy Place. The Holy Place was the place of service, prayer, worship, and fellowship with the Lord. The laver teaches us that God wants our service to be done with clean hands and feet. Hands speak of service and feet speak of our walk and conduct. We are priests (1 Peter 2:15) and need to be clean and consecrated to the Lord just like the Old Testament priest. The Bible helps us to be clean.

It is interesting to note that the laver at the Tabernacle was made from the brazen mirrors that were brought out of Egypt. The mirrors were symbols of pride, vanity, and glorification of the flesh. The laver, the place of cleansing for service, reminds us to put away our pride, vanity, and love of self if we are going to serve the Lord. Mirrors in the Bible are also a type of the Word of God. The Bible is like a mirror, revealing our weaknesses and faults and revealing us as we really are.

*James 1:23,24- For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. The Word of God cleanses us, just like the laver.

3. Compliance to the Word of God has a purifying effect on us.

* 1 Peter 1:22- Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

If we are going to be what God wants us to be, we must make the choice to obey the Lord, get rid of our sin, and do what is right. It is not enough to just read the Word, it needs to be put into practice.

In Mexico and the tropical zones of South America a “strangler” fig grows in abundance. The Spanish-speaking people refer to it as the “matapalo” which means “the tree killer.” The fruit is not edible except to the cattle and birds. After birds eat it, they must clean their beaks of the sticky residue. They do this by rubbing them on nearby trees. The seeds have a natural glue which enables them to stick to the branches. When the rainy season comes, germination begins. Tiny roots begin to
make their way down into the heart of the wood. Within a few years, beautiful trees become entangled with this parasitic vine. Unless the tree is freed from these vines, it eventually dies. The only way to stop the killing process is to cut away the vine. We must take the same action when it comes to sinful habits in our life. They must be removed or else they will choke out the desire to obey the Lord’s will in our life.

* Matthew 13:22- He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he cometh unfruitful.

* Matthew 24:12- And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

4. Cherishing and a reverential fear of the Lord has a cleansing effect on us.

* Psalm 19:9- The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

A reverence and respect for the Lord will help us stay right with the Lord and reject that which is wrong. When reverence for Christ wains, then so does godly living. The change in attitude of our country toward the Lord has brought about a change in behavior through the history of our country.

John Kilbourn pointed out that the state of Pennsylvania once had a law that reads: "If any person shall willfully, premeditatedly and despitefully blaspheme, or speak loosely or profanely of Almighty God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the Scriptures of Truth, such a person, on conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to pay a fine, not exceeding $100, and undergo an imprisonment, not exceeding three months, or either, at the discretion of the court." A lot has changed in America.

5. Chastening has a cleansing effect on a child and upon us.

* Proverbs 20:30 - The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

* Hebrews 12:11- Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

6. The Second Coming of Christ should motivate us to keep ourselves pure.

* 1 John 3:2,3- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Knowing that the
Lord could come today is a motivation for all of us to keep our lives clean before the Lord. Do you want to be ashamed when He returns?

Paul says we are to cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh. Then he says we are to perfect holiness in our life. The word “perfecting” is from the word *epiteleo* {ep-ee-tel-eh'-o} which means “to bring to an end, to finish, complete.” Cleansing ourselves is a twofold action: turning away from sinful habits or bringing them to an end, and turning toward God. They were to make a clean break with their past and give themselves to God alone. We are supposed to do this too. In giving ourselves to the Lord, we are to bring to maturity what God had started in our lives in every area. All closets of our heart are to be open to His inspection.

* 1 Peter 5:10- But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.
* 1 Thessalonians 4:7- For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

Most people in this country do not know that the instructive motto of the State of Hawaii is a result of the influence of the Protestant missionaries who first came to Hawaii in 1820. It expresses a great truth in the Hawaiian language: *Ua mau ke ia o ka aina i ka pono*, which means, "The life of the land is preserved in righteousness." May we too, adopt the principle of this motto and respond to the challenge of Paul to live clean and holy lives. We have seen the **challenge to cleanliness, now we will look at the claim of character.**

II. THE CLAIM OF CHARACTER 7:2

*Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.*

After challenging the Corinthians to cleanse themselves of sin and improper relationships with pagans, he calls out to them to receive him and his fellow workers. The phrase “*receive us*” is from the word *choreo* {kho-reh'-o} which means “to make room or yield.” Paul was asking them to make room for them in their affections. He wanted the Corinthians to receive them as friends, as their teachers, and to love them as much as they were loved.
This is the struggle that every pastor or teacher faces. If people do not receive you, if they do not make room for you in their hearts, they won’t grow or learn. I have never been able to help any Christian who did not want to be helped, who did not think he or she needed help, or did not give me the time of day.

One of the difficulties of being in any kind of leadership position are the false accusations that you may face from people who don’t like you or are backslidden. Paul faced this and alludes to this here. Evidently he was accused of wronging others, corrupting and defrauding other people. Paul defends his ministry among the Corinthians by using phrases his adversaries might have employed.

* **Wronged no man**- The word “wrong” is from the word *adikeo* {ad-ee-keh’-o}. It refers to an injustice, as in a financial agreement or physical harm inflicted upon someone by creatures or fellow human beings. Paul says we have not hurt anyone or swindled them. Can you say this?

* **Corrupted no man**- The word “corrupt” is from the Greek word *phtheiro* {phi’ti’-ro}. It means “to corrupt or destroy; to bring into a worst state or condition; to lead a Christian away from the Lord.” Paul did not corrupt any person in their morals either by his example or his preaching. In fact, they were spiritually much better off listening and obeying what he had to say.

Let me ask, “Are you a good example to others?” Does your life point people to Christ or away from Christ by the way you live and act? Never underestimate the power of your example. This truth is amply seen in the life of Samuel Wesley. All three of the Wesley brothers started life curiously. John Wesley was rescued from a blazing house, a “brand plucked from the fire.” Charles Wesley, born prematurely, was tightly bound for days in swaddling clothes. Samuel Wesley was born February 10, 1690. He worried his parents from the beginning by refusing to utter sounds.

As he grew, no amount of coaxing would draw from him even one word. Friends feared he was dumb. But one day when five, Samuel hid under a table. His mother, Susanna, became alarmed when she couldn’t find him, and that prompted Samuel to speak his first sentence: “Here I am, Mother!” After that, there was no stopping him. Susanna soon realized Samuel was a precocious child. She taught him the alphabet in a snap, then she proceeded to teach him to read. What textbook did she choose? Genesis.
In short order, Samuel read all of Genesis 1:1 by himself. Then he read the first ten verses. Then he memorized the whole chapter, ending with the last verse: “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” It was a firm foundation.

Samuel became a preacher, poet, and educator who exerted a lasting, powerful impact on many—including his younger well-known brothers Charles, who wrote 5500 hymns, and the famous preacher John (though he objected to their Methodism). Samuel’s life was cut short. He went to bed in apparent health on November 5, 1739, age 49, only to awaken at three in the morning, ill. By seven, he was dead. His influence, however, outlived him and on his tombstone are these words:

Here lye interred
the remains of Rev. Mr. Samuel Wesley, A. M.
A man, for his uncommon wit and learning, esteemed by all
An excellent preacher:
But whose best sermon
was the constant example of an edifying life.

* Defrauded no man- The word “defraud” is from the word pleonekteo [pleh-on-cek-teh'-o] which means “to gain or take advantage of another person or to deceive them.” Paul took no man's property, by cunning, by trick, or by deception. The idea is that Paul had taken advantage of no circumstances to extort money from them, to overreach them, or to cheat them. Paul was bold and confident in his defense because he was blameless. We are to live our lives in such a way that if any person falsely accuses us, people will not believe their accusations and the accuser will be put to shame.

* 1 Peter 3:16- Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

III. CONDEMNATION IS NOT THE ISSUE  7:3
I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

Paul did not blame the Corinthians for their vacillation or lack of love and acceptance toward him. His rivals or enemies were very impressive, much more so than he. Even though these
Christians restrained their love for Paul, their actions did not smother his concern and compassion for them. His confidence in them was unimpaired. He felt strongly the Lord was working in their lives as Titus will confirm in a moment.

The attitude he demonstrates show us that the Spirit of God can help you to not become bitter toward those who may be cold, indifferent, or bitter toward you. He guarded his heart against hate and revenge which are definite compassion killers. Paul knew the real enemy was not these deceived believers, it was Satan himself. He warned us in the Ephesian letter to not give Satan ground in our heart (Ephesians 4:27). This was important in guarding against bitterness which he addressed four verses later.

* Ephesians 4:31- Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

* Colossians 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

* Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

* James 3:14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. {sensual: or, natural}

Author Ken Sande gives an example of how loving actions can communicate forgiveness: Loving actions can do much more than change your feelings; they can also communicate in unmistakable terms the reality of your forgiveness and your commitment to reconciliation. Thomas Edison apparently understood this principle.

When he and his staff were developing the incandescent light bulb, it took hundreds of hours to manufacture a single bulb. One day, after finishing a bulb, he handed it to a young errand boy and asked him to take it upstairs to the testing room. As the boy turned and started up the stairs, he stumbled and fell, and the bulb shattered on the steps. Instead of rebuking the boy, Edison reassured him and then turned to his staff and told them to start working on another bulb.

When it was completed several days later, Edison demonstrated the reality of his forgiveness in the most powerful way possible. He walked over to the same boy, handed him the bulb, and said, “Please take this up to the testing room.” Imagine how that boy must have felt. He knew that he didn’t deserve to be trusted with this responsibility again. Yet, here it was, being offered to him again as though nothing had ever happened.
Nothing could have restored this boy to the team more clearly, more quickly, or more fully. May we learn from Edison’s example of patience and forgiveness.

We have seen the challenge to cleanliness, the claim of character, condemnation is not the issue, and now we will examine confidence in conflicts.

IV. CONFIDENCE IN CONFLICTS 7:4

Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

Paul’s had great “boldness of speech” toward these Christians. This phrase “boldness of speech” is from the word parrhesia {par-rhay-see’-ah} which means “freedom in speaking; unreserved, open, frank discussion; fearless confidence in someone or something.” So in spite of the trouble or conflicts in the past, Paul had great confidence in these folks and took great pride in them and what the Lord had done in their lives. This is quite a statement considering all the turmoil and trouble that had taken place in the Corinthian church. These folks had come a long way.

In spite of conflicts, Paul was comforted or encouraged. In fact, he was exceeding joyful in all of his tribulations. The word “exceeding” is from the word huperperisseuo {hoop-er-per-is-syoo’-o}. This word is used only here and in Romans 5:20 in the New Testament. It means “to super-abound.” It is a word which would be used only when the heart was full, and when it would be difficult to find words to express its conceptions. Paul’s heart was full of joy and he pours forth his feelings in the most fervid and glowing language. He was saying that he had joy which could not be expressed. What an example to us!

Let me ask, “In spite of your trials and troubles, do you have joy and confidence in the midst of your conflicts?” It is not easy, but Paul shows us that you can! The Lord can give you comfort, confidence, calm, and courage when you are facing circumstances that are stressful. In fact, He can take our sorrows and turn them around for His glory. The Lord can take burdens and turn them into powerful blessings.

* 2 Corinthians 4:17 - For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;
*Job 23:10- But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

Carey Falwell grew up running bootleg whiskey during Prohibition, aided by his beloved younger brother Garland, a likable chap with a grin that could melt an iceberg. But the brothers were star-crossed. Garland was wild and careless, flying along mountain roads in a black roadster, drinking heavily, causing trouble. One day Garland armed himself with two pistols and aimed them at Carey in a drunken rage. A dangerous cat-and-mouse game ensued, but Carey finally fired a shotgun in self-defense, instantly killing his little brother.

Carey never reconciled himself with the tragedy. Morning after morning, he visited Garland’s grave, staring down, hat gripped in hand. Night after night, unable to sleep, he brooded at the table or in the barn, nursing a whiskey bottle, trying to forget what he had done. Dark moods seized him and his drinking increased. Time passed, and he grew embittered. He eventually succumbed to cirrhosis of the liver and died.

Against all odds, Carey had a son that grew up to be a preacher whose name was Jerry. It was Jerry Falwell who led his Thomas Road Baptist Church to purchase a farm and establish there a treatment center for alcoholics. The first man to enroll was Earl Thompson, who had once helped Carey Falwell smuggle his booze. But what should the new center be called?

As Jerry studied Exodus 15, he read of the Israelites going from the Red Sea to the waters of Marah to the wells of Elim. There were lessons at every stop, and along the way the Lord replaced bitterness with blessings. So the center for alcoholics was named Elim House, a place of blessing. Soon other Elim Houses popped up around the nation, modeled after the one in Lynchburg, Virginia.

One day, when Jerry Falwell took his mother to see Elim House, she laid her hand on his arm, and from her eyes a gentle trickle of tears flowed like a broken necklace of pearls. She said to her son, “Jerry, do you know that if your father hadn’t died you might not have cared enough about the others to build this place.” Beloved, God took Jerry Falwell’s burden and turned it into a blessing. He can do the same for you. He can give you confidence and cheer in the midst of conflicts because of His empowering grace.

*Romans 5:20b- ...... But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*
We have seen so far four key areas.
* THE CHALLENGE TO CLEANLINESS 7:1
* THE CLAIM OF CHARACTER 7:2
* CONDEMNATION IS NOT THE ISSUE 7:3
* CONFIDENCE IN CONFLICTS 7:4
* Next, COMFORT IN THE TIME OF NEED 7:5-7

V. COMFORT IN THE TIME OF NEED 7:5-7

For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. [6] Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; [7] And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

A. The Afflictions Paul Faced 7:5

For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

Paul was a very busy man. When he arrived in Macedonia there was little time for rest or relaxation. In fact, he was surrounded by “trouble” which is from the Greek word *thlibo* {thlee'-bo} which means “to press hard or compress; to be cramped in a narrow place; to be afflicted, troubled, or distressed.” This was created by fighting, strife, and contention from outward opposition. Meanwhile, emotionally he was facing fear, dread, or terror.

Can you relate to what he faced? Have you ever been in this boat? Satan had launched an all-out attack against God’s man. He was endeavoring to smother the apostle with stress, strain, sorrow, and scary circumstances. God was aware of what was happening and sent his man a breath of fresh air. Notice verse six.
B. The Arrival of an Encouraging Friend  7:6

Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

The apostle states his dilemma but adds a big word....

"Nevertheless!" This is a great word. It is from the word *alla {al-lah'}* which means "to form a transition to the cardinal, vital matter at hand." Paul said, "We may have had problems, but God comforts those that are cast down." Paul’s focus was on the Lord, not the problems. Message received! This is what we are to do too.

* Hebrews 12:2a- Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; ....

The Lord comforts those that are cast down. This word "comforteth" is from the Greek word *parakaleo {par-ak-al-eh'-o}* which means "to call to one’s side and speak to; to encourage, strengthen, instruct, and comfort." God comforts those that are "cast down." This word has the idea of being discouraged or depressed. Do Christians get depressed? You bet! In fact, some of the most well known Christians throughout history faced times of depression. Satan’s goal is to get God’s people so discouraged and depressed that he can whisper into the heart of a lost sinner and say, "There is a Christian! Do you want to be like that?"

Charles Spurgeon suffered black periods of anguish ing depression. On a notable Sunday morning in 1866, the famous Victorian preacher C. H. Spurgeon shocked his five thousand listeners when from the pulpit of London’s Metropolitan Tabernacle he announced, "I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever gets to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to." For some of his audience it was incomprehensible that the world’s greatest preacher could know the valley of despair. Yet, it was a regular part of his life because twenty-one years later in 1887, he said from the same pulpit, "Personally I have often passed through this dark valley."

Spurgeon also said, "There are dungeons beneath the castles of despair." His church family at Metropolitan Tabernacle was once amazed to hear Spurgeon begin a sermon from Isaiah 41:14 with these words in his introduction: *I have to speak today to myself, and whilst I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and downhearted, I shall be preaching, I trust to myself, for I need something which shall cheer my heart-- why I cannot tell, wherefore I do not know,*
but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me; my soul is cast down within me; I feel as if I had rather die than live; all that God hath done by me seems to be forgotten, and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down. I need your prayers.

John Henry Jowett, the renowned pastor of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian in New York City, and later Westminster Chapel in London, wrote to a friend in 1920, “You seem to imagine I have no ups and downs but just a level and lofty stretch of spiritual attainment with unbroken joy and equanimity. By no means! I am often perfectly wretched and everything appears most murky.”

Writing of Alexander Whyte, perhaps Scotland’s greatest preacher since John Knox, G. F. Barbour said, “Resolute as was Dr. Whyte’s character, he had seasons of deep depression regarding the results of his work in the pulpit or among his people.” John Knox said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and put an end to this miserable life.”

Adoniram Judson, the first foreign missionary from America, suffered from deep depression after the death of his wife Nancy. He said, “God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in Him, but I find Him not.” William Cowper, the author of the song There is a Fountain Filled With Blood suffered from severe depression all of his life. In fact, he spent eighteen months in an insane asylum and tried several times to take his own life.

Martin Luther was subject to such fits of darkness that he would hide himself away for days, and his family would remove all dangerous implements from the house for fear he would harm himself. In the midst of one of these times, his indomitable wife, Katharina, entered his room dressed in mourning clothes. Startled, Luther asked who had died. She replied that no one had, but from the way he was acting, she thought God had died!

Depression is no respecter of persons. The reality is that godly believers sometimes get depressed. Those who have set their minds on “the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1) have not been exempted from down times. Those who have gone for it all, who have scaled heights we may never attain, sometimes were subject to depression and despair. If you are down in the dumps, you are not alone. Many great Christians faced the same predicament. Thank God, however, we can find comfort when we are discouraged. The question is how? How does the Lord comfort us? Again, the Bible provides the answer.
* How Does the Lord Comfort Us when we are Depressed?

1. He uses PEOPLE to be an Encouragement and Blessing

Paul says here that he was comforted by the coming of Titus.

* 2 Corinthians 7:6- Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

The arrival of Titus was not only a relief, but also a shot in the arm for Paul. He did not feel out on the limb any more. Beloved, God uses people to lift us up when we are down. David had Jonathan, Elijah had Elisha, Moses had Joshua, Paul had Silas, Barnabas, Timothy, and Titus. The list is endless.

In the same manner, our Lord wants to use you to encourage others that need it. You can, if you will be alert to the needs of others and concerned enough to get involved. You won’t be a blessing if you are griping, complaining, critical, and walking around with a chip on your shoulder. It ain’t gonna happen! Does your presence encourage other people? Do you bring them up or down?

* Proverbs 27:9- Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.
* Proverbs 27:17- Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.
* Job 4:3- Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.

The Protestant Reformation, which began in 1517, produced virtually no church-sent missionaries until two Moravians, Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann, left the warmth of their community of Herrnhut and ventured to St. Croix in 1732. It was Herrnhut’s leader, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who spurred their going. Zinzendorf had visited Copenhagen the previous year on political business. While there, he had met a black man from St. Thomas, who pleaded with him to send someone to share the gospel with his enslaved family members in the Danish West Indies.

Back at Herrnhut, Zinzendorf shared this burden, and it took root. A year later, on August 18, 1732, two young men were commissioned as missionaries in an unforgettable service in which a hundred hymns were sung. Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann soon left Herrnhut for Copenhagen, seeking passage to the islands, but Copenhagen proved unfriendly, and the two men were pelted with obstacles. One disappointment followed another, and much opposition arose to their mission. No one would help them. No ship would take them. Their hearts
At that critical moment, Numbers 23:19b turned up in their daily devotional book: *hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* Inspired by these words, Dober and Nitschmann determined to persevere, believing that God would fulfill what he had started through them.

A handful of people in Copenhagen began helping them, and the tide of public opinion turned. Two royal chaplains lent their support, and even the Queen of Denmark encouraged them. Princess Charlotte contributed financially. A court official secured passage for them on a Dutch ship, and on October 8, 1732, they sailed for the West Indies, opening the modern era of missions. The Lord had spoken to them, and He had made it good. He provided the people they needed to encourage and strengthen them on their way.

2. **God’s PEACE is Given in the Midst of Instability and Unrest.**
   *Psalm 119:165*- Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.
   *Isaiah 26:3*- Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

3. **He PRIES Us from Bondage and Sinful Habits.**
   *Romans 6:22*- But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

4. **The Lord PROVIDES Healing & Strength for Our Weakness & Sickness.**
   *Hosea 6:1*- Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
   *Luke 4:18*- The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

5. **PROBLEMS & Trials are Countered by God’s Provision of Grace.**
   *2 Corinthians 12:9*- And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

6. **God PROMOTES Courage When We are Afraid.**
   *Psalm 27:1*- The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
   *Matthew 17:7*- And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise,
be not afraid.

7. He **PARDONS when we Fail & Seek Forgiveness.**
   * 1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

8. The Lord **PROTECTS from Danger When it's His will for Us.**
   * Proverbs 19:23- The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.
   * Psalm 91:1- He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

9. God **PULLS us up when we are down.**
   * Psalm 27:14- Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.
   * Isaiah 41:13- For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not: I will help thee. Praise the Lord, we serve the God of all comfort!

10. Jesus **PLEDGES to Reward those Who are Faithful.**
    * Matthew 16:27- For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.
    * Revelation 22:12- And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. The message of the vine is also a message of cleansing.

11. He **PROMISED to Care For Us and Give Us Rest.**
    * 1 Peter 5:7- Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.
    * Matthew 11:28- Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

The Ridderhof family had little money, but they were rich in singing, worshiping, and love. Their daughter, Joy, knew the Gospel from infancy, and at age 13, she gave her heart to the Lord Jesus. She went on to study at the University of Los Angeles, preparing to be a teacher. At the same time, Joy kept busy leading Bible clubs, witnessing to neighbors, and singing in a quartet.

Little did her friends realize that Joy secretly battled worry and anxiety. Exams, public speaking, and the uncertainty of the future kept her spinning from one state of worry to the next, all of it concealed and well-hidden, but inwardly was crippling her with discouragement.

Joy’s life was changed, however, when she attended a Victorious Christian Life Conference at her church. The speaker, Robert C. McQuilkin, declared, “Worry is a sin. It amounts to a grievous lack of
faith in the Father’s care.” That week changed Joy’s attitude, and soon she found herself enrolling in McQuilkin’s Bible School in South Carolina. She made the decision to rest in God’s promises of His care for her.

Four years later, she was back in Los Angeles, well-trained for missionary service, but unsure of her next step. She prayed, “Lord, whatever door you open, I’ll go there.” Soon a mission board approached her about Honduras. Joy, wanting to serve God in Africa, was hesitant, but while lunching at a friend’s house, she picked a card at random from a little box of Bible verses. It was Deuteronomy 28:8, “The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

This promise spoke directly to her in an undeniable way, and Joy sensed God’s directing her to Honduras. As it turned out, Honduras became but the first stop on a lifelong, worldwide ministry for Joy Ridderhof. The Lord did more than she ever expected. Joy was the founder of Gospel Recordings, Inc., an enterprise that has blanketed the earth with recordings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in nearly 5,000 languages. Joy was greatly used of God because she learned to rest in God’s promises for her own life. I like what is written in Isaiah 41.

* Isaiah 41:10- Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Paul found comfort in a time of need. We have examined two elements that surrounded this comfort:

* The Afflictions that Paul Faced vs. 5
* The Arrival of an Encouraging Friend vs. 6
* Next, the Account of the Attitude of the Corinthians vs. 7

C. The Account of the Attitude of the Corinthians 7:7

And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

Not only did the arrival of Titus encourage Paul, but the news or report of the attitude of the Corinthians was such a blessing. Titus reported to Paul that there had been a change in attitude among the Christians in Corinth. He informed the apostle that they
longed or had an earnest desire to see Paul again and shared with Paul that the Corinthians were sorry or mourning for what they did. The Corinthians Christians had a “fervent mind” toward the apostle. This phrase is from the Greek word zelos (dazay'-los) which means “zeal, excitement of mind, concern, or loyalty.” There was a total change for the good toward Paul. The apostle could not change their hearts, but God could and He did.

Are you having difficulty with someone in your life? Ask the Lord to work in their heart and change them. My father-in-law, Dr. Sylvester Matthews, shared with me recently that he deals with difficult Christians by asking the Lord to fill them with the Holy Spirit. He told me that since he has started doing this, time after time, God transforms the lives of these people within a short period. He said, “It is amazing and exciting to watch this happen.”

Are you facing discouragement and depression in your life? You can overcome it. In fact, the Bible gives us some insights that we can apply in dealing with depression. It tells us what to do when we are “Cast Down.”

* What Can you Do When You Are “Cast Down?”

1. Rely on the Lord to help you face the Depression.

   The Lord is close to those who are broken-hearted and discouraged.
   * Psalm 34:18- The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

   He heals the pain of discouragement and a broken heart.
   * Psalm 147:3- He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

   The Lord revives us in our trouble and depression.
   * Psalm 138:7- Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

2. Rest in God’s faithfulness when you are Discouraged.

   The Lord will not allow you to go through more than you can bear. He knows your weakness and limitations. Rest in His care for you.
   * 1 Corinthians 10:13- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted
above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.  
* Psalm 29:11- The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

3. Read Bible stories and biographies of great Christians.  
* Romans 15:4 - For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

When you read about the lives of other Christians, you will find out about their trials and how God met their needs. You will read of their victories and the results of their trials. This may help you to see your problems from a bigger perspective and may help you discover God’s direction and purpose in your life. That which may be depressing you may be the tool which God uses to help others. Your trial may be the school room for future ministry in your life.

* 2 Corinthians 1:4- Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Dwight L. Moody never imagined the chain reaction produced by his sermon as described on the previous page. In this life, Christian workers seldom see more than a splinter of their success. Many preachers thrash about in apparent failure, not realizing that some word or verse or sermon or deed, like a well-buried seed, will eventually bring forth a mighty harvest. Even Moody himself occasionally succumbed to discouragement. According to his son, William Moody, he once said:

One Sunday I had preached and there did not seem to be any result. On the Monday I was very much cast down. I was sitting in my study, brooding over my want of success, when a young man who conducted a Bible class called upon me. As he came in I could see he was away up on the mountain top, while I was down in the valley. Said he: “What kind of day did you have yesterday?” “Very poor; I had no success, and I feel quite cast down. How did you get on?” “Oh, grandly! I never had a better day.” “What was your subject?” “I had the life and character of Noah. Did you ever preach on Noah? Did you ever study his life? You had better do it now. It will do you good.”

When the young man went away, I got out my Bible and some other books and read all I could find about Noah. I had not been reading long before the thought came stealing over me: Here is a man who toiled on for 120 years and never had a single convert outside his own family. Yet
he did not get discouraged. “I closed my Bible,” said Moody. “The cloud had gone; I have never hung my harp on the willows since that day.”

4. **Realize discouraging trials can bring glory to God if you respond the right way.**

* 1 Peter 1:6-7... Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: [7] That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

   Sickness and even death can bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

* 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.... And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

5. **Remove any possible guilt by Repenting of the sin that could be causing your depression.**

* 1 John 1:9- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Satan uses our past failures to keep us from removing guilt and dealing with discouragement.

6. **Remove yourself from depressing, angry, fearful people.**

   Folks who struggle with these kinds of traits will spread fear, bitterness, and anger among others and make them the same way.

* Proverbs 22:24-25... Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: [25] Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

* Hebrews 12:15- Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Depression is fed by brooding, resentment, gripe sessions, excessive eating, refusal to eat, and procrastination.

7. **Recall God’s blessings from the past and present, and praise Him for them.**

* 1 Thessalonians 5:18- In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

   There is power in praising God. God defeated an army because another army praised God.
* 2 Chronicles 20:21-22... And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever. [22] And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

8. Reluctance in sharing with authorities, family, or friends, that we are depressed should be mastered.

Pride keeps us from sharing our hurt. When we get depressed, we tend to avoid people, but as we humble ourselves, and seek help, God gives us grace and the encouragement we need from people who care about us.

*James 4:6- But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

9. Resist making major decisions during times of depression. Wait until your head is clear.

*Galatians 6:9- And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10. Release your offenders from your bitterness. Forgive them.

Many times depression is created by bitterness. People deplete their strength by using emotional energy to focus their anger upon other people, leaving them exhausted and down. This is why it is so important to forgive your offenders.

*Ephesians 4:31-32...Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: [32] And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

11. A Reclusive place needs to be established in order to get alone with God.

*Luke 6:12- And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

It is important that you have personal times with the Lord, away from distractions. You need time to focus on Him.

*Isaiah 26:3- Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

12. Remove any clutter from your life.

God is not the author of confusion. When your life is disorganized or in chaos, it leaves a sense of "Where do I begin? How am I going to
get control of my situation?" This feeling of helplessness creates depression. Get organized and start cleaning up your junk. Throw away that which is not needed. Take on the task one day at a time. Break up your task into little goals.

* 1 Corinthians 14:33- For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

13. Rescue or reach out to others who are having trials.
* Philip. 2:4 - Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Helping someone else will help you get your mind off your problems and will encourage you.

* Psalm 19:8- The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
* Psalm 119:47- And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.
* Psalm 119:165- Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.
* Jeremiah 15:16 - Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.
* Psalm 119:105- Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
* Psalm 119:130-The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

15. Relegate your worries and cares to the Lord.

Give what is depressing you, to the Lord. Trust Him with your worries.

* 1 Peter 5:7- Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

16. Realize that God will Use You for His glory if you are Willing to Serve Him.

For over 200 years Sunday schools have gathered people together, millions of men, women, and children, hearing, learning, and observing God's Word. Did you know that much of the credit for the Sunday School movement does not go to a preacher, missionary, or evangelist? The birth of Sunday School goes to Robert Raikes, an eighteenth-century newspaper publisher in Gloucester, England.

Mr. Raikes was a prosperous and pompous man with a soft spot for ragamuffins. He determined to begin a school for them in the slums of
Gloucester. Since children worked Mondays through Saturdays, he selected Sundays, and in 1780, his first Sunday school began in Mrs. Meredith’s kitchen on Sooty Alley. The children learned reading and writing, using the Bible as a textbook. After several years, Raikes’s experiment was working well enough to publicize in his newspaper.

Then he had another idea. An annual festival was held near Gloucester, and it was always packed with wild, hard-drinking, rabble-rousing crowds. Raikes distributed curious leaflets inviting the people to the festival to witness “a novel sight.” On Sunday, September 24, 1786, the crowds flocked in. There, standing before the church, were 331 clean, well-dressed Sunday school children. Many in the crowd had never before seen a clean, well-dressed child.

Mr. Raikes had persuaded his friend, Dr. Samuel Glasse, to prepare a special sermon. Glasse rose, looked at the throng of people, and preached a sermon from Deuteronomy 31.

* Deuteronomy 31:12-13a... Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: [13] And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live....

Dr. Glasse’s sermon swept across England in printed form under the title, “The Piety, Wisdom, and Policy of Promoting Sunday Schools.” And the Sunday school movement was soon established. God used an ordinary Christian newspaper publisher to start something that would reach millions for Christ and disciple them in the Word of God. What a blessing to be used of God. Let me ask, “What does the Lord want you to do?” Beloved, when you serve the Lord and see God using YOU, it will help you to deal with depression. It’s when we get focused on our problems or failures, instead of focusing on God, we get down in the dumps. Keep your eyes on the Lord and He will revive and sustain your heart, mind, and soul.
Chapter 16
The Stress and Sweetness of Spiritual Surgery
2 Corinthians 7:8-16

For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. [9] Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. [10] For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. [11] For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. [12] Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. [13] Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. [14] For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. [15] And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. [16] I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.
Have you ever had an operation or surgery in your life? I have had several. The most memorable one was at the age of seven when I had my tonsils taken out. That did not go well because I woke up in the middle of the surgery screaming bloody murder.

There are times that surgery may be necessary for you. In order for the surgeon to repair or remove a dangerously infected part from the human body, it is necessary for him to cut deep into the flesh. This can be painful and stressful. The doctor does not rejoice in causing pain to the patient. He is not a mad man with a foot-long knife, drooling to cut into somebody’s guts. No, the surgeon cuts the body and removes or fixes a problem because he knows it must be done if the patient is to regain his health and strength. This is especially true if the patient is a close friend. The surgeon is keenly aware of the suffering that will be necessary, but he realizes that this suffering is only temporary, and he is willing that it should be so in order that the final outcome might be the healing of the person.

The same application holds true for any preacher that loves his people. There are times that you have to perform spiritual surgery either on the church as a whole or on a wayward Christian. The surgery takes the form of a stern rebuke from the Scriptures and denouncing sin. Such times are not only stressful from those who are receiving the rebuke, but also the ones that are giving the rebuke.

It is painful for any man of God to rebuke or be stern with his people. It is a lot more fun to preach messages of encouragement, love, and Heaven, than to reprove or deal firmly with sins like drinking, smoking, adultery, immorality, immodesty, divorce, homosexuality, abortion, gossip, gambling, spouse or child abuse, swearing, and stealing from God, etc. Yet, it is very necessary to reprove in order to restore or maintain the health of the church or the wayward Christian. The goal of spiritual surgery is the sweetness of recovery, repentance, revival and the restoration of the joy of the Lord.

These sentiments are what Paul is expressing in the final half of 2 Corinthians chapter seven. This section reveals the stress that Paul felt in doing spiritual surgery on the Corinthian church and the sweetness he enjoyed when they repented and corrected the problems in the church. The changes they made in their lives reveal elements of revival for any Christian. Let’s dig in!
I. THE CONCERN OF PAUL & THE CONTRITION OF THE CORINTHIANS 7:8

For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

Paul said, “I made you sorry with a letter.” What does he mean by the word “sorry?” It comes from the word χαίτις (kaitis) which means “to cause grief or sorrow, to affect with sadness, to make someone uneasy.” The sorrow was caused by a letter that was written by Paul after his second visit to Corinth. As you recall, when Paul found out about the immorality that existed in the Corinthian church, he wrote the letter to them that we know as 1 Corinthians to deal with problems in this church. When Paul found out that the problem of immorality was not dealt with in the church, Paul made a second visit to Corinth to deal with the problem.

On this second visit, matters evidently got pretty heated. This is when Paul came to them in sorrow or heaviness as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:1. Paul had instructed the church to remove this man from the church, and this man, and possibly his friends heatedly opposed Paul when he arrived. When Paul arrived, there was evidently a confrontation with this man who insulted, verbally attacked Paul, and challenged his apostolic authority to have him disciplined in the church. The fact that the man had not been dealt with reveals he may have been very influential in the church or in the city of Corinth.

Paul left Corinth and returned to Ephesus where he wrote a severe, stern letter to the church to deal with this problem. Evidently, nothing had been resolved. This letter was delivered by Titus to the Corinthians. As far as we know, this stern letter has been lost and is unavailable now. As we saw in the first half of chapter seven, it was from Titus that Paul learned that these people were longing for Paul’s fellowship and expressed deep sorrow for what had happened.

This severe letter of rebuke was painful for Paul and the Corinthians, but it was also necessary. Paul said he did not repent that he wrote it, but he did repent. That seems confusing so what is he saying here?

The word “repent” is from the Greek word μετάμελλομαι (metamelloma). It means “to have regret about something, to be very sorry; to have second thoughts or change one’s mind.” The word here
does not denote repentance in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, as if any wrong had been done. It is not the language of remorse. Paul did not do anything wrong. This word “repent” denotes nothing more than the uneasiness which a good man feels, not from the consciousness of having done wrong, but from a tenderness for others.

The apostle did not regret writing the letter, because it was necessary for the health of the church. He did at first have second thoughts or regrets about the pain the letter would create in these believers for a little while. He did not relish inflicting pain upon people. He wasn’t like this at all. Like a father that disciplines his children because it is necessary, Paul knew the discipline of this church was for their own good, even though it was painful for him to do the surgery.

**There are times when rebuke is necessary.** It often happens that the man who avoids confrontation and seeks an easy peace finds in the end nothing but trouble because problems have a way of festering and growing. Trouble is like disease. If it is dealt with at the right time, it can often easily be eradicated; if not, it can become an incurable growth or cancer. This is true in school, business, the family, or in the church. Paul’s purpose was to help these believers to be the best Christians they could be. His purpose was not to discourage them, but to encourage them to do the will of God and mature in Christ.

Let me say this here, if your parents discipline you because you have disobeyed them or you have done something wrong, don’t hate them and conclude they don’t care about you or are trying to control your every move. They correct you because they are trying to teach you proper boundaries of behavior that will enable you to pursue good goals and dreams and protect you from doing something that will damage, scar, or destroy your life.

The same truth holds for a pastor or church that has to discipline one of its members for sinful behavior. The purpose of the discipline is to bring the believer to repentance and help restore him or her to spiritual growth and usefulness for Christ. Don’t get mad at the pastor or church for obeying what God has instructed them to do in His Word and for trying to help the Christian out of sinful bondage. Spiritual surgery is not fun for anyone.
II. THE CHEER OVER THE CHANGE IN THE CORINTHIANS 7:9

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

Paul rejoiced, not because these believers were grieved, hurt, or made sad, but because their grief led to a change in behavior and attitudes that were godly and Christ-honoring. They sorrowed to "repentance." This word is a different Greek word than the one used in verse eight. It is the word metanoia {met-an'-oy-ah} which means "a different state of mind or a change of mind or purpose." This word denotes a change for the better; a change of mind that is durable and productive in its consequences; a change which amounts to a permanent reformation.

The stress of their spiritual surgery led to sweetness. The Corinthians were not harmed in any way by Paul’s letter of rebuke. It had the intended effect in their lives because they responded the right way to God’s leading and Spirit. The change in their behavior indicated their repentance was genuine.

There was a cartoon several years ago in the Saturday Review of Literature in which little George Washington was standing with an axe in his hand. Before him, lying on the ground was the famous cherry tree. He has already made his smug admission that he did it -- after all, he "cannot tell a lie." But his father was standing there exasperated saying, "All right, so you admit it! You always admit it! The question is, when are you going to stop doing it." This is the message of genuine repentance. Beloved, when you repent, you stop doing what is wrong.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GODLY SORROW 7:10-11

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. [11] For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.
The kind of sorrow that the Lord wants us to have is the kind that causes us to turn away from our sins, and results in our salvation and deliverance from that sin. Godly sorrow produces a change that shall be permanent. It is not mere regret; it does not soon pass away in its effects, but it produces permanent and abiding changes. A man who mourns over sin as committed against God, and who seeks the Lord for pardon, will reform his life and truly repent. This is why God’s men preached “repentance” all throughout the Old and New Testaments.

* Noah's message from the steps going up to the Ark was not, "Something good is going to happen to you!" No, that wasn’t his sermon.
* Jeremiah was not put into the pit for preaching, "I'm O.K., you're O.K.!
* Daniel was not put into the lion's den for telling people, "Possibility thinking will move mountains!"
* John the Baptist was not forced to preach in the wilderness and eventually beheaded because he preached, "Smile, God loves you today!"

* The two prophets of the Tribulation will not be killed for preaching, "God is in his Heaven and all is right with the world!"

* Instead, what was the message of all those men of God? Simple, one word: "Repent!" Godly sorrow produces repentance in our lives without regret.

Not all sorrow is the same. There is another kind of sorrow which results in destruction and spiritual death. It is the sorrow of this world. There is a very distinct difference between “godly” sorrow and “worldly” sorrow. Let take a look at both of them. We will start with a story to illustrate a point.

When Michigan played Wisconsin in basketball early in the season in 1989, Michigan's Rumeal Robinson stepped to the foul line for two shots late in the fourth quarter. His team trailed by one point, so Rumeal could regain the lead for Michigan. He missed both shots, allowing Wisconsin to upset favored Michigan. Rumeal felt awful about costing his team the game, but his sorrow didn't stop at the emotional level. After each practice for the rest of the season, Rumeal shot one hundred extra foul shots. Thus, Rumeal was ready when he stepped to the foul line to shoot two shots with three seconds left in overtime in the national-championship game.

Swish went the first shot, and swish went the second, nothing but net. Those shots won Michigan the N.C.A.A. national basketball
championship. Rumeal's repentance had been genuine, and his grief and sorrow motivated him to work so that he would never make the mistake of missing crucial, game-winning free-throw shots again.

**Beloved, in the same manner, sorrow that is godly is conviction and grief that lead to a change in the behavior and attitudes of a person.** It is confirmed by the actions and deeds of the individual. The person realizes that their actions displease the Lord and they endeavor to stop doing what is wrong and correct their mistakes, wrongs, or failures.

God commends this kind of sorrow in the second Beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn"; that is, they mourn over their sins before God. Such grief is "blessed" because it drives us to God and to repentance. Sorrow is not enough for a changed life. It has no healing benefit by itself. We are to let the grief over our sins motivate us to change our behavior. Good grief is godly grief that leads to good behavior and the effort to never do what is wrong again. It sees the sin as an offense toward the Lord.

When we look at the lives of Peter and Judas, we find that both men were grieved and sorry for their sinful choices. The difference we find between the two was the fact that they responded differently to their sorrow. Peter repented and he drew closer to the Lord. He went forward for Christ and was greatly used by God. Judas, on the other hand, was overwhelmed by what he had done and committed suicide. He had remorse for his atrocity, but not repentance.

**Worldly sorrow is not really sorrow at all in one sense.** It is not sorrow for its sin or for the hurt it may have caused others. If it got the chance to do the same thing again and thought it could escape the consequences, it would do it. The Pharaoh of Egypt is a classic example of worldly sorrow that was insincere. He was reaping the consequences of his rebellion and confessed his sinfulness. Moses, however, questioned the sincerity of his sorrow. He was right to do so.

*Exodus 9:27- And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.*

*Exodus 9:30- But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God.*

*Exodus 9:34- And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.*
Looking at Judas, we find that the sorrow of this world can be very bitter and intense. It causes a person to become resentful and rebellious against the consequences and punishment of sin like that of Esau who grieved with many tears over the loss of his birthright but found no place for repentance. He had no chance to get it back.

* Hebrews 12:16-17... Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. [17] For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

At the center of worldly sorrow is selfishness, not grief over our sins against God. The focus of worldly sorrow is on your own hurt, your shame, your embarrassment, and the consequences of getting caught and being punished. It eats a man up with guilt and remorse, depression and despair, defeat and inactivity. It is consumed with self pity.

The attention to selfishness shifts the focus of the sorrow off of your offense toward God to yourself. This is why there is no change in behavior because the Lord has been left out of the equation. Bitterness over the consequences of sin makes the heart harder, not softer. If the person does not turn to the Lord, then the conviction, guilt, and remorse work on the soul like acid and drain the sinner of his strength, joy, peace, and stability. He does not find the forgiveness he desperately needs because he has not sought it.

Those who are experiencing worldly sorrow will go as far as to turn away from the Lord in their grief and sorrow. Instead of repenting, they look to substitute the Lord with other things. Some seek worldly companions, pleasure, drugs, or alcohol to ease their guilt. This sorrow works death. It produces additional distress, breaks your spirit, destroys your peace, deepens your gloom, and festers frustration. After you have died it results in eternal torment.

Godly sorrow, on the other hand, brings about blessing, cleansing, mercy, pardon, and rejoicing. It is encouraged by the Lord all throughout the Bible. If you are experiencing sorrow in your life, then let it be a catalyst to drive you closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. If your sorrow has been created by your sinfulness, then let it motivate you to take action to turn your life around with the Lord’s help. Don’t put it off. Turn from your sin today before it’s too late. Sir Thomas Fuller put it this way, “You cannot repent too soon because you do not know how soon it may be too late.” Heed the admonitions of Scripture to have a
tender heart.
* Matthew 5:4- Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
* Joel 2:12-Therefore also now, saith the LORD turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.
* 2 Chronicles 7:14- If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.
* Psalm 34:18- The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
* Psalm 51:17- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
* Isaiah 55:7- Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:11, “For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

Listed here are rudiments of revival. This is a list of the evidence that the sorrow of the Corinthians was godly sorrow that led to repentance. This was the sweetness that came from the stress of spiritual surgery. Notice the effects of godly sorrow in the Corinthian church. Eight different things are listed here. It is interesting to note that the number eight is the number of “new beginning” in the Bible. This was a new beginning for the Corinth church.

A. Diligence: ...“what carefulness it wrought in you”

The word “carefulness” is from the Greek word spoude {spoo-day’}. This word means “diligence, haste, earnestness in accomplishing or striving after anything.” Their godly sorrow made them serious about their faults and gave them a sense of urgency in getting them corrected. They felt this could be and must be done.

These folks were not going to wait around for the Lord to deal with them again. They did not offer excuses either saying, “It’s no use, we’re all failures. This is too hard.” No, they dealt with their faults firmly. When men are thoroughly convinced of their sin, they will set about removing it with the utmost diligence. This is part of the sweetness that comes from spiritual surgery. Let me ask, “Is there something in your life
you need to get rid of?” Godly sorrow will motivate you to deal with your sin decisively and urgently, with no more excuses. No matter what the past may be for you, when you deal firmly and decisively with your sin, you are back on the path to serving God.

Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. All the garbage and grief that Paul endured was turned around by the Lord for good. The Lord can do this for you too. He can take the mistakes, trials, or the burdens of your life and turn them into powerful, wonderful blessings.

The story of Hannah and her son Samuel has a modern counterpart in the life of Adjai Samuel Crowther and his mother. Adjai, eleven years old, was seized in 1820, by slave masters near his village in West Africa. The terrified boy was thrown into a crowded slave pen, then chained aboard a slave ship. He suffered untold panic and pain until the ship was captured by a British steamer.

Adjai was rescued and placed under the care of missionaries at Sierra Leone. There, he was enrolled in school and heard of the Lord Jesus Christ. A benevolent preacher, Samuel Crowther, financed his education. Adjai was baptized at age 16, and he took the name of his benefactor: Adjai Samuel Crowther.

By and by, Samuel, as he was called, traveled to England to further his studies. His keen mind quickly grasped languages and academics, as well as practical skills such as carpentry. When he returned as a preacher to Africa, he settled near the Niger River, married, preached the Word of God, began a boarding school for African children, and worked ceaselessly for the Lord Jesus Christ by sharing the Gospel with the lost.

Years passed, and one day Samuel was preaching at Freetown, not far from the spot where he was kidnapped as a child. In the corner of his eye, he saw an old woman, bowed and depressed. She appeared to have borne a heavy sorrow. As he talked with her, she opened her heart, telling him of her hard life and of the loss of all her children. “But the worst of all,” she wailed, “was losing my little boy Adjai.”

Samuel gazed into her eyes and recognized he was talking with his own mother. Under his tender ministry, she shortly afterward became a Christian herself, and at her baptism she, too, took a Christian name. She chose Hannah—the mother of Samuel, the man of God. Amen! God can take our burdens and turn them into blessings. All things do work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose.
B. Dealing with Past Failures and Faults: ... "what clearing of yourselves"

The sweetness of spiritual surgery is seen secondly in the fact that these Christians dealt with their past failures and faults. The phrase "clearing of yourselves" is from a familiar word *apologia {ap-ol-og-ee'-ah}. It forms our English word "apology." *Apolo*gia means "a speech of defense before a tribunal; a claim of extenuating circumstances." The word here properly means an apology and explanation for what had been done wrong to Paul.

These believers sought to clear themselves of that which they were to blame or what they allowed to fester among themselves by not speaking up. Some of the problems may have been unavoidable. These people were concerned about correcting their sins of commission and omission. They dealt with the leader of the opposition against Paul and apparently dealt with and corrected all the wrongs in their midst. It was important to them to clear their conscience which is a cardinal element of Christian growth and maturity. Paul stressed this repeatedly in his epistles.

* Acts 24:16- And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.
* 1 Timothy 1:5- Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

When people seek forgiveness for their offenses and make restitution for their wrongs, it is a good indication that they have a truly genuine, repentant spirit. Clearing your conscience of past mistakes and offenses is part of the sweetness of spiritual surgery. Are there any matters in your life where you need to make things right with God or with other people? If so, then get those matters cleared up today. Don’t delay it. Clearing your conscience will remove the weights that hinder you from serving the Lord Jesus Christ, which ought to be the goal of every believer. Realize that your decision to get matters right with God and others can have a powerful, ripple effect on your family and your friends.

For example, in the 1700’s, a young man named James Taylor proposed marriage to his girlfriend, and a wedding date was set. Neither of them were Christians. James, in fact, so detested itinerant preachers that he often pelted them with rotten tomatoes or eggs. Shortly before his wedding, one of John Wesley’s circuit rider preachers entered town, and James, hearing of it, wanted to disrupt the meeting. But as James listened in the fringes of the crowd, the preacher quoted Joshua 24:15: But as for
me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

These words stuck James like an arrow. When the day of his wedding arrived, the verse was still lodged in his thoughts. That morning, James retired to the fields to think. He was about to take a wife, to establish a home, but he wasn’t serving the Lord. He didn’t even know Him at all. He knelt in the grass and earnestly asked the Lord Jesus Christ to be his Savior. By the time he finished praying, he was alarmed to discover it was time for the wedding.

Rushing to the chapel, he apologized for being late, and the ceremony proceeded. Then he shocked his bride and guests, by announcing he had put his faith in Christ and had become a Christian. He soon began witnessing to his beautiful new wife, but she remained resistant to the Gospel. Finally, one day James came home so burdened for her that he picked her up and carried her to the bedroom. There, with a forceful hand, he made her kneel beside him. Soon both were weeping, and there she, too, became a Christian.

Eight generations have since passed, each filled with Christian workers serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Included among them is James Taylor’s great-grandson, Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, who opened the interior of China to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Beloved, you never know the future, ripple-effects your decisions for the Lord will have upon your family and upon the world. Don’t underestimate the importance of your choices, your testimony and example.

C. Dander: ... “indignation”

The effect of the godly sorrow of the Corinthians is seen in their dander or indignation. The word “indignation” is from the word aganaktesis {ag-an-ak’tay-sis} which means “indignation, anger, irritation, or vexation.”

One effect of true repentance is to produce decided hatred for sin. The indignation of the Corinthians may refer to their attitude toward the trouble-maker because of the reproach he brought on the name of Christ. I think it more likely refers to their attitude toward themselves for allowing sin to go on for so long without taking action against it. I believe they were angry at themselves for allowing this sin to fester and seep into the church. In fact, there was a renewed anger at sin itself—a renewed commitment to combat sin with all the resources available in the power of God’s Spirit.
Let me ask, “Do you get angry at your own faults and failures? Do you get angry with yourself when you do something stupid or wrong?” We all should! Our anger toward our sin should be a catalyst to not indulge in it anymore.

**D. Dread or Distress: ... “fear”**

This word “fear” also means “dread or terror.” Their dread may have referred to several areas. First, their godly sorrow caused them to have a fear or reverence for the Lord. This is the beginning of wisdom. They may have also feared that the same problem be repeated again and wanted to take all precautions from letting sin creep into their church as it did before. Thirdly, it may possibly mean fear of the displeasure of Paul, and of the punishment which would be inflicted if the evil were not removed from their lives and from the church.

There was also fear of the wrath of God and fear that great damage had been done to the church, to one of God’s great servants, and to the name of Jesus Christ. Godly fear or reverence will help you to stay dependent upon the Lord and to be careful how you live and act. When you have a fear or reverence for the Lord, your concern will be to glorify Him no matter what the cost may be to you. Your passion will be to honor God with your life, just like Eric Liddell did with his life.

Leaving his young son in boarding school in Great Britain was the hardest thing Rev. James Dunlop Liddell, Scottish missionary to China, had ever done. But Eric thrived like a hare in the highlands. He studied hard. He loved sports, particularly rugby. He joined a Bible study, attended church regularly, and became a member of the Crusader Christian Union. He also began his lifelong habit of early morning Bible reading and prayer.

Eric advanced to the university, joined the track team, and won races like a thoroughbred. Every week he brought home more prizes and trophies until he soon ran out of storage space. His legs became a Scottish national treasure, and all the world followed him to the 1924 Olympics. All the while, Eric’s Christian life continued on the fast track as well, and his newly-found fame gave him opportunities for preaching and witnessing for Christ.

At the Paris Olympics, his faith was put to the test when his chosen venue, the 100-meter race, was scheduled for Sunday. Eric, who didn’t believe in competing on the Lord’s Day, opted out of this race. He entered the 400 meter run instead as the world watched and wondered
what he was doing. In his dressing room just before the race, Eric unfolded a small bit of paper that had been given to him by the team masseur. It read: “In the old book it says ‘He that honors me I will honor.’ Wishing you the best of success always.” Eric knew the verse well. It was 1 Samuel 2:30. He smiled and made up his mind that, win or lose, he would honor the Lord with his life. Eric ran his race that day and won it, setting a new world record of 47.6 seconds. He and the Lord had honored each other that wonderful day. Are you honoring the Lord with your life?

Godly sorrow was evident in the Corinthian Christians. We have seen so far...

* Their Diligence
* Their Dealing with Past Failures and Faults
* Their Dander
* Their Dread or Distress
* Next, we see their Desire

E. Desire: ... “vehement desire”

The longing or intense desire of the Corinthian believers was to correct all the wrong they had done. They longed to see the wrong righted and the evil corrected. These believers also desired to see Paul again and renew their relationship with him. They also had a desire to remove the sin from their church and their own hearts. What a change that had taken place in their lives. The stress of spiritual surgery was worth the sweetness they were all enjoying now. Let me ask, “Do you desire to walk with God no matter what the cost and live a godly life? Do you long for the Second Coming of Christ and to enjoy the presence of the Lord?” This was John’s desire as the next to the last verse of the Bible indicates.

* Revelation 22:20-  He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The desire to please the Lord will lead to the surrender of your will to His. This is the conflict that every Christian faces almost every day. The world has been greatly blessed throughout history by the vehement, intense desire of Christians that were sold out to the Lord Jesus Christ. Such was the case of missionary Robert Moffat.

Robert Moffat was greatly encouraged and helped by 1 Samuel 3:18 when he faced bitter disappointment in his life.
* 1 Samuel 3:18- And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.

Robert had fallen in love with his employer’s daughter, Mary Smith. He wanted to propose to her, and she wanted to accept. They loved each other very much. They dreamed of serving the Lord together in South Africa, but they lived in the days when missionaries regularly fell in distant, unmarked graves. Robert’s parents, though apprehensive, were willing to let him go to Africa, but Mary’s parents refused. They could not relinquish their daughter nor bring themselves to give consent to the marriage.

Robert’s heart was torn in two. Should he marry his beloved and remain in Scotland? Or should he surrender to God’s will? He wrote his parents with the answer to his questions: From the clearest indications of His Providence, He bids me go out alone, and He who appoints crosses and disappointments, also imparts resignation and grace sufficient unto the day. So I am bold to adopt the language of Eli and say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.”

On October 18, 1816, Robert and Mary tore themselves apart, and Robert boarded his ship, alone and grief-stricken, yet determined to do the will of God in his life and be surrendered to the Lord. We look at this and say, “How sad for both of these two young people that deeply loved each other.” Others might look at it and say, “Wow, what commitment!”

This story does not end here, thank the Lord. Three years later, Mary’s parents surrendered her to the Lord’s keeping and allowed her to join Robert in Africa. The two were married at last, and walked hand-in-hand in remarkable missionary service for the next fifty years. Why? They had a vehement desire to do the will of God no matter where He leaded and no matter what the cost would be. Do you have the same attitude?

**F. Dynamic Devotion: ... “zeal”**

The zeal or devotion of the Corinthian church demonstrated a huge change in their attitudes. This word “zeal” is from the Greek word zelos (dzay'-los) which means “excitement of mind; fervency of spirit; passion in embracing, pursuing, or defending anything.” They were excited about the Lord, His work, and their walk with God. They demonstrated dynamic devotion to do several things.

* To remove their sin
* To correct their wrongs
* To restore their relationship with Paul
  
  Worldly sorrow robs us of our enthusiasm and excitement for Christ. Godly sorrow, however, will create a new desire and devotion for the Savior. You don’t want to hurt the Lord anymore. We get excited about so many things. Let me ask, “Are you excited about serving and walking with the Lord and learning His Word?”

G. Discipline: “revenge”

What does Paul mean by this word “revenge?” It comes from the word *ekdikesis* (*ek-dik'-ay-sis*) which means “vengeance, punishment, discipline, justice, vindication.” The thought here is the church took corrective measures against the offender in their assembly which is a proper and scriptural thing to do. The person was disciplined by the church. The Corinthians realized that if people persist in their sin, if they create division in the church, or attack Christian leaders of the church, they have to be dealt with in a firm manner or else the church is damaged. Appeasing those who are sinful or divisive does not work. The problems created by people like this only get worse. There was a renewed commitment to allow no more open sin or underhanded divisiveness in this church anymore.

H. The Demonstration of their Best Effort: “In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

Note the words "in all things." What a glorious picture of true repentance and of God’s glorious grace. As corrupt and polluted as the church was, when they truly repented, God cleared them of all things! They had approved themselves. What does Paul mean?

The word “approved” is from the word *sunistano* (*soon-is-tan'-o*). It was a word that was used to describe the mending of broken bones. It means “to put or bind together; to unite parts into one whole.” This is what the Corinthian believers did. They did what was necessary to make matters right with God and Paul, to fix what was broken in their lives, and re-unite the church with Paul.

The church, by its godly sorrow and repentance, had cleared itself. The apostle does not mean that none of them had been to blame, or that the church had been free from fault, for a large part of his former epistle was occupied in reproving them for their faults in this business. He does mean, however, by their zeal and their readiness to take away the cause of complaint, they had removed all necessity of further blame, and had
pursued a path that met his approval and praise.

Are there broken relationships that need to be mended in your life? Are they broken because of something you did? If so, then why not seek the forgiveness of those you offended or hurt and try to restore that relationship.

IV. THE CAUSE OF THE LETTER 7:12

Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

Paul’s purpose in writing his letter of rebuke was not to write about who did wrong or who was offended. He desired harmony between himself and the people in Corinth, and his sorrowful letter was written to make the readers repent and turn to him again. This purpose is exactly what the letter achieved. Now he wants the readers to see that the effect of their good will toward him strengthens the oneness of the body of Christ.

V. THE COMFORT & CONFIRMATION OF THE CARE OF TITUS 7:13-15

Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. [14] For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. [15] And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

The revival that occurred in the Corinthian church from the godly sorrow that worked in their lives greatly encouraged and comforted the apostle. That’s what revival does for any dedicated Christian. It is a blessing to see others excited about the Lord. Paul was encouraged by their change and also by the joy and excitement that Titus conveyed to Paul. The Corinthian believers were a blessing and encouragement to Paul and to Titus. Their attitude refreshed Titus and the welcome they gave him put him at ease. Paul was blessed by the “Titus Touch” which is the touch of joy, encouragement, and enthusiasm. We all need the Titus Touch, don’t we?
Paul was also comforted in the fact that the Corinthians Christians proved to Titus that his boasting about them was true. He was not embarrassed, disappointed, or ashamed by their treatment of Titus. He loved these people and now Titus loved them. Titus saw for himself and felt the love and respect of these people. He saw their submission and obedience to the Lord in dealing with their problems in the church.

Instead of being a burden and source of grief to Paul and to Titus, the Corinthian Christians became a huge source of blessing and encouragement. This is what God wants to do with you too. He wants you to give the Titus Touch to others who are hurting or need help. Your encouragement can help other Christians accomplish great things for the Lord that maybe you could not do yourself because you do not have the abilities that others may have. Let me illustrate.

Paula was born into a wealthy family in Rome in A.D. 347. She grew up aristocratic and respected, but at age 33 she encountered Jesus Christ in a way that changed her life. She asked the Lord into her heart. She became friends with the great Bible translator Jerome, and eventually left her family in Rome to settle near him in Bethlehem.

Jerome was a genius and master at languages. He was fluent in Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin. He was, however, a crusty and impatient man, but Paula got along with him splendidly and aided him in his work. She established a nearby monastery where she and her co-workers ministered to the poor and hungry. Jerome wrote this about Paula, “What poor man, as he lay dying, was not wrapped in blankets given by Paula? What bedridden person was not supported by money from her purse?” So Paul was a very generous young lady.

Jerome and Paula worked side-by-side together, not as lovers, they did not marry, but they worked as brother and sister in Christ. As Jerome labored to exhaustion, translating the Bible into Latin, Paula helped and encouraged Jerome to do what he was appointed to do by paying his expenses from her family inheritance and gathering supplies for his work. She copied his manuscripts. She even studied Greek and Hebrew and critiqued his work. Jerome, who needed intellectual and critical stimulation, found her conversations absolutely invaluable. She was strong, astute, kind, and committed.

It took Jerome twenty years to translate the Bible into Latin, which had become the predominant language of his time. When Jerome finished his translations of Job, Isaiah, Samuel, Kings, Esther, Galatians, Philemon, Titus, and the prophets, he dedicated them all to his helper and
side-kick, Paula.

His translation of the Bible is known as the Vulgate translation which was used in the Western Church for one thousand years. This translation had its weaknesses, but God still used it to speak to the hearts of multitudes of people of their need to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. In fact, many do not know that the Vulgate was consulted in translating the King James Version which used the translation of the Vulgate in sixty places*.

The first book printed with movable type by Johannes Gutenberg was the Latin Vulgate Bible. A handful of copies of the compete original Gutenberg Bible (four on parchment and seventeen on paper) exist today. Beloved, this story confirms the truth of the importance of our encouragement of others and helping them to serve the Lord.

* Note: If you would like to study the Vulgate’s influence on the King James Version, then let me recommend two books that discuss this. Look at the Indexes of both books for the information under Latin Vulgate. Book 1 is The Unbound Scriptures: A Review of KJV-only Claims and Publications by Rick Norris. Book 2 is The Literary Lineage of the King James Bible by Charles Butterworth.

VI. THE CONFIDENCE OF PAUL 7:16

I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

Paul rejoiced because he had complete confidence in these believers in all things. They experienced a revival of unity, humility, morality, honesty, integrity, love, obedience, and in doctrinal truth. The stress of spiritual surgery was worth the sweetness it produced. In closing, let me ask, “Do other Christians rejoice about the way you are living? Do they have confidence of your Christian testimony and example in all things or do you need spiritual surgery?” Let me encourage you to let the Lord take control of your life and lead you in doing His will.

Barnabas Shaw, a colleague of Robert Moffat in South Africa, was a missionary from England who journeyed to Capetown, South Africa, to preach the Gospel, only to be forbidden from doing so by the governor. Not knowing how to proceed, Shaw purchased a yoke of oxen and a cart and put his goods in the back. Shaw and his wife, taking their seat, gave the Lord the reins and let Him lead their oxen just as He did when the
oxen returned the Ark of the Covenant to Israel after it was confiscated by the Philistines (1 Samuel 6).

The oxen rambled into the interior of Africa, lowing, trudging ahead day after day, covering 200 miles in just under a month. One evening while camping in the bush, Shaw heard noises nearby. Upon investigation, he found a tribe of Hottentots led by its chief, Little Namaqualand. They had left their homes and village to travel to Capetown in search of a missionary to teach them “the Great Word.” Had either party started a half-day sooner or later, or veered a half-mile this way or that, they would never have met. Their meeting was a divine appointment. Shaw returned with them to their village and established a thriving work among them, spending eleven years before returning to England for furlough. All in all, he devoted over forty years to advancing the Gospel in South Africa. Why? He let the Lord take the reigns of his life! Does He have your reigns?
Bibliography for 2nd Corinthians

The following men of God have made contributions to this book. Any of these books will provide you a great source of information in your studies of the Bible. I recommend that you stock them in your library.

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3. The Life Application Bible (very practical notes)
4. From this Verse by Robert Morgan (outstanding stories) Robert Morgan’s books are some of the best in the world for getting illustrations for preaching.
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6. Adam Clarke’s Commentary on 2nd Corinthians. (very practical and helpful)
7. Barnes Notes on 2nd Corinthians by Albert Barnes (excellent)
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Index on 2 Corinthians

A
* Ambassadors-194
  * Apostle-7

B.C.
* Bitterness-51
  * Blinded by Satan-125
  * Clear Conscience (how to get)-35
  * Cleansing-256
  * Comfort-12,77,265,268
  + Comfort in restoration steps-77
  * Comforter-12
  * Conscience-32
  * Consistency-204
  * Corinth-1

D
* Death-162
  * Deception-79
  * Dependence on God-107
  * Depression-272
  * Devices of Satan-79
  * Discouragement-80
  * Distraction-80

E.F.G.H.
* Faith-147
  * Flesh-198
  * Forgiveness-76
  * Fragrance of Christ-94
  * Greed-96
  * Holy Spirit-166

I
  * ILLUSTRATIONS
  * Abilities: Use your abilities for God’s glory. 92
  * Alertness gone: Comments of sleepy nurses. 52
  * Ambassadors for Christ: Worker becomes a bridge between two broken wires used to transmit the message of the King of England. 194
  * The Bible is our Defense: Sir James Simpson defends anesthesia with the Scriptures. 225
  * The Bible helps us cope with Depression: Moody’s testimony. 273
  * Burdens to Blessings: The burden of Jerry Falwell’s dad was turned into a blessing. 264
  * The Care of God: God protects Christians imprisoned for their faith in Jesus Christ. 138
  * Your Choices have an impact on Others: James Taylor is saved. His great grandson was Hudson Taylor. 288
  * Clarity is Missing: Radio station runs a confusing listening campaign. 53
  * Comfort in deep sorrow: John Paton after the death of his wife and child-14
  * Comforting others at their side: Girl forgets the words to the Star Spangled Banner while on T.V.... 18
  * Comfortless: Many times we can’t comfort ourselves. The story of the clown Grimaldi. 21
  * Comfort of God in Trials: Story behind the song A Mighty Fortress. 56
  * Committed to the will of God: The story of Robert and Mary Moffat. 291
  * The Conscience has great power: The story behind the Olympic Skating Scandal. 31
  * The Conscience can be weak: The little boy and the cookies. 32
  * Consistent in the face of Death: The story of Hugh MacHale. 234
  * Conversion of Muslim: Muslim
kills a Christian and is saved later. 74

*Death of D.L. Moody: Words of Moody on his death bed. 148

*Deception: Satan wants to rob us of God’s blessings as illustrated by a bandit in Mexico. 79

*Depression from false accusations: Story of Bill and Gloria Gather-11

*Depression of Great Christians: Spurgeon, Luther, Knox, & Judson-266

*Diligence: The burro masters the stallion by its diligence. 205

*Direction of God: God directs an evangelist to America. He ends up missing a voyage on the Titanic. 249

*Distraction: Atalanta loses her race because she was distracted. 80

*Encouragement’s Power: Robert Moffat encouraged David Livingstone to be a missionary. 199

*Encouragement from friends: Moravian missionaries are encouraged by other Christians in their quest to take the Gospel to the West Indies.268

*Our Faithfulness will Influence Others: David Brainerd’s life impacted the life of William Carey.227

*A Glimpse of Glory: John Jasper’s description of Heaven. 235

*Godly Influence: Influence of Samuel Wesley on his younger brothers, Charles and John. 260

*The Grace of God is Sufficient: Thomas Hauker is burned at the stake, but God gives him dying grace. 209

*Hindering Christians: Indians refuse to listen to David Brainerd because of the bad actions of Christians. 203

*Honoring God with your Life: The story of Eric Liddell. 290

*Hopelessness: Man with venereal disease dies without hope. 20

*Looking toward Heaven: Missionary’s family dies at sea and he finds comfort knowing they are with the Lord. 163

*Losses that are Gain: Livingston’s lost a goat and received the scepter of the king. 98

*Love is demonstrated by actions: The story of a little girl and her teacher. 88

*Made up Mind: The story of Daniel Webster and his wife Grace. 38

*Magnifying Christ with your life: George Atley chooses death so that the Gospel would not be hindered. 200

*Martyr for Christ: Man saved in Northern Iraq is killed for his faith in Jesus Christ. 127

*More Beyond the Grave: The story of the motto of Spain. 160

*Our Need of a Savior: Christ is our example, but our greatest need is a Savior because we cannot totally follow His example. 112

*Pain: How Renoir coped with his pain. 153

*Path directed by God: Sherman Smith is traded to Seahawks and wins a man to Christ who is now greatly used of God. 37

*Power of One Sermon: The impact of Moody’s sermon on Tommy Bewes and the generations to come. 223

*The Power of Kindness: The impact of a school teacher on her student. 218

*Praising God when we have obstacles: Teens praise the Lord on Interstate 24...26
* Prayer for Strength: Elizabeth Elliot prays for strength to care for her sick husband. 109
* Presence of God: Comfort of God in the Korean War. 15
* Protection of God: God uses Christians to thwart the Soviet coup in 1991. 232
* Protection and Provision of God: God cares for a Christian Canadian trapper who is injured in the wilderness. 187
* Purity at all cost: The ermine protects its white fur at all cost from being soiled. 214
* Quitting is not an option: The incredible story of Ramona Banuelos who became the Treasurer of the United States. 140
* Quitting is Refused: Beethoven continues to compose his music even though he is deaf. 62
* Quitting: Frustration can cause us to quit. Story behind the book The Power of Positive Thinking. 119
* Rejecting the Conscience: Pilot’s crash when they reject the warnings of their instruments. 33
* Restoration leads to Usefulness: The Nike shoes that were re-united. 83
* Righteousness brings blessing: The state motto of Hawaii. 259
* Salvation: The testimony of George Foreman’s salvation. 192
* Salvation: D.L. Moody tells a dying soldier how to be saved. 252
* The Sermon of your life: Your life preaches a message. 104
* Steadfastness: The faithfulness of Adoniram and Ann Judson-46
* Steadfastness: W.E. Sangster would not quit in spite of all his physical problems. 154

* Strength in weakness: George Mattheson’s thoughts. 5
* Suffering for Christ: John Selwyn willingly suffers for the Lord. 217
* Suffering amplifies our message: The message of Adoniram Judson. 16
* Treasures under our Nose: Man finds Wendy’s cup worth $200,000-page 130
* Urgency: The story behind the words “Post Haste.” 196
* Urgency of being Saved Today: D.L. Moody made the mistake of giving his audience a week to think about being saved. The Chicago Fire struck that night-201
* Used of God: The story of Edward Kimball & D.L. Moody-41
* Work for God: The Sunday School movement was started by a newspaper publisher, not a preacher. 276

J, K, L
*Judgement Seat of Christ-173
*Longsuffering-216
*Love-221

M, N, O, P
*Ministry of believers-118
*New things for believers-191
*Patience-204
*Pleasing the Lord-170
*Praise-10
*Prayers hindered-24
*Prayer (successful)-25
*Pressure-134
*Purity-214
*Purpose of 2 Corinthians-3

Q, R
*Quitting-153
*Rebuke-68
*Reconciliation-193
*Renewal elements-155
*Restoration (steps)-72
*Resurrection-148,149
*Roman Triumph Parade-89

S T, U, V
* Satan's devices-79
* Seal-58
* Separation-243
* Sincerity-42
* Sorrow (godly, worldly) 283
* Testimony-103
* Titus-87
* Trapped-207
* Trials-132,157
* Trouble-133

W.X.Y.Z
* Weapons of Satan-118

Topical Studies
* How to Get a Clear Conscience-35
* The Rigors of Restoration-72
* How to Comfort those who Need Restoration-77
* The Devices of Satan-79
* Dependence on God-107
* The Arsenal of Satan-118
* How Does Satan Blind the Eyes of Men? 125
* The Resurrection of Christ-149
* Elements of Renewal-155
* How do Trials Produce Glory and Maturity-157
* Pleasing the Lord with Your Life-170
* Checklist for the Judgment Seat of Christ-176
* Steps for Daily Cleansing-256
* How does the Lord Comfort Us when we are Depressed?-268
* What Can You do When You are Cast Down?-272
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