

2 CORINTHIANS, Teacher's notes, prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Introduction

Authorship: unquestionably from the apostle Paul. Polycarp (A.D. 69-156), pupil of the apostle John, quotes 2 Cor. 4:14 and 8:21 in his Epistle to the Philippians; Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200) frequently quotes from 2 Corinthians; Tertullian A.D. 160-220) cites 2 Cor. 11:14 in his Treatise on the Soul; 2 Corinthians is mentioned in the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170). All of these indicate Paul was the author. The writer of 2 Corinthians twice calls himself Paul (2 Cor. 1:1; 10:1); the subjects in the epistle parallel all we know of Paul historically and theologically.

Historical and Cultural Background: see "Introduction" to teacher's notes on 1 Corinthians by Paul T. Butler.

Occasion and Date: Paul established the church in Corinth on his 2nd missionary journey (Acts 18) about A.D. 50-51. After a year or more there he returned to Palestine (Acts 18:18-22); then, eventually, to Ephesus (A.D. 54) on his 34th missionary journey (Acts 18:24—19:41) where he stayed three years. During this time he wrote a "**First**" letter to Corinth (indicated in 1 Cor. 5:9) which has not been preserved. Receiving word from the household of Chloe of the many problems in the Corinthian congregation, he then wrote a second letter that we know as **First Corinthians (perhaps 2 Corinthians)**. In spite of Paul's strong condemnation and warning about division, the party-spirit continued, agitated by Judaizing factions insisting on observance of the law of Moses and Jewish traditions (see 2 Cor. 3:1-18; 10:7; 11:13). When this news reached Paul at Ephesus, he made a short visit to Corinth to deal with it, but failed in the attempt (2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14,21; 13:1,2), and he returned to Ephesus. Many scholars think Paul, soon after returning to Ephesus from his "short, second visit," wrote a "severe" **Third** letter sending it to Corinth by Titus (see 2 Cor. 2:3,4,10; 7:8-12) also not preserved. Plummer thinks that the major portion of this "severe" third letter is preserved in chapters 10 through 13 of what is now our extant **Second Corinthians (perhaps 4 Corinthians)**. Plummer's theory that *only* chapters 10-13 constitute "**3 Corinthians**" is unacceptable because of the *contextual connections* throughout what we call "**Second Corinthians**."

While waiting for Titus to return with a report of the effect of his "severe" *third* letter, trouble arose in Ephesus, and he left that city before he had planned to do so (Acts 20:1). Paul started to Macedonia, via Troas, to meet Titus returning from Corinth. The two met in Macedonia in the Fall of A.D. 57 as Paul was visiting churches in the region of Philippi and Thessalonica. Titus's word was that the long letter we now call *First Corinthians* had accomplished much good (2 Cor. 7:6), but at the same time, his "short second visit" and his "severe third letter" had not solved the problem of party spirit and vision; he was told, in fact, that some "false authorities" at Corinth were attacking his motives, his integrity and his authority as an apostle of Christ.

Against the background of this news and Paul's deep concern, he determined to visit Corinth "a third time" and he wrote (from Macedonia) **Second Corinthians**, which appears to have been his *fourth* letter to the congregation there! He sent **Second (i.e., "fourth") Corinthians** on ahead to the church by the hand of Titus (2 Cor. 8:6,17). A little later Paul reached Corinth, and spent the winter of A.D. 57 there (Acts 20:2,3), as he had planned (1 Cor. 16:5,6). While in Corinth, he wrote his great **Epistle to the Romans**.

Style: have you ever read someone's diary? My sister and I became privy to our mother's daily diary after her death. It was a very emotional, intimate and strengthening experience. After reading **Second Corinthians** one man said he felt like a person would after rummaging in an old desk and discovering the daily diary of a preacher named "Paul." He said he felt almost as if he should not have been reading the pages because they were so intimate and special. You will feel something when you study 2 Corinthians. You may say to yourself, "Yes, Paul, I know how you felt about that because I have had the same experience!" The letter may make you feel sympathy, disgust, shame, determination, and even anger. And it will not be only your emotions that are stirred. It will most significantly attack your mind! You will have to think! A number of doctrines and spiritual principles for life will demand understanding and decision. It will build your faith and strengthen your capacity to live the sanctified life.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-24, Teacher's notes, prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

1. The word for comfort in Greek is *paraklesseos*. It is literally, "to call alongside, or to summon into one's presence." It is the same word used by John in his Gospel as the name of the Holy Spirit (i.e., *paraclete*), "Comforter, Counselor." To be "comforted" means to be "assisted, counseled, helped, strengthened." Should preachers (and all Christians) understand their experiences of affliction as "**assistance**"? YES! So says the Lord! But such an understanding does not come by human reason or feeling or experience—it comes only when the human mind is surrendered to the Divine revelation (the Bible)! It really doesn't make affliction go away by denying its reality or by "feeling" bitter about it. Affliction is going to come to everyone in some form

- or another. And just because we become believers and followers of Christ will not guarantee exemption from affliction. In fact, becoming a Christian will almost guarantee an **increase** in one's affliction. Jesus told his disciples, "I chose you out of the world therefore the world hates you—a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you" (Jn. 15:19-20). Peter says we are not to be surprised at affliction and persecution as if it were something strange for a Christian (1 Pet. 4:12-19). **It is normal!** And for preachers, affliction of one sort or another is an almost constant companion. **Affliction** (Greek *thlipsei*) means the suffering that accrues from **pressure**. Every messenger-servant of God in the Bible lived under pressure and affliction, including the Lord Jesus himself (see Lk. 12:49-53, etc.).
2. Paul wrote the churches of Galatia, "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17). He told the Philippians, "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound...I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want..." (Phil. 4:12). And he writes later in 2 Corinthians of "Far greater labors, imprisonments, countless beatings, often near death, five times forty lashes, less one, three times beaten with rods, once stoned, three times shipwrecked, a night and a day adrift at sea, danger from rivers, robbers, the Jews, Gentiles, the city, the wilderness, at sea, false brethren, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure, and the daily pressure of anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:21-29). And in 2 Cor. 12:7ff he adds the life-time affliction of his "thorn in the flesh." Paul "boasted" of his weaknesses, because through them the power of Christ rested on him. He said he was **content** with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities: for when he was weak, then he was strong! (2 Cor. 12). Here in 2 Cor. 1:9 Paul said that when he was "utterly, unbearably crushed," he **learned** to rely on God and not on himself. Paul learned: (a) faith in God; (b) what grace really was; (c) to be content and not complain; (d) what deliverance is; (e) what strength is; (f) fellowship in Jesus' sufferings (Phil. 3; Gal. 6:17); (g) humility (2 Cor. 12:6-7); (h) Satan's message. All this was God's goal for Paul's life! And he **learned** it through **affliction!** Is this normal? Should preachers and missionaries expect to have the same mentality toward affliction? Should all Christians?
 3. What about preachers, missionaries, Christians, and **depression**? Should they have it? Dr. Stanley E. Lindquist (Joplin *Globe*, 7-18-1975): "Christians sometimes try to give the impression that God's presence keeps us always on 'cloud nine,' when we know we also have times of depression...a radiant front can be a form of dishonesty—and it can become psychologically damaging to the person affecting it, and also for others...we need to develop more honesty about the state we are in...some tend to imply that their faith brings a continual state of victorious well-being...an exalted mood and no defeat...but we know very well that life is not always like that...God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons we could not learn in any other way...the way we learn those lessons is not to deny the feelings but to find the meanings underlying them...in this manner we grow to become more like the persons God wants us to be...the refiner's fire may well be the mood problems we experience. If we deny that these feelings exist, we deny that God can use them to help us...emotional honesty is necessary for one's own spiritual growth and it also helps others to get the right perspective on their own experience." (Underlining, mine). We know that Jesus was "troubled in his soul" (Jn. 12:27; Matt. 26:38); that he "wept with great sobbing (Lk. 19:41); that he was astounded by the unbelief of the Jews. He was "pressured" (Lk. 12:50) or "constrained" (Greek, *sunechomai*, "pressed together"). Jesus was "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:1-12). We know that Peter suffered depression—Paul suffered anxiety, depression, and emotional hurt. But we also know, they had **joy** unspeakable and full of glory. **Now how did they come to that "joy unspeakable"?** "For the joy that was set before them they, like Jesus, endured the cross" (2 Cor. 5:1-21; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Heb. 12:2).
 4. Every preacher of the gospel will have to endure, sometime or another, the acrimony of some of the members of his "flock." Jesus did (Jn. 15:18-27), and even from some of his own disciples (Judas, John & James, Peter, his mother, his brothers). Paul had to deal with the rancor and ill will of some of the Corinthians. This is almost an inevitable hazard of the ministry ("Beware when all men speak well of you"). And preachers should not be "surprised" at it (1 Pet. 2:18-25; 4:12-19). Paul suffered some suspicion and indifference from a few members of churches in Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica—just read those letters! Paul defended his veracity by

appealing to his record as a Christian. He also reminded them that he had always communicated with them honestly, plainly and forthrightly. He was never ambiguous or equivocal in his relationships. He never vacillated back and forth. But no matter how straightforward and plain spoken he was, some found fault! Christian people need to concentrate on being sincere, loving, and understandable. Unity in the body of Christ is dependent, to a large degree, on **understanding one another**—feelings, motives, intentions, opinions, aims and aspirations should be clearly and lovingly communicated. Covert, disguised, surreptitious language and actions should not be a part of Christian relationships (read Ephesians chs. 4 & 5). Does the Bible give us sufficient instruction and role-modeling that we may deal with this problem? Of course it does! It gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). As members of a congregation we must grant our “ministers” (all of them) the right to be straightforward with us and not attack their veracity—and they must produce for us a non-vacillating ministry!

5. Definitely—preachers, elders, all Christians, should make every effort to be clearly understood. Wives and husbands should; parents and children should; employers and employees should; writers, actors, musicians, physicians, and every one else should make every effort to be clearly understood. **There is no reason to deliberately try to deceive anyone (except in war) in order to exploit.** Preachers and elders are dealing with eternal souls. There is no room for ambiguity, vacillation, half-truth, evasion. Jesus was never evasive. He was always plain and straightforward—even in his parables. People understood him even when they refused to accept and obey what he said! The trouble with most of us is we wear our feelings on our sleeves. We are just looking and expecting to be hurt. When Mary, Jesus’s mother, “bugged” him about the wine at the marriage feast, what was Jesus to do? Was he to be nice and evasive and ambiguous and let her make a mistake? Or was he to speak straightforwardly, plainly, and risk a hurt feeling so she could tune in on the kingdom? When Paul found problems in the churches, like Corinth and Galatia, what was he to do—equivocate—evade? Was he to write generalizations and tactful words? He said to the Galatians, “Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” How many souls would have been lost had he not squarely, plainly, bluntly, but lovingly, told them the truth? We have to understand how diametrically opposed to the carnal mind the truth really is! There is a war going on between truth and falsehood! Life is not a game—there are no charades, no “make believes” in Christianity. Note how Peter dealt with Simon in Acts 8:14-24!
6. First, remember, it is not wrong to say “No” when the occasion demands it. It **is** wrong to say “No” when you mean “Yes” or to say “Yes” when you mean “No.” Don’t demand of your preacher that which he cannot do! And, there are times when promises are made, when later circumstances or knowledge would show it was more profitable that the promise should not be kept (e.g. Herod’s promise to Salome). However, the usual practice ought to be that a preacher (and any Christian) should **keep his word!** Jesus said our “yea” ought to mean “yea” and our “nay” ought to mean “nay” (Matt. 5:37; James 5:12). Evidently Paul had planned to make a double visit to Corinth (1:15-16) and told them so, and then had not done so. He implies that it had been revealed to him by the Lord he should make other plans (1:23). The Lord seems to have revealed to Paul that had he made these planned visitations the Corinthians would assume he was “lording it over their faith.” So, he did not go! They accused him of vacillation—of saying “Yes” when he meant “No.” But Paul said “Yes” and meant “Yes.” He said, investigate my past behavior—both toward you and toward the world—when I was among you did I vacillate? That is what is meant in the Scriptures when it says, “Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak...” (James 1:19)—because we too often make promises and vows and offers we never intend to keep. “The tongue is a little member and boasts of great things” (James 3:5) we are exhorted (1 Thess. 4:10-12) to “aspire to live quietly, to mind our own affairs, and to work with our hands, so that we may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.”
7. Paul mentions the “Yes” of God because **the ultimate “YES” of God was the resurrection of Jesus Christ!** God cannot, this side of heaven, say “YES” with any more emphasis! That is as “YES” as God can be in this world. That is why continual miracles today would be superfluous. Christians are to be people who keep their word because that is the essence of God’s character. God keeps his word (Deut. 7:9; Psa. 119:89-90; Isa. 55:10-11; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Thess. 3:3; Heb. 6:13-20, etc.). Paul argues that it is contrary to the regenerated

- nature of a Christian to deliberately equivocate because it is contrary to the nature of God. The record of Jesus' life and words in the four Gospels verify that God keeps his word. God incarnate (Jesus) always fulfilled his promises! Not one word of Jesus (except that about his 2nd coming) failed to be fulfilled. Rest assured, what Jesus has said about his 2nd coming will come to pass—but no one knows the day nor the hour. The absoluteness of Jesus' words and actions is what Paul refers to in verse 19. Whatever Jesus promises is always answered with an absolute "YES"! The resurrection of Christ was the supreme, unparalleled, veracity of God manifested in the historical frame of reference. All of God's promises from Genesis through Revelation find their verification or ratification in Christ's historical, bodily resurrection from the dead. This is what Paul means in 2 Cor. 1:20. This is also what he meant when he wrote Hebrews 6:17 where he says God's oath to verify the immutability of his promises, was *himself* (incarnate in Jesus Christ) upon the cross—and raised from the dead! Because of the veracity of God, demonstrated historically, men may have such emphatic assurance they respond with "Amen," or "so be it," to every promise of God. "God said it, I believe it, that settles it."
8. There is nothing mystical or extra-Biblical about the "seal" of the Spirit of God. In ancient times, a ruler's "seal" marked documents and objects with the authority of the sovereign ruler. Such documents were authenticated as belong to the king by the seal stamped upon them. The seal was usually an engraving made in the likeness or image of the king. Alexander Campbell writes in *The Christian System* that when the moral facts of redemption (i.e. the New Testament gospel) "are understood or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul...the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and the faith of those who believe and obey this testimony are the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the heart and character of man...all the moral facts which can effect a moral character after the divine model, or which can effect a moral or religious change in man, are found in the testimony of God." (My underlining). God, acting upon the believer's nature through the divine word of the Spirit, has engraved his image upon the believer. When a believer loves God, the Spirit of God (in the word) bears witness with the spirit of the believer that he is a child of God. William Barclay puts it: "When Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as an *arrabon* (guarantee) given us by God, he means that the kind of life we live by the help of the Holy Spirit is the first installment of the life of heaven and the guarantee that the fulness of that life will some day open to us." In this context Paul is inviting the Corinthians to compare his past manner of life toward them with the witness of the Spirit in the word of God and test his veracity—he is "sealed," or authenticated, by the Spirit of God.
9. Paul explained his change of plans by stating that he had not come to visit them, first, that he might "spare" them an unpleasant confrontation. He probably would have spoken to them "severely" and that would have hurt both them and him. But he also says he changed his plans because he did not want to give any appearance of "lording it over" them. He could have visited them as planned, asserted his authority, criticized publicly their Christian immaturity, and handed down apostolic reprimands and edicts. Such was the way "false apostles" acted (see 2 Cor. 11:12-13; Gal. 2:4; 2 Pet. 2:10-22; Rev. 2:2). But he wanted to spare them that. True apostles admonished firmly, honestly, but tenderly, always willing to sacrifice any personal stature or reputation for the sake of the flock (1 Cor. 4:14-15; Acts 20:17-35). Paul is not shirking leadership—he is fulfilling it! The Corinthians had problems. Paul wrote them heartfelt admonitions and instructions. Then, he expected them to be able to work their problems out in a manner pleasing to God! Too many preachers today are impatient. They are in a hurry to become famous! They want to "lead" (actually, drive) congregations into model churches, so they "take the bull by the horns" and "ramrod" people and programs, "lording it over" the whole show. They are unwilling to give people time or credit for the capability to mature. Actually, they have never understood the kingdom!!! Jesus likened the kingdom unto a farmer planting seed—first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear "automatically" (the Greek word in Mark 4:28 is *automate* from which we get the English word "automatic"). The kingdom grows slowly, automatically—of itself. Preachers are not "pastors"—they are evangelists—unless the "pastors" (i.e., **elders**) have unloaded their responsibilities upon him! Then if he "lords it over them" they have only themselves to blame!

2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-17, Teacher's notes, prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

1. Paul made up his mind not to make **another** painful visit to Corinth. He had written his first (non-preserved, see 1 Cor. 5:9-13) letter which was “corrective.” He wrote his second letter (**First Corinthians**) which was firm, frank and a little harsh here and there. Then he made a hasty (painful) visit to Corinth (see 2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1). Then he wrote his third letter (“severe” also non-preserved). And finally he wrote this letter, his fourth, which we call **Second Corinthians**. So, Paul has “laid it on them” as severely as he dares without alienating more than he has already. He makes up his mind not to make **another** “painful” visit. After the word from Chloe about the divisions and other problems, he heard from Timothy that there were Judaizers in Corinth attacking his apostleship and his integrity. So, he had to make a hasty trip there to resolve some of these problems. And it was a “painful” experience. Paul was no stoic. He had feelings, too. He was a sensitive man. He had done all he felt the Lord would want him to do to resolve the situation. He determined he would not make another painful visit. If he goes on inflicting pain and causing the Christians there to grieve (2 Cor. 7:2ff), **who will be there to make him glad?** Paul knew that when he had to “pain” the Corinthians, he would hurt, too! From the beginning of the troubles Paul felt the alienation of some of the Corinthians. He wanted it resolved. He got no thrill or satisfaction out of stirring up the situation or prolonging or intensifying it! He experienced that lonely feeling that comes from alienation—he wanted no more of it. He had poured out more than 3 years of his life into these Corinthian brethren. So, he would bring no more “pain.”
2. THE PERSON MISBEHAVING (2 Cor. 2:5ff) or “causing pain” is probably **not** the incestuous man of 1 Cor. 5:1ff. The one “causing pain” here in 2 Cor. 2 has supposedly (according to the Corinthian Christians) caused pain **only** to Paul (2:5). This person is probably a ring-leader of the bitter opposition against Paul’s personal integrity and apostolic authority (perhaps even one of the Jews). But his conduct was immoral, nevertheless! He was “punished” by the congregation. And they seemed to want to continue the punishment beyond what was necessary. “Troublemakers” in a congregation are as immoral as those committing sexual and other social sins. Division is said to be “demonic” in its origin (James 3:14-16). The church is admonished to deal with “factious” and “divisive” elements in the church **swiftly, firmly and surely** (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Titus 3:10; etc.). Rebellion against godly, spiritual leadership in any congregation (even when the leaders lead in matters of opinion which does not suit everyone) especially when “factions” are started and stirred, brings alienation, hurt, loneliness, and vulnerability to Satan’s attacks as well as disrepute on the body of Christ, the church. Many a good preacher has “burned out” and “quit the ministry” because he could not bear the loneliness caused him and his family by members of a congregation that thought their calling was to keep “tabs” on him and his family, to criticize him and his family, and stir up others against him, bringing disrepute upon the church and the Lord. Many a good elder and deacon has “resigned” and either quit the church or transferred to another congregation because of the kind of “nit-picking” that was going on at Corinth toward the apostle Paul! Will such people stir up in heaven? **I DON’T THINK SO!**
3. Whether this “man” of 2 Cor. 2 is the incestuous man of 1 Cor. 5, or some other “immoral,” nit-picking, divisive trouble-making Jew slandering the apostle Paul, discipline was called for and exercised. The problem is hardly ever *whether* discipline is called for or not. The problem is most often, what **kind of discipline** (its severity, extent, length, and by whom). In Corinth, discipline was exercised by “the majority.” It has to be that way or a church leaves itself open to major divisiveness (and now-a-days, judicial litigation). The discipline must have been strong. It made the disciplined one sorry. He was even in danger of becoming overwhelmed by **excessive sorrow**. The objective in church discipline is always, of course, the reclamation of a **brother** from the danger of hell. Discipline, I repeat, always seems painful (momentarily), rather than pleasant (Heb. 12:11). So, it may be impossible to ever exercise discipline without causing (for the moment) some loneliness! In fact, *loneliness* appears to be the initial aim of discipline (see 1 Cor. 5:2,5,9,13). Recalcitrant sinners within the body of Christ must be **isolated** so that they **feel** the consequences of their sin. It is their sin which has actually alienated them from a Holy God and his holy church. If the church does not isolate them they have no experience of what they have done! But once the sinner has repented, the congregation must forgive and

“reaffirm” its love toward him. What is necessary to “reaffirm” love? This may be asked about disciplining sinning preachers, too! If a preacher falls into sin and repents, just how far are we to go in reaffirming our love toward him? Let him preach again? Did Peter preach again? Paul?

4. The devil is the author of loneliness. He is the author of alienation, fragmentation (“scattering” see Matt. 12:30), division, factiousness, isolation, and selfishness (the ultimate form of loneliness). The devil is the source of all lying, and there is no truth in him at all (John 8:44). And it is the absence of truth that produces loneliness! In hell there will be no sharing, no helping, no fellowship, no truth, no trusting—one of the excruciating torments of hell will be complete isolation with one’s self! Total loneliness! Why does the devil want this is because he hates God and he hates mankind! He wants to cut man off from God (the Absolute Communicator), Absolute Helper, Absolute Friend, Absolute Sharer, Absolute Companion). When man is cut off from God he is **lonely**. The devil is devious enough and deceptive enough to seduce millions into thinking they are **not** lonely without God and without Christ. Friendships formed in this world (unless both friends are headed for heaven) are vain and temporary—thus seductive! Only if we are in Jesus are we guaranteed against loneliness! He said, “You are my friends if you do what I command you...I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn. 15:15-16). Paul warns us not to be ignorant of Satan’s “designs” (the Greek word is *noemata*, from *noema*, “mind, thought, purpose”). Thus we are to inform ourselves of the way Satan thinks by studying what God says about him in the **Bible** which is the **only authentic information on Satan!**
5. Paul first visited Troas on his 2nd missionary journey (Acts 16:6-10). On his 3rd missionary journey he arrived in Ephesus (Acts 19:1ff), wrote the epistle we know as First Corinthians, left Ephesus at the time of the riot (Acts 20:1) and evidently went first to Troas (2 Cor. 2:12—not mentioned in Acts). He went to Troas in search of Titus, and thence to Macedonia. He went later to Troas a third time, still on his 3rd missionary journey (Acts 20:1-12). He was so eager to hear about the situation at Corinth he could not stay in Ephesus so he went to Troas hoping to meet Titus there. But Titus did not arrive. Paul really **cares** about the spiritual condition of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:28). He was feeling great anxiety! He was feeling lonely! He was depressed! He wanted to have Titus with him—he wanted his companionship and word from Corinth. And even though there was “a door opened” for Paul to preach in Troas, he could not take advantage of it because **he could not set his mind at rest**. Now whether preachers are supposed to be that depressed or not, this preacher, Paul, was! He had to leave Troas, go on to Macedonia, and meet Titus before he could set his mind at rest enough to concentrate on preaching the gospel! Many a preacher has felt the same loneliness because the congregation to which he ministers has made it a point to keep from him information necessary to building the kingdom and making it grow in spirituality. Too often, the preacher is flooded with negative communications and deprived of encouragement by **real friends**, so that his mind is unable to rest. Thus, many “open doors” wait upon someone helping him be at rest! Just an encouraging word—an offer of help—a compliment!
6. The imagery used by Paul to portray the awesomeness of a gospel preacher’s task is taken from the Roman triumphal ceremony. The risen King, Jesus, leads his preachers in an awesome triumph through the streets of the world. To the victors comes the perfume of joy and triumph. But they are **few**—and far separated from one another. To the wretched “prisoners” (the defeated enemy), the condemned, the gospel is the “scent of death,” impending their doom. The very destiny of a minister of God’s word is conducive to loneliness. Because they preached the truth, the ancient Hebrew prophets were men who had to suffer loneliness. Paul is portraying the earnestness of the gospel ministry here. It is a “life and death” ministry. Some (a minority) will welcome the man preaching the truth as a “refreshing fragrance of life itself.” Others, the majority, will be offended at the minister of the gospel because discerned in his message is the unmistakable smell of doom. This makes the pilgrimage of the preacher of God’s word on earth a lonely journey. Preacher’s have little time for frivolity, for foolishness. They have no time to waste on inanities. They walk in a procession of life and death. To most of those walking with them, their message smells of doom, and they are not appreciated or welcomed. Those dead in sin are **surprised** that there are men of God who take their work with such seriousness. Those who spend their leisure hours in reveling, wonder why preachers choose to miss out on “the good life” of living in

licentiousness, passions, carousing and the like (1 Pet. 4:1-6). Some of the Corinthians (sinning Corinthians) evidently reacted to Paul's preaching as "a fragrance from death to death." Paul was feeling the depressing loneliness of their antagonism toward him and so he portrays it with this scene from Roman culture.

7. The "fish-bowl" kind of life preachers must lead only intensifies the loneliness they must endure. Congregations often expect of their spiritual proclaimers nearly impossible rigid standards of personal conduct. This is only correct when those expectations square with Scripture. Paul firmly contradicts the false claims some in Corinth were making that he preached the gospel as a "peddler." The Greek word is *kapeleuontes* which signifies someone who is a "small-time retailer, a huckster" in contrast to the Greek word *emporos* which means to be a "merchant." The idea of the word *kapeleuontes* is "marketing something dishonestly in order to exploit others and line one's own pockets. Evidently, in Paul's day, some were exploiting people through preaching or teaching for personal fortune. Jesus spoke of "hireling" shepherds (John 10). Paul was certainly no "hireling" (1 Cor. 9:12,18; 2 Cor. 11:7-9; 13:13,16). Needless to say, there are many self-appointed religious "giants" today "peddling" the gospel for their own financial fortunes. And so many of them are plainly dishonest in their huckstering. This in turn, makes a cynical world think all preachers "are in the racket." Many a struggling, suffering messenger of God has served out his life on earth hurting and lonely because the world categorizes all preachers as "hucksters." It wasn't true of the apostle Paul, and it isn't true of a host of faithful spokesmen for God today! Peter talks about the false teachers who "entice unsteady souls" who in greed exploit people with false words (2 Pet. 2:3). And the world's cynicism about all preachers makes for an exacting and lonely life for the true preacher of the Word. **Faithful (to the Scriptures) preaching of the gospel (as evangelist or elder), especially as a "paid-preacher" is no "racket":** (a) it is spoken of as "work" in scores of places in the Bible both OT and NT. Paul told Timothy to "do the **work** of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5; see 1 Cor. 9:7); (b) Paul classified preaching right alongside being in the military, being an athlete, being a "hard **working** farmer" (2 Tim. 2:4-6); (c) Paul exhorts Timothy to be a "**workman**" that has no need to be ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15); (d) run a concordance search some day on the word "labor" and see how often Paul used the word in connection with his ministry!; (e) financial support for the preacher and his family, equal to that of those who receive the benefits of his ministry, is **scripturally ordained** by the Lord (1 Cor. 9:1-14; Gal. 6:6). The faithful preacher is no "huckster"—he is an honest, hard-working man, just like the "hard-working" farmer. He is "worthy of his hire" and even Jesus said that (Lk. 10:7; Matt. 10:10)!; (f) the preacher is a "professional." We do not like to say that—but in the good sense, he is! Why did Jesus take 12 men aside from all the other "disciples" and **train them**? Paul told Timothy the "evangelist" must (1) attend to public reading of Scripture, peaching, teaching—to "practice" these duties—to "devote" himself to them (1 Tim. 4:11-16); (2) be apt to teach—able to correct opponents (2 Tim. 2:24); (3) be able to handle aright the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). **Studying, teaching, being a "public relations" expert, dispensing compassion, attending a multitude of "meetings" IS W.O.R.K.!!**
8. Here is how a preacher may handle loneliness: (a) get married, have children; (b) understand what a "queer duck" he is from the perspective of others. He knows he is not weird, but do others? It might help preachers understand how others see him if they didn't become preachers right out of High School, but served and internship of about 10 years between High School and Bible College as a deacon or adult member of a congregation involved in its daily activities; (c) get involved in some local, civic, social or benevolent clubs or activities and establish "friendships" outside the circle of the congregation. Hopefully, the congregation will **understand** and not accuse the preacher of "eating with publicans and sinners"; (d) have "special friendships" within the congregation—those with "common interests," same age level—or any other appropriate age level. Hopefully, again, a congregation would be mature enough to understand a preacher's family's need for this and encourage it!; (e) **carefully, VERY carefully**, find a confidant, one who "sticketh closer than a brother," with whom you can be perfectly open. One whom you can trust to keep quiet, to be honest with you like a father or mother. Unburden yourself to such a one. But be very careful!!! Such a confidant is difficult, if not impossible to find. Hopefully, every preacher will have a wife for confidant. But even then, it takes an exceptional wife to be able to **bear** all her husband's burdens; (f) finally, **pour out your heart to Jesus—he understands—and is**

“with you”—you are not alone!!!

9. It is not always **intolerable** to be alone—**BUT IT IS A BIG BURDEN TO HAVE TO BEAR! IF YOU WANT TO HAVE A MENTOR OF LONELINESS—READ THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH!** Most of the OT prophets led **lonely** lives (except for those who were married—and even then they probably had to bear most of their burdens by themselves). Jesus bore the burdens God placed on him **ALONE!** Jesus lived a very lonely life on earth—his mother misunderstood him; his brothers were antagonistic toward him; his chosen disciples were spiritual dolts until after the resurrection, and certainly the majority of the multitudes showed him no “companionship” except when they wanted to be healed or have him give the miraculous “fish and bread.” When he quit “handing out” his favors, “they all left him and went away” (John 6). Only the “apostles” stayed with him in body—but in mind they were often opposed to him (Matt. 16:23). There **are** situations **worse** than loneliness! To have constant companionship with evil people (whether family or “friends”) is **worse!** **SO DON’T GET DISCOURAGED IF YOU ARE LONELY—IT ONLY LASTS FOR THIS LIFE—IN HEAVEN THERE WON’T BE ONE LONELY PERSON!**

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18, Teacher’s notes, prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

1. Legalism is fundamentally an **attitude**. It is the attitude that demands justification from God on the basis of having behaved in conformity with a *humanly* devised set of regulations or rules—usually devised by the legalist himself. Justification through human regulations does not necessarily have to appeal to the law of Moses. Justification may be claimed on **any alleged meritorious behavior** before God. Purely, simply, totally, exclusively, and absolutely, Christians are justified because we believe God’s decree that the meritorious work of Christ is accepted in place of our merit! (See Gal. 2:16; 5:4; Heb. 10:10,12,14; Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:28; 10:4). Followers of the Pharisees and, later, the Judaizers (i.e., Christian-Jews who were insisting that people adhere to the law of Moses to be Christians) were **everywhere** in the first century world of Paul (they were Jews of the “Diaspora” or Jews dispersed in the exiles in 721 B.C. and 606 B.C.). These Judaizers had infiltrated the Christian churches all over the Roman empire. Paul called them “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4) and “dogs” (Phil. 3:2). These “false brethren” (1) kept impugning Paul’s authority as an apostle by accusing him of preaching a gospel “unauthorized by Jerusalem;” and (2) kept the Christian churches in constant turmoil, divisiveness, and hostility! That is what legalism produces. Legalism never produces peace or real holiness (only hypocritical holiness). That’s because it is hostile to the mind of God which has decided absolutely on redemption and salvation by grace exclusively through the work of Jesus Christ. Legalism (a) confuses people; (b) alienates people; (c) makes people into hypocrites; (d) condemns people to hell; (e) those who advocate it are false teachers. Paul suffered great personal anxiety, physical and verbal abuse, and loss of fellowship because of it. Churches to whom Paul ministered (practically every one to which he wrote) were divided over this issue or at least confused and led astray. Legalism affected Paul’s relationship to Peter and other Jewish apostles and brethren. Not even apostles were immune from its pseudo-holiness. Paul had to fight it in his own heart constantly! You know what a great struggle the “Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to righteousness under the law blameless...” must have had keeping himself free from the **attitude** that he could be justified by law! He bares his soul about this in Romans 7:13-25; Phil. 3:2-21). He also reveals that God allowed the devil to send him a “thorn in the flesh” for the very purpose of reminding him that “grace was sufficient” for him! Rules, laws, commandments, guidelines, ordinances, are not, in themselves legalistic. It is the human being’s **attitude** toward them that constitutes legalism. Of course, a rebellious attitude toward God’s commandments and his law (see Matt. 5:17-20)—even by a Christian—is as condemning as legalism! God condemns both the attitudes of legalism and lawlessness!
2. Paul’s statement (3:2) about “living letters” is to authenticate his apostleship. He contends that the converted heathen Corinthians were **living credentials** of his apostolic ministry. They proved he was the properly authorized emissary from Christ. He had written on their hearts the **eternal gospel**. They had become persons with a consciousness of immortality. They “looked to the things that are unseen...eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Their mind-set was “known and read by all men...” (2 Cor. 3:2) because it had made their behavior holy. **They** were Paul’s “letter or commendation” from God. Plato said 400 years before Paul that the good teacher does not write his message in ink that will fade; he writes it upon men. And that is the way the gospel of Christ operates. It becomes fixed upon the character, the personality, the spirit of the humble and contrite person. Christ’s word is eternal. It shall never pass away. It never returns to him void but always accomplishes that for which it is sent (Isa. 55:11). Christ has written his character, through Paul’s inspired revelation, upon the hearts of the Corinthian Christians. It would not fade as Moses’ law was destined from its inception to do. Their relationship to Christ was Paul’s accreditation (1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). It is an awesome thought that every Christian, whether he likes it or not, is at once a “living letter” known and read by his contemporaries. Christians represent Christ to an unbelieving world. Men “read” about the church from its members! The honor of God is on the character and in the hands of Christians (see Rom. 2:24; John 13:35; 1 Thess. 1:7-8). You and I are “open books” or “letters” being **read**, for better or worse, written by the Holy Spirit of God through his word controlling our minds, words and deeds. Think of yourself as a letter arriving in your next-door neighbor’s mail-box—return address on the envelope is “God, #1, Golden Street, Heaven, zip code, 77777.” Your neighbor opens and reads, “Dear Neighbor....(1) God loves sinners, like you and me and everyone else; (2) God makes people **good, helpful, friendly, honest, and wise**; (3) God somehow gives those who believe him and worship him the capability to deal with trials, discouragements, failures, and depressions; (4) God gives people an abiding joy while admitting at the same time they don’t have all the answers, have doubts sometimes, and go through the same sadness everyone else goes through; (5) God is gracious, forgiving and merciful; (6) God stands for what is just, fair, truthful, and right; (7) God has accomplished redemption for every human being—he has communicated to the whole world in his book the Bible (especially in the New Testament); (8) God, through me, invites you, dear sinner, to all he offers, signed, Sincerely, Your next-door neighbor.” YOU AND I ARE “LETTERS” TO OUR NEIGHBORS—TO OUR SOCIETY—WHAT ARE THEY “READING”?

3. God gave the law of Moses. But God never intended the law to be used in a legalistic, self-justifying way. The law had a holy and good purpose (Rom. 7:7-12). It was actually intended to teach just the opposite from what the Judaizers used it for. The law was to bring all who knew it to a consciousness of the need for divine grace. It is not the law which is insufficient—it is legalistic perversions of it which constitute any insufficiency that may be attributed to it. Law (and more so, legalism) condemns to separation from God (eternal death). The law puts man on trial before an **absolute** Sovereign. Man is guilty before absolutes! The absolute Sovereign’s penalty for guilt is eternal banishment from eternal guiltlessness! A future, new covenant of grace, accomplished by the absolute God in absoluteness, freeing man from the responsibility of guilt of the law, was typified, prophesied and preached in the Old Testament. All who believed that, were justified by God’s future graciousness. All who refused to trust in the coming graciousness of God in the Messiah were **not** justified—no matter how *legal* they thought they were. The New Covenant was a manifestation of the righteousness of God apart from the law (although the law and the prophets bore witness to its grace, Rom. 3:21-26). The Old Covenant is a manifestation of the judgment of God apart from grace (its inevitable consequence is death). The **New Covenant of grace** is all about **life**. It does not condemn or sentence anyone to death who will accept it. **Trying to earn** justification by law (any law) man must inexorably face his death sentence. **Accepting** justification by grace, through faith, man is *given* life. Those who do not accept grace, come under law—one law or another (Rom. 2:12-16). And if divine law is unable to justify, certainly human law results in condemnation!
4. Under which “covenant” would you prefer to answer for to an absolute God—the law of Moses or the Gospel of Christ? This is not as easy as some would think! **Most** people in the world today (and in ages past) have chosen “Law” as the basis upon which they plan to stand before Almighty God and insist upon being justified—(1) either they are totally deceived by the devil into arrogance and rebellion, thinking they are not dealing with an **absolute** God, or they have been duped into thinking they are “blameless” before God’s law because they “feel” like they have kept it—or; (2) they understand the implications of the total surrender in loving slavery

and stewardship demanded by absolute grace from an absolute Christ, and they are unwilling to be so totally “bought” and they prefer to shirk that responsibility (“You are not your own”) and take their chances with law, preferring to withhold part of themselves for themselves! Justification by law is **totally impossible**. Only one Person ever earned justification before God through law—Jesus Christ. That is true or the Bible is the biggest hoax ever perpetrated on mankind! Justification by grace is **totally possible**! The one Person who earned justification by law declared he gives his justification, freely, apart from anyone’s merit, to all who believe. That is true or Jesus is a liar and unworthy of any honor. He validated his declaration by his bodily resurrection. Which do you prefer? Are you willing to be “not your own” and answer God with grace? Are you willing for *others* to be given God’s grace? Remember the account of David, Uriah, Bathsheba, and Nathan—“What’ll you have, David, for the man who stole the sheep—justice or mercy?----David, you are that man!” (2 Sam. 12).

5. The law of Moses was a dispensation (or “ministry”) of death, carved on deteriorating stone. It had splendor—everything God does has splendor. But its splendor was “fading” (Greek, *katargoumenen*, “being done away” 3:7). The law of Moses, glorious as it was, was to be superceded by a New Covenant or Ministry. Actually, Paul uses the Greek words *diakonia*, “ministry,” and *diathekes*, “covenant” of righteousness by grace instead of the word “dispensation” (the word for “dispensation” would have been Greek, *oikonomia*). To this all the prophets (including Moses), gave testimony (e.g., Isa. 61; Jer. 3:15; 31:31ff, etc.). The transfiguration of Jesus, in all his divine splendor, outshining Moses and Elijah, along with God’s voice, “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him,” signified to the apostles that he was more splendid than Moses or the prophets. Peter was finally able to comprehend all this (2 Pet. 1:16ff). The New Covenant accomplished through the glorious Son of God is of such surpassing splendor that the law is **as if** it had no splendor at all! The New Covenant/Ministry’s splendor consists in its “remaining.” It is **permanent—for all eternity—never ending—never being superceded by any other dispensation from God**. It is the **perfection** of a perfect Being. Nothing can ever be better. Thus, no further “revelation” than the New Testament Scriptures is needed from God; It is **all** man needs for eternal life and godliness. Through it man can reach the goal God had for him when he created man! Through it man can, by faith, be conformed to the very image (character) of the Divine-man, Jesus Christ. To turn one’s back on the absolute best which an absolute God can accomplish—turn away from what could never be earned but is freely given—turn from that which is “beyond all comparison”—turn from what is not only offered by offered along with the ultimate inducement to accept it—to spurn this glory is to make the ultimate mockery, the most contemptible, unforgivable, arrogant rebuff of infinite love imaginable!
6. Moses put a veil over his face **after** he finished speaking with the **Israelites** (Ex. 34:33-34), and removed it when he went in to speak with Jehovah in the tabernacle. He always **put** the veil on when he was in the presence of the **Israelites**. Paul states he did this so the **Israelites** would not see the “**end**” of the glory that was “**fading** away” (3:13). This was because Moses did not have enough hope in the “fading away” revelation to be bold enough to let Israel see the “fading away glory.” Moses certainly did **not** veil his face because it blinded the Israelites. He talked to them **before** putting on the veil. Paul uses the fading glory of Moses’s face as a **symbol or type (prophecy)** of the **fading** glory of the Old Covenant. Most Jews refused to accept this doctrine (fading glory) even though the O.T. predicts it (Jer. 3:15; 31:31-34; Dan. 9:24-27; Isa. 66:1-24, etc.). Jews certainly do not accept this doctrine today! Nor do a lot of Christians (“dispensationalists,” and legalists). The Israelites were not spiritually mature enough so that Moses had to go around constantly in their presence with a veil over his face hiding the fact that very soon **after** he would go in to God’s presence, after he told the people what God had said, the glory of his face would begin to fade! The Jews killed the prophets and the Messiah for declaring the fulfillment of the law of Moses and its obsolescence as a covenant relationship. That was their real reason for accusing Paul to the Roman authorities. It means that people have to be mature enough to think and act responsibly—to have faith strong enough—to accept the obsolescence of law (in general) and accept the “slavery of grace.” It means Christians, by faith in the atonement of Christ, are bold enough to look God’s New Covenant squarely in the face—no veil—exposed to its blinding splendor!
7. If we are to behold the glory of the absolute Lord of grace—the covenant that is permanent—we must “unveil”

our own faces! Paul means we must divest ourselves of the spirit of legalism (i.e., seeking to be justified by our own merit). How can we appreciate the blinding, incomparable, unsearchable glory of grace if we put the “blindness” of legalism over our eyes? How shall we comprehend the spiritual when we are locked into the physical and material? How shall we experience everlasting life when we have tied the albatross of death (legalism) around our necks? Many passages in the New Testament indicate our **beholding the glory of the Lord** to be changed into his image is exclusively through the instrumentality of the Scriptures: (a) partakers of the divine nature—we are granted **all** things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-11); (b) transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2); (c) conformed to the image of God’s Son by setting our minds on things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-32); (d) called through the gospel so that we may obtain the glory of our Lord (2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Thess. 2:13); (e) purify our souls by obedience to the truth (1 Pet. 1:22-25). “No living man has ever been heard of, and none can now be found, possessed of a single Christian concept or one spiritual thought, feeling, or emotion, where the Bible, or some tradition from it has not been before him!”—Alexander Campbell in *The Christian System*. **Without the word of the Lord, there is no beholding the glory of the Lord!**

8. No one would be a better Christian than they are today by merely having the Lord physically (incarnate) present to behold! His incarnate presence did nothing greater for thousands who did see him, then, than his spiritual presence does through his word now! Even the Twelve who accompanied him in the flesh grew spiritually the most **after** he was ascended to heaven and out of sight! By beholding the glory of the Lord through the testimony of the word, people are *metamorphoumetha* (Greek of 3:18) “changed, transformed.” That Greek word is in the present tense meaning it is a continuing procedure. People are “transformed” from “one degree of glory to another.” It doesn’t happen all at once. The most significant thing we must understand from this is that the change taking place by beholding the glory of the Lord is **moral**. It is mental. Our minds, our thinking processes, our desires, our choices, our **characters** must be in a state of **constant change**. There is no mental or moral plateau of final achievement for the Christian in this life and, I suspect, there will be none in the next life since **growth** is of the essence of **life**. When we shall have **life eternal** we shall also have **growth eternal**. The **objective** for our growth is “the image of Christ, the divine nature.” God sent his Son, in human form, to show us what his ultimate goal for each of us is—the mental, moral “stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-16). No beholding of Christ’s glory equals no change in the direction of Christ’s nature. No studying and obeying his word equals no beholding his glory. **Studying and obeying his word is the most crucial matter of human existence!**
9. What is “glory”? It is a word used in the Bible to describe, “rank, renown, position, weight, worth.” It is a word describing “brilliance, majesty, nobility, beauty, dignity, excellence.” That which is **glorious** is that which deserves and receives **praise**. So what is the glory you should anticipate in heaven, if you are to be ultimately changed into the glory of Christ? (1) you will be renowned; (2) you will be beautiful; (3) you will have dignity; (4) you will have innocence, purity, righteousness (you will be right with God and people); (5) you will be rich (everything that belongs to Christ will belong to you); (6) you will be praised (God, himself, will speak words of praise about you, unto you); (7) you will be wise with divine wisdom; (8) you will be loved (because you are you—not because someone wants to exploit you); (9) you will be perfect. It will be glory beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Think of earth’s ultimate glory—what do you consider to be the essence of “glory” among men? Is it fame? Is it power? Is it wealth? Is it Character? Is it adoration? Is it attainment? Is it self-satisfaction? Think of the glory God attached to his law—to Moses—to David—to the prophets—to the Messiah (at the transfiguration)—there is no comparison—AND YOU WILL HAVE IT! YOU ARE BEING CHANGED INTO THAT FROM ONE DEGREE TO ANOTHER!
10. NO! The opposite of legalism is **not** the **absence of restraint!** The opposite of legalism is “love-sim.” Love, by its very nature, demands a return of love—a responsibility to be loving. And such responsibility is exercised only within certain parameters or boundaries or restraints. The *responsibility* of love is exercised within the boundaries of the **one being loved**. That is true of earthly affiliations or citizenship as well as of heavenly! Christians are continually taught in the NT that their heavenly affiliation demands a restraint commensurate

with value and “rank” (glory) of the One we love and according to the boundaries revealed (delineated) by his gracious Sovereignty. Paul said it in 2 Cor. 5:14, “The **love** of Christ **constrains (controls) us.**” John said it this way, “We love **because** he **first** loved us” (1 John 4:19). Jesus repeatedly stated, “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” That is not legalism—it is the responsibility of having received divine love! A reaction of irresponsibility toward divine love is a manifestation of: (a) ingratitude; (b) contemptuousness; (c) immorality (moral rebellion); (d) mental anarchy; (e) mockery; (f) self-righteousness (unrestrained irresponsibility toward God’s love as he delineates its guidelines in the NT is exactly what Christ came to destroy about legalism). Part of the glory we anticipate in heaven is the unfettered opportunity to respond in an eternal and ultimate way to the divine love extended us by God through Christ! Service responding to love is glory.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18, Teacher’s notes, prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

1. It was always a severe blow to Paul’s spirit when he received word the Judaizers were working their “ministry of death” among brethren he had converted to Christ. So, chapter 4:1 is connected to the problem of legalism he had just discussed in chapter 3 (note; “therefore” 4:1). Paul was **discouraged**, but he had “**not lost heart.**” The Judaizers went everywhere accusing Paul of “tampering” with the word of God because he taught that people did not have to keep the law of Moses for covenant relationship to God. They said Paul had been dealing “disgracefully, underhandedly, cunningly” with people and with God’s word. Paul **had** actually handled the word of God “disgracefully” and “tampered” with it **before** his conversion (as a persecutor of Christians) even though he was sincere when he was doing it, he states that he has “renounced” all that now that he has committed his life to Christ. At one point in his life (Phil. 3) Paul gloried in his self-righteousness according to the law of Moses—BUT NO MORE! The word “tamper” is in the Greek text, *dolountes*, which means, “to mix, to dilute, to adulterate in order to trap or snare.” The word is sometimes translated, “deceive.” It describes a **deliberately** wicked action! The Judaizers were those “mixing” and “adulterating” the gospel with Judaism. To do so is to “tamper” with the word of God! Some would not see legalism as “tampering” with the word. Some would see legalism as strengthening God’s commandments (the Pharisees did). But to add law to grace is to **dilute** and **adulterate** the power of grace! As we pointed out in lesson #3, responsibility to grace is infinitely more demanding and powerful than any legalism could ever be. We must not dilute grace with legalism of any kind. Many want to “get by” with legalism in Christianity today!
2. The devil is **not** the “god” of this world! He created nothing. He has no sovereignty—not even over hell (God made hell and is Sovereign over it). God created this world and all other beings (including angels and those who became demons). This world belongs to God. God even created the person called Satan. God maintains constant sovereignty over the devil! The devil was created with freedom to choose whether he would serve his Creator or not. He chose not to serve. So, God has consigned the devil to eternal banishment in the lake of torments (Rev. 20:10). The devil has not yet been put there in a *consummate* way, but that is his destiny. The devil is presently *bound* to some extent—the extent being comparative or relative—which limits his ability to deceive mankind which had at an earlier time been more extensive. But the devil has *always* been “bound” to some limitations placed upon him by the Sovereign rule of God (see Job, chs. 1-2). The redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the gospel of grace, is what currently “binds” the devil from deceiving all mankind as he did before grace came (see Lk. 10:17-20; Matt. 12:29; John 12:31; 16:11; Rev. 12:9,11; 20:2,3). But the devil **pretends** he rules this world. Everything he does is a lie! Every power he may possess is deceitful! That is the only sense in which he may be said to be a “ruler.” He is the “god” of this world only because some have been **deceived** into worshiping (following) him. One does not have to have a “church of Satan” to follow Satan as a “god.” In our context here, one has only to advocate Judaism, legalism, to be “blinded” (voluntarily) by Satan and to be on his side! To go to Judaism for justification is apostasy; it is to crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to open shame (Heb. 6:1ff). It is the work of the devil! John mentioned “the synagogue of Satan” in

Rev. 3:9 in direct relationship to “those who say they are Jews and are not.” Now, in the New Covenant, who are true “Jews”? (see Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9-25; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:6-29; 6:15-16). If then, “Jew” in the New Covenant is **not** those who merely “say” they are, and are **not** those necessarily descended from Abraham genetically (Rom. 9:6-7), then those of whom John wrote in Rev. 3:9 were worshiping the “god” of this world—Satan, even though they were genetic Jews in a synagogue. Paul calls such, “dogs,” “evil-workers,” who mutilate the flesh and insist on circumcision as demanded by God for salvation (Phil. 3:2-3). The “god” of this world has deceived millions of “religious” people into “tampering” with the word of God (the gospel of grace in Christ). They have swallowed his bait, they are hooked! They are in rebellion against the absoluteness and exclusiveness of God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus! They insist on “doing and being religious” as the way to find justification before God. There isn’t a “religion” in all the world capable of producing justification before the absolute God! If there were, it would probably be Judaism. We cannot, therefore, think of our relationship to Christ as a “religion.” Our relationship to Christ is purely and simply a “gift” of “grace.” Anything less (and all religions are less than grace) is from the “god” of the “fleshly-minded” (this world) which is totally false and deceitful. I am not persuaded we should even concede there is “some truth” in all the world’s religions! If anyone attempts to demand justification through one of the alleged “partially-true religions” shall he have it? NO! Then why allow people to be deceived with “partially-true” religions?

3. In context, the believer’s “**treasure**” is the “**Spirit**,” the “**freedom**” the “**glory**” which we have by **grace** (2 Cor. 3:16-18) as contrasted with the “ministry of death” we studied in chapter 3. Our “treasure” is, “God...who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of **the glory of God** in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). The Greek word *thesauron* is translated “treasure” and is the word from which we get the English word, “thesaurus” (“a place of safe-keeping, a storehouse, a collection”). What God has given us of himself, he “stores” in these earthen vessels we call our “bodies.” The Greek word *ostrakinois* is translated “earthen vessels” and is the word from which we get the English word “ostraca” (i.e., inscribed potsherds which were once complete vessels). Paul is here (2 Cor. 4:7) reminding the Corinthians of the **mortality** of the human body (even apostles were mortal), for the purpose of puncturing the inflated egos of the Judaizers in their midst. Human mortality is a stark reality that often produces moments of discouragement and depression. God intended that from the moment of man’s sin in Eden (see Gen. Ch. 3). The Judaizers gloried in their own “goodness.” Jesus told the rich young ruler to “call no man good, but God alone.” All humans must remember constantly that the flesh of man is as frail as the dust from which his earthly body is made. His mortal body is only an earthen vessel compared with the **treasure** he has “stored” within him. This constant fact demonstrates that the power available to man through Christ “in him” **transcends** anything of which he is **mortally** capable through legalism. Only by the grace of Christ **given us** are we set free from the doom to which our “mortality” is destined! Without the precious hope we have through grace, our “mortality” during “afflictions” would depress, discourage us, and make life unbearable!
4. The answer to being “knocked down” is to **know and believe** that although being constantly afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and frustrated with our “earthen vessel”—all the time we have the “life of Jesus” manifested in us as we allow God’s word to change us from one degree of glory to another into Christ’s image! That is the **only** answer to being “knocked down”! That is the **only** “experience” we shall have, this side of heaven, by way of an answer! This is the way Paul received an **answer** to the “knock downs” in his life. His “earthen vessel” was “knocked down” as much as anyone’s, but his answer to the afflictions, perplexities, and depressions was always the “treasure” being borne about in that “earthen vessel.” That “treasure” was the “Lord, the Spirit of God” (2 Cor. 3:16-18). The Spirit is the “earnest” of our inheritance. But the Spirit of God in us is not some “feeling”—it is the **character, the personality, the nature** of Christ “at work in us” (2 Cor. 4:12) or “being manifested in us.” And how do we know that the Spirit is “at work in us” if we don’t have some “feeling”? We know it when our **mentality** is the same as the Spirit’s mentality—when our works are the same as the Spirit’s works—when the fruit of our works produce the same fruit as the Spirit says he produces—**MOST OF ALL WE KNOW IT BECAUSE GOD HAS PROMISED IT IN HIS WORD AND HE NEVER GOES BACK ON HIS WORD!** We know the Spirit’s mentality, works and the fruits of the Spirit’s works

through his communication to us. He communicates to us in his inerrant, supernatural, eternal, absolutely complete word—we call it the Bible! Paul summed all this up in **Romans 8:16** by saying, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Paul’s answer is not a “feeling—it is a divine **promise**.”

5. Paul is not talking about the physical “death of Jesus” being carried around in him or in us. No man, not even Paul, may duplicate in his body the vicarious, atoning death of Jesus on the cross. Paul **is** talking about the **death to self** that Jesus accomplished in his own fleshly nature on earth by total surrender to the will of God (i.e., “Nevertheless, not my will by thine be done:”). Paul states the idea of death to self clearly in Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14. He also discusses it at length in Romans chapters 6 through 8. Jesus demanded it of those who would follow him (Matt. 10:38-39; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14:25-33; 17:33). While we cannot die the same death Jesus died in a vicarious way, we are all, nevertheless, dying! We are all mortal! We are all terminal in these “earthen vessels.” And that very fact “works in us” either to throw ourselves on the merciful grace of God as he has chosen to extend it through Jesus Christ, **or**, death to the earthen vessel “works in us” bitterness, rebellion, despair, an sense of having been forsaken, and a grasping after the vanity of this doomed world! “The Preacher” (Solomon) spent many hours, evidently contemplating this human “earthen vessel,” and wrote Ecclesiastes. Life’s brevity, it’s perplexities, its vanities were all analyzed and Solomon concludes, “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the **whole** of life!” That is what God intended physical death to “work in us” when he decreed it in Eden! Death is our enemy, but we can make it serve us if we throw ourselves upon the mercy of God and let his Spirit manifest eternal life in us (Rom. 8:31-39). Paul said, “Therefore, having this ministry **by the mercy of God** we do not lose heart” (2 Cor. 4:1). Thus, our physical dying (earthen vesselness) is to work in us death to **self** so the life of the Spirit may live in us.
6. Do you “feel” like you are being renewed in your inner nature every day? That is a trick question! Assurance of your renewal is not measured by feeling, but by knowing and doing! Assurance of your renewal is measured by **where your mind dwells**, or upon **what it dwells**. Assurance of your being renewed every day is measured by what your priorities, your goals, your “treasure,” your beliefs are! It is measured by what your life manifests! Assurance of renewal is dependent upon **knowing** that this slight, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (see also Rom. 5:2; 8:18; 1 Pet. 4:12-13; 5:1; Col. 3:4; Titus 2:13, etc.). Now if we must **know** something that is “beyond all comparison” and we must “see” things that are invisible, we are talking about something that must come to us by divine revelation, and not by some subjective, vacillating, mood or feeling. We **know** and **see** that which is impossible to humanly know and see by faith in God’s revelation which promises us impossible things! Did you notice that Paul makes a point to “preach” the resurrection of Jesus Christ (4:14) as the basis for his assurance of renewal even in the face of crushing affliction, despairing perplexity, destroying “knock-downs?” The fact of the resurrection was what kept him from losing heart while at the same time being aware of the death of his “earthen vessel”! Paul certainly does not base his assurance of renewal on “religion” or on legalistic self-justification, or his “feelings.” He bases it on the mercy of God, on the transcendent power belonging to God, on Christ’s resurrection, on the revealed “unseen” promises of God! Assurance is in who God is and what he has done and promised—not in anything we are—for we are “earthen”!
7. Paul clearly states there is a **direct connection** between life’s afflictions and the glory that is to come to the believer in the next life! “This slight momentary affliction is **preparing** us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” The Greek word *katergazetai* is an emphatic form of *ergazomai* signifying, “to work out, achieve, effect by toil,” and is stronger than “preparing.” It is a present tense participle describing continuous action being done by the subject of the sentence (i.e., “This slight momentary affliction”)---4:7-12---“earthen vessels—death working in us.” In other words, our “wasting away” in the outer nature, plus our daily “renewal” in the inner nature (by beholding the glory of Christ), is accomplishing or working-out for us a never ending status beyond all comparison. **OF COURSE, IT IS GOD WHO IS DOING THE “WORKING” IN US!** Without the affliction there is no future status. Affliction works in us a realistic, God-ordained view of our mortality! Affliction, coupled with faith in God and his revealed word, works in us humility, reliance on

our Creator (see 2 Cor. 1:8-11), an other-world mind-set, compassion for others, essentially, it points us toward the spiritual! It helps give divine perspective! Without the renewal, daily, there is no future status. Affliction alone—without daily renewal or change into the likeness of Christ by degrees—would inevitably make us bitter and intensify our rebellion. This is precisely what happened to those of the Roman empire—worshippers of the beast (i.e., worshippers of the emperor)—who suffered the “plagues” of Revelation 16. They “cursed” the name of God and did not repent, Rev. 16:9,11. Affliction plus beholding Christ’s glory daily, directs our attention (by faith) to the **things that are unseen**. No matter what the affliction in this life, compared with the glory that is to come, it is relatively “slight”!

8. God promises to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” to every one who honors him by honoring his Son, Jesus Christ. Could that be the glory “beyond all comparison” awaiting us? The human spirit revels most when it is praised (not flattered) by someone superior. The shining hour (they just radiate) for children is when their father or mother or someone else praises them for a job well done. The glory of a soldier is when his commander in chief gives him a medal for “well done.” Workers in every vocation thrive on praise. The glory of a wife or husband is to be praised by one’s spouse. Can you comprehend what it will be like to be praised by the Creator—by the absolutely perfect God? Not merely pitied---but **praised?!** And God promises he is going to praise all who honor him through his Son. If turning one’s back on the grace of an absolute God is the ultimate mockery, the most contemptible, unforgivable arrogant rebuff of infinite love imaginable—then what is the ultimate honor that can be paid back for absolute grace extended? It would be grateful, humble, believing (though always inadequate and often erroneous) passionate service is the ultimate honor. Honest, constant loving service will receive a “Well done,” even though it is not perfectly well done! Isn’t that true of a father with his children? How much more an absolute Father with his? Yes, every believer, no matter when they began to believe, early or late in this life, will receive “a full day’s wages,” if they honor the Father—even if they are prodigals and have “come back’ after being away!
9. Affliction and beholding the glory of the Lord works glory in us and for us **only** if we focus our mind’s eye intently on the things that **really** matter. To keep from “losing heart” in the throes of affliction and mortality, and to have the blessed hope of the incomparable glory, the believer must set his mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5ff)—on the things that are above (Col. 3:1-4). Paul does not mean the Christian is **not** to look at trees, houses, people, flowers, etc. When he says we look to “the things that are unseen” he means the Christian is **not** to **set his mind** on the **values** and standards of worldliness. He means the Christian must decide that the things of heaven, the values and standards and promises (disavowed by the worldly mind-set) are the **realities of existence and life everlasting**. What the carnal mind-set calls realities (materialism, sensuality, atheism) are not realities at all because they are transitory. All that is physical and material (though not unreal and not evil in itself) is not abiding. All of it is destined to pass away (or be completely changed from what it now is). Paul calls this world, “transient” (Greek, *proskaira*, “limited time”—it is the same Greek word translated “fleeting” in Heb. 11:25). Only that which is unseen by the physical eye is **really, real**. Only what is of the nature of heaven lasts forever. All that is **real** is promised and described, as nearly as human language can describe the unseen, in the Bible—and there **only!** The unseen (and unseeable) things of heaven are **present realities** to the Christian **by faith** (Heb. 11:1). **Not** even our “feelings” are to be trusted to tell us what is **really, real!** Our faith must be founded on empirically-verified evidence that such unseen powers and qualities do exist beyond the realm of the physical and empirical. And that is exactly what we have in the Bible—empirical evidence of the reality of the spiritual unseen testified to by eyewitnesses. It has always been difficult for human beings to believe that there are unseen realities, invisible to human eye and investigation, but they are nevertheless very real and important. The mind of man struggles with the description of the supernatural and the promise of life beyond death (both as to its existence and its quality) because it all seems to be contrary to human experience. But human beings must learn not to trust their own presuppositions and limited experiences. Even the physical sciences (when not interpreted by the presupposition of evolutionism) teach us that there is a reality beyond that which is seen with the physical eye (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; Acts 17:22-31; Psa. 19, etc.). What is really, real, is an **absolute God**—an only absolute God of absolute power, wisdom,

justice, mercy, grace, love, eternity, and sovereignty. What is really, real, is self-sacrificing love, self-abnegating servant-hood, self-renouncing giving. **That is the essence of, the reality of self-hood.** What is really, real, is beauty, kindness, compassion, edification, growth, wholeness, purity, holiness, truth, satisfaction, rest, fulfillment, accomplishment, self-control, discipline and goodness. All that is opposite this is false and doomed to banishment from God’s presence in the realm of ultimate reality. What the most brilliant minds of the world have tried for millenniums to discover by finite reasoning, and have failed to find, Christians may have by studying, proving and believing the revelation of God—the Bible! The Bible is a divine revelation, claiming, proving and describing (as much as human language is capable) **ultimate reality**. That is what the human soul **craves!** It is what human beings were created for! One of the tortures of eternal hell will be having never found and experienced **ultimate reality—but having wasted self on that which was transitory, fleeting and unreal.**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-21, Teacher’s notes, prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

1. **This chapter (2 Corinthians 5) may be the greatest and dearest-to-the-soul chapter in all the Bible!** IT CERTAINLY IS TO ME! The problem of **perspective** (outlook, viewpoint) is as old as man! It began in the Garden of Eden. When God created man, he *gave* (revealed) to man his **divine perspective**. This perspective was to be applied to every human experience. But Satan came to earth and seduced woman and man into rejecting the divine perspective. Man prostituted his viewpoint and perverted God’s creation. At that point, for the sake of wooing man back to the divine viewpoint, God “subjected the creation to futility and decay” (Rom. 8:18-25). This was part of God’s plan to redirect man’s perspective. God intended to reclaim man’s viewpoint so that it would conform to the divine (only blessed one) viewpoint. Part and parcel with the “futility and decay” of creation is the **frailty of the human body**. As a result of man’s sin, his physical body was condemned to dissolution and death. That very mortality of the body has presented a constant problem for man in the matter of perspective. The ultimate problem of human philosophy remains. That problem is that there is **no** satisfactory human metaphysical (i.e., “beyond physical”) viewpoint or system. The mortality of the human body frustrates all human metaphysical systems! And that is precisely where God wants all human metaphysical systems—frustrated! The frailty of man **provokes** him to cry out for a perspective that is superhuman. Unlike non-believing philosophers, Paul knew where to find and how to appropriate a **divine perspective**. Paul could look **beyond** human mortality to a perfect and eternal existence by faith based on the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-15). The word “For” in 5:1 connects what follows to Paul’s statement of the Christian perspective in 4:16-18. Christians are to see their total experience in this life, and that includes the mortality of the human body, from the perspective of the “eternal weight of glory” which is “beyond all comparison.”. The Greek word *oidamen* is present tense, meaning, “We are **continuing** to know...” In other words, the divine perspective needs to be a **continuing experience**. The Christian needs to remind himself every day to look at everything and every person from God’s viewpoint! **The only place to find God’s viewpoint is in the Bible.** The mind of Christ (or God) is revealed no place else (see comments on 1 Cor. 1:1-16). Christians are to look to the Bible for God’s viewpoint on **every** aspect of life. That *exclusiveness* is unacceptable to the non-Christian world. Paul’s knowledge went beyond human philosophy or logic for he knew everything from a **divine perspective**—i.e., from divine revelation. And you can know exactly what Paul knew! Literally translated, 5:1 would read, “Our dirt-house, this tent...” The Greek word *epigeios* is translated, “earthly,” and is a compound of *epi* “down” and *ge* “soil, land, dirt.” (We get the English language prefix, *geo-* from the Greek *ge*). The human body is emphatically of the soil! It is marvelously fashioned, but essentially dirt! It is bound to and inseparable from the soil. The word *skenos* “tent” or “tabernacle” is poignant. Our human bodies are like tents—temporary and uncomfortable! Nomads and pilgrims live in tents! They are always looking for permanent dwelling places (Heb. 11:8-16). That is what an “earthly tent” has to do with perspective! Man sees everything in his world, including his own body, as **transient—passing away—temporary**. Anyone who does not get that perspective is philosophically

schizoid—refusing to face reality—self-deceived!

2. All human beings have some anxiety about death! Even Christians—even apostles! Especially do they have perplexity about the quality or state of the next existence (what kind of body—see 1 Cor. 15:35ff). Paul’s faith was sure; his confidence was firm; yet he shrank from the idea of being without a body—“naked.” But Paul was able to keep on top of his anxieties by keeping his **divine perspective** constant. Paul, by revelation, informs us that Christians who die receive **immediate** embodiment. There is no teaching of “soul-sleeping” or “purgatory” in the apostolic revelation. For Paul, the state of existence for the Christian immediately after the shedding of this “earthen vessel” was one of being “further clothed.” In 2 Cor. 5:8 he describes the next existence for the Christian as: “At home with the Lord.” Paul even implies in our text that he was anxious to die and put off this earthly body because he **knew** he would **not** be “naked” at death but abundantly “clothed” and “at home with the Lord.” He expresses exactly the same anticipation in Phil. 1:22-23. Ray Stedman says: “In time we are all locked into the same rigid sequence of events—but in eternity there is no past or future: there is simply one great present moment. Therefore, the events we experience in eternity are never anything we have to **wait** for, they are always what we are **ready** for, what we are spiritually prepared for—the Scriptures clearly teach that when a believer dies, he experiences immediately the coming of the Lord for his own.” The believer goes immediately to be with the Lord in a conscious, recognizable, embodied state at death (see 1 Sam. 28:114ff; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-12; Matt. 17:1-8, etc.). The Christian’s existence after death is **very far better** than this worldly existence, and therefore, could not be a disembodied state! There’s no superlative in human language capable of expressing **how much better heaven is than this earth!** God **prepares** us for this very far better existence by these “slight, momentary afflictions” (see also Rom. 8:18-28; 2 Cor. 4:16-18), and by “forming Christ in us” (Gal. 4:19) for it is “Christ in us” that is our “hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). When we “behold the glory of the Lord” and allow that beholding to change us into his likeness from one degree of glory to another—we are on our way to “glory.” This is God’s Spirit at work in us, as an “earnest” (i.e., guarantee) of our future existence in a **very far better** clothing at home with the Lord. (See Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; 2 Pet. 1:3-11). God’s Spirit lives in our minds and hearts through his word (John 6:63; 1 Pet. 1:22-24; James 1:18) and gives us a spiritual, mental, foretaste of the very far better life and creates in our spirits a longing for the full redemption (Rom. 8:31-39). And if God guarantees it, who can prove it otherwise? (Rom. 8:31-39). **The Spirit’s guarantee is only as good as his word!** While the frailty of the human body provokes and pressures, and makes us anxious about losing our existence because we lose this earthly body, Christians may **know** with abiding assurance (from the Spirit of God) that God is preparing them for an elegant “body” **beyond all imagination**. That is the divine perspective. Without the divine perspective there “remains only a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:27). **The divine perspective comes only through one’s knowing and believing the revelation of the Spirit which is found only in the Bible.** One’s believing the revelation of the Spirit (the Bible) depends on one’s willing ness to be honest with the evidence that the Bible is the revelation of the Spirit of Almighty God through Jesus Christ his Son, and his chosen apostles.
3. “At home in the body” is literally, in the Greek text, *endemountes en to somati*, or, “Among one’s own in the body.” In our text it is contrasted with *ekdemountes* which means, “away from one’s own.” When we are “among our own” in this earthen body, we are “away from our own” in the Lord. Paul does not mean that the Lord is absent from us in this earthly existence altogether. The Lord is present with us at all times in his spiritual, invisible, existence. Yet, in spite of Christ’s constant presence through the Spirit (Matt. 28:20; John 14:1-4; 14:21-23; Gal. 2:20, etc.), there is a sense in which the Christian is away from, separated from, his Lord as long as he lives in this world. While we are “in this earthen vessel” the Lord’s presence is not direct—it is mediated by the Spirit—indirect. It is not until we are “away from the body” that we shall have his **direct presence** (Rev. 21:3; 22:3-4). In the meantime, we must walk “by faith and not by sight.” We must view everything in this “away-from-the-Lord” existence through the divine perspective. And it is important that we understand our “away-from-the-Lord” existence as something inferior to what our “at-home-with-the-Lord” experience will be. Our eagerness to proclaim the Christian life in this world as the ultimate experience

occasionally leaves people with the impression that there is **nothing better to come!** We must never do that! The Christian life even at its best in this world, is far inferior to that which it shall be in the next world. We must never de-emphasize the strength and courage derived from walking with Christ by faith in this life. It would be difficult for the Christian to **over-emphasize** the glory and blessedness of the promised life to come for all believers. The very limitations and mortality of this human body—its war against the Spirit—makes us know we are absent from the Lord where there is no time limit, no mortality, no war, no pain, no separation, no death!

4. A significant part of having the divine perspective is to believe the coming **judgment** of Christ, and to act in accordance with that belief. The person who refuses to see the world, history, or himself as inevitably coming under the scrutiny and sovereignty of the absolute Creator and Redeemer, has a flawed perspective. Such a person has no hope for ultimate vindication of right over wrong. He has no hope that final justice will be accomplished. The word “For” in 5:10 connects Paul’s appeal for a **judgment–perspective** to his “ambition” to be always pleasing the Lord. The Christian’s magnificent obsession should be to always please the Lord **because** he must inevitably appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The Greek word *phanerothenai* translated “appear” means, “revealed, made manifest.” What Christ is going to do at the judgment for the Christian is to reveal the Christian to himself! Christ does not need a special time to put people on trial to ascertain their deeds or motives. He already knows the secrets of men’s hearts! This is not a judgment to settle final destiny. It is a personal evaluation given to each individual by the Lord himself. Paul looked forward to this judgment because **he believed the Lord would be showing many things Paul thought were failures to really be successes!** The Lord will reveal many things that pleased him which no one else heard of or applauded (Mt. 25:31-46; Mk. 12:41-44). Everyone who has made it his ambition or aim to please the Lord is going to be surprised by joy at this “manifestation.” It will be a time of disclosure and evaluation when all mankind learns for the first time, and perfectly, who was right and what attitudes men should have or should not have had. It is the moment when believers will see and learn the **real value** of many things they thought no one knew and which they themselves often did not understand. It will be the time when ultimate **grace** will be dispensed to the believer! Thinking and living in the light of perfect evaluation (judgment) should drive men to seek the divine perspective. Christ is primarily concerned with our motives. That is why Paul said he always made it his “ambition” to please the Lord. It is “ambition, aim, motive” that counts most with Christ. Our “ambition” here (not the quantity of our accomplishments) determines the degree to which we will be rewarded in the next life! The Person who has understood this will not be frustrated with life in this world where one’s “ambitions” for the Lord often exceed his opportunities and capabilities. If he has the divine perspective, his ambition is to always, in whatever limited opportunities or limited capabilities he has, please the Lord. If that has been a person’s ambition, he is “groaning” and “anxious” to be “further clothed” and at home with the Lord to be pleasing to him forever.
5. The reality of the fact (proven by the resurrection of Christ) of the vicarious and death of Christ should flood a man’s soul with love. That love should “**constrain**” (i.e., **control**) him to live no longer for himself, but to live for Christ (according the “way” Christ has revealed he wills a man should live). Paul **died to self rule**, by accepting in his place the death of Christ as the vicarious substitute acceptable to God. The Greek word *sunechei* translated “constrains” or “controls” means literally, “pressures.” Divine love is intended to “pressure” us into reciprocating love and obedience. The love of Christ should pressure, control, impel and motivate the Christian. The love of Christ **drives** and **guides** by setting the **limits to what we should and should not do**. And why did the love of Christ control Paul? Because he was **convinced** that Christ had died **for him**. The word *krinantas* (“convinced”) comes from the Greek legal vocabulary, meaning, “legal conviction.” Paul’s conviction about Christ’s atonement was based on **evidence** and not feeling or emotion. It was the **evidence that produced the emotion**—not vice, versa. The critical issue is: What does the atonement mean to an individual factually, personally, existentially, subjectively? It means that when Christ died, the believer died! If I accept **Christ’s** death in **my** place, I have actually accepted **my** death! In other words, I agree with God that my sins put **me** there on the cross, “in” Christ. “All” died, therefore, “I” died when Christ

died. “I” no longer live; “I” have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer “live” (see Gal. 2:20). Having accepted, by faith, the grace of God in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ, we are also privileged to accept by faith, the gracious **life** of Christ as a substitute for the old sinful life of self-rule. “He died for all, that those who live might live no longer from themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” We must live that imputed (i.e., accredited) life of Christ vicariously in our lives by faith (Gal. 2:20). **2 Cor. 5 is one of the greatest treatises on the experiential impact of the atonement in all the Bible!** It is paralleled by such great passages as Romans ch. 6; Colossians ch. 2; Ephesians ch. 2; Hebrews chs. 2 & 10. In the midst of unmitigated vanity by those who take pride in human position and other vagaries of life apart from faith in Christ, a personal, existential absorption of the fact of Jesus’ vicarious death (and bodily resurrection) is absolutely critical to a divine perspective. Christians have no right to any other perspective!

6. The main problem with the human perspective is its ego-centricity. It is selfish! It centers and focuses and devotes itself to self! In the Bible this is called “setting the mind on the things of the flesh” (see Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:5-11; 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:29; 5:5; Gal. 5:16-17; 6:13; Eph. 2:34; Phil. 3:3-11; Col. 2:23; 3:5ff; 1 Pet. 4:1-5). Paul wrote, “The mind that is set on the flesh is *hostile* to God; it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot,; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7). Paul did not mean that simply living in a fleshly body makes a person inexorably hostile to God. Jesus lived in a fleshly body. Paul is talking about a **worldly-mindedness**—an attitude that makes the flesh and the world its priority. The “human point of view” in the Greek text is, *oidamen kata sarka*, literally, “know according to flesh.” Jesus called the “fleshly viewpoint” idolatry—serving mammon—Matt. 6:24-34. There are only two viewpoints for man—human or divine! The unbeliever sees everything from the perspective of this world—dying—passing away—vain—“absurd”—discouraging—dooming—damning. Everything is relative to this earthly experience. It leads to degradation, depravity and despair (Romans 1:18-32). Every human experience is evaluated and acted upon from an animal-fleshly-materialistic perspective. But for the believer, from the very moment he accepts by faith the atoning death of Christ, he gives up his right to think or evaluate or act by himself or for himself. He sets his mind on the things of the Holy Spirit. He surrenders his thinking and evaluating and acting to the mind and behavior of Christ revealed in the Bible. **The Bible takes over his mind and his life.** Every aspect of life—home, job, education, entertainment, finances, hobbies, sexuality, emotions—everything is brought into conformity to the precepts and principles of the Holy Spirit of God revealed in the Bible! The Christian surrenders all right to say, “It’s my life, and I’ll think the way I please and live the way I want.” The Christian **never** claims the right to disagree with any New Testament viewpoint! If any man is “in” Christ he is a new creature. **That is a fact!** Paul is not dealing with theories or feelings here! This is the way it **must** be for a Christian! The old, human perspective, has passed away: behold, the new, divine perspective has come and is **continuing** to come (Greek, *gegonen*, perfect tense verb). The new creation with the new, divine perspective, is a continual, growing, ever-expanding experience. It is the experience of being “changed into the likeness of Christ from one degree of glory to another, by beholding the glory of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). If you struggle with that, (and the very fact of our “having this treasure in earthen vessels” necessitates struggle) you know you are pleasing the Lord. Those who do not struggle with it are not pleasing the Lord! The “flesh” has won the war with those not struggling with divine perspective. Saints of old struggled with it. Apostles struggled with it. And even Jesus, because he was willing to become incarnated, struggled with it!
7. The reason the human perspective is ego-centric is that the human being is **estranged from God**. Man, the rebel-sinner, has chosen to exclude God from his life. He is at “enmity” (war) against God (see Rom. 5:8-10; 8:6-8; James 4:1-4). The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit—these are opposed to each other (Gal. 5:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:11). The mind of the flesh is “hostile” toward God (Rom. 8:7). We are “enemies” (Rom. 5:10) of God! Man, not reconciled to God is against God! There is no neutral zone—no demilitarized zone (DMZ) when we are fleshly-minded. There are not three categories—only two—either for God or against God; saved or lost; friends of God, enemies of God; sheep or goats; wise or foolish; on Christ’s right hand or on his left hand; sons of this world or sons of the light. So, Paul says, the only possible way any human being can acquire the divine perspective is through the redemptive work of God in Christ which reconciles man and God to one

another. God declares “peace” with man, and those people who want it declare “peace” with God. Reconciliation is purely and simply by the grace of God responded to in faith and love. God took the initiative. God accomplished the peace through a Perfect Redeemer, his Son as the ultimate Ransom. **It is all from God.**

The obligation of man is the grateful response of faith and love in accepting the grace of God. Though some may be “nominal” church-goers, if they really do not have the divine perspective, they are not really reconciled to God. Those not “new creatures in Christ” cannot possibly see things from a non-human perspective because they have not had their sins atoned for—thus they are still “hostile” toward God and at war with the Holy Spirit!

8. When man declares war on God (i.e., when man sins), God, in keeping with his very nature, declares war on man! God cannot love man for man’s good without acting hostile toward that which would destroy man! So, God “withdraws” himself from man. This is consistently taught throughout the Bible (Hosea 5:15; Isa. 64:7-9; Psa. 51:11; Rom. 5:10-11; Eph. 2:1-22, etc.). The very word “propitiation” assumes there is someone who has to be “appeased.” The **wrath** of God is revealed in the very forces of nature (Rom. 1:18ff). The absoluteness of God’s justice had to be satisfied. Until all this was accomplished, there could be no “reconciliation” between God and man. God’s absolute justice had to be satisfied and his wrath appeased, and man had to be wooed back to humble surrender in faith toward God. To think of God without wrath against sin—without absolute justice—without the need to have his wrath appeased—without his law being vindicated—without him as the enemy of sinners—is to deflate, degrade and make vain the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God is not willing that any sinner perish! He wants all sinners to be reconciled and saved. At the same time, he is willing to execute absolute justice for sinners who choose never to be reconciled. God so loves man (whom he created in his own image) he came to earth in the form of man (by his Son, Jesus Christ), conquered sin in the flesh, died the death of eternal punishment for man, suffered the divine penalty for sin, extended infinite grace to man, and provided the motive for man to be reconciled to the divine Creator. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. He pleased God in everything he thought and did. He kept the commandments of God, the law of God, completely. And then, he willingly laid down his life as a ransom for sinful mankind. He became the “curse” of God in our place (Gal. 3:10-14; 1 Pet. 2:21-25). God punished Christ for all the sins of all the ages and thus God’s wrath was appeased and man was justified all in the same redemptive work (Rom. 3:21-26). The absolute God was reconciled to the finite man through the absolute atonement of the perfect Man, Jesus Christ. God does not “count” men’s trespasses against them if they accept God’s work of redemption and reconcile themselves to him by faith and obedience to his Son.

9. Of course, it does not **seem** fair to any honest individual that someone else should suffer for his errors or mistakes or sins. But God has not asked men to accept the vicarious atonement of Christ on the basis of their “suppositions.” God asks that it be accepted on the basis of their **faith!** Deist, Ethan Allen, American Revolutionary War hero said: “There could be no justice or goodness in one being’s suffering for another, nor is it at all compatible with *reason* to suppose that God was the contriver of such a propitiation.” **Of course, it’s not compatible with human reason—if it were it wouldn’t be divine and supernatural!** Bishop Oxenam, former head of the World Council of Churches, wrote: “I cannot see forgiveness predicated upon the act of someone else. It is my sin. I must atone.” (He probably will—forever!). Canon Vernon F. Storrs, wrote: “We are in no way bound to accept Paul’s interpretation of Christ’s death. I dismiss from my mind all ideas of substitution, or of the innocent paying the penalty of the guilty because these ideas offend my moral consciousness.” Well, these people are “without God and without hope in the world” (Eph. 2:11-18) because the only “peace” that “reconciles” man to God is that which Jesus Christ accomplished with his vicarious death and verified by his bodily resurrection! God did not force Christ to become sin on our behalf! Christ was free from personal sin and under no obligation to suffer the consequences of any sin! That left him free to **choose** to become, vicariously, sin for all who were obligated by their own sin to suffer its consequences! That’s the **gospel—the good news!** He was not only free to choose to do so, he had the *right* and authority, by his perfect life, to do so if he chose. No human being may dare to gainsay Christ’s right to assume sin vicariously if he chooses unless that human being is perfectly sinless! Jesus claimed he came to be a ransom for sin (Matt. 20:28; 26:28). The New Testament is filled with statements of his vicarious atonement (1 Tim. 2:5-6; Titus

2:14; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 2:24; Rev. 1:5; Gal. 3:13). It is predicted in the Old Testament (Isa. 53:1-12; Dan. 9:24-27; Zech 12:10—13:1). To reject the revelation of God about vicarious atonement is to fly in the face of a document that has been historically authenticated and validated by the eye-witnessed resurrection of Christ from the dead. To reject the vicarious death of Christ as atonement for sin is infidelity and rebellion. It is the spirit of anti-Christ. It cannot be made respectable by couching it in “moral revulsion.” To disavow what God has plainly stated should offend moral consciousness! To disavow the vicarious death of Christ is the rebellion against surrendering one’s mind and life to the divine perspective. That is exactly why Paul emphasized the vicarious death of Christ here in this text: **because it is absolutely crucial to the divine perspective**. It is the one critical pre-requisite to the “new creation.” The world-perspective arrogantly insists on atoning for its own sins. Those who glory in the flesh intend to earn their standing before God with self-righteousness. Throwing oneself upon the mercy and grace of God will not do for the “autonomous man”—such a man must rule his own thoughts, deeds and destiny. And God must be satisfied with that! That is “evil unbelief” (Heb. 3:12). Reconciliation to God with that attitude is **impossible** (Heb. 6:1-8). We must believe and obey God whether it seems right to us or not!

10. Every Christian is obligated by the grace of God’s reconciliation given to him to proclaim the good news of God’s offer of reconciliation to the whole world. God has “entrusted” (Greek, *themenos*, “assigned, committed”) to all Christians the work of ministering the **rationale** (Greek, *logon*, “word, logic, rationale”) of reconciliation. No Christian is exempt from this assignment. Paul considered himself a “debtor” and thus obligated (by his own redemption) to preach the gospel to as much of the world as he could humanly reach (Rom. 1:14-17). All Christians are “ambassadors” 2 Cor. 5:20 (Greek, *presbeuomen*, “presbyters, elders, legates, ambassadors) allowing God to make his “appeal” (Greek, *parakalountos*, “advocacy”) through them. The ministry of reconciliation is calling sinners to come to the side of God! Paul said the “ambassador” of reconciliation has to “beseech” (Greek, *deometha*, “beg, plead, pray”) people to come to the side of God for the sake of Christ. And the motivation in the message of that ministry is the vicarious atonement of Christ. Could it be that “ambassadors” of reconciliation are to have the same qualifications as “presbyters” or elders? (1 Tim. 3:1-7). One thing is certain—the world of unbelief will not be reconciled to God without the ministry of God’s ambassadors (Rom. 10:14-17). The world will not be reconciled without the **message** (Greek, *logon*, “word”) of reconciliation. People are not reconciled to God by the testimony of our lives—by their own “feelings” or assumptions or rationalizations. People are reconciled to God by the **word** of reconciliation (the New Testament scriptures and those alone). The **word**, ministered, is what produces reconciliation!

2 CORINTHIANS 6:1—7:1, Teacher’s notes, prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

1. That which ties chapter 6 to chapter 5 is the little word “Then” in 6:1. “Then” refers to the “grace of God” in the vicarious atonement of Christ. Paul is “working together” with God, as God’s “ambassador” to “beseech” the Corinthians to “be reconciled to God!” A strange thing to say to a “Christian church”?! Not when there is a clear danger of said “Christian church” reverting to **paganism and/or Judaism**. And that is the problem facing this preacher, Paul, as he writes to the Corinthian congregation. Paul is **laboring** (with God) to keep the Corinthian Christians from coming up empty (vain) of the grace of God. It is evidently possible to **accept** the grace of God **vainly**! Grace, even for the Christian, can become a hollow, empty pretense. Paul is **laboring** to keep the Corinthian Christians from reverting to paganism and Judaism and viewing everything from a **human perspective**. If they do, it is certain they are void of the grace of God. God’s grace demands those who have actuated divine grace in their lives to see everything from the **divine perspective**. To pretend to have the grace of God and have the mind (even secretly) set on that which is passing away is **vanity**! If those who claim to be Christians still look at people and things differently than God’s word directs them to, the grace of God has been of no profit to them. Grace that does not produce gratitude (i.e., grace in exchange for grace, John 1:16) is an empty grace. It is no grace at all. It has never been acknowledged or accepted. Paul had a problem with some Christians who were responding to the grace of God with indifference as their pagan neighbors or the Judaizers

responded. Some of those who called themselves Christian at Corinth were leaning toward the same depravity as that described in Rom. 1:18ff. Some were listening to the Judaizers, glorying in the flesh, and refusing to let the pure grace of God fill them so they might see all from the heavenly perspective. They were minding “self”...justifying “self”....glorifying “self”....and that is the way unbelievers respond to God’s grace. Church leadership still has this problem facing it in congregations all over the world! Hundreds claiming the name “Christian” but responding to absolute grace like unbelievers—minding “self,” justifying “self,” indulging “self,” glorifying “self.” Self-ruled, egocentric, serving self, they profess to have accepted the grace of God, but their profession is hollow, vain and an insult to God.

2. Isaiah 49:8 is a Messianic prophecy. The “time of favor” in Isaiah’s prophecy is a synonym for the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8ff). The Year of Jubilee is a type of the Messianic age. “Jubilee” was a year of abundant grace in the Law of Moses foreshadowing the absolute divine grace that would come when the Messiah appeared (see Isa. 61:2; Luke 4:16ff). “Jubilee” was mandated by God for every 50th year, significantly to be announced on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and to be observed by 3 significant dispensations of grace: (1) liberty was granted to all Israelites who were in servitude to any of their countrymen; (2) there was to be a return of ancestral possessions to those who had been compelled to sell because of poverty; (3) it was to be a year of “rest” for the land which was to lie fallow. Judaizers among the Corinthians were seducing some into legalism and a rejection of the dispensation of grace. Paul quotes Isaiah to refute the Judaizers, using the Jewish Old Testament to prove that the gospel he preached to the Corinthians was the true gospel of the Messiah. No one need wait for another Messiah. To procrastinate would be to miss the “acceptable time.” The “end of the ages” (i.e., “Jubilee”) started with Jesus (1 Cor. 10:11). God has only one “acceptable time.” That is the time “in Christ.” The word **now** is the eschatological “now.”—the “now” of the Christian age in contrast to the “then” of the OT age. **There is no other age more acceptable to God and never shall be any until time is no more! It is the age ushered in by “once for all atonement” of abundant grace, eternal liberty, eternal possession of divine heritage, and entering into eternal rest (see Heb. 4).** The first “acceptable” in 6:2 is the Greek word *dekteo* and the second “acceptable” is the Greek word *euprosdektos*, literally, *eu*, “well,” and *pros*, “toward,” and *dektos*, “acceptable,” meaning, “very favorable acceptance.” Essentially, Paul is saying, “Do not be waiting for something better—there ain’t gonna be any ‘better’ until you get to heaven.” If ever the Corinthians were going to be changed from their unbelieving attitudes and ways, the time was “**now**.” Christ was (and is) the **fulfillment** of the law and the prophets. He is the fulfillment of all that God intended for man when man was created. Jesus filled up full God’s purpose for man, and made that fulfillment available to all men who would receive it by grace. To put off receiving the grace of God in Jesus, to procrastinate and wait for something better (in another Messiah—or to go back to the mere shadow of the Messiah in the OT law) would be to miss the very favorable and final (for this world) acceptance in the grace of God! And this searching and waiting for another “acceptable time” or going back to what they think is more “acceptable” in the law) is what the majority of the world is doing today—both Jew and Gentile. And it is all **heathen unbelief** in God’s eyes! Preachers are surrounded by those who insist God has a “better” way than grace through Jesus Christ. Some of those people are even in the church! As Paul found out! We must let grace fill us now, not yesterday, not tomorrow, not a thousand years from now. There is only one word on God’s clock—it is “**NOW!**” God’s time is always “Today,” “Now!” Now is the day to quit looking at things like the heathen. Now is the day to start seeing everything through the revealed divine perspective in the Bible. **“Jubilee” is NOW!**
3. The unbelief which surrounded those Christians and permeated their every circumstance and association would present itself as an **easier** way to deal with the crises and struggles of life. Unbelief demanded no sacrificial resistance to immorality—it demanded no forbearance, kindness or good reputation. It would be the “broad” and “easy” way. What we call Paul’s “first” letter to Corinth shows some of the Christians had already been seduced back into paganism. But the Christian way is **restrictive** (i.e., “narrow and difficult” Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24). The word translated “endurance” means “to remain under.” The word translated “hardships” means “constraint” or “compulsion.” Preachers (and all Christians) simply cannot think and act like

unbelievers! They must bring their minds and their actions, motives and goals, under constraint to the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). The divine instrument or weapon to do that is “mighty” and able to overthrow “fortresses” (entrenched) rationalizations of unbelief or pharisaic legalism (or “imagination”) and “proud” (i.e., literally, “high thing rising up”) things **against** the divine perspective (“knowledge of God”) and these divine weapons are capable of “capturing” every “thought” (design) unto obedience to Christ (see 2 Cor. 10:3-5). Paul put no “stumbling block” (i.e., obstacle) in any one’s way! Even if it meant for him affliction, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, hunger, etc., etc. (2 Cor. 11). He “became all things to all men that he might win some” (1 Cor. 9:22). Paul endured dishonor, ill-repute, being treated as an impostor, being unknown, “dying,” punishment, sorrow, poverty, destitution, and anxiety. Paul didn’t wait around until things happened to him before he endured them—**he actively sought things to endure in order to win people to Christ!** He put himself under the restraints and circumstances and difficulties of any and all so he might win them to Jesus Christ! It can be done! It must be done! It is being done by some—what about us? If a Jew, with all his built in millenniums of cultural and religious superiority and “differences” can put restraints on all that supposed Jewish religions and cultural superiority and humbly “swallow” all his inhibitions, can we not suffer any and all restraints to win others to Christ? And think of all the **restraints** Jesus suffered to accomplish our redemption! The great restraint of all is for Deity to become flesh (Phil. 2:5-11). To imitate that loving servant-hood is our calling!

4. No one can conduct a ministry for the Lord without **knowledge**. Paul does not qualify his use of the word “knowledge” in this text. But he undoubtedly means to include knowledge of all that is good and of practical use in serving the Lord. Paul knew Greek literature and poetry (Acts 17:28). He knew the Jewish literature and culture and way of thinking. He knew about athletics, military life, farming, sea-faring ways, construction work, politics, philosophy, education. All this can be determined by Paul’s writings and the book of Acts. But above and beyond every other bit of knowledge Paul had, he **knew the Scriptures**. He knew how to **reason** from the scriptures with philosophers and theologians (Acts 17:2; 18:4,19; 24:25). This was not miraculous “knowledge”—it was knowledge of the OT scriptures. Paul learned these scriptures the same way any one else can learn them. What he received by miraculous knowledge was “revelation” and he wrote those doctrines in his epistles. Paul put all his secular knowledge and his knowledge of the OT to use interpreting and communicating what God gave him directly (by supernatural inspiration and revelation) of the NT. But now that we have the completed New Testament (by Paul and others), we need no other “revelations” from God. We can apply our secular knowledge plus the OT and the NT to interpret and communicate “everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-5). Without this knowledge we cannot minister to the lost and hurting world! **There simply is no excuse for any American Christian to be without a thorough knowledge of God’s word!**
5. Paul includes “genuine love” (Greek, *anupokrito*, literally, “without hypocrisy) because so much love is hypocritical and not genuine! Christian love is no facade. It is not surface and superficial. Christians do not “play-like” they love. They really, genuinely, earnestly care! They care when they don’t feel like caring. They care when others are not “worthy” of being cared for. Unbelievers do not understand this kind of love. They love those who love them (Matt. 5:43-48). Genuine love is not based on emotions or moods! That does not mean genuine love is without emotion—it simply means that genuine love cares and acts in spite of emotions. Genuine love is not controlled by something within man, but is controlled by something within God. Man’s love is a response to what God has done and is, rather than on what any man does or is or feels or believes (2 Cor. 5:14). Genuine love is motivated by a **conviction** that Christ died for all and therefore all have died to themselves and are living unto Christ. Genuine love does not indulge anyone to their hurt or harm. Genuine love disciplines and corrects in order to produce good and holiness. Genuine love gives—it gives, and gives and gives. It withholds nothing that edifies and strengthens. Genuine love is brave, firm, strong, abiding and self-sacrificing and unconditional. Pagan love is based on human moods and feelings. It seeks some recompense. It is given in order to get. It indulges in order to “buy” reciprocating love. It is cowardly. It is expressed only in pleasant circumstances. It is whimsical, flighty, vacillating (see 1 Cor. 13:1ff for genuine

- love). Christians must have it!
6. Paul was treated as an “unknown” by both unbelievers and Christians! Some of the Judaizing Christians continually considered Paul *persona non grata*, “unacceptable.” They said he amounted to nothing since he had not been one of the original twelve apostles from Jerusalem. Jesus was unknown except in the land of Israel! Think of all the first century Christian heroes whose names you do not know!—people who stood up for their faith in the face of excruciating tortuous deaths by fire, wild beasts, gladiators, drowning, etc. Think of all the saints (millions of them) put to death by the Communists in Russia, China, Southeast Asia, and Muslim nations—whose names are known only to their families. Bruce Parmenter writes (in *What The Bible Says About Self-Esteem*): “It is doubtful that Paul would approve of the modern search for self-esteem. It is likely that such a search would be ‘fleshly’ for him...Paul could never celebrate self-esteem gained independently of Christ. His goal was to know Christ rather than to know himself, yet knowledge of Christ proved to be the way to authenticate self-knowledge...Paul did not affirm himself, he sought affirmation from Christ. Neither did the affirmation of others mean as much to him as the affirmation of Christ...the esteem of Christ rather than self-esteem was Paul’s desire...To esteem Christ and be esteemed by him was sufficient...Such esteem was based on the gospel of justification by faith rather than on self-worth, personal competence, social prestige, perfectionism, achievement, or ‘mental health.’ Paul did not believe that becoming a Christian would relieve our neuroses. The word neurosis was not in his vocabulary, but it is likely that Paul would quickly understand the term in its modern setting and would be apt to say, ‘Oh, you mean ‘the flesh!’...he would not expect the gospel to provide total liberation from weak human nature, any more than it gave him freedom from the thorn in the flesh...Paul would say that God can save us with or without our neuroses, for salvation is by grace, not by mental health...Just when we abandon the search for mental health, peace of mind, and psychological adjustment, just when we say, ‘Christ is my esteem,’ we experience a quantum leap in personal happiness.” (My emphasis). **That is how we must handle being “unknown.”**
 7. Paul is not the only Christian to ever experience the paradoxical nature of the Christian life! To start with, Jesus came to earth to reveal that it would be so. Jesus says a person must lose his life to find it—die to live—give up all he has to get treasure—know tribulation to have joy—look upon things not seen—love those who hate you. I once made up a list of 75-80 paradoxical statements in the New Testament. Every Christian finds **unceasing paradoxes** in his struggle to follow the leading of the word of God. He finds the flesh warring against the Spirit and the Spirit warring against the flesh. He finds power in weaknesses; wolves in sheep’s clothing; he learns he is to “work out” his own salvation which comes totally by grace; he is to renounce the world, yet all the world belongs to him through Christ. Such a paradoxical view of life is unacceptable to the heathen and unbeliever. He wants life to be all tied up in neat little bundles of evolutionary progress, human goodness, the American dream, and fairy-story endings. The unbeliever doesn’t see all the paradoxes in his own withdrawals from reality. The unbeliever is terrorized by the idea of death to self and surrender of one’s will, one’s thinking, ambitions and feelings to a Sovereign God. He is afraid he will lose identity, lose existence, and never be happy if he “dies” to self! But the only way any one’s paradoxes of this life are ever solved is by faith! So long as this world remains, paradoxes will remain! Questions, perplexities, what appears to be contradictions, and enigmas will always be a part of life in this “time” frame. “The unknowns” will continue to plague finite man. He can find a true answer to them only by a faith built on demonstrated evidence in the word of Jesus Christ! He can only survive a paradoxical life by trusting that all the paradoxes shall be resolved in the next life, in the presence of the absolute, non-paradoxical Person—God Almighty!
 8. “Do not be mismated with unbelievers” does **not** mean, “Do not marry non-Christians.” First, Paul is not talking about **necessary** associations here. He had already granted that Christians would often have to be associated with unbelievers in mundane affairs (1 Cor. 5:9-13). He has also granted that some Christians would be married to unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:1-40). What the apostle seeks to forestall here is the “yoking” of a Christian with an unbeliever so that the Christian is actually **working toward** the same **purpose** as the unbeliever—(Greek, *heterozugountes*, from *hetero*, “different from,” and *zygotes*, “yoked, linked, united”—i.e., “linked or united” with someone of a different kind—see Deut. 22:10; Lev. 19:19; Matt. 11:29; 1

Tim. 5:18; 6:1; Gal. 5:1; Acts 15:10; 1 Cor. 9:9; Phil. 4:3). A Christian working to destroy Christianity is his point! Paul clarifies what he means in the following contrasts and opposites. The Christian cannot be in “partnership” (yoked) with iniquity. It is an impossibility—no Christian can serve two masters—no Christian can be a friend of God and a friend of the world at the same time. The Christian can have no communion with darkness. He has no **accord** (Greek *sumphonesis*, “symphony”) with Belial (i.e., “worthlessness, ruin, desperate wickedness”). Where one is the other cannot be! The believer cannot join in the same **goal** unbeliefer has. Whatever this passage means, it *cannot forbid* members of the Christian church to be married to spouses who are believers from other denominations. There **are** “believers” in all denominations! I believe denominationalism is a spiritual error and has frustrated Christian unity and harmony throughout the world. Christ is not pleased with its perpetuation. But then Christ is not pleased with the numerous spiritual errors practiced in the Restoration movement, either! Whatever this passage means, it cannot mean the absolute prohibition of the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever. First, the context forbids any such interpretation; there is no mention made here of the marriage relationship. Second, the Greek verb, *heterozugountes*, is in the present tense and would literally be translated, “do not go on being yoked to one of a different kind...” That would contradict Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7:1-40). The OT forbids Hebrews from marrying “foreigners,” but that was mainly directed against idolatry. Joseph married Asenath, daughter of an Egyptian priest (whose children became tribal inheritors). Moses married a Midianite; Hosea married a woman with “a spirit of harlotry” and when she deserted him and wound up in the slave market, he was told to go “love again” a woman who is an “adulteress.” Third, marriage is for this life only and is a means to an end for society (whether believing or unbelieving). So, then, what is Paul saying when he says “Do not be united (or yoked) with those completely different—unbelievers”? He is **still discussing** the matter of Christians separating themselves from those who are militantly, deliberately, aggressively opposing belief by working against Jesus and the Bible. He is, actually, talking about those “unbelievers” who had slipped into the Corinthian congregation (mainly Judaizers) working to destroy the gospel of grace! He is talking about those in Corinth trying to destroy his ministry. **He is not talking primarily about marriage here.** He is warning the Corinthian Christians (and us) not to be joined to pagan concepts, viewpoints, actions—he is **not** primarily talking about people! Of course, the practical thing would be for believers to marry other believers! That would certainly better advance the kingdom of God! But how do you know one is truly a believer when you marry? And how do you know one is going to *remain* a believer after you marry? We’ve seen so many “Christian Church” marriages disintegrate we know better than to try to make this passage demand that!

9. Since God has promised condemnation and hell for the impenitent, and gracious adoption and glory for the believer (the separated ones), it is imperative that we have a **catharsis** (Greek, *katharisomen*, “cleansing”) from every **pollution** (Greek *molusmou*, “filthiness, foulness”) of **body and spirit**! Body, soul and spirit make up the whole human person (1 Thess. 5:23). A person cannot keep his body pure while sinning with his mind and expect Christ’s approval (Matt. 5:21-30). Nor should the Christian try to justify himself by saying he keeps his mind pure so it doesn’t matter what he does with his body. That is Gnostic sophistry and is thoroughly denounced by scripture (e.g. 1 John 3:4-10). In 2 Cor. 7:1 Paul tells Christians precisely how this “separation” and “cleansing” is to be **accomplished**. It is done by “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” The word “perfecting” is from a Greek present tense participle derived from the word *teleios* which means, “to complete, to finish, to bring to its goal.” It does not mean “perfect” in the sense of absolute sinlessness. In other words, we reach the goal of holiness (we are separated and cleansed) in the fear of God! The fear of God is a healthy (cathartic) attitude. The scriptures bear witness that a significant contributing factor to purging the church of its plague of paganism is consistent proclamation of the judgment and fear (awesomeness) of God. Paul says so in this very text! The goal of holiness is reached through the fear of God! So, Paul has dealt with another problem that plagues preachers—the problem with paganism. Paganism now, as then, is at times an attraction into which preachers may be tempted to indulge, or it surrounds a preacher like a plague in those to whom he ministers. And how did Paul deal with it? **First**, he appealed to the brethren at Corinth to remember how much he had opened up his heart in love to them and by pleading with them to reciprocate the same kind of openness.

Second, he reminded them of the incongruity of yoking belief to unbelief in order to fight against Christ. Belief and unbelief are incompatible. You can't love Christ and fight against him at the same time. **Third**, he pointed out that holiness is brought to its goal through the fear of God. Not a bad plan for the church to follow in any age as it deals with the problem of paganism.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:1-16, Teacher's notes, prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

1. Paul has to urge these Corinthian Christians to "open" their hearts to him **because** he is preaching **repentance** to them! Few of us are "open-hearted" when we are being told we need to repent. The first, "knee-jerk" reaction is defensive, self-justifying and resistant. Our pride has been wounded, self has been humiliated. We close our "hearts" i.e., minds against any further erosion of pride and self-esteem. We close our minds against further hurt. **Repentance is drastic!** It is an inner **revolution** of the soul, or as Freud would say, the "id" (i.e., personality, identity, being). Repentance is conformity. It is a **slavery** of the human mind unto the mind of Christ. It is the capturing of our thoughts unto obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). It is the transformation of our being by the renewing of our mentality according to the will of God (Rom. 12:1-2). It is a "journey from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ" (William Chamberlain). Repentance is a "death" to self—a destruction of pride—a humbling of the ego. It is a rearrangement of our values, our ambitions, our decisions. It is a surrender of our self-sovereignty! God made us each with a sovereign will, but, for our eternal blessedness he pleads with us to surrender, totally, that sovereign will to his Sovereignty! That is repentance! Paul is advocating here that passion (earnest love) is part and parcel with the severity that produces repentance. He has already pled with them (2 Cor. 6:11-13) to "widen their hearts" (i.e., minds) to make room for him. He has already stated that full reconciliation between them awaits only the restoration of **their** affections—not his. His affection has never abated. Without opening their hearts, they will not repent! The "bottom line" in repentance is an "open heart." And each man or woman has been created with the sovereign capability of opening or closing his or her own "heart" (e.g. the parable of the soils). Taking offense at a preacher or teacher for speaking the word of God will not absolve guilt or contribute to "opening" one's heart—it only exacerbates the "closing"! Remember, the human psyche (soul) progresses to "feeling" or "passion" from fact—to testimony—to faith—to feeling and not in reverse order! Paul is trying to get the Corinthians to know the facts about his life so they may "feel" affectionate toward him!
2. We do not know, exactly, the type of affliction Paul experienced in Macedonia. We do know that he was so troubled in his mind at Troas (2 Cor. 1:12-17) just before he crossed over the sea into Macedonia that he could not go through doors "opened" to him for the gospel! We do know that wherever he went, Judaizers followed, assaulting his reputation, and even inflicting bodily harm when they could arouse others to do it! Paul is expressing to the Corinthians his empathy, his pathos, with their own troubled souls and their emotional feelings toward him. This pathos on the part of Christian leaders is so necessary to the augmentation of a program of repentance in those they lead! Leaders who are trying to lead others to repentance, must experience the pressures and afflictions necessary to produce repentance in their own lives, too! Paul is saying to the Corinthians, "You are feeling the 'afflictions' attendant to repentance! I've been experiencing the same 'afflictions.' I know your feelings—I know your difficulties—but you are 'downcast' for the very purpose of being 'comforted' (strengthened) by the God who strengthens the downcast." Paul is going to elaborate on this principle in the next verses! He is even going to say that he is not sorry he made the Corinthians "grieve"! For that was the experience which triggered their repentance and in repentance they were comforted (strengthened). There is no such thing as **instant empathy!** Before we can really understand what others must endure to repent, we must have "walked a mile in their moccasins." Paul had walked more than his "mile" in affliction of the soul (Romans, chs. 7-8 and 2 Corinthians chs. 11 & 12)! Spiritual leaders must learn to lead by having gone through the "valley of the shadow" from which they hope to lead those entrusted to them. Paul's life was one

- long pilgrimage of repentance. He repeatedly writes that he is “learning” this and “learning” that!
3. Preachers must understand there is no repentance without some pain! Paul had written severe rebukes—painful reproofs. He had called the Corinthians “childish” for the divisions; “arrogant” for their indifference to immorality; “shameful” and “incompetent” because they could not judge wrong-doers’ “disgraceful” in their corporate worship about the Lord’s Table; “immature” in their use of spiritual gifts; and many other verbal “slaps” across their “spiritual bottoms.” If you think Paul was “rough,” just take a look at the OT prophets! Isaiah called his congregation, “dumber than animals”! Hosea called his, “whores”! Ezekiel called his “hard-headed, stubborn, impudent and rebellious.” They were preaching to people who had no shame—people who had forgotten how to blush—people who blamed everyone else for their wickedness—people who wanted to hear illusions and untruths (Isa. 30:8-11). And don’t forget how piercing, sharp, abrupt, biting and wrathful were so many of the words of John the Baptist and Jesus! Yes! Jesus spoke rebuke even to his very special friends, the apostles (Peter, James, John, Judas, Thomas). He rebuked his mother, his brothers, Martha, the Syro-Phoenician woman, hungry multitudes (John 6), religious potentates, political potentates. And one politician he shunned altogether (Herod)—rejecting his invitation. So how do you bring a “friend” or a “loved one” to repentance? How would God do it? Do we know the “thinking” and “methodology” of God on this? Certainly!!! And it isn’t easy! There is no room for cowards in the ministry of repentance! (Remember Jeremiah, Elijah, Moses, John the Baptist, Paul).
 4. Paul was not sorry he had made the Corinthians “grieve” because true love causes pain when it has to do so! God had to “afflict” Israel to save a “remnant.” The Bible clearly teaches that God chastens by hurting the rebellious hoping to bring about repentance. We do not show love by withholding the truth. Paul, asked the Galatians, “Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). We often let people go on and on, in sin, saying we love them too much to hurt them, but nothing is more self-deceptive. What we usually mean by such a statement is that we do not want to **hurt ourselves!** Sinners usually react with anger when told the truth! And, no matter how strong and secure the “teller,” the anger hurts! No one likes rejection. Paul did not like it! But he was willing to endure it for the sake of the Corinthians (and others) let us not fool ourselves—we must be willing to be hurt if we are to assist God in bring men to repentance! C. S. Lewis, writes insightfully in *The Problem of Pain* wrote, “Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has roused him, he knows that he is in some way or other ‘up against’ the real universe; he either rebels...or else makes some attempt at an adjustment, which, if pursued, will lead him to religion...When I think of pain—if I knew any way of escape I would crawl through sewers to find it...I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made ‘perfect through suffering’ is not incredible.” That God “perfects” mankind (brings him to the divine goal) through affliction, pain, suffering and tribulation is a **primary doctrine of the Bible**. It began when God “cursed the earth for man’s sake” (Gen. 3:17-18 and subjected the whole creation to futility and decay (Rom. 8:18-25). It does not end until the consummation of creation (Rev. Chs. 21 & 22). Preachers must face the stark reality that there is no repentance without pain—sometimes both psychological and physical!
 5. William Chamberlain writes in his book, *The Message and Meaning of Repentance*, that the popular concept of repentance “has been tragically shallow; it has been perverted into emotionalism or sacramentarianism...Repentance has been almost exclusively associated with an emotional crisis of sorrow for sin and fear of punishment.” He goes on to say, “A proper definition of the Greek word *metanoeo* calls for a renovation of mind...a complete change in mental outlook and of life design...” But mere reformation of behavior is not the crucial issue in repentance. To lay stress on change of conduct or reformation of behavior is to lead the minds of people away from the fact that *metanoeo* (repentance) deals primarily with the “springs of action,” rather than with the actions themselves! *Metanoeo* deals with the **source** of our motives (**our thinking**), not with conduct, or even with the motives themselves. The real meaning of the word began to be misunderstood when the New Testament was first translated into Latin (about A.D. 150) when the Greek word was translated in to the Latin *poenitentiam agite*, or, “do penance.” The church began to think of so many acts

of penitence to cancel a given amount of sin. The emphasis was put on feelings (remorse) and deeds (penance) while it should have been, as the Greek word shows, on “having the mind of Christ”—a transformation of thinking (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:14-17; 10:3-5). People may be sorry for their past and they may even reform certain outward ways of living (to keep from suffering unpleasant penalties) and still refuse to allow every thought to be brought into captivity to obedience to Christ. True repentance has little to do with emotions. It is a mental metamorphosis...in spite of one’s feelings! “Godly grief” is literally in the Greek text, *elupethete gar kata theon*, or, “For you were grieved **toward** God.” That preposition *kata* is significant—it means either “toward” or “according to.” Either way it makes “godly grief” a sorrow that turns the mind toward (or, according to) the mind of God! Paul says that “godly grief” produces repentance. Sorrow is only godly if it “works” repentance (Paul actually uses the Greek word *ergazetai*, “works”). Sorrow is not repentance—it is the **way** of God to produce repentance. But whether sorrow “works” repentance or not depends on whether man opens his mind or closes his mind when he suffers chastening. God’s **way** (sorrow, chastening, suffering) brings true remorse (regret) only if it works repentance. That is because repentance (conformity to the mind of Christ) is the way we become partakers of his nature. It brings the experience of reconciliation, forgiveness, son-ship, spiritual growth, self-worth and freedom from guilt and sin. Repentance starts with grief (within the limits of God’s will) but blossoms into joyful salvation!

6. **Worldly grief** (Greek, *kosmou lupe*, “cosmic grief”), a grief that has the human perspective, one that is throughout the cosmos (Rom. 8:18-25), works out death—it is under judgment as evidenced in the creation (Rom. 1:18-23)! What else can it work out! That is what the cosmos reveals—nothing more—it is subjected to futility and decay! The mind of God unto grace and reconciliation is in the Bible, and there only. Nature condemns and judges. Worldly grief works death because it becomes a **substitute** for true repentance. It is satisfied with sorrow and not a change of mind! It is not glad about sorrow, but satisfied with it rather than surrendering to the divine outlook on everything! Worldly grief thinks it has made reconciliation happen on the basis of emotion and not on the basis of a changed mentality. Worldly grief regrets being caught in sin but secretly vows not to change the mind about sin and rebellion. It vows to be smarter, more self-sufficient, and not to be caught again. Worldly grief is the criminal mentality. It does not lead to peace and joy because it is the grief of a rebellious mind. Worldly grief starts with hurt, but it is a mixture of anger and self-pity. It is allowed to work retreat into morbid self-judgment and eventually into suicide (both physical and spiritual) or to rise up in self-justification, fighting and striking back to “get even” by its own power.
7. The Corinthians proved they had repented by the actions listed in 7:11-13. First, there was the eagerness to clear themselves. This was not an attempt at justifying their impenitence, but a passion to change their thinking. They did not react emotionally, or superficially, but with deliberation (the Greek word translated “clear themselves” is *apologian*, from which we get “to make apologetic response—logical, reasoned, clarification”). Second, their godly grief produced in them indignation (Greek, *aganaktesin*, “vexation, anger, much grief”). They were not indignant toward Paul—but toward themselves! They manifested shame for their past and their shame moved them beyond self-pity to self-abnegation. Self-abnegation, **indignation or revulsion of self**, usually produces a corrective attitude and action. Third, their indignation worked in them alarm (Greek, *phobon*, “fear”). This was, of course, **godly fear**. Godly fear is the very beginning of **wisdom**. It is a state of mind synonymous with repentance. It is the beginning of thinking God’s way. Fourth, this all worked in them a “longing” for Paul who had “hurt” them or “made them sorry” to their own benefit! Fifth, they “punish” those of their membership who had been doing wrong. There was the immoral man, the pagan, living incestuously with his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5)—and they had boasted of their sophistication in not involving themselves in the man’s private life. Paul spoke “harshly” to them about that! Then there were the “trouble makers” (Judaizers, schismatics, maniacs for gifts, haughty worshipers, etc.). The Corinthians clearly changed their minds about these matters and “punished” (disciplined) the wrong-doers. This **proved their repentance**. Christ told the church at Thyatira that it must change its mind about “tolerating” the woman “Jezebel” (Rev. 3:19-29) or he would give to each of them as their works deserved! Practically every letter Paul wrote has in it instructions and pleas for repentance about failure to discipline factious, lazy or immoral

members. Repentance within the church remains a crucial problem that continues to plague preachers, elders and church members. There is only one divine solution—**know** the Bible and **practice** the Bible. Paul the preacher, and one of his congregations, Corinth, did so and solved the problem of repentance. They proved themselves mentally changed (penitent) **in every point of the matter**.

8. Repentance (redirection of the mind toward God’s way of thinking) produces spiritual discoveries and spiritual growth! Paul says, “The real reason I wrote those severe things which caused you grief was to bring you to a revelation of just how much **you** loved **me** as we are all in God!” (7:12). Paul had the ultimate benefit of the Corinthian Christians in mind when he had to be harsh with them. When they repented, it proved who they were! In arrogance, they had forgotten who and whose they were. Going through the experience of repentance inevitably produces an awareness that one is a child of God (Rom. 8:1-17; Heb. 12:1-17). The chastening and discipline which leads to repentance and “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” is the **experience** that confirms we are the sons of God. People are always wanting an “experience” in their religion—and the true **“experience” of Christianity is repentance!** Few ever find the true “experience” with Christ because they will not change their minds to his mind! Repentance (change of mind to conform to God’s way) gives divine perspective to everything! It is as if a dark veil were lifted—as if blind eyes were suddenly given sight. History, life, origins, destinies, relationships, and things are “seen” in the light of the future glory for the sons of God. Repentance is more than sorrow for sin—it is more than reformed behavior. ***It is a renewed mind!*** Repentance brought “relief” to Titus. It was a great blessing to Titus to be involved in bringing about the repentance of the Corinthians. It set Titus’s “mind” (Greek, *pneuma*, “spirit”) at rest! The church would stop its hell-bent slide back into paganism. Paul’s veracity and character and apostleship would be no longer maligned. Titus would not have to return to Corinth with more condemnations from the apostle’s pen. It brought great relief to Paul. Corinthian Christians were reconciled to Paul. The church was at rest. A repenting church will be a church at rest! What the church of Christ needs in this day more than anything else—more than cathedrals, causes, and collections—is repentance! Have you ever heard of a congregation implementing “a program for repentance?” Yet, repentance is the thrust of every epistle written by an apostle to any congregation—it is the main goal of the book of Revelation to the seven churches of Asia Minor—it is the goal of all the writings of the OT prophets—the goal of the law and the gospel!
9. The Corinthians received Titus and his message from the Lord’s apostle with “fear and trembling.” And they repented! William Chamberlain (*op.cit.*) concludes his book: “The church must redefine its task. We have had too much preaching that dealt out mild homeopathic (i.e., treating the disease with something like the disease) doses of ethical exhortation or sought to establish a social utopia by ignoring the fundamental need for a complete change in the mind and heart of mankind. Jesus and John the Baptist began with this need. The kingdom was at hand, they proclaimed, and that called for a complete metamorphosis of the mind of man. This includes the subconscious mind...the church must be told that becoming a Christian requires a new set of values, a new pattern for life, a new mind. **If one’s thoughts begin and end with one’s personal convenience and desires, one is disqualified for Christian living.** The preacher must keep reminding the church that it must become Christian in its ideals, its desires, and its aspirations before it can become Christian in its practice, **for the conduct of man hinges on his thought life.** A pagan bent in one’s thoughts gives a pagan tilt to one’s life.” What moved Titus emotionally was the **obedience** of the Corinthians. It was not their sorrow that impressed Titus—it was their obedience! In most cases today, **people get emotional over seeing the emotions of others on display!** But the impact the Corinthians had on Titus and Paul was due to their display of obedience. The fruition of repentance is obedience! How many Christians do you know who respond to exhortations to repent with fear and trembling? Is it sadistic for Paul to rejoice that the Corinthians responded with *phobia* (fear) and *timidity*? The usual response is anger, then defensiveness, then self-justification, and finally retaliation. But what Titus saw in the Corinthians was godly grief, then obedience, then fear and trembling. What a difference! The difference between rebellion and repentance—between righteousness and ungodliness. Fear plays a very significant part in holy conduct (see 1 Pet. 1:15-17). And it all starts with “godly sorrow which works repentance”!