

# THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

BY

**Arno Clement Gaebelein**

1861-1942

In the Public Domain

---

## Introduction

SECOND CORINTHIANS

CONTENTS

Introduction  
Division of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians  
Analysis and Annotations

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians

Introduction.

This second epistle is inseparably connected with the first Paul had written to the Corinthians. Its authorship is undoubted, for no other epistle bears such distinctive marks of the author and brings out all which characterized him as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. From critical sides it is claimed that between the first and second epistles, there must have been another letter of the Apostle, more severe in tone than the first epistle. This letter the critics maintain was lost. This supposition is mostly founded on chapter 2:3-4 and chapter 7:8. The statements made by the apostle in these passages, it is argued, cannot be explained by the message of the first epistle and the situation described is altogether too strong to have been created by the first epistle. But there is no need to invent an intermediate letter to explain the tone and burden of this second epistle. The first epistle contains sufficient material to produce the effects in the Corinthians and also in the mind and heart of the apostle of which he writes in the above passages. 1 Corinthians 4:18-21; 5:1-8; 6:5-8; 11:17-22 and 15:35-36, account fully for the great Apostle's solicitude and emotions.

How the Second Epistle Originated

After the first epistle had been written and delivered to the Corinthians, Paul seemed to have been greatly troubled in his mind about how the church in Corinth would receive and treat his inspired communication. The first epistle had been written with many tears and deep

soul-exercise. He knew that it would make them sorry, yet he was in doubt and unrest about it all. Titus had evidently been sent by the Apostle to Corinth to ascertain the truth about this matter and to find out what effect the first epistle had upon the Corinthians. Others think that Timotheus had first returned from Corinth and had brought very painful news, which greatly increased the anxiety of Paul and he sent, therefore, another letter through Titus to the Corinthians (the letter which is claimed was lost). However, this is only a conjecture.

At the time of writing this epistle, Paul had left the province Asia (2 Corinthians 1:8) where he had been in some great peril. In leaving Asia he had come by Troas, where the Lord had opened a door for him to preach the Gospel (2 Corinthians 2:12). In Troas he fully expected to meet Titus and receive the much longed for report from the Corinthian Church. "I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother" (2:13). He therefore sailed to Macedonia. It was in Macedonia where Titus met him and told Paul about his visit to Corinth. "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (2 Corinthians 7:5-7). The tidings which Titus brought were in the main good tidings. They had mourned over the wrong which the first letter had pointed out and they had repented; however, it is also clear that not all had been settled. There were still his enemies who attacked him and they became evidently more bitter against him on account of the strong letter he had written to the church. He wrote therefore, this second epistle in which he expresses the comfort which the news of their repentance had brought him, but in which he also very strongly defends his personal character and his apostolic authority.

This establishes beyond controversy the fact that the epistle was written in Macedonia. The exact place can hardly be ascertained. The note at the end of the epistle "written from Philippi" is simply traditional. It is more likely that he spent some time in Thessalonica. The time when this second epistle was written must have been the early autumn of 57, A.D.

#### The Contents and Characteristics

That in many ways there is a vast difference in the two epistles to the Corinthians cannot escape even a superficial reader. The second epistle is a far more personal one than the first and there is less doctrinal matter mentioned. One of the leading characteristics is the rapid transitions, which emanated not from the moods of the great man of God, but from the deep exercises of his soul. Anxiety, indignation, resentment, trust and love are linked together in rapid succession. A critic begins his remarks on this epistle with the following words "Of all Paul's epistles this is the most obscure. It is a veritable cloudland." But another writer expresses the value of this Epistle in a true way, when he says "What an admirable epistle is the second to the Corinthians! How full of affections! He joys and is sorry; he grieves and he glories: never was there such care of a flock expressed, save by the great Shepherd, who first shed tears over Jerusalem and afterward blood." Dean Alford remarks on this grand document: "In no other epistle are matter and style so various, and so rapidly shifting from one character to another. Consolation and rebuke, gentleness

and severity, earnestness and irony, succeed one another at very short intervals and without notice." Still another gives a good summary of the contents of this epistle.

"Personal experience, and this used for the help of others in their trials; the work of the Lord in all its varieties, with the action of the Holy Ghost answering to it; the truth of God in its distinctive shape and highest forms, or the glory of Christ contrasted with the spirit; in former days hidden under the letter; the walk and service which befit such revelations of grace; the affections called into action by all this in the midst of sorrow and suffering, with evil abounding and grace much more abounding; the trials and wants of saints, calling out the loving remembrance of others; the opposition of self-seeking men, employed of the enemy to hinder the blessing of saints and to lower the glory of Christ, to distract the weak and give scope for unscrupulous activity; but on the other hand the energy of the Holy Ghost working not only to vouchsafe heavenly visions, and so give faith its object, but to manifest Christ in weakness and suffering where the power of Christ may rest, are all brought out with remarkable force and fulness."

#### The Apostle's Self-Defense

While the epistle to the Galatians is the defense of the doctrine of the Gospel against false teachers, the second epistle to the Corinthians is the defense of his own personal character, his apostolic authority, his motives and his ministry. His adversaries, Judaizing teachers and others, who were continuing the sectarian spirit, had charged him with many things, slandering his character and belittling his apostolic authority and efficiency. What they had spoken against him we learn from the epistle itself. They depreciated his person. "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (10:10). "Though I be rude in speech (as they had accused him) yet not in knowledge" (11:6). The reason why he speaks in this epistle so much of his self-sacrifice, his zeal, his sincerity, his manly courage, his untiring service and his many sufferings, is that he had been attacked and belittled in all these things. It is well known that Paul means "little." Saul had been changed to Paul, the little one. Unlike his namesake in the Old Testament, King Saul, whom Samuel had rebuked, with the words "when thou wast little in thine own eyes," the great Apostle was little and remained little in his own estimation, the mark of every true servant of Christ. He called himself "less than the least of all saints" (Ephesians 3:8). Yet in this epistle he is forced to boast in order to vindicate his character and ministry. In chapter 12:11 we read "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." Thirty-one times he speaks of glorying or boasting and that because he was compelled to do so. In this way we learn of some new things which happened in the life of the Apostle Paul which are unrecorded elsewhere. These are: his escape from Damascus in a basket (11:32-33); his great experience in being caught up to the third heaven (12:1-4); his thorn in the flesh (12:7, etc.); his remarkable sufferings and privations (11:23-27). The fact that these experiences were not mentioned by him till he was compelled to do so and to show that, if he wanted to boast in something, he had abundant reasons for doing so, manifests his great humility.

## True Ministry

The epistle is a wonderful mine in spiritual and practical truths. The one great truth which may be traced throughout the entire epistle is the ministry in the body of Christ, the church. And the apostle himself in making his self-defense is a pattern of what true ministry in the body of Christ is and what it means. Here are blessed, spiritual lessons and principles which apply to God's true children at all times. All who desire to be devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ in these days, need these practical truths. May it please God to lead us into them and enable us by His grace to walk in His truth.

# Outline

## The Division of Second Corinthians

We divide this epistle into three parts, which is the most satisfactory division.

- I. TRUE MINISTRY AS MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLE. Chapters 1-7.
  1. The Introduction. Chapters 1:1-7.
  2. Paul's Experience and Explanations. Chapter 1:8-24.
  3. His Deep Exercise Concerning Them. Chapter 2.
  4. The Ministry of the New Covenant as Contrasted with the Old. Chapter 3.
  5. The Character of the True Ministry. Chapter 4.
  6. Concerning the Future; The Ministry of Reconciliation. Chapter 5.
  7. Ministry in Connection with Testings and Trials. Chapter 6:1-13.
  8. The Apostle's Appeals and Rejoicing. Chapter 6:14-7:16.
- II. THE MINISTRY OF GIVING. Chapters 8-9.
  1. The Examples and Principles of Giving. Chapter 8.
  2. Exhortation and Encouragement. Chapter 9.
- III. THE APOSTLE'S SELF-DEFENSE AND VINDICATION. Chapters 10-13.
  1. The Defense of His Authority. Chapter 10.
  2. Answering His Adversaries. His Boasting. Chapter 11.
  3. Revelations in which He Might Glory. The Marks of His Apostleship. Chapter 12.
  4. Still Absent, Yet Coming. The Conclusion. Chapter 13.

I. TRUE MINISTRY AS MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLE. Chapters 1-7.

## Chapter 1

1. The Introduction.

CHAPTER 1:1-7

1. The Salutation. 1-2.
2. The Thanksgiving. 3-7.

After the opening words of salutation, the Apostle blesses God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. The Apostle had many trials and testings, as well as much suffering, and in all these depressing experiences, God had graciously ministered unto him. Therefore he blessed God in this outburst of praise. We can only bless God as we know Him. Trials, afflictions, sorrows and sufferings make God a greater reality to the believer and display His gracious favor towards His beloved people. The Apostle had made this experience, "Who comforteth (or encourageth) us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." In all his distress and tribulation he had drawn near to God, and God had not failed him, but ministered to his need. The blessing and encouragement he had received from God fitted him to comfort those who are in trouble. An important principle concerning true ministry in the body of Christ is made known in these words of thanksgiving. God must minister to our hearts first, and, through what we receive, we can minister to others. And so all true ministry is of Him. He knew the sufferings of Christ in an abundant measure, but while the sufferings of Christ abounded toward him, so did his consolation abound through Christ also. All he passed through and suffered as a devoted servant of Christ in an antagonistic world, were the sufferings of Christ. Of these sufferings he speaks more fully elsewhere in this Epistle. And both, the trouble and the comfort, were not exclusively for him, but for all Christians likewise. All was for their benefit and blessing. The Apostle states, that whether afflicted or comforted, it is for their consolation and salvation, and that the same result is wrought in" them by their own participation in a like experience. The Lord in His gracious dealing would turn affliction to their blessing as well as the consolation. His heart had been encouraged by what he had heard from Titus about their godly sorrow and therefore he could express his confidence "and our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so are ye also of the consolation."

2. Paul's Experience and Explanations.

CHAPTER 1:8-24

1. His Experience. 8-14.
2. His Explanations. 15-24.

The Apostle speaks, first of all, of the trouble he had when he was pressed out of measure (or "weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power"), in so much that he despaired of his life. What experience did he mean? The question cannot be positively answered. It may have been the trouble in Ephesus (Acts 19) to which he refers in 1 Corinthians 15:32, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts in Ephesus." Others think that it was some severe attack of sickness or a powerful assault upon his life from some other source. Whatever it was, he had been in such a peril that he almost lost his life. "But we had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." It was all permitted to come upon him for his own good. He learned by it his own utter helplessness; it destroyed in him all self-reliance; he had to cast himself upon God, whose power and faithfulness as a deliverer were blessedly manifested in this experience. It showed him his nothingness and God's power in deliverance. Every true believer will welcome any affliction or tribulation which produces such precious results. In the tenth verse, he groups together the fact of God's deliverance past, present and future. "Who delivered us from so great a death." This undoubtedly refers to the danger he was exposed to and out of which He had been delivered, but it may also be applied in a more general way. We are as believers delivered from so great a death, that is, eternal death. Then there is a present deliverance "who doth deliver." These are the trials and testings in the way, in which the believer learns anew that He is the God of our salvation. "Salvation through a work wrought already for eternity is the daily lesson of a growing faith. Sickness, privation and trouble Of any kind are, with outward persecution, permitted as occasions of sustaining and delivering love. Grace knows how to deliver even from those snares in which our own folly or carelessness may have entangled our feet." (Pridham.) And the Apostle expressed his confidence in a future deliverance. He who has delivered His people, saved them by Grace, who constantly delivers and keeps, will do so in the future till the final great deliverance comes and all His redeemed people will be gathered home.

But while the Apostle trusted in God for all this, as all true believers do, he also recognized the value of the prayers of others. God's children can be fellow-helpers in prayer for the servants of God "helping together by prayer for us." Prayer is therefore a very important part of true ministry in the body of Christ. And what had been bestowed upon him, would lead many to praise God in giving thanks on his behalf. He was rejoicing in the testimony of his own conscience, that in holiness (not "simplicity" as in the authorized version) and sincerity before God he had acted in the world and more abundantly towards them. (The word rejoicing is "glorying" or "boasting." As mentioned in the introduction this word is found thirty-one times in this epistle.) Only partly had they recognized him. He mentions "the day of our Lord Jesus." In that day the Corinthian saints would be the Apostle's glorying, and the Apostle was their glorying. The day of the Lord Jesus is not the Old Testament day of God. The day of the Lord will bring the visible manifestation of the Lord in great power and glory. Judgment for this earth follows as well as mercy in bringing righteousness, peace and the Kingdom. The day of the lord Jesus is for the Saints of God and is celebrated not on earth but in glory. Often the Apostle refers to that blessed coming day when the Saints shall be gathered home. As a doctrine it is impressed continually on the memory of the church, while as a moral power it is a constant endeavor of the Spirit to bring it to bear directly on the daily walk of the believer, both as a

regulator of conscience, an argument of patience, and an efficient stimulant of all true spiritual affection (Romans 13:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:7; 1 John 3:1-3).

His explanations follow. He intended to come to them long before this. His plan was to pass by them into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto them, so that they might bring him on his way toward Judea. He had not done so. They might accuse him therefore of having failed. The word "lightness" in verse 17 means fickleness. Was he fickle-minded? Was it merely the lightness and fickleness, a changing yea, yea, followed by nay, nay? He had stayed away from Corinth for other reasons; it was to spare them that he did not go there. Therefore, it was not fickleness on his part at all.

He did not purpose according to the flesh. What he earnestly desired was from love for them, and all his plans were under the guidance of the Lord. "But as God is true, our word toward you is not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him is yea. For whatever may be the promises of God, in Him is the yea, wherefore also through Him is the amen, unto the glory of God through us." They had been suspicious of him and his motives, and now after having denied the false charge of being fickle-minded he reminds them of his preaching among them which was not yea and nay. He turns from the accusations against him, to what he had preached. The positive doctrines of the Gospel had molded his character and controlled all his motives. He and his companions, Silvanus and Timotheus, had preached among them the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and the blessed truths of salvation and redemption which center in Him and flow forth from His Person. And the preaching of the Son of God has no doubt and uncertainty in it; it is the declaration of positive and final Truth. Men doubt and are fickle-minded about the Person of Christ and the Gospel in our days, but God's Word speaks in positive terms, which do not permit any uncertainty whatever. It is a wonderfully deep statement that all the promises of God, whatever they may be, are in Christ--in Him is the yea and through Him the amen likewise. All promises are made to Christ and are in Him and those who trust in Christ share them in Him. All came by Him, all is in Him, all will be accomplished through Him. "Whatever promises there had been on God's part, the yea was in Him, and the amen in Him. God has established--deposited, so to speak--the fulfillment of all His promises in the Person of Christ. Life, glory, righteousness, pardon, the gift of the Spirit, all is in Him: it is in Him that all is true--yea and amen. We cannot have the effect of any promise whatsoever apart from Him. But this is not all: we, believers, are the objects of these counsels of God. They are to the glory of God by us." (Synopsis.)

But how can we participate in it, if all is "in Christ?" Here is the blessed answer. God Himself establishes the believer in Christ, in whom all the promises subsist, so that the true Christian securely possesses in Him all that is promised. We have it all through God in Christ and can enjoy it in Him. And furthermore, God hath anointed us. We possess in Christ the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are sealed by that Spirit; God has put His seal upon us. And finally the Spirit also is in us the earnest of that which we shall possess with Christ in the coming day of His glory. "In whom ye also, after that Ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also believing, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of an inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

## CHAPTER 2

### 3. His Deep Exercise Concerning Them. Yet Overcoming.

1. The Burden of his Soul. 1-4.
2. Concerning the Brother who had been Disciplined. 5-11.
3. Overcoming. 12-17.

In the previous chapter we read the reason why he had not gone to Corinth. "To spare you I came not to Corinth" (verse 23). He feared, that on account of their deplorable condition; exercising his God-given apostolic authority, he might appear as dominating over them. He had determined that he would not come again to them with sorrow. He might have hastened to Corinth with a rod (1 Corinthians 4:21), but he exercised patience and had waited, no doubt with much prayer to God, for the gracious effect of the first Epistle he had sent unto them. In all these statements so humble, so loving and so patient, we have the love exemplified which is described in the previous epistle (Chapter 13). He was not easily provoked; he hoped all things and endured all things. He also tells them in what state of mind he was in when he wrote his first Epistle. What deep soul exercise the fourth verse reveals! He was so much concerned that he wrote out of much affliction and agony of heart, while his tears flowed freely. But it was not done to grieve them; love for them was the only motive, "that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly towards you."

The case of the transgressor whose wicked deed had been exposed and rebuked in the first Epistle (1 Corinthians 5), whose discipline had been demanded by the Apostle, is taken up first. What had grieved him had grieved them also. This they had shown by the way in which they had treated this brother. Titus had brought him the information that they had acted and the transgressor had been put away from fellowship. He also must have told Paul of his deep and true repentance. He therefore exhorts them to receive him again and comfort him, who was in grave danger of being swallowed up with much sorrow on account of the discipline from the side of the mass of Christians. He tells them to assure this weak brother, who had been restored, of their own love, and while they had forgiven him, he also forgave. In assuring the disciplined brother of their love they would thereby prove their obedience in all things. They had previously shown their obedience by judging the evil doer for his sin. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices." The brother in question who had been delivered to Satan was in danger of being driven to despair, and in this way Satan might get an advantage over them. This might have resulted in bringing about a division between the Apostle and the Corinthians. The course pursued by the apostle in forgiving love, prevented this.

When the Apostle came to Troas to preach the Gospel of Christ, there was a door opened unto him by the Lord. His great business was to preach the Gospel, and the Lord had manifested His approval by opening a door. Yet Paul was restless. He had expected to meet Titus to receive the anxiously awaited news from Corinth. So he did not enter the door which the Lord opened to preach the Gospel, but he hastened to Macedonia. His own anxiety and restless haste were weaknesses. The door opened for service should have

made him tarry at Troas to preach that Gospel, which he loved so well. Then, in due time, the Lord would have led Titus to him. From all this the Corinthians could learn his great love for them and his deep anxiety and concern. And yet his conscience must have been troubled in having lost so great an opportunity to preach the Gospel. Surely he was in a very trying position as a servant of Christ. On the one hand he valued the Gospel and loved to preach it, and on the other hand was his burdened heart for the Saints of God. And therefore he comforts and encourages himself by an outburst of thanksgiving. He knows that God is in it all; not he himself leads, but God always leadeth him in triumph in Christ, ("causes us to triumph" is a faulty translation), "and maketh manifest the odor of His knowledge through us in every place." It is an allusion to a Roman triumphal procession after the victory. Captives were led in these processions, but the victors were the prominent figures. So Paul declares, "God always leadeth us in triumph in Christ." He gives us the victory. All his anxiety for the Corinthians ended in triumph. This was always so. In connection with a Roman triumph incense was burned upon every altar. These aromatics pervaded the whole procession. Through the apostle the sweet smell of His knowledge was spread about. But he also applies this to the Gospel. The two classes are mentioned by him, those who are being saved and those who are perishing. Let us also notice the beautiful thought that the preaching of the Gospel is a sweet incense of Christ unto God. Independent of the results of the preaching of the Gospel, whenever that precious name is preached, which is as ointment poured forth (Song of Solomon 1:3), it delights the heart of God and is a sweet savor unto Him. But as to men, to some it is a savor (or odor) of death unto death and to others a savor of life unto life. (In the Roman triumphal procession were captives to whom the burning incense was a token of death; to others it was a token of life.)

And who is sufficient for these things? What great issues the Gospel ministry involves and how great the responsibility! The question is answered in the next chapter. "Our sufficiency is of God" (3:5). Upon Him the true minister of the Gospel is solely cast. And because Paul had his sufficiency of God as well as those who were associated with him, he could say, "for we are not as the many, corrupting the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." The word "corrupt" has the meaning of adulterating, trading. It has been strikingly translated "driving a traffic in the Word of God" and with this making merchandise of the Truth of God, the adulterating is closely connected. It began with apostolic days. How much worse is it in our times! Many who lay claim to the name of ministers of the Gospel are men-pleasers, covetous, aiming at their own popularity, seeking their own and not the things of Christ; and therefore they trade in these truths and handle the Word of God deceitfully as well as diluting it. A solemn description of a true servant of Christ is the concluding sentence of this chapter. He is of God, with a God-given message, and he speaks of God in the sight of God.

## CHAPTER 3

### 4. The Ministry of the New Covenant in Contrast with the Old.

1. The Epistle of Christ. 1-3.
2. The True Sufficiency. 4-6.
3. The Old and New Ministry Contrasted. 7-11.
4. The Glory in the Face of Moses and the Glory in the Face of Christ. 12-18.

It was customary in the church to give letters of commendation (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1). Did the Apostle need, as some others, epistles of commendation to the Corinthians, or such letters from them? Probably his enemies, the Judaizing teachers, who upheld the law and its ordinances, demanded such letters. They may have said, he did not come from Jerusalem; who then is Paul? Why has he not letters of commendation? His answer is, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of the heart." It is a most beautiful and tender Statement. The Corinthians were his letter of commendation, the proof of his blessed ministry, because under his preaching they had been saved and were walking well. After their obedience, he could rightly say so. it would have been impossible for him to make such a statement in the first epistle. Let all men read you as an epistle, and they will know what kind of a man I am. What confidence and love this expresses! It would also lead them to an earnest inquiry if they were really such a letter of commendation. When he speaks of "ye are the epistle of Christ" he describes the general character of the church and her responsibility. The church is the representative of Christ, or Christ's letter of commendation to the world. What a solemn responsibility to recommend in life and walk Christ to the world! Just as God had written once the law on tables of stone exclusively for Israel, so now the Spirit of the living God writes Christ on the hearts of believers, that the world may read Christ in the Church composed of all believers. ("Exodus 34:1; John 13:35; 17:21. The analogy is obvious. Jehovah was 'the God of Israel,' Christ is 'the Savior of the world.' The tables were Jehovah's witness to His people, the Church is Christ's living Epistle to the world. Israel heard but turned away; the world saw and read but refused, and yet refuses Him who thus speaks from heaven. Lastly, in the former case, the law was made void by the commandments of men; in the latter, the Church, the power of whose testimony consists in her separation from the world, has by mingling with it become the betrayer, rather than the witness of the name by which she is called.") And this is true ministry, witnessing to Christ not alone in the proclamation of the Gospel, but in life and walk. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the children of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). And such was Paul's confidence through Christ to Godward. He trusted the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to accomplish this. In himself, he acknowledges, there is no sufficiency for anything, "all our sufficiency is of God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of letter, but of spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The latter statement is often wrongly interpreted. The word "letter" does

not mean the entire written Word of God. Many have taken this view and declare that the Bible must not be taken literally, just as it says. (This is mostly said in connection with Prophecy, the Second Coming of Christ, etc. More than once the word "the letter killeth" has been used to explain away the literal meaning of things to come.) It is not the question at all between the literal words and meaning of the Scriptures and the spiritual meaning, but it is a contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant, between the law and the gospel. The word "letter" stands for the law, which in its ministration kills and cannot give life. What the purpose of the law is and what it can do and cannot do is learned from the following passages: Romans 3:20, 5:20, 7:5-11, 8:3; Galatians 3:10, 19.

By the law no flesh can be justified; by the law the offence abounded; the law means death to man (Romans 7:10-11). It is weak and has no power to help man, and it curses man. In this sense the letter, the law, killeth. But the spirit giveth life. It means that the spirit of the Gospel is different from the law, for the Holy Spirit operates through the Gospel and quickens the sinner who is dead and under the curse. Here then we have the absolute incompatibility of law and gospel. The epistle to the Galatians makes this fact fully known. The contrast between law and gospel, the old and the new covenant, is introduced in this epistle because the teachers who magnified the law and preached the keeping of the law for righteousness, were also at work in Corinth (chapter 11:22). And the glory of the gospel and its ministry cannot be fully demonstrated except in its relation to the law. The contrast made is fivefold:

Law		Gospel
Letter.		Spirit.
Ministration of death.		Ministration of the Spirit (Life).
Ministration of condemnation.		Ministration of righteousness.
Vanishing glory.		Abiding glory.
Veiled glory.		Unveiled glory.

The law ministers death. It was written and engraved and came with glory. This refers us to the second giving of the law. Glory was connected with that, for Moses' face shone. Because grace and mercy were mingled with the second giving of the law (Exodus 34:1-7), glory was seen upon the face of Moses. They could not look upon that glory, and Moses, the Mediator, had to cover his face with a veil. It was a brightness which dazzled and repelled, but had no power to attract or to bring light, warmth and joy to the hearts of the people. But if glory was connected with the ministration which is death, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?

The Gospel is all-glorious and abiding; it is the ministration of righteousness which abounds in glory. The glory on the face of Moses has given way to the glory in another face, even in the face of the Lord, Jesus Christ. The glory on Moses' face was but the reflection of His glory who came and dwelt among men. It is now a remaining glory as well as a

surpassing glory, "the glory that excelleth." And the sinner can behold that glory. "Righteousness is now ministered unto us, not worked out by us; and thus, indeed, the glory of God is revealed as nothing else could reveal it. His inmost heart is told out in righteousness, but love is righteousness, and love, how marvelous, as shown in the gift of Christ for men! So that which was made glorious in the time past had, in itself, no glory compared with this surpassing glory" (Numerical Bible).

"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness (literally: boldness and confidence) of speech." With such blessed assurance and knowledge of the ministration of righteousness and the Spirit, the true minister can use great plainness of speech in the proclamation of the Gospel. "To make the marvelous truth of God's gospel as clear as daylight to the human conscience is the first duty of those whom the Lord now sends forth as heralds of His grace. Whatever is recondite or enigmatic is not now of God. Babes receive that which, when digested, makes them men. It could not be thus with Moses, who was indeed the open minister of the law, but the veiled prophet of grace,. The action of Moses in covering his face is here described as something intentional, and in keeping with his office as the minister of that which he knew to be imperfect in character, and therefore not of permanent effect. The lawgiver was a witness also of a better thing than law. To deliver his present message to the people he lifted the veil, which was again replaced when the commandment was uttered. Before God he was unveiled, and looked with open vision on the mystery of Jehovah's ways, but to Israel his covered face was an emblem of the incomplete and unsatisfying nature of the ministry committed to his charge." (A. Pridham)

But Israel has been blinded. The people who boast in the ministration of the law did not believe, and as a result their minds were blinded (Isaiah 6:9, 10; Matthew 13:14; John 12:40; Acts 28:26; Romans 11:8). They read the Old Testament, but the veil is unremoved; yet the day of grace is coming when the veil shall be taken away, and that will be when they turn to the Lord during the coming time of great tribulation, ending with the glorious coming of Him whom they once rejected (Hosea 5:15; 6:1-3).

And those who believe look upon the unveiled, the unhidden glories of the Lord, and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. It is through faith. And all is through the blessed life-giving Spirit of Christ, who works in believers as the Epistle of Christ. "The power to enjoy Him is the power to reflect Him. The reflection is no effort, but the necessary effect of enjoyment." May we enjoy Christ by being more and more occupied with Him through His Word and then make Him known by walking even as He walked. This is a part of true ministry so much needed.

## CHAPTER 4

### 5. The Character of the True Ministry.

1. The Gospel of the Glory of Christ. 1-6.
2. The Treasure in Earthen Vessels; Weakness and Power. 7-12.
3. Resurrection and Coming Glory. 13-18.

This ministry which the apostle mentions is the ministry of the Gospel. And those who know it by having received mercy are to be the witnesses. Every Christian who has obtained mercy, who is saved by grace, is called to witness to this blessed fact in some way. "We faint not"--we are not discouraged, but encouraged to go on in its proclamation, knowing that it is a sweet savor unto God and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The hidden things of shame, the methods of the flesh, craftiness, the deceitful handling Of the Word of God, were renounced by the apostle: he avoided those things. All carnal things, all artifices, human wisdom and rhetoric, by which men's minds might be captivated and their applause gained, were unknown to the apostle. His commendation to every man's conscience in the sight of God was by the manifestation of the truth. He had implicit confidence in God's Word and in the Gospel of the glory of Christ. This confidence is sadly lacking in our days among the professed preachers of the Word. As a result the methods of the flesh are used and the holy things are dragged down into the gutter. What abominable methods are used by professional "evangelists" to gain notoriety, secure large crowds and large collections! And the falsifying of the Word, the deceitful handling of the Scriptures, which go along with those methods! No wonder the world applauds such methods and the defense of the cross lies ceased.

And the gospel is here called "the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." And this gospel shines in all its radiancy. In the first epistle we had a blessed definition of what the Gospel is (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). There we read of His death for our sins, His burial and His resurrection. But here we are lifted higher; the Christ who died and rose again is in heaven crowned with glory and honor. He is there at the right hand of God as our representative, and all the love, the grace and power which are for His people shine out in His blessed face. A glorified Christ in all His fulness and glory, is the gospel in its highest meaning. But if this gospel, which Paul calls "my gospel" is hid, that is, veiled, it is in those that are perishing. They are unbelieving, and unbelief puts them under Satan's power. He is called here the god of this age (the word world means age), that is our age. The age rejected Christ, and that has made Satan the god of the age, a title which he did not possess in the previous age. And he blinds the eyes of them that believe not. As they refuse to see the light which now shines in the gospel of the glory of Christ, they become blinded by the father of lies by various methods and means. He blinds the eyes by the age itself over which he domineers. He makes it appear as if this age is fast making for better things. Righteousness and peace are impossible during the present evil age; this age is one of darkness, ending in a complete manifestation of the mystery of iniquity in the person of Satan's man, the Antichrist. Righteousness and peace can only come through the Return of the Lord Jesus

Christ and by His enthronement as King over this world. Satan hides the real character of this age and this is one of the ways by which he blinds the eyes of them that believe not. He leads man to exalt himself, and nourishes self-trust and self-exaltation.

But what is the message of the true servants of Christ? Do they exalt man, or themselves, or the age with its boasted progress? "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. Because it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, who hath shined in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." As it was in the hour of creation when darkness covered all, so it is in redemption. God hath shined in His grace into the hearts of them who believe. And He hath shined, in that, through us, the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ may shine forth to others. This unspeakable treasure and glory is in earthen vessels that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not of us. As the ancients kept the most valued treasures in earthen jars, so all those glorious things God has given in the gospel, as well as the ministry of it, are deposited in earthen vessels. The believer, with a body of humiliation, weak and frail, though no longer in the flesh, yet the flesh, the old nature, still in him, is the earthen vessel. The term reminds us of Gideon and his men with the torches in earthen pitchers (Judges 7:16-29.). The pitchers had to be broken to pieces so that the light could shine, and thus in that dark night the victory was won. The old man has to be kept constantly in the place of death, self must be judged and broken to pieces, that the light may shine forth. This is a truth which is more than suggested by this statement, though the outward man in his weakness and frailty, subject to affliction and suffering in the world is principally in view.

Then follow statements which illustrate the earthen vessels in their weak and helpless condition, and the exceeding greatness of the power of God. The power is manifested through the earthen vessels in trial and affliction. The earthen vessels may be troubled, afflicted on every side, but the power keeps them from being straitened or distressed. Perplexed, persecuted, smitten down--such is the condition of the earthen vessels. But God's gracious power is manifested in all these earthly and trying circumstances.

"Always bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus (made like Him, in that the man as such was reduced to nothing), in order that the life of Jesus, which death could not touch, which has triumphed over death, should be manifested in his body, mortal as it was. The more the natural man was annihilated, the more was it evident that a power was there which was not of man. This was the principle, but it was morally realized in the heart by faith. As the Lord's servant, Paul realized in his heart the death of all that was human life, in order that the power might be purely of God through Jesus risen. But besides this, God made him realize these things by the circumstances through which he had to pass; for, as living in this world, he was always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, in order that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh. Thus death wrought in the apostle; what was merely of man, of nature and natural life, disappeared, in order that life in Christ, developing itself in him on the part of God and by His power, should work in the Corinthians by his means. A thorough trial of the human heart, a glorious calling, for a man to be thus assimilated to Christ, to be the vessel of the power of His pure life, and by means of an entire self-renunciation, even that of

life itself, to be morally like unto Jesus. What a position by grace! What a conformity to Christ" (Synopsis).

How little of all this is known experimentally in our easy-going days among God's people! In verse 12 we read, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you." Different explanations have been given of this statement. True ministry in self-denial and self-forgetfulness works death to the servant. His self-forgetting love brought him constantly hardships and suffering; he followed the Lord in all this and knew the fellowship of His sufferings. But through it the people of God were helped, comforted and blessed. In this sense life worked in them through the self-sacrifice of the apostle.

And what sustains in all this? It is faith. And faith reckons on God who raiseth the dead. "Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also with Jesus, and shall present us with you." The faith of the believer and the servant looks forward to the glorious consummation when Christ comes for His saints and the great presentation (Jude 24) takes place. This is the glorious goal when we shall no longer see in the glass darkly, when we shall know as we are known, when we shall see Him as He is and be like Him. Therefore, "we faint not; but if our outward man be consumed, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Faith always looks upon things seen as temporal. Unseen things, the things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, are eternal; with these faith is to be occupied. But who is able to say what awaits us there? Who is able to tell out the meaning of that wonderful sentence, "A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" There is a surpassing, an unspeakable, an indescribable, an unfathomable and eternal glory for the Saints of God. In ages to come God will display the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

## CHAPTER 5

6. Concerning the Future. The Ministry of Reconciliation.

1. The Earthly and the Heavenly House. 1-8.
2. The Judgment Seat of Christ. 9-12.
3. The Constraint of Love. 13-16.
4. The Ministry of Reconciliation. 17-21.

The certainty of the future things is brought more fully in view. The apostle had given the great doctrines concerning the resurrection of the body, the coming of the Lord and the blessed hope in his first epistle (chapter 15). In the closing verses of the preceding chapter, he mentioned again the fact of the believer's resurrection and presentation in the presence of the Lord (verse 14) and spoke of the eternal things, the coming glory. And so he continues: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The earthly house of this tabernacle

is the body of the believer, the earthen vessel in the previous chapter. It is called a tabernacle (a tent) because it is only the temporary lodging of those who are by grace but strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Yet in this earthen vessel, this frail tabernacle, there is a divine indweller, the Holy Spirit. The apostle speaks of the dissolution of our earthly house, "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved." He does not say "when we die," but only states the possibility that the tabernacle might be dissolved. The dissolution of the mortal body of the believer is not presented therefore by the apostle as a certainty, but only as a possibility. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" was the blessed mystery revealed through the apostle in his first epistle (1 Corinthians 15:51). The change of the body of the believer is the certainty, but its dissolution is not. But if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved "we know we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What do these terms mean? What is the building of God, the eternal house in the heavens? Some have identified it with the Father's house and its many mansions of which our Lord speaks. But this house of which the apostle writes cannot be heaven, the Father's house, for it is said to be from heaven and in the heavens. Others have invented a temporary body. They teach that when the believer dies he gets at once a kind of an ethereal body which he will possess between death and resurrection. This is a speculation contradicted by the word "eternal." Nowhere in the Word of God is it taught that the disembodied spirits of the redeemed are to be clothed with a body before resurrection takes place. The body of the believer in its present state is compared to a tabernacle; the building of God, the house not made with hands, refers to that which the believer shall possess in the future, no longer an earthly house, a tabernacle, but something permanent, of supernatural origin. It is quite evident that the apostle means by way of contrast the spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44), which is in store for the believer. This fact is stated once more, but the purpose of these words is not to convey the thought that this house is to be possessed immediately after death: the emphasis is upon "we know" and "we have." The Spirit of God assures us of the certainty of it. Thus positively every child of God can speak.

"For in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." The groaning is not on account of infirmities, hardship, privations or unsatisfied desires. It is deeper than that. It is the longing for the promised glorified condition with which we shall be invested. "It is the groaning not of a disappointed sinner, nor of an undelivered saint, but of those who, assured of life and victory in Christ, feel the wretched contrast of the present with the glory of the future." If we, beloved fellow-believer, live close to God, enjoy the fellowship with His Son into which grace has called us, then even in the fairest scenes and in the most attractive earthly conditions, we shall know something of this groaning and longing to be clothed upon with that which is from above and which will fit us to be the vessels of the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. (The knowledge that at any moment one may change the prison garments of mortality, and as a chosen companion of the King of Kings be found in the likeness of the Lord of Life, must generate a longing for that moment to arrive. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus.")

"If so be that being clothed upon we shall not be found naked." This again is another warning corresponding to the one at the close of 1 Corinthians 9. All human beings will be clothed upon with a body, for there is a resurrection of the bodies of the just and the unjust. The wicked dead, standing before the great white throne, will be clothed upon, but,

not having Christ, they will be found naked for their eternal shame. And so the apostle warned of the possibility that even among the Corinthians there may be some who, destitute of Christ, only professing to be Christ's, would then be found naked.

Then again the apostle speaks of the groaning in this tabernacle, the body of our humiliation. His desire is not to be unclothed, that is, unclothed in death, when the body is put into the grave; he desires to be clothed upon, to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. For this the apostle groaned; and this is what we wait for and not for death. When the shout comes from the air and His voice opens the graves of His saints, we who are alive and remain shall be changed (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). No death then but mortality will be swallowed up of life. Then our mortal bodies will be quickened. And God has wrought us for this very thing; the evidence of it is the indwelling Spirit, who has made the body of the believer His temple. Then the apostle describes a twofold condition, "at home in the body (the tabernacle) we are absent from the Lord"; and "absent from the body, present with the Lord." The latter statement is a complete refutation of that evil doctrine called "soul-sleep," i.e., an unconscious state between death and resurrection. The believer who dies goes into the presence of the Lord and is consciously present there, waiting with the redeemed of all ages, "to be clothed upon with the house from heaven."

Linked with all this blessed teaching is the judgment seat of Christ (verse 10). All, whether saints or sinners, will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ; certainly not at the same time. There is no universal judgment, when the righteous and the unrighteous appear together before the judgment seat of Christ taught in the Bible. The Saints of God will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, when He has taken them from earth to glory, not at death, but when He comes with the shout in the air. But for His blood-bought people, who constitute His body, who will then be clothed with the house from heaven (the glorified body), there is no more judgment in the sense of condemnation. His own blessed lips have given us the assurance of this. (See John 5:24--that blessed word!) Nevertheless, there is a judgment seat of Christ for believers. The word "appear" in verse 10 is "manifested". We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Our works and our ways as Christians will then be brought fully into view; all will be brought into the light. Nothing can be concealed, and the believer receives the things done in the body.

"But there is more than this. when the Christian is thus manifested, he is already glorified, and, perfectly like Christ, has then no remains of the evil nature in which he sinned. And he now can look back at all the way God has led him in grace, helped, lifted up, kept from falling, not withdrawn His eyes from the righteous. He knows as he is known. What a tale of grace and mercy! If I look back now, my sins do not rest on my conscience; though I have horror of them, they are put away behind God's back. I am the righteousness of God in Christ, but what a sense of love and patience, and goodness and grace! How much more perfect then, when all is before me! Surely there is great gain as to light and love, in giving an account of ourselves to God; and not a trace remains of the evil in us. We are like Christ. If a person fears to have all out thus before God, I do not believe he is free in soul as to righteousness--being the righteousness of God in Christ, not fully in the light. And we have not to be judged for anything: Christ has put it all away" (Synopsis).

And thus the believer has no more fear of death, for he knows what awaits him; and the judgment seat of Christ has also no terror for him. But the words of the apostle apply equally to unbelievers. The occupant of the great white throne (Revelation 20) before which the wicked dead appear and will be manifested, is the Lord Jesus Christ. They will be judged according to their works and condemned to eternal darkness and conscious punishment. In view of this the apostle states, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

And how can we persuade men to flee the wrath to come, unless we preach the Gospel to them? Beautifully linked with this is the constraining power of the love of Christ (verse 14). In his ministry, service, walk and everything else, the great apostle knew this mighty constraint of love. And the cross and its glorious work looms up before his vision, in view of that love manifested there. In Him who, died and who liveth, we are called as well as equipped with power to live unto Him. In faith, as dead with Christ and risen with Him, we look to a risen and glorified Christ in whom we are a new creation, "old things have passed, behold all things are become new."

Having reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ, He has also given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Having brought us into this blessed position through grace, He calls us to make it known to others and lead others to Him. What we have received we are to use in our ministry. And every reconciled one is called into this service to exercise the ministry of reconciliation and be a soul-winner. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin, He hath made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This is the great message of the true minister, and all believers can be true ministers and proclaim the message in Christ's stead and point sinners to the cross, where He who knew no sin was made sin for us, where redemption full and free is offered to all.

## Chapters 6-7

7. The Example of the Apostle Paul; His Testings and Trials.

### CHAPTER 6:1-13

He beseeches the Corinthians as coworkers, in view of the ministry of reconciliation, not to receive this grace of God in vain. This is not a contradiction of the doctrine of the security of a true believer. The apostle evidently was uneasy about some of these Corinthian Christians and feared that some had not received the grace of God in their hearts. Their conduct led him to this questioning. If the grace of God comes to man it may be received in vain and lead not to the blessed results in quickening power and real salvation for which it is given. "The security of His children is unquestionable, not so much through their perseverance, as men say, but by His power through faith; but the Corinthians needed and received faithful entreaty, for their ways were not such as became the gospel. They were compromising His glory, who had called them to the fellowship of His Son; and the apostle instead of comforting them with the blessed assurance of the close of Romans 8, would here exercise conscience as well as affection in presence of God's grace" (William Kelly).

Interesting is the quotation from Isaiah 49. A careful examination of

Isaiah 49:4-8 is suggested. It is a prophecy concerning the Messiah. His rejection by Israel is there predicted, and the words of the eighth verse, quoted here, "I have heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation I have succored thee" are addressed to Christ, whom Israel rejected. God raised Him from the dead, and though Israel is not gathered, He becomes the power of salvation for the Gentiles. This is the meaning of "behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." "Now" means this present dispensation when salvation is offered to the Gentiles. But grace rejected, neglected or perverted, as it is the case in this age in which grace reigns through righteousness, will bring judgment, followed by the blessings for Israel and the earth.

The apostle speaks once more of himself and describes negatively and positively the moral features which he manifested in his life as a true minister of God. He knew nothing of inconsistency in life, which is so detrimental to the ministry of the Word. "Giving no offence in anything that the ministry be not blamed." Well has it been said, "Christianity is real and living, not dogmatic only, still less official, else it becomes of all things the most contemptible." The apostle's life in every detail was a comment on his ministry. He practiced what he preached, The opposite undermines any preaching or teaching. "But in everything commending ourselves as the ministers of God." There was more than the avoidance of offence; in anything, in all conditions and under all circumstances he behaved himself as becomes the minister of God, the ambassador of Christ. In much patience, never impatient, but always enduring in afflictions of various kinds when the world and the god of this age pressed him hard; in necessities and straits, when there seemed to be no escape. Then there were sufferings: in stripes, in prisons, in tumults. Of these we read more in chapter 11. Then there are named things he took upon himself willingly and gladly as the minister of God, namely: labors, watchings and fastings. By these he manifested his devotedness. Well may we ponder over each as they are given in verses 6 and 7. Then follows a series of contrasts. By glory and dishonor. He experienced these opposite extremes, both among the Saints, and also in the world. He was shamefully entreated and also revered. He was beloved and honored by God's people and dishonored by the slandering tongue of false teachers. But throughout he proved himself as the minister of God. By evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true. "Woe unto you if all men speak well of you." If the servant of Christ follows Him, the world will hate him and brand him a deceiver as it was done with the Lord (Matthew 27:63). It would take many pages to follow the paradoxes as given by this model and master servant. Nothing more beautiful and attractive than verse 10, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." Oh, blessed life! May God's grace and God's Spirit enable us to manifest Christ as this servant of Christ did.

#### 8. The Apostle's Exhortations and Rejoicings.

##### CHAPTER 6:14-7

1. His Exhortations. 6:14-7:1.
2. His Rejoicing and Confidence. 7:2-16.

The first exhortation is to separation from evil, without which no true fellowship with God can be enjoyed. It is one of the most important exhortations in the Pauline epistles, and greatly needed in our days of laxity and worldliness among Christians. God calls His people to holiness.

"But as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." He has separated us from the world which lieth in the wicked one and separated us in Christ to Himself. Believers are not of the world as He is not of the world (John 17:14). The cross of Christ makes us dead to the world and the world dead unto us (Galatians 6:14). Furthermore God's Word tells us not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world (1 John 2:15), and "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). And the world is that great system over which Satan domineers, built up and developed by him, to give the natural man a sphere of enjoyment. True faith not only joins the believer to the Lord, but also separates him in heart and practice from the world which crucified the Lord and still rejects Him.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" is often quoted as a prohibition of a mixed marriage. This is no doubt included, but the exhortation means more and includes every form of alliance with the world and ungodly principles. It also includes the so-called "religious world" with its unscriptural practices and denials of the truth. The apostle shows that the believer going along with unbelievers and the world, is indeed in an unequal, a strange, yoke. What fellowship can there be between righteousness and unrighteousness? What fellowship hath light with darkness? Each has a different head; Christ is over His people, they belong to Him; Belial is the head of those who believe not. What could there be for a believer to enjoy with an unbeliever? And believers are the temple of God. How then is association with idols possible? "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Blessed statement! But God's presence demands holiness, separation from evil. Fellowship with evil shuts out God in His gracious manifestations. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing."

"God must have His own holy, for He is holy; and this not only in an inward way, without which all would be hypocrisy, but in outward ways also to His own glory, unless He would be a partner with us to His own dishonor. He will have us clear from associations which are worldly and defiling; He will exercise our souls in order to free, them from all that denies or despises His will. He commands those that believe to come out from those that believe not, and to be separated. Indeed the union of the two is so monstrous that it never could be defended for a moment by a true heart. It is only when selfish interests or strong prejudices work, that men gradually accustom and harden themselves to disobedience so flagrant and in every way disastrous. For as the man of the world cannot rise to the level of Christ to be together with His own, the Christian must descend to the level of the world. God is thus and ever more and more put to shame in what claims to be His house, with a loudness proportioned to its departure from His Word" (William Kelly).

And in connection with this exhortation to separation from unbelievers the Lord declares His relationship to us. Interesting is the use of the name Lord Almighty in verse 18. "And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." In the Greek the definite article before "Lord" is missing. It is simply "Kyrios," Lord. It is the same as "Jehovah." By that name He revealed Himself to Israel. To Abraham he spoke as the El Shaddai, the Almighty. The Lord who revealed Himself to Abraham, called Him to

separation, "Get thee out from thy country." To Israel God spoke as Jehovah and they became His people, separated by Him and to Him. And the same Jehovah-Shaddai declares now a new relationship, He will be a Father and we His sons and daughters. In Christ we know God as our Father; "we are all the sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ." But to enjoy this relationship practically is only possible if the believer walks in separation. Real communion with God as Father without separating from evil is an impossibility.

"God will not have worldlings in relation with Himself as sons and daughters; they have not entered into this position with regard to Him. Nor will He recognize those who remain identified with the world, as having this position; for the world has rejected His Son, and the friendship of the world is enmity against God, and he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. It is not being His child in a practical sense. God says, therefore, "Come out from among them, and be separate, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters" (Synopsis).

May we heed these important truths. God cannot compromise His own holy and righteous character. His demands upon His people are the demands of separation. And, as we are obedient, we enjoy in faith the blessed relationship into which His grace has brought us.

The second exhortation is closely linked with this. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Holiness in our walk is God's demand. God looks for practical holiness in His people. If we walk thus, habitually cleansing ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, we perfect holiness, a practical, daily separation, in the fear of God. While we are, as born again, "clean every whit" (John 13:10), our calling is equally to purify ourselves as He is pure. The defilements of the flesh are the things mentioned in Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:19, and elsewhere. What are the defilements of the spirit? It means the license of the natural mind, the whole sphere of thought and will, when unregulated by the truth and fear of God. Read Chapter 10:5. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The words which follow tell us again of the affectionate concern which the apostle had for the Corinthians! How he loved them and how considerate he was. His whole soul yearned for them. He had wronged no one, nor had he corrupted any, nor did he make personal gain through them. He was filled with comfort. He had fightings without and fears within, but now all was changed. He had met Titus in Macedonia, and through his report and the encouraging news he brought from Corinth, God had comforted him. He knew his former letter (the first epistle) had grieved them, but it had worked for them the godly sorrow which was the aim of the messages sent to them through his inspired pen. "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that in nothing ye might be injured by us." But he also states that for a moment at least he regretted that he had written his first epistle of rebuke (verse 8). But was not that letter inspired? The power behind his pen was the Holy Spirit, yet he regretted for a time that he had written. How is this to be understood? It shows the difference between the individuality of the apostle and divine inspiration.

His heart was filled with so much love, that it obscured his spiritual

discernment and he forgot for a moment the character of his epistle, that not he was responsible for what he had written, but that the Spirit of God was the author. The regret was an evidence of weakness at the time when no tidings reached him from Corinth and when his loving heart was so burdened for the Corinthians. (The same weakness is manifested in his journey to Jerusalem. He loved Jerusalem and Israel in such a way that he went there even against the solemn warnings given by the Holy Spirit.) And what he writes now is a loving apology and great joy over what the epistle had wrought, an earnestness to clear themselves of the reproach, indignation on account of sin permitted, yea, zeal for God, and what revenge (or vengeance--righteous wrath)! And so he rejoiced therefore that his confidence had been restored in them in all things.

## II. THE MINISTRY OF GIVING. Chapters 8-9

### CHAPTER 8

#### 1. The Examples and Principles of Giving.

1. The Grace of God Manifested in the Churches of Macedonia. 1-7.
2. The Great Example. 8.
3. The Advice, Principles and Administration. 9-24.

There is to be a practical ministry in giving, especially in remembering the poor of the flock. He is anxious now to lay this responsibility upon their hearts. In the first epistle he had written them that his glory was in giving the gospel gratuitously. He would not take anything from the Corinthians for himself, but he wants their gifts for others. He was making up a collection for the poor saints in Judea and Jerusalem; of this he writes to them. Thus Gentile believers were to show their appreciation for the blessing which they had received through the Jews, for salvation is of the Jews.

We also see in this an illustration of the oneness of the body of Christ, how the members are to minister to each other. Great grace in this ministry had been bestowed upon and manifested by the churches in Macedonia. They were themselves stricken with great affliction. They were very poor, but their deep poverty did not stint their gifts; they joyfully gave and abounded in the riches of liberality. These poor, afflicted Macedonian saints had even prayed the apostle with much entreaty to receive the gift from their hands. And the secret of it was that they had given themselves first to the Lord. All else was the outflow of this self-surrender. In all this the apostle rejoiced greatly, and therefore he exhorts the Corinthians to abound in this grace also. But the greatest example, which should constrain to abundant giving is the Lord Jesus Himself. He was rich and became poor, even for such as the Corinthians were, "that through His poverty ye might be rich." ("His Riches--Our Riches," by A.C.G., unfolds the three leading truths of this precious word. The eternal Riches of the Son of God; His deep poverty in our behalf, and His Riches in resurrection-glory.)

What confidence the apostle had in the Corinthians that they would indeed abound in this grace. They had begun a year before not only to do, but to forward also. He urges them to act now in performing what they had begun. It depends upon the willing mind: without this giving has no value at all. But if there is the willing mind, one is accepted according to what he has, and not according to that he hath not.

And in all this ministration Paul exercised great caution, "avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us, providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." There is always danger of reproach in these matters. Messengers were chosen to travel with the apostle "with this grace (the collections) which is administered by us to the glory of the self-same Lord, and for a witness of your ready mind." The apostle knew the devices of the enemy and therefore watchfully guards against suspicion and mischievous insinuations. Alas! what havoc the filthy lucre, the love of money, covetousness, which is idolatry, has worked in the professing church, and what offenses have been given by it to unbelievers.

## CHAPTER 9

### 2. Exhortation and Encouragement.

1. Further Exhortations to Liberality. 1-5.
2. The Blessings Connected with Giving. 6-15.

Again he exhorts them to liberality in giving. He knew their willing mind and had boasted of it to them in Macedonia and told them they were ready a year ago. This had stimulated many. He hoped that they would measure up to this report and fall not behind in this expectation "lest our boasting should be in vain in this behalf." To encourage them in giving and carrying out what they had purposed, he speaks of the blessing: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." There is, then, blessing according to faithfulness in this ministry; as any other faithful ministry is not forgotten of God. Giving must not be grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. God Himself delights to give. In infinite love He gave His only begotten Son, and He delights in all who imitate Him in His ways. There is no compulsion in giving save the constraint of His love.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Such a loving ministry is not an unremunerative service. He is able to make up to all who, out of love, minister to the needs of poor and suffering and afflicted brethren. The apostle shows that thanksgiving to God would be the result of their loving ministry in giving. Three causes are specified:

1. Their subjection to the gospel.
2. Their liberal gifts to the Saints of God.
3. "By their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding

grace of God in you"--that thanksgiving and glory to God for the fervent and longing prayers of other Saints, who received their ministry.

This section ends with thanksgiving unto God, "for His unspeakable gift." There is no need to add what that gift is, for every saint knows, God's unspeakable gift is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. THE APOSTLE'S SELF-DEFENSE AND VINDICATION. Chapters 10-13.

## CHAPTER 10

#### 1. The Vindication of His Authority.

The apostle now turns to vindicate the authority, which he had received from the Lord. This had been brought into question by the enemy. In doing this Satan aimed at three things: He attempted to discredit him as a true minister of God; he tried to damage the great truths the apostle preached, and he endeavored also to bring about a separation between the apostle and the Corinthians. Assuredly the great man of God was troubled and did not want to speak much of himself and his authority. But he was forced to do so in this epistle and also in the epistle to the Galatians, for the truth of God and the honor of the Lord were at stake. The defense of his apostolic authority stands in the foreground in Galatians; here he puts it at the close of his letter, for it was necessary to deal with other matters first, and to assure the Corinthians of his deep concern for them and thus pave the way for an answer to the accusations brought against him.

He begins by entreating them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The three words "Now I, Paul," were to remind them of his own person. It was the Paul who had come amongst them to preach the gospel, and through his preaching wonderful results had been brought about. And now attacked and belittled among the same people, who, next to God, had to thank him for everything, he begins to entreat them and vindicate his authority and character. He states, "Who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you." These words make partly reference to his personal appearance, which was not of a character which appealed to the Corinthians, who admired the athletic physique of the Greeks. Not alone was his outward form lowly, but he was equally so in his manner and conduct. From this we learn that his accusers, who tried to influence the Corinthians against him, had thrown contempt on his person and character. We shall find that he takes up repeatedly their false charges and insinuations, to meet and refute them. When he writes, "but being absent am bold toward you," he has in mind what his enemies had said about the epistle he had written them; they belittled his personal appearance and his character, and sneeringly said, he is bold when he is absent; he knows how to write strong letters when he is away, but otherwise he is a coward. He answers by saying, "But I beseech you that I may not be bold when I am present with the confidence with which I think to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walk according to the flesh." He beseeches them that he may not be obliged to use his authority as an apostle when among them, against those who had wronged him by their false charges. He had written in boldness, yet he

could also act in boldness and with authority when he was present with them. They had accused him that he was walking on the same level with them, that is, "according to the flesh." This he repudiates by saying that he walks in flesh, (note in the Greek the word flesh is without the definite article; not "in the flesh", but "in flesh"), which is quite a different thing. He was a man like other men; but when it came to warfare, he waged no fleshly conflict. He acknowledges that he has no wisdom in himself; as to flesh he is powerless, he is cast upon God. How different from these false teachers, his accusers who walked in pride and boasted of wisdom and were governed by selfish motives. The weapons he used were not fleshly, but mighty through God; the weapons which the Holy Spirit supplies. And this spiritual warfare means "the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Well has it been said, "repression of the natural will, which is the seat and vehicle of Satan's machinations, is the true aim of spiritual warfare." Mere fleshly, independent "reasonings" and "imagination" are inconsistent with a real subjection to God. The natural man thinks his own thoughts and follows his own imaginations, but not so the believer: he abandons his own thoughts and imaginations; he casts down all that exalteth itself against the true knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. The Corinthians had not done this; they walked in a carnal way and the enemy got an advantage over them. And so it is largely today among God's people.

After stating that he was ready to avenge all disobedience, in virtue of his apostolic authority, when their obedience was fulfilled, he asks, "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" This is what they had done. "For his letters," say they, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." But he answers that just what he was in his letters when not with them, so would he also be when he is present with them, He speaks of his authority given to him by the Lord for edification and not for their destruction; he wanted them to know that he was not terrifying them by his letters. He did not dare to do as others did, commending himself. Those who opposed him constantly measured themselves among themselves, and not in God's presence. He acted differently. "But we will not boast of things without measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you." He disavowed all connection and comparison with those whose glory was of themselves, and though he had greater gifts bestowed upon himself than others, yet he would not boast of it. The measure which God had given to him had reached unto the Corinthians, for they were the fruit of his labors. He did not boast of other men's labors, and hoped that with an increase of their faith there would also be an increase of his labors even to the regions beyond.

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." If there is any glorying it must be in Him, who is the only proper object. He must be glorified by the true minister; He must be praised and exalted, and not the instrument. Self-praise and self-commendation do not mean approval from the Lord, but the opposite. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." Self-commendation, the love of human praise in some form, disguised or undisguised, are prominent characteristics with many who preach and teach a great deal of truth in our days of boasting. Happy is the servant who hides himself, whose aim is to please the Lord and

who looks to Him for approval.

## CHAPTER 11

### 2. Answering His Adversaries. His Boastings.

1. The Danger Through False Teachers. 1-6.
2. Answering His Adversaries. 7-15.
3. His Boastings of Labors and Sufferings. 16-33.

Inasmuch as he did not want to boast, he tells the Corinthians to bear with him a little while he acts foolishly in speaking of himself. It had become necessary to do so in order to answer his adversaries, who were making havoc among the Corinthians, but he looks upon his vindication and boasting as nothing less than folly. He is about to do what he had exposed in others in the previous chapter (verse 12). He therefore asks their indulgence. What he did he asked them to look upon as being folly, but to remember that it was for their sakes. He was jealous over them, not with a jealousy which originated in the spirit of a natural emulation, but with godly jealousy. He had espoused them to one husband, so that he might present them a chaste virgin to Christ.

The church is the bride of Christ. He as God's messenger by the preaching of the Gospel of Grace, and the acceptance of it by the Corinthians, had betrothed them as an assembly to the Lord. His jealous desire was to present the Corinthian church to the bridegroom in the coming day. He had his grave fears that as the serpent had beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so their minds might also be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Eve was for Adam, and so the church is for Christ and for Him alone. Eve was deceived by listening to another voice. Even so the Corinthians were listening to other voices and their simple faith was being corrupted by false teachings. Behind it stood the same enemy who had deceived Eve. Was there another Christ, which these teachers preached, than the Christ he had preached? Or were they receiving another and a better Comforter, another Holy Spirit, than the One they had received in believing the Gospel Paul had preached unto them? Or, have these men brought you a better gospel? If such were the case, they could bear with it. But how could there be another Jesus, or a better Comforter or a better gospel? He was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles; though he had, for the gospel's sake, abstained from excellency of speech, yet in all things had he been manifest among them.

Evidently the great apostle searched his heart and life to discover the cause of the alienation of the Corinthians. Was the offence perhaps in taking nothing from them and preaching the gospel freely, without money? It was his boast that he took nothing from them, as the brethren in Macedonia had ministered to his needs. But his boast was that he had preached the gospel in Achaia gratuitously. But why? Because he loved them not? God was his witness that such was not the case. It was to take away from these false teachers the boasting of preaching for nothing, so that they could not say, we labor gratuitously while the apostle receives money for his services.

And who were these teachers? The Holy Spirit now exposes the true character of these men. They were not apostles at all, but deceitful workers, who transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ. They were the instruments of that sinister being who was once an angel of light and whose most powerful tactic is to assume this character, to which he had lost all claim by his fall. These false teachers posed as ministers of righteousness. They made high pretensions, yet denied the true righteousness of God. We see much of this in our own days, especially in systems like Christian Science and others.

From dealing with the deceivers, he turns now to those who had become ensnared by them (verse 16). Reluctantly he speaks of himself again. To boast of anything except the Lord was a foolish thing to Paul. "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also." Inasmuch as they compelled him to glory (12:11), he is therefore ready to show what reasons he had for boasting. These Judaizing teachers boasted much of being Hebrews, of the seed of Abraham. But so was Paul. They boasted of being ministers of Christ. And here the apostle marshals his wonderful proofs of how much he excels in his ministries and labor. What other one could say what he rightfully said of himself? "In labors exceedingly abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." Then follows the remarkable record. If it had not been for these evil teachers who had invaded the Corinthian church, we would never have known of these experiences of the great man of God, for the historical record, the Book of Acts, does not give us a full account of his devotedness and trials. And most likely even this list is not complete.

"Troubles and dangers without, incessant anxieties within, a courage that quailed before no peril, a love for poor sinners and for the assembly that nothing chilled--these few lines sketch the picture of a life of such absolute devotedness that it touches the coldest heart; it makes us feel all our selfishness, and bend the knee before Him who was the living source of the blessed apostle's devotedness, before Him whose glory inspired it" (Synopsis).

And if he must needs glory, he would glory in his infirmities, in his helplessness. Why should he mention the otherwise unrecorded incident of his escape from Damascus? It was an inglorious experience. There was nothing to glory in, for no miracle took place to preserve him, nor angelic interference. Anyone who gloried in himself would never have mentioned so humiliating an experience.

## CHAPTER 12

3. Revelation in which He Might Glory. His Apostleship.

1. Caught up to the Third Heaven. 1-6.
2. The Thorn in the Flesh. 7-10.
3. The Marks of His Apostleship. 11-15.
4. His Continued Deep Concern. 16-21.

In the previous chapter the apostle gloried in that which in the eyes of man has no glory at all. From the ignominious experience of being let

down in a basket he turns to another experience in which he was caught into the third heaven. "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." Of these he undoubtedly had many, given to him by the Lord, to comfort and strengthen him. We would never have heard of this great spiritual experience he speaks of now, if he had not felt the need of boasting on account of the deceiving teachers among the Corinthians. He had kept it as a secret to himself for fourteen years; an evidence of his humility. (What a contrast with a certain class of people in our own times who claim to have returned to apostolic faith and apostolic power. They also speak much of visions and revelations, but they constantly make them known, print them in tract form, etc. Often they think themselves more advanced in spiritual things than others and give sad evidences of being puffed up.) In telling us of this experience he does not speak of himself as the apostle, but "as a man in Christ." It was therefore not a distinction put upon him on account of his calling as an apostle. As a man in Christ, that is, a heavenly man, for such every believer is, he was taken up in a marvelous, unaccountable way, into the heavenly sphere.

"Paul was in a state neither intelligible to himself nor explicable to his brethren. Yet he knows well the man, and can attest the visions which he is unable to describe. It was himself, but in a condition equally distinct from nature and from ordinary spiritual experience. He had while in this state a faculty of perception independent of both bodily and mental organs." He was in this state, undefined by himself, caught up into the third heaven and being caught up into paradise, he heard unspeakable words, which it is not allowed to man to utter. The word "paradise" is found but three times in the New Testament. The Lord used it first in speaking to the dying thief (Luke 23:43) promising him that he would be with Him in that blessed place that very day. Once more our Lord uses this word, promising the overcomer to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).

The passage here is the third in which this word is used. It is the wonderful place above in His glorious presence, and Paul, being caught up to that place, had a foretaste of the joys and blessings of the redeemed. But he does not tell us anything he saw, but only what he heard. And the words he heard were unspeakable; they were unutterable --he had not the ability nor the permission to make them known. Thus the apostle, to whom the great truth concerning the church and her heavenly destiny was especially committed, passed through this great experience. And all who are "in Christ," who constitute the body of Christ, will ultimately be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air and be forever with the Lord. Then we shall know the unspeakable words. Surely the heart burns within us when we think of such a destiny. And Paul saith, "Of such a one will I glory, but of myself will I not glory." It was of himself as in Christ he gloried; as he looked to himself as a man, the earthen vessel, he could not glory, save in his infirmities. But was there not danger of being exalted on account of this great experience? Linked with the revelation, is the thorn in the flesh. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through this abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." There was danger of pride of heart after such a vision, and so the Lord permitted a messenger of Satan to buffet the apostle for his own good. Here we have one of the most interesting evidences, that the flesh, the proud, old nature, is still in the believer and not eradicated as some claim. He had perhaps the greatest experience a human being ever had, and yet, though he did not exalt himself, in view of the tendency of the old

nature to lift itself up, there was given him this thorn in the flesh. ("Alas! what is man? But God is watchful; in His grace He provided for the danger of His poor servant. To have taken him up to a fourth heaven--so to speak--would only have increased the danger. There is no way of amending the flesh; the presence of God silences it. It will boast of it as soon as it is no longer there. To walk safely, it must be held in check, such as it is. We have to reckon it dead; but it often requires to be bridled, that the heart be not drawn away from God by its means, and that it may neither impede our walk nor spoil our testimony."--Synopsis.)

What was this thorn in the flesh? Numerous answers have been given to this question. It is evident that it was not something sinful as some suggested, but it must have been some affliction in his body, which made him contemptible in the eyes of others and in his preaching. The exact nature of this affliction in the flesh cannot be determined. And he had gone to the Lord with this thorn in his flesh. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." And the answer came to him. The thorn was not taken away but something better he hears from his Lord. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The assurance of the sufficiency of divine grace was to comfort his heart in the affliction, and that the power of God needed his weakness for its display, was to encourage him as the servant of the Lord. He at once understood the divine message. It enabled him not only to bear with infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake, but to take pleasure in them, for he knew all these things were the things which enable God to manifest His power. He therefore gloried most gladly in infirmities.

They had compelled him to become a fool in glorying. It should have been different. Instead of his self-defense and vindication in writing all these things to them they should have commended him, for in nothing he was behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, yet he adds "though I be nothing." He speaks of the signs of an Apostle which were wrought among them by himself. What love and tenderness he manifests once more towards his weak and wavering Corinthian brethren! And still he has deep concern about them. "For I fear lest, perhaps when I come, I find you not such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be strifes, emulations, wraths, contentions, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults; and lest when I come again, my God should humble me with regard to you, and that I shall bewail many who have sinned before, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed." What a Christ-like servant he was!

## CHAPTER 13

### 4. Still Absent--Yet Coming. The Conclusion.

1. Being Absent; Expecting to Come. 1-10.
2. The Conclusion. 11-14.

He speaks in conclusion of his coming to them. "This third time I am coming to you." And when he comes again he will not spare them. He reminds them once more of their doubtings about Christ speaking in him and using

him as an apostle. They themselves were proof of this. If it were that Christ had not spoken to them through him (by preaching the Gospel), then Christ also did not dwell in them. But if Christ really was in them then it was an evidence that Christ had spoken by him. Notice that part of the third verse and the fourth verse are parenthetical. Leaving out the parenthetical words gives us the correct argument. "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me--examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves. Do ye not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" What he wished was their perfecting. Why had he written this second epistle? "I write these things being absent, but being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

"Finally, brethren, rejoice." (Not farewell, but rejoice.) And the believers joy as well as glorying is in the Lord. "Be perfected; be of good comfort; be of one mind; be at peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

---

[Return to Top](#)