

2 Corinthians

CHAPTER 1

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you

ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead:

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

11 You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly toward you.

13 For we write none other things to you, than what you read or acknowledge; and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end;

14 As also you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

15 And in this confidence I was minded to come to you before, that you might

1:4,5 This chapter is in direct conflict with the message of modern evangelism, which promises a life of happiness, joy, peace, and fulfillment. The truth is that the Christian life is flavored with trials that keep us on our knees.

have a second benefit;

16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia to you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea.

17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes yes, and no no?

18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yes and no.

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yes and no, but in him was yes.

20 For all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us.

21 Now he which stablishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God;

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

23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet to Corinth.

24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand.

CHAPTER 2

BUT I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that makes me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

3 And I wrote this same to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many

tears; not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have more abundantly to you.

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

6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

7 So that contrariwise you ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that you would confirm your love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether you be obedient in all things.

10 To whom you forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

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

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me of the Lord,

13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

14 Now thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

15 *For we are to God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:*

16 *To the one we are the savour of death to death; and to the other the savour of life to life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

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

2:17 Opticians now offer glasses with titanium frames. Titanium twists and bends but retains its integrity. It always goes back to its original shape. That's what a Christian should be like. We bend; we are flexible on certain issues. However, we always retain our integrity. We refuse to compromise the truth of God's Word. See also 2 Corinthians 4:2.

2:17

The Gospel: Why not preach that Jesus gives happiness, peace, and joy?

Two men are seated on a plane. The first is given a parachute and told to put it on as it would improve his flight. He's a little skeptical at first, since he can't see how wearing a parachute on a plane could possibly improve his flight.

He decides to experiment and see if the claims are true. As he puts it on, he notices the weight of it upon his shoulders and he finds he has difficulty in sitting upright. However, he consoles himself with the fact he was told that the parachute would improve his flight. So he decides to give it a little time.

As he waits he notices that some of the other passengers are laughing at him for wearing a parachute on a plane. He begins to feel somewhat humiliated. As they continue to point and laugh at him, he can stand it no longer. He slinks in his seat, unstraps the parachute and throws it to the floor. Disillusionment and bitterness fill his heart, because as far as he was concerned he was told an outright lie.

The second man is given a parachute, *but listen to what he is told*. He's told to put it on because at any moment he'll be jumping 25,000 feet out of the plane. He gratefully puts the parachute on. He doesn't notice the weight of it upon his shoulders, nor that he can't sit upright. His mind is consumed with the thought of what would happen to him if he jumped without the parachute.

Let's now analyze the motive and the result of each passenger's experience. The first man's motive for putting the parachute on was solely to improve his flight. The result of his experience was that he was humiliated by the passengers, disillusioned, and somewhat embittered against those who gave him the parachute. As far as he's concerned, it will be a long time before anyone gets one of those things on his back again.

The second man put the parachute on solely to escape the jump to come. And because of his knowledge of what would happen to him if he jumped without it, he has a deep-rooted joy and peace in his heart knowing that he's saved from sure death. This knowledge gives him the ability to withstand the mockery of the other passengers. His atti-

tude toward those who gave him the parachute is one of heartfelt gratitude.

Now listen to what the modern gospel says: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll give you love, joy, peace, fulfillment, and lasting happiness." In other words, Jesus will improve your flight. The sinner responds, and in an experimental fashion puts on the Savior to see if the claims are true. And what does he get? The promised temptation, tribulation, and persecution—the other "passengers" mock him. So what does he do? He takes off the Lord Jesus Christ; he's offended for the Word's sake; he's disillusioned and somewhat embittered . . . and quite rightly so.

He was promised peace, joy, love, and fulfillment, and all he got were trials and humiliation. His bitterness is directed at those who gave him the so-called "good news." His latter end becomes worse than the first, and he's another inoculated and bitter "backslider."

Instead of preaching that Jesus improves the flight, we should be warning sinners that they have to jump out of a plane. That it's appointed for man to die once and then face judgment (Hebrews 9:27). When a sinner understands the horrific consequences of breaking the Law of God, he will flee to the Savior, solely to escape the wrath that's to come. If we are true and faithful witnesses, that's what we'll be preaching—that there is wrath to come—that God "commands all men everywhere to repent: *because* he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:30,31).

The issue isn't one of happiness, but one of righteousness. It doesn't matter how happy a sinner is, or how much he is enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, without the righteousness of Christ, he will perish on the day of wrath. Proverbs 11:4 says, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivers from death." Peace and joy are legitimate *fruits* of salvation, but it's not legitimate to use these fruits as a drawing card for

(continued on next page)



(2:17 *continued*)

salvation. If we continue to do so, the sinner will respond with an impure motive, lacking repentance.

Can you remember why the *second* passenger had joy and peace in his heart? It was because he knew that the parachute was going to save him from sure death. In the same way, as believers we have joy and peace in believing because we know that the righteousness of Christ is going to deliver us from the wrath that is to come.

With that thought in mind, let's take a close look at an incident aboard the plane. We have a brand-new flight attendant. It's her first day. She's carrying a tray of boiling hot coffee. She wants to leave an impression upon the passengers and she certainly does! As she's walking down the aisle she trips over someone's foot and slops the hot coffee all over the lap of our second passenger. What's his reaction as that boiling liquid hits his tender flesh? Does he go, "Man that hurt!"? Yes,

he does. But then does he rip the parachute from his shoulders, throw it to the floor, and say, "The stupid parachute!"? No, why should he? He didn't put the parachute on for a better flight. He put it on to save him from the jump to come. If anything, the hot coffee incident causes him to cling tighter to the parachute and even look forward to the jump.

If we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ for the right motive—to flee from the wrath that's to come—when tribulation strikes, when the flight gets bumpy, we won't get angry at God, and we won't lose our joy and peace. Why should we? We didn't come to Christ for a better lifestyle, but to flee from the wrath to come.

If anything, tribulation drives the true believer *closer* to the Savior. Sadly, we have multitudes of professing Christians who lose their joy and peace when the flight gets bumpy. Why? They are the product of a man-centered gospel. They came lacking repentance, without which they cannot be saved.

CHAPTER 3

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

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

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

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW

3:5,6

"God be thanked when the Law so works as to take off the sinner from all confidence in himself! To make the leper confess that he is incurable is going a great way toward compelling him to go to that divine Savior, who alone is able to heal him. This is the whole end of the Law toward men whom God will save." *Charles Spurgeon*

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also has made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

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

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excels.

11 For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remains is glorious.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

13 And not as Moses, which put a veil

over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

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

CHAPTER 4

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

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

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

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

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are always deliv-

3:12 "The big problem is that many Christians speak with forked tongues. They speak a strange lingo called the 'language of Zion' and can only be understood by using a special unscrambler, which most [people] do not possess. So we have to learn to speak plainly and not in code." *Dan Wooding*

3:14-16 "Be cold, sober, wise, circumspect. Keep yourself low by the ground avoiding high questions. Expound the Law truly and open the veil of Moses to condemn all flesh and prove all men sinners, and set at broach the mercy of our Lord Jesus, and let wounded consciences drink of Him." *William Tyndale*

3:18 We often delight in sifting gnats, making issues out of things that aren't important. If someone becomes a Christian, some in the Church seem intent on shaping him to be conformed to their own image, rather than the image of Christ. They feel that he should dress, look, believe, speak, eat, and breathe just as they do.

When someone comes to the Lord, he may not look as we think he should. His hair may be long, his clothes may be radical, he may have an earring in his ear, but if these things are wrong God will speak in his ear. In the meantime, He may be ministering to him about the need to return stolen goods, or about seeking forgiveness from those he has wronged in the past. Those are the things that matter to God.

4:2 "I believe in preaching without compromise against sin." *Franklin Graham*

"Some evangelists are prepared to be anything to anybody as long as they get somebody at the altar for something." *Leonard Ravenhill*

PRINCIPLES OF GROWTH FOR THE NEW AND GROWING CHRISTIAN



4:4

Warfare—Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition

Before you became a Christian, you floated downstream with the other dead fish. But now, God has put His life within you, and you will find yourself swimming against a threefold current: the world, the devil, and the flesh. Let's look at these three resistant enemies.

Our first enemy is the world, which refers to the sinful, rebellious, world system. The world loves the darkness and hates the light (John 3:20), and is governed by the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). The Bible says the Christian has escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. "Lust" is unlawful desire, and is the life's blood of the world—whether it be the lust for sexual sin, for power, for money, for material things. Lust is a monster that will never be gratified, so don't feed it. It will grow bigger and bigger until it weighs heavy upon your back, and will be the death of you (James 1:15).

There is nothing wrong with sex, power, money, or material things, but when desire for these becomes predominant, it becomes idolatry. We are told, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"; whoever is "a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (1 John 2:15; James 4:4).

The second enemy is the devil, who is the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). He was your spiritual father before you joined the family of God (John 8:44; Ephesians 2:2). Jesus called the devil a thief who came to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

The way to overcome him and his demons is to make sure you are outfitted with the spiritual armor of God (Ephesians 6:10–20). Become intimately familiar with it. Sleep in it. Never take it off. Bind the sword to your hand so you never lose its grip. The reason for this brings us to the third enemy.

The third enemy is what the Bible calls the "flesh." This is your sinful nature. The domain for the battle is your mind.

If you have a mind to, you will be attracted to the world and all its sin. The mind is the control panel for the eyes and the ears, the center of your appetites. All sin begins in the "heart" (Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 15:19). We think of sin before we commit it. James 1:15 warns that lust brings forth sin, and sin when it's conceived brings forth death. Every day of life, we have a choice. To sin or not to sin—that is the question. The answer is the fear of God. If you don't fear God, you will sin to your sinful heart's delight.

Did you know that God kills people? He killed a man for what he did sexually (Genesis 38:9,10), killed another man for being greedy (Luke 12:15–21), and killed a husband and wife for lying (Acts 5:1–10). Knowledge of God's goodness—His righteous judgments against evil—should put the fear of God in us and help us not to indulge in sin.

If we know that the eye of the Lord is in every place beholding the evil and the good, and that He will bring every work to judgment, we will live accordingly. Such weighty thoughts are valuable, for "by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil" (Proverbs 16:6).

For the next principle of growth, see Hebrews 10:25 footnote.

ered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death works in us, but life in you.

13 *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;*

14 Knowing that he which raised up

4:6 Just as in the beginning the earth was without form and void, and in darkness (Genesis 1:2), the understanding of unregenerate man is darkened (Ephesians 4:18). It is without form and void until God says, "Let there be light."

QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

5:14,15

“Because Jesus died on the cross, we are all forgiven of every sin.”

The forgiveness that is in Jesus Christ is conditional upon “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). It is a gift that God offers to everyone, but individuals must receive it by repenting and trusting in Christ, or they will remain dead in their sins.

No one has biblical grounds to continue in sin, assuming that they are safe just because Jesus died on the cross. See 1 John 3:4–6.



the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

CHAPTER 5

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.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of

life.

5 Now he that has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also has given to us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.

11 *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest to God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*

12 For we commend not ourselves again to you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.

14 For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died

5:10 Judgment Day: For verses that warn of its reality, see 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9.

5:11 “We fear men so much because we fear God so little. One fear causes another. When man’s terror scares you, turn your thoughts to the wrath of God.” *William Gurnall*

for all, then were all dead:

15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him which died for them, and rose again.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

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

18 And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

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

21 For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

CHAPTER 6

WE then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 (For he says, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salva-

tion have I succoured you: behold, now is the accepted time; **behold, now is the day of salvation.**)

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned,

7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

8 By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

11 O you Corinthians, our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged.

12 You are not straitened in us, but you are straitened in your own bowels.

13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as to my children,) be you also enlarged.

14 Be not unequally yoked together with

5:17 **New birth—its necessity for salvation.** See Titus 3:5. "It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man." *Albert Einstein*

5:21 "Christians are continually trying to *change* their lives; but God calls us to experience the *exchanged* life. Christianity is not a self-improvement program. It isn't a reformation project. It is resurrection! It is new life! And it is expressed in terms of a total exchange of identity. Jesus Christ identified Himself with us in our death in order that we might be identified with Him in His resurrection. We give Christ all that we were—spiritually dead, guilty sinners—and Christ gives us all that He is—resurrected life, forgiveness, righteousness, acceptance." *Bob George, Classic Christianity* (See Galatians 2:20.)

6:1 "It's very sobering to find how many people whom I would presume to be saved feel little or no urgency regarding their spiritual condition, the condition of the church, or that of our nation ... Whereas I once though the battlefield was 'out there' among those rejecting Christ, I see things differently now ... The front-line of the battle is in the hearts of God's people." *Rob Cummins* (quoted in *The Transforming Power of Fasting and Prayer* by *Bill Bright*)

SPRINGBOARDS FOR PREACHING AND WITNESSING



The Olympic High Diver

An Olympic gold-medalist high-diving champion was once plagued with insomnia. As he tossed and turned upon his bed, he began thinking deeply about the success he had attained in his field. He meditated on the gold medals he had won. To his dismay he realized that his success had not achieved what he had hoped. The excitement of winning, the photographers, the medals, and the fame had given him some sense of pleasure, but the fact of death awaiting him left him with a complete sense of futility.

He rose from the bed and made his way to his diving pool. Because of a full moon, he didn't even bother to turn the lights on. As he climbed the high diving board, he watched his shadow cast by the moonlight on the far wall. The routine had become so commonplace to him that he could confidently walk that board in the semi-darkness.

At the end of the diving board, he prepared for the dive. He placed his feet together, then pulled his arms up to a horizontal position. As he did so, his eyes caught a glimpse of his shadow on the far wall. All he could see was a perfect cross. His mind immediately raced back to his Sunday school days: "God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). All of a sudden he felt unclean as he considered the Commandments he had broken. The sinless Son of God had come to pay the penalty for his sins. With tears in his eyes, the great athlete turned around, slowly made his way down to the bottom of the diving board, fell to his knees, and yielded his life to Jesus Christ. He was able to go back to bed and sleep peacefully.

In the morning he arose with a new sense of forgiveness of his sins. He made his way back to the pool, but to his utter astonishment, *it was completely empty*. The previous evening, the caretaker had emptied it and was just beginning the process of refilling.

unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, said the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters,

said the Lord Almighty.

CHAPTER 7

HAVING therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that you are in our hearts to die and live with you.

4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

5 For, when we were come into Mace-

7:4 "Receive every inward and outward trouble, every disappointment, pain, uneasiness, temptation, darkness and desolation with both hands, as to a true opportunity and blessed occasion of dying to self and entering into a fuller fellowship with thy self-denying, suffering Savior." *John Wesley*

donia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforts those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

You must have, more or less, a distinct sense of the dreadful wrath of God and of the terrors of the judgment to come, or you will lack energy in your work and so lack one of the essentials of success.

CHARLES SPURGEON

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle has made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance: for you were made sorry after a godly manner, that you might receive damage by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but

the sorrow of the world works death.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yes, what clearing of yourselves, yes, what indignation, yes, what fear, yes, what vehement desire, yes, what zeal, yes, what revenge! In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote to you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yes, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.

15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembered the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.

16 I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

CHAPTER 8

MOREOVER, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

7:10 Godly sorrow. A pastor was once approached by his six-year-old son who said he wanted to "ask Jesus into his heart." The father, suspecting that the child lacked the knowledge of sin, told him that he could do so when he was older, then sent him off to bed.

A short time later, the boy got out of bed and asked his father if he could give his life to the Savior. The father still wasn't persuaded of the son's understanding, so, not wanting the child's salvation to be spurious, he sent him back to his room.

A third time the son returned. This time the father questioned him about whether he had broken any of the Ten Commandments. The young boy didn't think he had. When asked if he was a liar, the child said he wasn't. The father thought for a moment, then asked him how many lies he had to tell to be a liar. When it was established that one lie made a person a liar, the child thought for a moment, realized he had lied, and broke down in uncontrollable tears. When the father then asked if he wanted to "ask Jesus into his heart," the child *cringed* and shook his head. He was fearful because now he knew that he had sinned against God. At this point, he could do more than experimentally "ask Jesus into his heart." He could find a place of godly sorrow, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).



"If your sorrow is because of certain consequences which have come on your family because of your sin, this is remorse, not true repentance. If, on the other hand, you are grieved because you also sinned against God and His holy laws, then you are on the right road." (See 2 Corinthians 7:10.)

Billy Graham

2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality.

3 For to their power, I bear record, yes, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as you abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not.

13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened:

14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went to you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved

diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

23 Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

CHAPTER 9

FOR as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has provoked very many.

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, you may be ready:

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, you) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before to you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof you had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

6 But this I say, He which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a

cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

9 (As it is written, He has dispersed abroad; he has given to the poor: his righteousness remains for ever.

10 Now he that ministers seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings to God;

13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution to them, and to all men;

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

15 Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER 10

NOW I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we

9:2 "If you never have sleepless hours, if you never have weeping eyes, if your hearts never swell as if they would burst, you need not anticipate that you will be called zealous. You do not know the beginning of true zeal, for the foundation of Christian zeal lies in the heart. The heart must be heavy with grief and yet must beat high with holy ardor. The heart must be vehement in desire, panting continually for God's glory, or else we shall never attain to anything like the zeal which God would have us know." *Charles Spurgeon*

do not war after the flesh:

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds:)

5 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;

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

7 Do you look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord has given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

13 But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God has dis-

tributed to us, a measure to reach even to you.

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not to you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

15 Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

17 But he that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

CHAPTER 11

WOULD to God you could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

4 For if he that comes preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind

11:3 Notice that Paul believed the Genesis account of the Fall. See 2 Peter 3:6 footnote.

11:3 When the serpent deceived Eve, he cast doubt on God's Word, causing her to mistrust God Himself (Genesis 3:1-5). God said, "You shall surely die," but Eve chose to believe that God was deceitful. To partake of the fruit was an act of rebellion against the God who had not only given Adam and Eve life but had lavished His goodness upon them.

We must remember that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), and he usually uses enough of the truth to make the lie believable. Here Paul cautions believers to reject any message that differs from the true gospel as revealed in the Word of God. See Ephesians 4:18 and Luke 4:1-13 footnotes.

the very chiefest apostles.

6 But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that you might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so will I keep myself.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knows.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

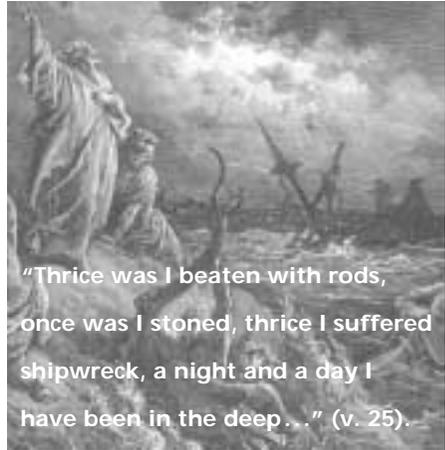
16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

17 That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

19 For you suffer fools gladly, seeing you yourselves are wise.

20 For you suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.



"Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep..." (v. 25).

For other trials and tribulations Paul suffered for preaching the gospel, see John 17:14.

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knows that I lie not.

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

CHAPTER 12

IT is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he sees me to be, or that he hears of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the 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.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; you 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.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

We spend our entire lives acting out our concept of God.

JACK TAYLOR

13 For what is it wherein you were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent to you?

12:9 "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." *C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain*

12:11 "God creates out of nothing. Therefore until man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him." *Martin Luther*

12:15 "You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work." *John Wesley*

18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

19 Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found to you such as you would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

21 And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

• • • • •

To find out where the races came from, see Acts 17:26 footnote.

• • • • •

CHAPTER 13

THIS is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

3 Since you seek a proof of Christ speak-

ing in me, which toward you is not weak, but is mighty in you.

4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

5 Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Do you not know your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?

6 But I trust that you shall know that we are not reprobates.

7 Now I pray to God that you do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that you should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and you are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.

10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord has given me to edification, and not to destruction.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

13 All the saints salute you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

13:3 The Christian life. "The Christian life is more than difficult; it is humanly impossible to live. Only Jesus Christ can live it through you as He dwells within you. The Christian life is not a person trying to imitate Christ; rather, it is Christ imparting His life to and living His life through the person. The Christian life is not what you do for Him; it is what He does for and through you. He wants to think with your mind, express Himself through your emotions, and speak through your voice, though you may be unconscious of it." *Dr. Bill Bright*

13:5 See 1 John 4:8 footnote.