

Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians

2 Cor. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia: **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Church of God at Corinth and all the saints - Paul had received disturbing news of problems in the church at Corinth and took the time to write them a letter. We now believe that it was a letter that no longer exists. Then in the spring of A.D. 55 Paul penned the letter known as 1st Corinthians. It was a letter addressing the questions that had been asked by the leadership there in the Corinthian church. That letter was direct and scolding in many ways. 1st Corinthians was written from Ephesus when circumstances were fairly pleasant for him and his disciples. Paul had intended to stay in Ephesus until after the harvest and then travel through Macedonia and make an extended stay with the Corinthians, and that he would do, but the days until harvest proved to be much harder for him than he ever expected. As we will see in the next passage, they were persecuted almost to the point of death and this delayed his plans. Paul heard more bad news from Corinth and penned another letter that no longer exists. At the opportune time, Paul left Ephesus and traveled to Philippi Macedonia. There, after a while, he soon was joined by Timothy and later Titus. Finally good news came from Corinth and there in A.D. 56 Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians. It is actually the fourth letter, but only the second protected by the Lord which was God breathed as Scripture.

2 Cor. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; **4** who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. **5** For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. **6** But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; **7** and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort. **8** For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; **9** indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; **10** who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver *us*, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, **11** you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through *the prayers of many*.

The Prayers of Many – The last nine months in Ephesus had been extremely difficult for Paul and his disciples. Beaten and battered, imprisoned and starved, they held on through prayer, not only their prayers but the many prayers of other saints who knew of their plight. While they held on with the prayers of the saints, they were at all times comforted by the Lord. God is the one who provides the way through the trials of each day. He is the deliverer, yet other saints are necessary to God's process of providing hope and endurance through every struggle of life.

2 Cor. 1:12 For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. **13** For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and

I hope you will understand until the end; ¹⁴just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

The testimony of our conscience - Things happen and Paul's plans were changed by the persecution that happened in Ephesus. Because Paul was hindered in his plans some of the leadership in Corinth used this as an excuse to complain about Paul's integrity. They complained that Paul would write one thing and then do something else. They were not "understanding" of the circumstances that Paul was in. Paul's intentions were his intentions yet circumstances changed those intentions.

^{2 Cor. 1:15}And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you, that you might twice receive a blessing; ¹⁶that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. ¹⁷Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or that which I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*? ¹⁸But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. ¹⁹For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us- by me and Silvanus and Timothy- was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. ²⁰For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. ²¹Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, ²²who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

I was not vacillating when I intended to do this – Upon hearing of the complaints against his change of plans, Paul addressed the complaints by stating that plans may change because it is God who really makes the plans. Sometimes the plans of man are thwarted by the divine plans of God. A man who continues to do his own will, despite the changes of circumstances directed and allowed by God will find himself out of the will of God. Not only did the circumstances of Paul's life in Ephesus change his plans but the report of the status of the Corinthian church changed his plan too and Paul wanted to spare the Corinthian church his sorrow.

^{2 Cor. 1:23}But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. ²⁴Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm. ^{2 Cor. 2:1}But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again. ²For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful? ³And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy would be *the joy* of you all. ⁴For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.

That you might know the love – Even in the midst of the troubles within the Corinthian church, Paul never stopped loving them. In his letter to them he spoke of how "love" was the "more excellent way," better than all the manifestations of the Spirit and the ministries of the Lord. His love for them brought him sorrow because of their sins. He anguished over their actions and he was afflicted by their faith. Paul had given them the instruction of the Lord and nothing more needed to be said. Paul wanted them to make the necessary corrections without his further interference.

2 Cor. 2:⁵But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree-- in order not to say too much-- to all of you. ⁶Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was *inflicted* by the majority, ⁷so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort *him*, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love for him. ⁹For to this end also I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. ¹⁰But whom you forgive anything, I *forgive* also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *I did it* for your sakes in the presence of Christ, ¹¹in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

Forgive and comfort lest one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow – Now another problem had occurred in Corinth, and quite possibly a more sinister problem. The issue is “forgiveness.” Evidently one of the situations in Corinth had been handled but the majority of the people or leadership there was having difficulty forgiving the person of his sin. Evidently the person has repented yet the majority was still throwing it back in his face. The church is to be a place of forgiveness; it is to be a place where life can start anew in a safe surrounding, yet many times it is a place where a sinner is continuously punished for their sin long after they have repented. The church is to be aware of the sin and careful not to allow that sin to reoccur, yet the church is to forgive that sin if forgiveness has been asked for. It is one thing to forgive a sin, forgetting is another. But it is a sin to continue to act on the memory of that sin as if it has not been repented. Such is the case in Corinth. Where Satan was using the sin of the person to destroy their relationship with God, he is now using the memory of that sin to further destroy their relationship with God. If the person is going to continue to be persecuted once he has repented, in the mind of that sinner there comes a time when the sinner sees no use for repentance.

2 Cor. 2:¹²Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, ¹³I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.

Not finding Titus - Paul had expected to find Titus there in Troas where there was a strong established church. Because Paul is mentioning this in the letter to the Corinthians, it is possible that he was wanting to hear news of Corinth there from Titus. According to Acts 16, that night Paul had a vision that he needed to go to Philippi. On the morning he set sail and then traveled by land to Philippi in Macedonia.

2 Cor. 2:¹⁴But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? ¹⁷For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God. 2 Cor. 3:¹Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ²You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. ⁴And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶who also made us adequate as

servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, ⁸how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? ⁹For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. ¹⁰For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

Not like many, peddling the word of God – Today we think of “peddling” around in the garage or the house and it carries no positive or negative feeling with the word. But in Paul’s day this was a negative harsh word for it carried the idea a adulterating or selling for gain something that was precious. In the context of this passage Paul uses it for both purposes. There were ministers who were adulterating the Word of God, mixing it with Judaism or false philosophy in an attempt to continue the status quo of life and personal desires. In addition, there were ministers who were using the Word of God as a means of gain to line their pockets with the donations of the innocent saints. These types of ministers exist today in the 21st century. They go about their ministry work for the purpose of lording over the saints the status quo of religious life, placing emotional burden upon burden on their lives all for the sake of their position of power. Likewise there are those who peddle the ministry as an easy way to gain wealth without paying taxes. They are lazy, not fearful of the wrath of God, seeking their own, for their own desires with little use for the saints who support them. But Paul is not one of these. He is a faithful minister who does not corrupt the Word of God for his own purposes by mixing anything else with it or use it to advance his place in the world among men. Paul is governed by pure motives. Paul is of God and speaks as if he is in the presence of God. The aroma that he presents is a pure aroma. His ministry is a ministry of righteousness. But there are others whose ministries are ministries of condemnation.

The letter kills – The purpose and effect of the law was to kill. In all its forms, it was specifically designed by God to bring people to a knowledge and understanding of their sin and helplessness, produce a sense of guilt and misery, and establish within their hearts a longing for redemption and salvation leading to Jesus Christ. This law was necessary and therefore it was glorious. The shining of Moses’ face was a reflection of that old system. But the ministry of the Gospel exceeds the ministry of the law. The glory of the ministry of the Gospel has overtaken the ministry of the law. The glory of the law is now gone.

^{2 Cor. 3:}¹²Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech, ¹³and *are* not as Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away. ¹⁴But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. ¹⁵But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; ¹⁶but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. ¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. ^{2 Cor. 4:}¹Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, ²but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to

those who are perishing, ⁴in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Veiled unlifted – Paul is well aware that there are those who are still steeped in the law and its restrictions. For them the veil to God has not been lifted. Even today millions of Jews read the law with an unlifted veil. They do not see Christ who lifted the veil so they could see clearly God in all His wonder and experience His wonder working salvation. In some cases their hearts are so hardened that the veil will never be lifted for them.

Light shall shine out of the darkness – Yet out of the darkness of the unlifted veil came forth the light of God. Christ lifted the veil and man was able to see the face of Christ, the image of God. God shone the light on our hearts and the wonderful knowledge of God. Paul was not sharing an adulterated knowledge of God but the true knowledge of God that penetrates into the conscience of every person who will look upon this gospel.

² *Cor.* ⁴:⁷But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; ⁸*we are* afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So death works in us, but life in you. ¹³But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore also we speak; ¹⁴knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. ¹⁵For all things *are* for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

Treasure in earthen vessels - This earthen vessel that each person owns is rugged yet frail, resilient yet vulnerable, powerful yet weak. Yet for those who have the gospel of Christ shining forth there is a treasure that is greater than anything that could possibly attack this vessel. The death that Jesus Christ suffered will always be in our minds yet it was for the reason of bringing forth spiritual life, yes even life over death, resurrection from the grave. Just as Christ was resurrected from the grave, so too, we will be raised to a new life. This is the promise of the grace of the Lord that we are to be spreading among all people, lifting the veil of darkness and bringing many into the glory of God.

² *Cor.* ⁴:¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸while 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. ² *Cor.* ⁵:¹For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; ³inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not

be found naked. ⁴For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. ⁶Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord- ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight- ⁸we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. ⁹Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Earthly tent and a building from God - As we grow older, our tents, these earthen vessels, become much more difficult to press forward each day, not only in our daily duties but also our duties for the Lord. Even so we who have the light of the Lord within us know with full assurance that God has prepared a heavenly building for our souls to live within once we cross from death into life. Here we are frail walking by faith but there we will be home walking by the sight of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the promise of this for those who have given themselves to the Lord. Once we are there, we will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be rewarded.

Judgment Seat – Those without the Lord will not be at this judgment; they will be at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the time of deception after the thousand year reign of Christ here on earth. The Judgment Seat is a time only for believers. It has nothing to do with salvation for only the saved will be there. The purpose of this judgment is to receive the gifts or rewards for what we have done for Christ while we were here on earth. Works will never provide a person with true salvation, yet a person who has had true salvation will always show that salvation by his works. Here at the Judgment Seat those works of the saints will be rewarded.