



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

## Study of Second Corinthians

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

Chapter	Page	Chapter	Page
Intro	2	8	47
1	4	9	53
2	9	10	60
3	14	11	66
4	20	12	71
5	26	13	77
6	34	bio	82
7	41		

These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

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## TEACHER'S NOTES 2<sup>nd</sup> CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### Introduction

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

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

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

While waiting for Titus to return with a report of the effect of his "severe" third letter, trouble arose in Ephesus, Paul left that city before he had planned to do so (Acts 20:1). Paul started to Macedonia, via Troas, to meet Titus returning from Corinth. The two met in Macedonia in the Fall of A.D. 57 as Paul was visiting churches in the region of Philippi and Thessalonica. Titus's word was that the long letter we now call First Corinthians had

accomplished much good (2 Cor. 7:6), but at the same time, his “short second visit” and his “severe third letter” had not solved the problem of party spirit and vision. He was told, in fact, that some “false authorities” at Corinth were attacking his motives, his integrity and his authority as an apostle of Christ.

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

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

**TEACHER'S NOTES 2<sup>nd</sup> CORINTHIANS**

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**2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-24**

The word for comfort in Greek is *paraklesseos*. It is literally, “to call alongside, or to summon help into one’s presence.” It is the same word used by John in his Gospel as the name of the Holy Spirit (i.e., *paraclete*), “Comforter, Counselor.” To be “comforted” means to be “assisted, counseled, helped, strengthened.” Should preachers (and all Christians) understand their experiences of affliction as “assistance”? YES! So says the Lord! But such an understanding does not come by human reason or feeling or experience—it comes only when the human mind is surrendered to the Divine revelation (the Bible)! It really doesn’t make affliction go away by denying its reality or by “feeling” bitter about it. Affliction is going to come to everyone in some form or another. And just because we become believers and followers of Christ will not guarantee exemption from affliction. In fact, becoming a Christian will almost guarantee an increase in one’s affliction. Jesus told his disciples, “I chose you out of the world therefore the world hates you—a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you” (Jn. 15:19-20). Peter says we are not to be surprised at affliction and persecution as if it were something strange for a Christian (1 Pet. 4:12-19). It is normal! And for preachers, affliction of one sort or another is an almost constant companion. Affliction (Greek *thlipsei*) means the suffering that accrues from pressure. Every messenger-servant of God in the Bible lived under pressure and affliction, including the Lord Jesus himself (see Lk. 12:49-53; Jn. 12:27).

Paul wrote the churches of Galatia, “I bear on my body the marks of Jesus” (Gal. 6:17). He told the Philippians, “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound...I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want...” (Phil. 4:12). And he writes later in 2 Corinthians of “Far greater labors, imprisonments, countless beatings, often near death, five times forty lashes, less one, three times beaten with rods, once stoned, three times shipwrecked, a night and a day adrift at sea, danger from rivers, robbers, the Jews, the Gentiles, the city, the wilderness, at sea, false brethren, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure, and the daily pressure of anxiety for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:21-29). And in 2 Cor. 12:7ff he adds the life-time affliction of his “thorn in the flesh.” Paul “boasted” of his weaknesses, because through them the power of Christ rested on him. He said he was content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities: for when he was weak, then he was strong! (2 Cor. 12). Here in 2 Cor. 1:9 Paul said that when he was “utterly, unbearably crushed,” he learned to rely on God and not on himself. Paul learned: (a) faith in God; (b) what grace really was; (c) to be content and not complain; (d) what deliverance is; (e) what strength is; (f) fellowship in Jesus’ sufferings (Phil. 3; Gal. 6:17); (g) humility (2 Cor. 12:6-7); (h) Satan’s message. All this was God’s goal for Paul’s life! And he learned it through affliction! Is this normal? Should preachers and missionaries expect to have the same mentality toward affliction? Should all Christians?

What about preachers, missionaries, Christians, having depression? Should they?

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

Dr. Stanley E. Lindquist (Joplin Globe, 7-18-1975): “Christians sometimes try to give the impression that God’s presence keeps us always on ‘cloud nine,’ when we know we also have times of depression...a radiant front can be a form of dishonesty—and it can become psychologically damaging to the person affecting it, and also for others...we need to develop more honesty about the state we are in...some tend to imply that their faith brings a continual state of victorious well-being...an exalted mood and no defeat...but we know very well that life is not always like that...God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons we could not learn in any other way...the way we learn those lessons is not to deny the feelings but to find the meanings underlying them...in this manner we grow to become more like the persons God wants us to be...the refiner’s fire may well be the mood problems we experience. If we deny that these feelings exist, we deny that God can use them to help us...emotional honesty is necessary for one’s own spiritual growth and it also helps others to get the right perspective on their own experience.” (Underlining, mine). We know that Jesus was “troubled in his soul” (Jn. 12:27; Matt. 26:38); that he “wept with great sobbing (Lk. 19:41); that he was astounded by the unbelief of the Jews. He was “pressured” (Lk. 12:50) or “constrained” (Greek, *sunechomai*, “pressed together”). Jesus was “a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:1-12). We know that Peter suffered depression—Paul suffered anxiety, depression, and emotional hurt. But we also know, they had joy unspeakable and full of glory. Now how did they come to that “joy unspeakable”? Only by faith! “For the joy that was set before them they, like Jesus, endured the cross” (2 Cor. 5:1-21; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Heb. 12:2).

Every preacher of the gospel will have to endure, sometime or another, the acrimony of some of the members of his “flock.” Jesus did (Jn. 15:18-27), even from some of his own disciples (Judas, John & James, Peter, his mother, his brothers). Paul had to deal with the rancor and ill will of some of the Corinthians. This is almost an inevitable hazard of the ministry (“Beware when all men speak well of you”). And preachers should not be “surprised” at it (1 Pet. 2:18-25; 4:12-19). Paul suffered suspicion and indifference from a few members of churches in Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica—just read those letters! Paul defended his veracity by appealing to his record as a Christian. He also reminded them that he had always communicated with them honestly, plainly and forthrightly. He was never ambiguous or equivocal in his relationships. He never vacillated back and forth. But no matter how straightforward and plain spoken he was, some found fault! Some apparently became his enemies because he told them the truth (Gal. 4:16). Christian people need to concentrate on being sincere, loving, and understandable. Unity in the body of Christ is dependent, to a large degree, on understanding one another—feelings, motives, intentions, opinions, aims and aspirations should be clearly and lovingly communicated. Covert, disguised, surreptitious language and actions should not be a part of Christian relationships (read Ephesians chs. 4 & 5). Does the Bible give us sufficient instruction and role-modeling that we may deal with this problem? Of course it does! It gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). As members of a congregation we must grant our “ministers” (all of them) the right to be straightforward with us and not attack their veracity—and our “ministers” must produce for us a non-vacillating ministry!

Definitely—preachers, elders, deacons, teachers—all Christians, should make every effort to be clearly understood. Wives and husbands; parents and children; employers

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

and employees; writers, actors, musicians, physicians, politicians and every one else should make every effort to be clearly understood. There is no reason to deliberately try to deceive anyone (except in war) in order to exploit. Preachers and elders are dealing with eternal souls. There is no room for ambiguity, vacillation, half-truths, or evasion. Jesus was never evasive. He was always plain and straightforward—even in his parables. People understood him even when they refused to accept and obey what he said! The trouble with most of us is we wear our feelings on our sleeves. We are expecting to be hurt. When Mary, Jesus's mother, "bugged" him about the wine at the marriage feast, what was Jesus to do? Was he to be nice and evasive and ambiguous and let her make a mistake? Or was he to speak straightforwardly, plainly, and risk a hurt feeling so she could tune in on the kingdom? When Paul found problems in the churches, like Corinth and Galatia, what was he to do—equivocate—evade? Was he to write generalizations and tactful words? He said to the Galatians, "Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" How many souls would have been lost had he not squarely, plainly, bluntly, but lovingly, told them the truth? We have to understand how diametrically opposed to the carnal mind the truth really is! There is a war going on between truth and falsehood! Life is not a game—there are no charades, no "make believes" in Christianity. The Christian life is a war (Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:1-7; Jas. 4:1-4 1 Pet. 2:11). Note how Peter dealt with Simon in Acts 8:14-24!

First, remember, it is not wrong to say "No" when the occasion demands it. It is wrong to say "No" when you mean "Yes" or to say "Yes" when you mean "No." Don't demand of your preacher that which he cannot do! But there are times when promises are made, when later circumstances or knowledge would show it was more profitable that the promise should not be kept (e.g. Herod's promise to Salome). However, the usual practice ought to be that a preacher (and any Christian) should keep his word! Jesus said our "yea" ought to mean "yea" and our "nay" ought to mean "nay" (Matt. 5:37; James 5:12). Evidently Paul had planned to make a double visit to Corinth (1:15-16) and told them so, and then had not done so. He implies that it had been revealed to him by the Lord that he should make other plans (1:23). The Lord seems to have revealed to Paul that had he made these planned visitations the Corinthians would assume he was "lording it over their faith." So, he did not go! They accused him of vacillation—of saying "Yes" when he meant "No." But Paul said "Yes" and meant "Yes." He said, investigate my past behavior—both toward you and toward the world—when I was among you did I vacillate? That is what is meant in the Scriptures when it says, "Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak..." (James 1:19)—because we too often make promises and vows and offers we never intend to keep. "The tongue is a little member and boasts of great things" (James 3:5) we are exhorted (1 Thess. 4:10-12) to "aspire to live quietly, to mind our own affairs, and to work with our hands, so that we may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody."

Paul mentions the "Yes" of God because the ultimate "YES" of God was the resurrection of Jesus Christ! God cannot, this side of heaven, say "YES" with any more emphasis! That is as "YES" as God can be in this world. That is why continual miracles today would be superfluous. Christians are to be people who keep their word because that is the essence of God's character. God keeps his word (Deut. 7:9; Psa. 119:89-90; Isa. 55:10-11; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Thess. 3:3; Heb. 6:13-20, etc.). Paul argues that it is contrary to the regenerated nature of a Christian to deliberately equivocate because it is contrary to the



nature of God. The record of Jesus' life and words in the four Gospels verify that God keeps his word. God incarnate (Jesus) always fulfilled his promises! Not one word of Jesus failed to be fulfilled. Rest assured, what Jesus has said about his 2nd coming will come to pass—but no one knows the day nor the hour. The absoluteness of Jesus' words and actions is what Paul refers to in verse 19. Whatever Jesus promises is always answered with an absolute "YES"! The resurrection of Christ was the supreme, unparalleled, veracity of God manifested in the historical frame of reference. All of God's promises from Genesis through Revelation find their verification or ratification in Christ's historical, bodily resurrection from the dead. This is what Paul meant when he wrote that Christ's resurrection was "of first importance" (1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 13:20-21). This is what Paul means in 2 Cor. 1:20. This is also what he meant when he wrote Hebrews 6:17 where he says God's oath to verify the immutability of his promises, was himself (incarnate in Jesus Christ) upon the cross—and raised from the dead! Because of the veracity of God, demonstrated historically, men may have such emphatic assurance they respond with "Amen," or "so be it," to every promise of God. "God said it, I believe it, that settles it."

There is nothing mystical or extra-Biblical about the "seal" of the Spirit of God. In ancient times, a ruler's "seal" marked documents and objects with the authority of the sovereign ruler. Such documents were authenticated as from the hand of the king by the seal stamped upon them. The seal was usually an engraving made in the likeness or image of the king. Alexander Campbell wrote in *The Christian System* that when the moral facts of redemption (i.e. the New Testament gospel) "are understood or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul...the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and the faith of those who believe and obey this testimony are the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the heart and character of man...all the moral facts which can effect a moral character after the divine model, or which can effect a moral or religious change in man, are found in the testimony of God." (My underlining). God, acting upon the believer's nature through the divine word of the Spirit, has engraved his image upon the believer. When a believer loves God, the Spirit of God (in the word) bears witness (Rom. 8:14-17) with the spirit of the believer that he is a child of God. William Barclay wrote: "When Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as an arrabon (guarantee) given us by God, he means that the kind of life we live by the help of the Holy Spirit is the first installment of the life of heaven and the guarantee that the fulness of that life will some day open to us." In this context Paul is inviting the Corinthians to compare his past manner of life toward them with the witness of the Spirit in the word of God and test his veracity—he is "sealed," or authenticated, by the Spirit (Word) of God.

Paul explained his change of plans by stating that he had not come to visit them that he might "spare" them an unpleasant confrontation. He probably would have spoken to them "severely" and that would have hurt both them and him. But he also says he changed his plans because he did not want to give any appearance of "lording it over" them. He could have visited them as planned, asserted his authority, criticized publicly their Christian immaturity, and handed down apostolic reprimands and edicts. Such was the way "false apostles" acted (see 2 Cor. 11:12-13; Gal. 2:4; 2 Pet. 2:10-22; Rev. 2:2). But he wanted to spare them that. True apostles admonished them firmly, honestly, but tenderly, always

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

willing to sacrifice any personal stature or reputation for the sake of the flock (1 Cor. 4:14-15; Acts 20:17-35). Paul is not shirking leadership—he is fulfilling it! The Corinthians had problems. Paul wrote them heartfelt admonitions and instructions. Then, he expected them to be able to work their problems out in a manner pleasing to God! Too many preachers today are impatient. They are in a hurry to become famous! They want to “lead” (actually, drive) congregations into model churches, so they “take the bull by the horns” and “ramrod” people and programs, “lording it over” the whole show. They are unwilling to give people time or credit for the capability to mature. Actually, such “leaders” have never understood the kingdom!!! Jesus likened the kingdom unto a farmer planting seed—first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear “automatically” (the Greek word in Mark 4:28 is automate from which we get the English word “automatic”). The kingdom grows slowly, automatically—of itself. Preachers are not “pastors”—they are evangelists—unless the “pastors” (i.e., elders) have unloaded their responsibilities upon him! Then if he “lords it over them” they have only themselves to blame!



**TEACHER'S NOTES    2<sup>nd</sup> CORINTHIANS**

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

**2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-17**

Paul made up his mind not to make another painful visit to Corinth. He had written his first non-preserved letter (see 1 Cor. 5:9-13) which was “corrective.” He wrote his second letter (named in our Bible, First Corinthians) which was firm, frank and a little harsh here and there. Then he made a hasty (painful) visit to Corinth (see 2 Cor. 2:1; 12:14; 13:1). Then he wrote his third letter (“severe” also non-preserved). And finally he wrote this letter, his fourth, which we call Second Corinthians. So, Paul has “laid it on them” as severely as he dares without alienating more than he has already. He makes up his mind not to make another “painful” visit. After the word from Chloe about the divisions and other problems, he heard from Timothy that there were Judaizers in Corinth attacking his apostleship and his integrity. So, he had to make a hasty trip there to resolve some of these problems. And it was a “painful” experience. Paul was no stoic. He had feelings, too. He was a sensitive man. He had done all he felt the Lord would want him to do to resolve the situation. He determined he would not make another painful visit. If he goes on inflicting pain and causing the Christians there to grieve (2 Cor. 7:2ff), who will be there to make him glad? Paul knew that when he had to “pain” the Corinthians, he would hurt, too! From the beginning of the troubles Paul felt the alienation of some of the Corinthians. He wanted it resolved. He got no thrill or satisfaction out of stirring up the situation or prolonging or intensifying it! He experienced that lonely feeling that comes from alienation—he wanted no more of it. He had poured out more than 3 years of his life into these Corinthian brethren. So, he would bring no more “pain.”

THE PERSON MISBEHAVING (2 Cor. 2:5ff) or “causing pain” is probably not the incestuous man of 1 Cor. 5:1ff. The one “causing pain” here in 2 Cor. ch. 2, has supposedly (according to the Corinthian Christians) caused pain only to Paul (2:5). This person is probably a ring-leader of the bitter opposition against Paul’s personal integrity and apostolic authority (perhaps even one of the Jewish Christians). But the immoral man’s conduct was immoral, nevertheless! He was “punished” by the congregation. And they seemed to want to continue the punishment beyond what was necessary. “Troublemakers” in a congregation are as immoral as those committing sexual and other social sins. Division is said to be “demonic” in its origin (James 3:14-16). The church is admonished to deal with “factious” and “divisive” elements in the church swiftly, firmly and surely (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Titus 3:10; etc.). Rebellion against godly, spiritual leadership in any congregation (even when the leaders lead in matters of opinion which does not suit everyone) especially when “factions” are started and stirred, brings alienation, hurt, loneliness, and vulnerability to Satan’s attacks as well as disrepute on the body of Christ, the church. Many a good preacher has “burned out” and “quit the ministry” because he could not bear the loneliness caused him and his family by members of a congregation that thought their calling was to keep “tabs” on him and his family, to criticize him and his family, and stir up others against him, bringing disrepute upon the church and the Lord. Many a good elder and deacon has “resigned” and either quit the church or transferred to another congregation because of the kind of “nit-picking” that was going on at Corinth toward the apostle Paul! Will such people

stir up the “congregation” in heaven? I DON’T THINK SO!

Whether this “man” of 2 Cor. 2 is the incestuous man of 1 Cor. 5, or some other “immoral,” nit-picking, divisive trouble-making Judaizer slandering the apostle Paul, discipline was called for and exercised. The problem is hardly ever whether discipline is called for or not. The problem is most often, what kind of discipline (its severity, extent, length, and by whom). In Corinth, discipline was exercised by “the majority.” It has to be that way or a church leaves itself open to major divisiveness (and now-a-days, judicial litigation). The discipline must have been strong. It made the disciplined one sorry. He was even in danger of becoming overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. The objective in church discipline is always the reclamation of a brother from the danger of hell. Discipline, I repeat, always seems painful (momentarily), rather than pleasant (Heb. 12:11). C. S. Lewis wrote in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, “Pain plants the flag of truth in a rebel soul.” So, it may be impossible to ever exercise discipline without causing (for the moment) some loneliness! In fact, loneliness appears to be the initial aim of discipline (see 1 Cor. 5:2,5,9,13). Recalcitrant sinners within the body of Christ must be isolated so that they feel the consequences of their sin. It is their sin which has actually alienated them from a Holy God and his holy church. If the church does not isolate them they have no experience of what they have done! But once the sinner has repented, the congregation must forgive and “reaffirm” its love toward him. What is necessary to “reaffirm” love? This may be asked about disciplining sinning preachers, too! If a preacher falls into sin and repents, just how far are we to go in reaffirming our love toward him? Let him preach again? Did Peter and Paul sin? Did Peter and Paul preach again?

The devil is the author of loneliness. He is the author of alienation, fragmentation (“scattering” see Matt. 12:30), division, factiousness, isolation, and selfishness (the ultimate form of loneliness). The devil is the source of all lying, and there is no truth in him at all (John 8:44). And it is the absence of truth that produces loneliness! In hell there will be no sharing, no helping, no fellowship, no truth, no trusting. One of the excruciating torments of hell will be complete isolation with one’s self! Total loneliness! Why does the devil want this? Because he hates God and he hates mankind! He wants to cut man off from God (the Absolute Communicator), Absolute Helper, Absolute Friend, Absolute Sharer, Absolute Companion). When man is cut off from God he is lonely. The devil is devious enough and deceptive enough to seduce millions into thinking they are not lonely without God and without Christ. Friendships formed in this world (unless both friends are headed for heaven) are vain and temporary—thus seductive! Only if we are in Jesus are we guaranteed against loneliness! He said, “You are my friends if you do what I command you...I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn. 15:15-16). Paul warns us not to be ignorant of Satan’s “designs” (the Greek word is *noemata*, from *noema*, “mind, thought, purpose”). Thus we are to inform ourselves of the way Satan thinks by studying what God says about him in the Bible which is the only authentic information on Satan!

Paul first visited Troas on his 2nd missionary journey (Acts 16:6-10). On his 3rd missionary journey he arrived in Ephesus (Acts 19:1ff), wrote the epistle we know as First Corinthians, left Ephesus at the time of the riot (Acts 20:1) and evidently went first to Troas (2 Cor. 2:12—not mentioned in Acts). He went to Troas in search of Titus, and thence to

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

Macedonia. He went later to Troas a third time, still on his 3rd missionary journey (Acts 20:1-12). He was so eager to hear about the situation at Corinth he could not stay in Ephesus so he went to Troas hoping to meet Titus there. But Titus did not arrive. Paul really cared about the spiritual condition of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:28). He was feeling great anxiety! He was feeling lonely! He was depressed! He wanted to have Titus with him—he wanted his companionship and word from Corinth. And even though there was “a door opened” for Paul to preach in Troas, he could not take advantage of it because he could not set his mind at rest. Now whether preachers are supposed to be that depressed or not, this preacher, Paul, was! He had to leave Troas, go on to Macedonia, and meet Titus before he could set his mind at rest enough to concentrate on preaching the gospel! Many a preacher has felt the same loneliness because the congregation to which he ministers has made it a point to keep from him information necessary to building the kingdom and making it grow in spirituality. Too often, the preacher is flooded with negative communications and deprived of encouragement by real friends, so that his mind is unable to rest. Thus, many “open doors” wait upon someone helping him be at rest! Just an encouraging word—an offer of help—a compliment!

The imagery used by Paul to portray the awesomeness of a gospel preacher’s task is taken from the Roman triumphal ceremony. The risen King, Jesus, leads his preachers in an awesome triumph through the streets of the world. To the victors comes the perfume of joy and triumph. But they are few, and far separated from one another. To the wretched “prisoners” (the defeated enemy), the condemned, the gospel is the “scent of death,” impending their doom. The very destiny of a minister of God’s word is conducive to loneliness. Because they preached the truth, the ancient Hebrew prophets were men who had to suffer loneliness. Paul is portraying the earnestness of the gospel ministry here. It is a “life and death” ministry. Some (a minority) will welcome the man preaching the truth as a “refreshing fragrance of life itself.” Others, the majority, will be offended at the minister of the gospel because discerned in his message is the unmistakable smell of doom. This makes the pilgrimage of the preacher of God’s word on earth a lonely journey. Preacher’s have little time for frivolity, or foolishness. They have no time to waste on inanities. They walk in a procession of life and death. To most of those not walking with them, their message smells of doom, and they are not appreciated or welcomed. Those dead in sin are surprised that there are men of God who take their work with such seriousness. Those who spend their leisure hours in reveling, wonder why preachers choose to miss out on “the good life” of living in licentiousness, passions, carousing and the like (1 Pet. 4:1-6). Some of the Corinthians (sinning Corinthians) evidently reacted to Paul’s preaching as “a fragrance from death to death.” Paul was feeling the depressing loneliness of their antagonism toward him and so he portrays it with this scene from Roman culture.

The “fish-bowl” kind of life preachers must lead only intensifies the loneliness they must endure. Congregations often expect of their spiritual proclaimers nearly impossible rigid standards of personal conduct. This is only correct when those expectations square with Scripture. Paul firmly contradicts the false claims some in Corinth were making that he preached the gospel as a “peddler.” The Greek word is *kapeleuontes* which signifies someone who is a “small-time retailer, a huckster” in contrast to the Greek word *emporos* which means to be a “merchant.” The idea of the word *kapeleuontes* is “marketing

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

something dishonestly in order to exploit others and line one's own pockets ." Evidently, in Paul's day, some were exploiting people through preaching or teaching for personal fortune. Jesus spoke of "hireling" shepherds (John 10). Paul was certainly no "hireling" (1 Cor. 9:12,18; 2 Cor. 11:7-9; 13:13,16). Needless to say, there are many self-appointed religious "giants" today "peddling" the gospel for their own financial fortunes. And many of them are plainly dishonest in their huckstering. This in turn, makes a cynical world think all preachers "are in the racket." Many a struggling, suffering messenger of God has served out his life on earth hurting and lonely because the world categorizes all preachers as "hucksters." It wasn't true of the apostle Paul, and it isn't true of a host of faithful spokesmen for God today! Peter talks about the false teachers who "entice unsteady souls" who in greed exploit people with false words (2 Pet. 2:3). And the world's cynicism about all preachers makes for an exacting and lonely life for the true preacher of the Word. Faithful (to the Scriptures) preaching of the gospel (as evangelist or elder), especially as a "paid-preacher" is no "racket": (a) it is spoken of as "work" in scores of places in the Bible both OT and NT. Paul told Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5; see 1 Cor. 9:7); (b) Paul classified preaching right alongside being in the military, being an athlete, and being a "hard working farmer" (2 Tim. 2:4-6); (c) Paul exhorts Timothy to be a "workman" that has no need to be ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15); (d) run a concordance search some day on the word "labor" and see how often Paul used the word in connection with his ministry!; (e) financial support for the preacher and his family, equal to that of those who receive the benefits of his ministry, is scripturally ordained by the Lord (1 Cor. 9:1-14; Gal. 6:6). The faithful preacher is no "huckster"—he is an honest, hard-working man, just like the "hard-working" farmer. He is "worthy of his hire" and even Jesus said that (Lk. 10:7; Matt. 10:10)!; (f) the preacher is a "professional." We do not like to say that—but in the good sense, he is! Why did Jesus take 12 men aside from all the other "disciples" and train them? Paul told Timothy the "evangelist" must (1) attend to public reading of Scripture, preaching, teaching—to "practice" these duties—to "devote" himself to them (1 Tim. 4:11-16); (2) be apt to teach—able to correct opponents (2 Tim. 2:24); (3) be able to handle aright the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Studying, teaching, being a "public relations" expert, dispensing compassion, attending a multitude of "meetings" IS W.O.R.K.!!

Here is how a preacher may handle loneliness: (a) get married, have children; (b) understand what a "queer duck" he is from the perspective of others. He knows he is not weird, but do others? It might help preachers understand how others see him if they didn't become preachers right out of High School, but served an internship of about 10 years between High School and Bible College as a deacon or adult member of a congregation involved in its daily activities; (c) get involved in some local, civic, social or benevolent clubs or activities and establish "friendships" outside the circle of the congregation. Hopefully, the congregation will understand and not accuse the preacher of "eating with publicans and sinners"; (d) have "special friendships" within the congregation—those with "common interests," same age level—or any other appropriate age level. Hopefully, again, a congregation would be mature enough to understand a preacher's family's need for this and encourage it!; (e) carefully, VERY carefully, find a confidant, one who "sticketh closer than a brother," with whom you can be perfectly open—one whom you can trust to keep quiet, to be honest with you like a father or mother. Unburden yourself to such a one. But be very careful!!! Such a confidant is difficult, if not impossible to find. Hopefully, every preacher will have a wife for confidant. But even then, it takes an exceptional wife to be able to bear all her husband's burdens; (f) finally, pour out your heart to Jesus—he understands—and is

“with you”—you are not alone!!!

It is not always intolerable to be alone—BUT IT IS A BIG BURDEN TO HAVE TO BEAR! IF YOU WANT TO HAVE A MENTOR OF LONELINESS—READ THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH! Most of the OT prophets led lonely lives (except for those who were married—and even then they probably had to bear most of their burdens by themselves). Jesus bore the burdens God placed on him ALONE! God told Ezekiel he was going to take the life of his wife, but he was not even allowed by God to mourn her passing (Ezek. 24:15-18). So the lonely Ezekiel went right on ministering to his people the very next day after his wife died!. Jesus lived a very lonely life on earth—his mother misunderstood him; his brothers were antagonistic toward him; his chosen disciples were spiritual dolts until after the resurrection, and certainly the majority of the multitudes showed him no “companionship” except when they wanted to be healed or have him give more miraculous “fish and bread.” When he quit “handing out” his favors, “they all left him and went away” (John 6). Only the “apostles” stayed with him in body—but in mind they were often opposed to him (Matt. 16:23). There are situations worse than loneliness! To have constant companionship with evil people (whether family or “friends”) is worse! SO DON’T GET DISCOURAGED IF YOU ARE LONELY—IT ONLY LASTS FOR THIS LIFE—IN HEAVEN THERE WON’T BE ONE LONELY PERSON!

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18

Legalism is fundamentally an attitude. It is the attitude that demands justification from God on the basis of having behaved in conformity with a humanly devised set of regulations or rules—usually devised by the human being himself. Justification through human regulations does not necessarily have to appeal to the law of Moses. Justification may be claimed on any alleged meritorious behavior before God. Purely, simply, totally, exclusively, and absolutely, Christians are justified because we believe God's decree that the meritorious work of Christ is accepted in place of our merit! (See Gal. 2:16; 5:4; Heb. 10:10,12,14; Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:28; 10:4). Followers of the Pharisees and, later, the Judaizers (i.e., Christian-Jews who were insisting that people adhere to some of the laws of Moses to be Christians) were everywhere in the first century world of Paul—perhaps some Jews who became Christians on the day of Pentecost. These Judaizers had infiltrated the Christian churches all over the Roman empire. Paul called them “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4) and “dogs” (Phil. 3:2). These “false brethren” (1) kept impugning Paul's authority as an apostle by accusing him of preaching a gospel “unauthorized by Jerusalem (see Acts 15:1-21; Gal. 2:1-21);” and (2) kept the Christian churches in constant turmoil, divisiveness, and hostility! That is what legalism produces. Legalism never produces peace or real holiness (only hypocritical holiness). That's because it is hostile to the mind of God which has decreed absolutely on redemption and salvation by grace exclusively through the work of Jesus Christ. Legalism (a) confuses people; (b) alienates people; (c) makes people into hypocrites; (d) condemns people to hell; (e) those who advocate it are false teachers. Paul suffered great personal anxiety, physical and verbal abuse, and loss of fellowship because of it. Churches to whom Paul ministered (practically every one to which he wrote) were divided over this issue or at least confused and led astray. Legalism affected Paul's relationship to Peter and other Jewish apostles and brethren. Not even apostles were immune from its pseudo-holiness. Paul had to fight it in his own heart constantly! You know what a great struggle Paul, the “Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to righteousness under the law blameless,.” must have had keeping himself free from the attitude that he could be justified by law! He bares his soul about this in Rom. 7:13-25; Phil. 3:2-21. He also reveals that God allowed the devil to send him a “thorn in the flesh” for the very purpose of reminding him that “grace was sufficient” for him! Rules, laws, commandments, guidelines, ordinances, are not, in themselves legalistic. It is the human being's attitude toward them that constitutes legalism. Of course, a rebellious attitude toward God's commandments and his law (see Matt. 5:17-20)—even by a Christian—is as condemning as legalism! God condemns both the attitudes of legalism and lawlessness! All sin is “lawlessness” (1 Jn. 3:4).

Paul's statement (3:2) about “living letters” is to authenticate his apostleship. He contends that the converted heathen Corinthians were living credentials of his apostolic ministry. They proved he was the properly authorized emissary from Christ. He had written



on their hearts the eternal gospel. They had become persons with a consciousness of immortality. They “looked to the things that are unseen...eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Their mind-set was “known and read by all men...” (2 Cor. 3:2) because it had made their behavior holy. They were Paul’s “letter or commendation” from God. Plato said 400 years before Paul that the good teacher does not write his message in ink that will fade; he writes it upon men. And that is the way the gospel of Christ operates. It becomes fixed upon the character, the personality, the spirit of the humble and contrite person. Christ’s word is eternal. It shall never pass away. It never returns to him void but always accomplishes that for which it is sent (Isa. 55:11). Christ has written his character, through Paul’s inspired revelation, upon the hearts of the Corinthian Christians. It would not fade as Moses’ law was destined from its inception to do. Their relationship to Christ was Paul’s accreditation (1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). It is an awesome thought that every Christian, whether he likes it or not, is at once a “living letter” known and read by his contemporaries. Christians represent Christ to an unbelieving world. Men “read” about the church from its members! The honor of God is on the character and in the hands of Christians (see Rom. 2:24; John 13:35; 1 Thess. 1:7-8). You and I are “open books” or “letters” being read, for better or worse, written by the Holy Spirit of God through his word controlling our minds, words and deeds. Think of yourself as a letter arriving in your next-door neighbor’s mail-box—return address on the envelope is “God, #1, Golden Street, Heaven, zip code, 77777.” Your neighbor opens and reads, “Dear Neighbor....(1) God loves sinners, like you and me and everyone else; (2) God makes people good, helpful, friendly, honest, and wise; (3) God somehow gives those who believe him and worship him the capability to deal with trials, discouragements, failures, and depressions; (4) God gives people an abiding joy while admitting at the same time they don’t have all the answers, they do have doubts sometimes, and go through the same sadness everyone else goes through; (5) God is gracious, forgiving and merciful; (6) God stands for what is just, fair, truthful, and right; (7) God has accomplished redemption for every human being—he has communicated to the whole world in his book the Bible (especially in the New Testament); (8) God, through Christ, invites you, dear sinner, to all he offers, signed, Sincerely, Your next-door neighbor.” YOU AND I ARE “LETTERS” TO OUR NEIGHBORS—TO OUR SOCIETY—WHAT ARE THEY “READING”?

God gave the law of Moses. But God never intended the law to be used in a legalistic, self-justifying way. The law had a holy and good purpose (Rom. 7:7-12). It was actually intended to teach just the opposite from what the Judaizers used it for. The law was to bring all who knew it to a consciousness of the need for divine grace. It is not the law which is flawed—it is legalistic perversions of it which constitute any defect that may be attributed to it. Law (and more so, legalism) condemns to separation from God (eternal death). The law puts man on trial before an absolute Sovereign. Man is guilty before absolutes! The absolute Sovereign’s penalty for guilt is banishment to eternal guilt! A new covenant of grace, accomplished by the absolute God, frees man from the responsibility of guilt. This new covenant of grace through faith was typified, prophesied and preached in the Old Testament. All who believed that, were justified by God’s future graciousness. Even Abraham who was guilty prior to the law of Moses was justified by grace through faith (Gen. 15:6; Gal. 3:8-9). All who refused to trust in the coming graciousness of God in the Messiah

were not justified—no matter how legal they thought they were. The New Covenant was a manifestation of the righteousness of God apart from the law (although the law and the prophets bore witness to its grace, Isa. 53:1-12; 55:1-5; Jer. 31:31-34; Dan 9:24-27; Zech. 12:1—13:9; Rom. 3:21-26, etal). The Old Covenant is a manifestation of the judgment of God apart from grace (its inevitable consequence is death). The New Covenant of grace is all about life. It does not condemn or sentence anyone to death who will accept it. Trying to earn justification by law (any law) man must inexorably face his death sentence. Accepting justification by grace, through faith, man is given life. Those who do not accept grace, come under law—their self-conceived law or another's (Rom. 2:12-16). And if divine law is unable to justify, certainly any and all human law results in condemnation!

Under which “covenant” would you prefer to answer for to an absolute God—the law of Moses or the Gospel of Christ? This is not as easy as one would think! Most people in the world today (and in ages past) have chosen “Law” as the basis upon which they plan to stand before Almighty God and insist upon being justified—(1) either they are totally deceived by the devil into arrogance and rebellion, thinking they are not dealing with an absolute God, or they have been duped into thinking they are “blameless” before God’s law because they “feel” like they have kept it—or; (2) they understand the implications of the total surrender in loving slavery and stewardship demanded by absolute grace from an absolute Christ, but are unwilling to be so totally “bought” preferring to shirk that responsibility and take their chances with law, preferring to withhold part of themselves for themselves! Justification by law is totally impossible. “You are not your own, you were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Only one Person ever earned justification before God through law—Jesus Christ. That is true or the Bible is the biggest hoax ever perpetrated on mankind! Justification by grace is totally possible! The one Person who earned justification by law declared he gives his justification, freely, apart from any merit, to all who believe. That is true or Jesus is a liar and unworthy of any honor. He validated his declaration by his bodily resurrection. Which do you prefer? Are you willing to be “not your own” and answer God with grace? Are you willing for others to be given God’s grace? Remember the account of David, Uriah, Bathsheba, and Nathan—“What’ll you have, David, for the man who stole the sheep—justice or mercy?----David, you are that man!” (2 Sam. 12).

The law of Moses was a dispensation (or “ministry”) of death, carved on deteriorating stone. It had splendor—everything God does has splendor. But its splendor was “fading” (Greek, katargoumenen, “being done away” 3:7). The law of Moses, glorious as it was, was to be superceded by a New Covenant or ministry. Actually, Paul uses the Greek words diakonia, “ministry,” and diathekes, “covenant” of righteousness by grace instead of the word “dispensation” (the word for “dispensation” would have been Greek, oikonomia). To this all the prophets (including Moses), gave testimony (e.g., Isa. 61; Jer. 3:15; 31:31ff, etc.). The transfiguration of Jesus, in all his divine splendor, outshining Moses and Elijah, along with God’s voice, “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him,” signified to the apostles Jesus brought the fulfillment of Moses and the prophets. Peter was finally able to comprehend all this (2 Pet. 1:16ff). The New Covenant accomplished through the glorious Son of God is of such surpassing splendor that the law is as if it had no splendor at all! The New

Covenant/Ministry's splendor consists in its "remaining." It is permanent—for all eternity—never ending—never being superceded by any other covenant from God. It is the perfection of a perfect Being—Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Nothing can ever be better. Thus, no further "revelation" than the New Testament Scriptures is needed from God. It is all man needs for eternal life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-11). Through it man can reach the goal God had for him when he created man! Through it man can, by faith, be conformed to the very image (character) of the Divine-man, Jesus Christ. To turn one's back on the absolute best which an absolute God can accomplish—turn away from what could never be earned but is freely given—turn from that which is "beyond all comparison"—turn from what is not only offered but offered along with the ultimate inducement to accept it—to spurn this glory is to make the ultimate mockery, the most contemptible, unforgivable, arrogant rebuff of infinite love imaginable!

Moses put a veil over his face after he finished speaking with the Israelites (Ex. 34:33-34), and removed it when he went in to speak with Jehovah in the tabernacle. He always put the veil on when he was in the presence of the Israelites. Paul states he did this so the Israelites would not see the "end" of the glory that was "fading away" (3:13). This was because Moses did not have enough hope in the "fading away" revelation to be bold enough to let Israel see the "fading away glory." Moses certainly did not veil his face because it blinded the Israelites. He talked to them before putting on the veil. Paul uses the veiled glory of Moses's face as a symbol or type (prophecy) of the fading glory of the Old Covenant. Most Jews refused to accept this doctrine (fading glory) even though the O.T. predicts it (Jer. 3:15; 31:31-34; Dan. 9:24-27; Isa. 66:1-24, etc.). Jews certainly do not accept this doctrine today! Nor do a lot of Christians ("dispensationalists," and legalists). The Israelites were not spiritually mature enough so Moses had to go around constantly in their presence with a veil over his face hiding the fact that very soon after he would go in to God's presence, after he told the people what God had said, the glory of his face would begin to fade! The Jews killed the prophets and the Messiah for declaring the fulfillment of the law of Moses and its obsolescence as a covenant relationship. That was their real reason for accusing Paul to the Roman authorities. It means that people have to be mature enough to think and act responsibly—to have faith strong enough—to accept the obsolescence of law (any "law") and accept the "slavery of grace." It means Christians, by faith in the atonement of Christ, are bold enough to look God's New Covenant squarely in the face—no veil—exposed to its blinding splendor and obey it!

If we are to behold the glory of the absolute Lord of grace—the covenant that is permanent—we must "unveil" our own faces! Paul means we must divest ourselves of the spirit of legalism (i.e., seeking to be justified by our own merit). How can we appreciate the blinding, incomparable, unsearchable glory of grace if we put the "blindness" of legalism over our eyes? How shall we comprehend the spiritual when we are locked into the physical and material? How shall we experience everlasting life when we have tied the albatross of death (legalism) around our necks? Many passages in the New Testament indicate our beholding the glory of the Lord to be changed into his image is exclusively through the instrumentality of the Scriptures: (a) partakers of the divine nature—we are granted all things pertaining to life

and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-11); (b) transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2); (c) conformed to the image of God's Son by setting our minds on things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-32); (d) called through the gospel so that we may obtain the glory of our Lord (2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Thess. 2:13); (e) purify our souls by obedience to the truth (1 Pet. 1:22-25). "No living man has ever been heard of, and none can now be found, possessed of a single Christian concept or one spiritual thought, feeling, or emotion, where the Bible, or some tradition from it has not been before him!"—Alexander Campbell in *The Christian System*. Without the word of the Lord, there is no beholding the glory of the Lord!

No one would be a better Christian than they are today by merely having the Lord physically (incarnate) present to behold! His incarnate presence did nothing greater for thousands who did see him than his spiritual presence does through his word now! Even the Twelve who accompanied him in the flesh grew spiritually the most after he was ascended to heaven and out of sight! By beholding the glory of the Lord through the testimony of the word, people are metamorphous (Greek of 2 Cor.3:18) "changed, transformed." That Greek word is in the present tense meaning it is a continuing procedure. People are "transformed" from "one degree of glory to another." It doesn't happen all at once. The most significant thing we must understand from this is the change that takes place by beholding the glory of the Lord is moral. It is mental. Our minds, our thinking processes, our desires, our choices, our characters must be in a state of constant change. There is no mental or moral plateau of final achievement for the Christian in this life and, I suspect, there will be none in the next life since growth is of the essence of life. When we shall have life eternal we shall also have growth eternal. The objective for our growth is "the image of Christ, the divine nature." God sent his Son, in human form, to show us what his ultimate goal for each of us is—the mental, moral "stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-16). No beholding of Christ's glory results in no change in the direction of Christ's nature. No studying and obeying his word results in no beholding his glory. Studying and obeying his word is the most crucial matter of human existence!

What is "glory"? It is a word used in the Bible to describe, "rank, renown, position, weight, worth." It is a word describing "brilliance, majesty, nobility, beauty, dignity, excellence." That which is glorious is that which deserves and receives praise. So what is the glory we should anticipate in heaven, if we are to be ultimately changed into the glory of Christ? (1) we will be renowned; (2) we will be beautiful; (3) we will have dignity; (4) we will have innocence, purity, righteousness (we will be right with God and people); (5) we will be rich (everything that belongs to Christ will belong to us); (6) we will be praised (God, himself, will speak words of praise about us, unto us); (7) we will be wise with divine wisdom; (8) we will be loved (because of whose we are—not because someone wants to exploit us); (9) you will be perfect. It will be glory beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Think of earth's ultimate glory—what do we consider to be the essence of "glory" among men? Is it fame? Is it power? Is it wealth? Is it Character? Is it adoration? Is it attainment? Is it self-satisfaction? Think of the glory God attached to his law—to Moses—to David—to the prophets—to the Messiah (at the transfiguration)—there is no comparison—AND WE WILL HAVE IT! WE ARE BEING CHANGED INTO THAT FROM ONE DEGREE TO ANOTHER!

NO! The opposite of legalism is not the absence of restraint! The opposite of legalism is “love-ism.” Love, by its very nature, demands a return of love—a responsibility to be loving. And such responsibility is exercised only within certain parameters or boundaries or restraints. The responsibility of love is exercised within the boundaries of the one being loved. That is true of earthly affiliations or citizenship as well as of heavenly! Christians are continually taught in the NT that their heavenly affiliation demands a restraint commensurate with value and “rank” (glory) of the One we love and according to the boundaries revealed (delineated) by his gracious Sovereignty. Paul said it in 2 Cor. 5:14, “The love of Christ constrains (controls) us.” John said it this way, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Jesus repeatedly stated, “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” That is not legalism—it is the responsibility of having received divine love! A reaction of irresponsibility toward divine love is a manifestation of: (a) ingratitude; (b) contemptuousness; (c) immorality (moral rebellion); (d) mental anarchy; (e) mockery; (f) self-righteousness (unrestrained irresponsibility toward God’s love as he delineates its guidelines in the NT is exactly what Christ came to destroy about legalism). Part of the glory we anticipate in heaven is the unfettered opportunity to respond in an eternal and ultimate way to the divine love extended us by God through Christ! Service responding to love is glory.

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18

It was always a severe blow to Paul's spirit when he received word the Judaizers were working their "ministry of death" among brethren he had converted to Christ. So, chapter 4:1 is connected to the problem of legalism he had just discussed in chapter 3 (note the logical-connection-word "therefore" 4:1). Paul was discouraged, but he had "not lost heart." The Judaizers went everywhere accusing Paul of "tampering" with the word of God because he taught that people did not have to keep the law of Moses for covenant relationship to God. They said Paul had been dealing "disgracefully, underhandedly, cunningly" with people and with God's word. Paul had actually handled the word of God "disgracefully" and "tampered" with it before his conversion (as a persecutor of Christians) even though he was sincere when he was doing it. But he states that he has "renounced" all that now that he has committed his life to Christ. At one point in his life (Phil. 3:4-11) Paul had gloried in his self-righteousness according to the law of Moses—BUT NO MORE! The word "tamper" is in the Greek text, *dolountes*, which means, "to mix, to dilute, to adulterate in order to trap or snare." The word is sometimes translated, "deceive." It describes a deliberately wicked action! The Judaizers were those "mixing" and "adulterating" the gospel with Judaism. To do so is to "tamper" with the word of God! Some would not see legalism as "tampering" with the word. Some would see legalism as strengthening God's commandments (the Pharisees did). But to add law to grace is to dilute and adulterate the power of grace! As we pointed out in lesson #3, responsibility to grace is infinitely more demanding and powerful than any legalism could ever be. We must not dilute grace with legalism of any kind. Many want to "get by" with legalism in Christianity today!

The devil is not the "god" of this world! He created nothing. He has no sovereignty—not even over hell (God made hell and is Sovereign over it). God created this world and all other beings (including angels and those who became demons). This world belongs to God. God even created the person called Satan. God maintains constant sovereign control over the devil! The devil was created with freedom granted by God to choose whether he would serve his Creator or not. He chose not to serve. So, God will consign the devil to eternal banishment in the lake of torments (Rev. 20:10). The devil has not yet been put there in a consummate way, but that is his destiny. The devil is presently bound to some extent—the extent being comparative or relative—which limits his ability to deceive mankind which had at an earlier time been more extensive. But the devil has always been "bound" to some limitations placed upon him by the Sovereign rule of God (see Job, chs. 1-2). The redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the gospel of grace, is what currently "binds" the devil from deceiving all mankind as he did before grace came (see Lk. 10:17-20; Matt. 12:29; John 12:31; 16:11; Rev. 12:9,11; 20:2,3). But the devil pretends he rules this world. Everything he does is a lie! Every power he may claim to possess is a lie (Jn. 8:44)! That is the only sense in which he may be said to be a "ruler." He is the "god" of this world only because some



have been deceived into worshipping (following) him. One does not need a “church of Satan” to follow Satan as a “god.” In our context here, one has only to advocate Judaism, legalism, to be “blinded” (voluntarily) by Satan and to be on his side! To go to Judaism for justification is apostasy; it is to crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to open shame (Heb. 6:1ff). It is the work of the devil! John mentioned “the synagogue of Satan” in Rev. 3:9 in direct relationship to “those who say they are Jews and are not.” Now, in the New Covenant, who are true “Jews”? (see Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9-25; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:6-29; 6:15-16). If then, “Jew” in the New Covenant is not those who merely “say” they are, and are not those necessarily descended from Abraham genetically (Rom. 9:6-7), then those of whom John wrote in Rev. 3:9 were worshipping the “god” of this world—Satan, even though they were genetic Jews in a synagogue. Paul calls such, “dogs,” “evil-workers,” who mutilate the flesh and insist on circumcision as demanded by God for salvation (Phil. 3:2-3). The “god” of this world has deceived millions of “religious” people into “tampering” with the word of God (the gospel of grace in Christ). They have swallowed his bait, they are hooked! They are in rebellion against the absoluteness and exclusiveness of God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus! They insist on “doing and being religious” as the way to find justification before God. There isn’t a “religion” in all the world capable of producing justification before the absolute God! If there were, it would probably be Judaism. We cannot, therefore, think of our relationship to Christ as a “religion.” Our relationship to Christ is purely and simply a “gift” of “grace.” Anything less (and all religions are less than grace) is from the “god” of the “fleshly-minded” which is totally false and deceitful. I am not persuaded we should even concede there is “some truth” in all the world’s religions! If anyone attempts to demand justification through one of the alleged “partially-true religions” shall he have it? NO! Then why allow people to be deceived with “partially-true” religions?

In context, the believer’s “treasure” is the “Spirit,” the “freedom” the “glory” which we have by grace (2 Cor. 3:16-18) as contrasted with the “ministry of death” we studied in chapter 3. Our “treasure” is, “God...who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). The Greek word *thesauron* is translated “treasure” and is the word from which we get the English word, “thesaurus” (“a place of safe-keeping, a storehouse, a collection”). What God has given us of himself, he “stores” in these earthen vessels we call our “bodies.” The Greek word *ostrakinois* is translated “earthen vessels” and is the word from which we get the English word “ostraca” (i.e., inscribed potsherds which were once complete vessels). Paul is here (2 Cor. 4:7) reminding the Corinthians of the mortality of the human body (even apostles were mortal), for the purpose of puncturing the inflated egos of the Judaizers in their midst. Human mortality is a stark reality that often produces moments of discouragement and depression. God intended that from the moment of man’s sin in Eden (see Gen. Ch. 3). The Judaizers gloried in their own “goodness.” Jesus told the rich young ruler to “call no man good, but God alone.” All humans must remember constantly that the flesh of man is as frail as the dust from which his earthly body is made. His mortal body is only an earthen vessel compared with the treasure he has “stored” within his being. This constant fact demonstrates that the power available to man through Christ “in him” transcends anything of which he is mortally capable through legalism. Only by the grace of Christ given us are we set free from the

doom to which our “mortality” is destined! Without the precious hope we have through grace, our “mortality” during “afflictions” would depress, discourage us, and make life unbearable!

The answer to being “knocked down” is to know and believe that although being constantly afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and frustrated with our “earthen vessel”—all the time we have the “life of Jesus” manifested in us as we allow God’s word to change us from one degree of glory to another into Christ’s image! That is the only answer to being “knocked down”! That is the only “experience” we shall have, this side of heaven, by way of an answer! This is the way Paul received an answer to the “knock downs” in his life. His “earthen vessel” was “knocked down” as much as anyone’s, but his answer to the afflictions, perplexities, and depressions was always the “treasure” being borne about in that “earthen vessel.” That “treasure” was the “Lord, the Spirit of God” (2 Cor. 3:16-18). The Spirit is the “earnest” of our inheritance. But the Spirit of God in us is not some “feeling”—it is the character, the personality, the nature of Christ “at work in us” (2 Cor. 4:12) or “being manifested in us.” And how do we know that the Spirit is “at work in us” if we don’t have some “feeling”? We know it when our mentality is the same as the Spirit’s mentality—when our works are the same as the Spirit’s works—when the fruit of our works produce the same fruit as the Spirit says he produces—**MOST OF ALL WE KNOW IT BECAUSE GOD HAS PROMISED IT IN HIS WORD AND HE NEVER GOES BACK ON HIS WORD!** We know the Spirit’s mentality, works and the fruits of the Spirit’s works through his communication to us. He communicates to us in his inerrant, supernatural, eternal, absolutely complete word—we call it the Bible! Paul summed all this up in Romans 8:16 by saying, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Paul’s answer is not a “feeling—it is a divine promise.

Paul is not talking about the physical “death of Jesus” being carried around in him or in us. No man, not even Paul, may duplicate in his body the vicarious, atoning death of Jesus on the cross. Paul is talking about the death to self that Jesus accomplished in his own fleshly nature on earth by total surrender to the will of God (i.e., “Nevertheless, not my will by thine be done:”). Paul states the idea of death to self clearly in Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14. He also discusses it at length in Romans chapters 6 through 8. Jesus demanded it of those who would follow him (Matt. 10:38-39; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14:25-33; 17:33). While we cannot die the same death Jesus died in a vicarious way, we are all, nevertheless, dying! We are all mortal! we are all terminal in these “earthen vessels.” And that very fact “works in us” to either throw ourselves on the merciful grace of God as he has chosen to extend it through Jesus Christ, or, death to the earthen vessel “works in us” bitterness, rebellion, despair, a sense of having been forsaken, and a grasping after the vanity of this doomed world! “The Preacher” (Solomon) spent many hours, evidently contemplating this human “earthen vessel,” and wrote Ecclesiastes. Life’s brevity, its perplexities, its vanities were all analyzed and Solomon concludes, “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of life!” That is what God intended physical death to “work in us” when he decreed it in Eden! Death is our enemy, but we can make it serve us if we throw ourselves upon the mercy of God and let his Spirit manifest eternal life in us (Rom. 8:31-39). Paul said, “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God we do not lose heart” (2 Cor. 4:1).

Thus, our physical dying (earthen vessel-ness) is to work in us death to self so the eternal life of the Spirit may live in us.

Do you “feel” like you are being renewed in your inner nature every day? That is a trick question! Assurance of your renewal is not measured by feeling, but by knowing and doing! Assurance of your renewal is measured by where your mind dwells, or upon what it dwells. Assurance of your being renewed every day is measured by what your priorities, your goals, your “treasure,” your beliefs are! It is measured by what your life manifests! Assurance of renewal is dependent upon knowing that this slight, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (see also Rom. 5:2; 8:18; 1 Pet. 4:12-13; 5:1; Col. 3:4; Titus 2:13, etc.). Now if we must know something that is “beyond all comparison” and we must “see” things that are invisible, we are talking about something that must come to us by divine revelation, and not by some subjective, vacillating, mood or feeling. We know and see that which is impossible to humanly know and see by faith in God’s revelation which promises us impossible things! Did you notice that Paul makes a point to “preach” the resurrection of Jesus Christ (4:14) as the basis for his assurance of renewal even in the face of crushing affliction, despairing perplexity, destroying “knock-downs?” The fact of the resurrection was what kept him from losing heart while at the same time being aware of the death of his “earthen vessel”! Paul certainly does not base his assurance of renewal on “religion” or on legalistic self-justification, or his “feelings.” He bases it on the mercy of God, on the transcendent power belonging to God, on Christ’s resurrection, on the revealed “unseen” promises of God! Assurance is in who God is and what he has done and promised—not in anything we are physically—for we are “earthen”!

Paul clearly states there is a direct connection between life’s afflictions and the glory that is to come to the believer in the next life! “This slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” The Greek word *katergazetai* is an emphatic form of *ergazomai* signifying, “to work out, achieve, effect by toil,” and is stronger than “preparing.” It is a present tense participle describing continuous action being done by the subject of the sentence (i.e., “This slight momentary affliction” “earthen vessels—death working in us.” 4:7-12). In other words, our “wasting away” in the outer nature, plus our daily “renewal” in the inner nature (by beholding the glory of Christ), is accomplishing or working-out for us a never ending life beyond all comparison. OF COURSE, IT IS GOD WHO IS DOING THE “WORKING” IN US! Without the affliction there is no future status. Affliction works in us a realistic, God-ordained view of our mortality! Affliction, coupled with faith in God and his revealed word, works in us humility, reliance on our Creator (see 2 Cor. 1:8-11), an other-world mind-set, compassion for others, essentially, it points us toward the spiritual! It helps give divine perspective! Without the renewal, daily, there is no future status. Affliction alone—without daily renewal or change into the likeness of Christ by degrees—would inevitably make us bitter and intensify our rebellion. This is precisely what happened to those of the Roman empire—worshippers of the beast (i.e., worshippers of the emperor)—who suffered the “plagues” of Revelation 16. They “cursed” the name of God and did not repent, Rev. 16:9,11. Affliction plus beholding Christ’s glory daily, directs our attention (by faith) to the things that are unseen. No matter what the affliction in

this life, compared with the glory that is to come, it is relatively “slight”!

God promises to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” to every one who honors him by honoring his Son, Jesus Christ. Could that be the glory “beyond all comparison” awaiting us? The human spirit is filled with joy most when it is praised (not flattered) by someone superior. The shining hour (they just radiate) for children is when their father or mother or someone else praises them for a job well done. The glory of a soldier is when his commander in chief gives him a medal for “well done.” Workers in every vocation thrive on praise. The glory of a wife or husband is to be praised by one’s spouse. Can you comprehend what it will be like to be praised by the Creator—by the absolutely perfect God? Not merely pitied—but praised?! And God promises he is going to praise all who honor him through his Son. If turning one’s back on the grace of an absolute God is the ultimate mockery, the most contemptible, unforgivable arrogant rebuff of infinite love imaginable—then what is the ultimate honor that can be paid back for absolute grace extended? It would be grateful, humble, believing (though always inadequate and often erroneous) passionate service is the ultimate honor to give the Divine Lover. Honest, constant loving service will receive a “Well done,” even though it is not perfectly well done! Isn’t that true of a father with his children? How much more an absolute Father with his? Yes, every believer, no matter when they began to believe, early or late in this life, will receive “a full day’s wages,” if they honor the Father—even if they are prodigals and have “come back’ after being away (see Lk. 15)!

Affliction and beholding the glory of the Lord works glory in us and for us only if we focus our mind’s eye intently on the things that really matter. To keep from “losing heart” in the throes of affliction and mortality, and to have the blessed hope of the incomparable glory, the believer must set his mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5ff)—on the things that are above (Col. 3:1-4). Paul does not mean the Christian is not to look at trees, houses, people, flowers, etc. When he says we look to “the things that are unseen” he means the Christian is not to set his mind on the values and standards of worldliness. He means the Christian must decide that the things of heaven, the values and standards and promises (disavowed by the worldly mind-set) are the realities of existence and life everlasting. What the carnal mind-set calls realities (materialism, sensuality, atheism) are not realities at all because they are transitory. All that is physical and material (though not unreal and not evil in itself) is not abiding. All of it is destined to pass away (or be completely changed from what it now is). Paul calls this world, “transient” (Greek, *proskaira*, “limited time”—it is the same Greek word translated “fleeting” in Heb. 11:25). Only that which is unseen by the physical eye is really, real. Only what is of the nature of heaven lasts forever. All that is real is promised and described, as nearly as human language can describe the unseen, in the Bible—and there only! The unseen (and unseeable) things of heaven are present realities to the Christian by faith (Heb. 11:1). Not even our “feelings” are to be trusted to tell us what is really, real! Our faith must be founded on empirically-verified evidence that such unseen powers and qualities do exist beyond the realm of the physical and empirical. And that is exactly what we have in the Bible—empirical evidence of the reality of the spiritual unseen testified to by eyewitnesses. It has always been difficult for human beings to believe that there are unseen

realities, invisible to human eye and investigation, but they are nevertheless very real and important. The mind of man struggles with the description of the supernatural and the promise of life beyond death (both as to its existence and its quality) because it all seems to be contrary to human experience. But human beings must learn not to trust their own presuppositions and limited experiences. Even the physical sciences (when mis- interpreted by the presupposition of evolutionism) teach us that there is a reality beyond that which is seen with the physical eye (cf. Rom. 1:18ff; Acts 17:22-31; Psa. 19, etc.). What is really, real, is an absolute God—an only absolute God of absolute power, wisdom, justice, mercy, grace, love, eternal life, and sovereignty. What is really, real, is self-sacrificing love, self-abnegating servant-hood, self-renounced giving. That is the essence of, the reality of self-hood. What is really, real, is beauty, kindness, compassion, edification, growth, wholeness, purity, holiness, truth, satisfaction, rest, fulfillment, accomplishment, self-control, discipline and goodness. All that is opposite this is false and doomed to banishment from God's presence in the realm of ultimate reality. What the most brilliant minds of the world have tried for millenniums to discover by finite reasoning, and have failed to find, Christians have by studying, proving and believing the revelation of God—the Bible! The Bible is a divine revelation, claiming, proving and describing (as much as human language is capable) ultimate reality. That is what the human soul craves! It is what human beings were created for! One of the tortures of eternal hell will be having never found and experienced ultimate reality—but having wasted self on that which was transitory, fleeting and unreal.

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-21

This chapter (2 Corinthians 5) may be the greatest and dearest-to-the-soul chapter in all the Bible! IT CERTAINLY IS TO ME! The problem of perspective (outlook, viewpoint) is as old as man! It began in the Garden of Eden. When God created man, he gave (revealed) to man the divine perspective. This perspective was to be applied to every human experience. But Satan came to earth and seduced woman and man into rejecting the divine perspective. Man prostituted his viewpoint and perverted God's creation. At that point, for the sake of wooing man back to the divine viewpoint, God "subjected the creation to futility and decay" (Rom. 8:18-25). This was part of God's plan to redirect man's perspective. God intended to reclaim man's viewpoint so that it would conform to the divine (only blessed one) viewpoint. Part and parcel with the "futility and decay" of creation is the frailty of the human body. As a result of man's sin, his physical body was condemned to dissolution and death. That very mortality of the body has presented a constant problem for man in the matter of perspective. The ultimate problem of human philosophy remains. The problem is that there is no satisfactory human metaphysical (i.e., "beyond physical") viewpoint or system. The mortality of the human body frustrates all human metaphysical systems! And that is precisely where God wants all human metaphysical systems—frustrated! The frailty of man provokes him to cry out for a perspective that is superhuman. Unlike non-believing philosophers, Paul knew where to find and how to appropriate a divine perspective. Paul could look beyond human mortality to a perfect and eternal existence by faith based on the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-15). The word "For" in 5:1 connects what follows to Paul's statement of the Christian perspective in 4:16-18. Christians are to see their total experience in this life, and that includes the mortality of the human body, from the perspective of the "eternal weight of glory" which is "beyond all comparison." The Greek word *oidamen* is present tense, meaning, "We are continuing to know..." In other words, the divine perspective needs to be a continuing experience. The Christian needs to remind himself every day to look at everything and every person from God's viewpoint! The only place to find God's viewpoint is in the Bible. The mind of Christ (or God) is revealed no place else (see comments on 1 Cor. 1:1-16). Christians are to look to the Bible for God's viewpoint on every aspect of life. That exclusiveness is unacceptable to the non-Christian world. Paul's knowledge went beyond human philosophy or logic for he knew everything from a divine perspective—i.e., from divine revelation. And you can know exactly what Paul knew! Literally translated, 5:1 would read, "Our dirt-house, this tent..." The Greek word *epigeios* is translated, "earthly," and is a compound of *epi* "down" and *ge* "soil, land, dirt." (We get the English language prefix, *geo-* from the Greek *ge*). The human body is emphatically of the soil! It is marvelously fashioned, but essentially dirt! It is bound to and inseparable from the soil. The word *skenos* "tent" or "tabernacle" is poignant. Our human bodies are like tents—temporary and uncomfortable! Nomads and pilgrims live in tents! They are always looking for permanent dwelling places (Heb. 11:8-16). That is what an



“earthly tent” has to do with perspective! Man sees everything in his world, including his own body, as transient—passing away—temporary. Anyone who does not get that perspective is philosophically schizoid—refusing to face reality—self-deceived!

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

evidence that the Bible is the revelation of the Spirit of Almighty God through Jesus Christ his Son, and his chosen apostles.

“At home in the body” is literally, in the Greek text, *endemountes en to somati*, or, “Among one’s own in the body.” In our text it is contrasted with *ekdemountes* which means, “away from one’s own.” When we are “among our own” in this earthen body, we are “away from our own” in the Lord. Paul does not mean that the Lord is absent from us in this earthly existence altogether. The Lord is present with us at all times in his spiritual, invisible, existence. Yet, in spite of Christ’s constant presence through the Spirit (Matt. 28:20; John 14:1-4; 14:21-23; Gal. 2:20, etc.), there is a sense in which the Christian is away from, separated from, his “own” as long as he lives in this world. While we are “in this earthen vessel” the Lord’s presence is not direct—it is mediated by the Spirit—indirect. It is not until we are “away from the body” that we shall have his direct presence (Rev. 21:3; 22:3-4). In the meantime, we must walk “by faith and not by sight.” We must view everything in this “away-from-the-Lord” existence through the divine perspective. And it is important that we understand our “away-from-the-Lord” existence as something inferior to what our “at-home-with-the-Lord” experience will be. Our eagerness to proclaim the Christian life in this world as the ultimate experience occasionally leaves people with the impression that there is nothing better to come! We must never do that! The Christian life even at its best in this world, is far inferior to that which it shall be in the next world. We must never de-emphasize the strength and courage derived from walking with Christ by faith in this life. But it would be difficult for the Christian to over-emphasize the glory and blessedness of the promised life to come for all believers. The very limitations and mortality of this human body and its war against the Spirit makes us know we are absent from the Lord where there is no time limit, no mortality, no war, no pain, no separation, no death!

A significant part of having the divine perspective is to believe the coming judgment of Christ, and to act in accordance with that belief. The person who refuses to see the world, history, or himself as inevitably coming under the scrutiny and sovereignty of the absolute Creator and Redeemer, has a flawed perspective. Such a person has no hope for ultimate vindication of right over wrong. He has no hope that final justice will be accomplished. The word “For” in 5:10 connects Paul’s appeal for a judgment–perspective to his “ambition” to be always pleasing the Lord. The Christian’s magnificent obsession should be to always please the Lord because he must inevitably appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The Greek word *phanerothenai* translated “appear” means, “revealed, made manifest.” What Christ is going to do at the judgment is reveal to the Christian what the Christian is worth to God. Christ does not need a special time to put people on trial to ascertain their deeds or motives. He already knows the secrets of men’s hearts! This is not a judgment to settle final destiny. It is a personal evaluation given to each individual by the Lord himself. Paul looked forward to this judgment because he believed the Lord would be showing many things Paul thought were failures to really be successes! The Lord will reveal to the Christian many things that pleased him which no one else heard of or applauded (Mt. 25:31-46; Mk. 12:41-44). Everyone who has made it his ambition or aim to please the Lord is going to be surprised with joy at this “manifestation.” It will be a time of disclosure and evaluation when all

mankind learns for the first time, and perfectly, who was right and what attitudes men should have or should not have had. It is the moment when believers will see and learn the real value of many things they thought no one knew and which they themselves often did not understand. It will be the time when ultimate grace will be dispensed to the believer! Thinking and living in the light of perfect evaluation (judgment) should drive men to seek the divine perspective. Christ is primarily concerned with our motives. That is why Paul said he always made it his “ambition” to please the Lord. It is “ambition, aim, motive” that counts most with Christ. Our “ambition” here (not the quantity of our accomplishments) determines the degree to which we will be rewarded in the next life! The person who has understood this will not be frustrated with life in this world where one’s “ambitions” for the Lord often exceed his opportunities and capabilities. If he has the divine perspective, his ambition is to always, in whatever limited opportunities or limited capabilities he has, please the Lord. If that has been a person’s ambition, he is “groaning” and “anxious” to be “further clothed” and at home with the Lord to be pleasing to him forever.

The reality of the fact (proven by the resurrection of Christ) of the vicarious life and death of Christ should flood a man’s soul with love. That love should “constrain” (i.e., control) him to live no longer for himself, but to live for Christ (according the “way” Christ has revealed a man should live). Paul died to self rule, by accepting in his place the death of Christ as the vicarious substitute acceptable to God (Gal. 2:20). The Greek word *sunechei* translated “constrains” or “controls” means literally, “pressures.” Divine love is intended to “pressure” us into reciprocating love and grateful obedience. The love of Christ should pressure, control, impel and motivate the Christian. The love of Christ drives and guides by setting the limits to what we should and should not do. And why did the love of Christ control Paul? Because he was convinced that Christ had died for him. The word *krinantas* (“convinced”) comes from the Greek legal vocabulary, meaning, “legal conviction.” Paul’s conviction about Christ’s atonement was based on evidence and not feeling or emotion. It was the evidence that produced the emotion—not vice, versa. The critical issue is: What does the atonement mean to an individual factually, personally, existentially, subjectively? It means that when Christ died, the believer died! If I accept Christ’s death in my place, I have actually accepted my death! In other words, I agree with God that my sins put me there on the cross, “in” Christ. “All” died, therefore, “I” died when Christ died. “I” no longer live; “I” have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer “live” (Gal. 2:20). Having accepted, by faith, the grace of God in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ, we are also privileged to accept by faith, the gracious life of Christ as a substitute for the old sinful life of self-rule. “He died for all, that those who live might live no longer from themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” We must live that imputed (i.e., “assigned”) life of Christ vicariously in our lives by faith (Gal. 2:20). 2 Cor. 5 is one of the greatest treatises on the experiential impact of the atonement in all the Bible! It is paralleled by such great passages as Romans ch. 6; Colossians ch. 2; Ephesians ch. 2; Hebrews chs. 2 & 10. In the midst of unmitigated vanity by those who take pride in human position and other vagaries of life apart from faith in Christ, a personal, existential absorption of the fact of Jesus’ vicarious death (and bodily resurrection) is absolutely critical to a divine perspective. Christians have no right to any other perspective!

The main problem with the human perspective is its ego-centricity. It is selfish! It centers and focuses and devotes itself to itself! In the Bible this is called “setting the mind on the things of the flesh” (see Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:5-11; 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:29; 5:5; Gal. 5:16-17; 6:13; Eph. 2:34; Phil. 3:3-11; Col. 2:23; 3:5ff; 1 Pet. 4:1-5). Paul wrote, “The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot,; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7). Paul did not mean that simply living in a fleshly body makes a person inexorably hostile to God. Jesus lived in a fleshly body. Paul is talking about a worldly-mindedness—an attitude that makes the flesh and the world its priority. The “human point of view” in the Greek text is, *oidamen kata sarka*, literally, “know according to flesh.” Jesus called the “fleshly viewpoint” idolatry—serving mammon—Matt. 6:24-34. There are only two viewpoints for man—human or divine! The unbeliever sees everything from the perspective of this world—dying—passing away—vain—“absurd”—discouraging—dooming—damning. Everything is relative to this earthly experience. It leads to degradation, depravity and despair (Romans 1:18-32). Every human experience is evaluated and acted upon from an animal-fleshly-materialistic perspective. But for the believer, from the very moment he accepts by faith the atoning death of Christ, he gives up his right to think or evaluate or act by himself or for himself. He sets his mind on the things of the Holy Spirit. He surrenders his thinking and evaluating and acting to the mind and behavior of Christ revealed in the Bible. The Bible takes over his mind and his life. Every aspect of life—home, job, education, entertainment, finances, hobbies, sexuality, emotions—everything is brought into conformity to the precepts and principles of the Holy Spirit of God revealed in the Bible! The Christian surrenders all right to say, “It’s my life, and I’ll think the way I please and live the way I want.” The Christian never claims the right to disagree with any New Testament viewpoint! If any man is “in” Christ he is a new creature. That is a fact! Paul is not dealing with theories or feelings here! This is the way it must be for a Christian! The old, human perspective, has passed away: behold, the new, divine perspective has come and is continuing to come (Greek, *gegonen*, perfect tense verb). The new creation with the new, divine perspective, is a continual, growing, ever-expanding experience. It is the experience of being “changed into the likeness of Christ from one degree of glory to another, by beholding the glory of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). If we struggle with that, (and the very fact of our “having this treasure in earthen vessels” necessitates struggle) we know you are pleasing the Lord. Those who do not struggle with it are not pleasing the Lord! The “flesh” has won the war with those not struggling with the divine perspective. Saints of old struggled with it. Apostles (Rom. 7:15-25)

struggled with it. And even Jesus the Son of God struggled in the flesh with it! But he conquered it Rom. 8:3.

The reason the human perspective is ego-centric is that the human being is estranged from God. Man, the rebel-sinner, has chosen to exclude God from his life. He is at “enmity” (war) against God (see Rom. 5:8-10; 8:6-8; James 4:1-4). The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit—these are opposed to each other (Gal. 5:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:11). The mind of the flesh is “hostile” toward God (Rom. 8:7). We are “enemies” (Rom. 5:10) of God! Man, not reconciled to God is against God! There is no neutral zone—no demilitarized

zone (DMZ) when we are fleshly-minded. There are not three categories—only two—either for God or against God; saved or lost; friends of God, enemies of God; sheep or goats; wise or foolish; on Christ's right hand or on his left hand; sons of this world or sons of the light. So, Paul says, the only possible way any human being can acquire the divine perspective is through the redemptive work of God in Christ which reconciles man and God to one another. God declares "peace" with man, and those people who want it declare "peace" with God . Reconciliation is totally by the grace of God responded to in faith and love. God took the initiative. God accomplished the peace through a Perfect Redeemer, his Son as the ultimate Ransom. It is all from God. The obligation of man is the grateful response of faith and love by accepting the grace of God. Though some may be "nominal" church-goers, if they really do not have the divine perspective, they are not really reconciled to God. Those not "new creatures in Christ" cannot possibly see things from a non-human perspective because they have not had their sins atoned for—thus they are still "hostile" toward God and at war with the Holy Spirit!

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

Of course, it does not seem fair to any honest individual that someone else should

suffer for his errors or mistakes or sins. But God has not asked men to accept the vicarious atonement of Christ on the basis of their “suppositions.” God asks that it be accepted on the basis of their faith! Deist, Ethan Allen, American Revolutionary War hero said: “There could be no justice or goodness in one being’s suffering for another, nor is it at all compatible with reason to suppose that God was the contriver of such a propitiation.” Of course, it’s not compatible with human reason—if it were it wouldn’t be divine and supernatural! Bishop Oxenham, former head of the World Council of Churches, wrote: “I cannot see forgiveness predicated upon the act of someone else. It is my sin. I must atone.” (He probably will—forever!). Canon Vernon F. Storrs, wrote: “We are in no way bound to accept Paul’s interpretation of Christ’s death. I dismiss from my mind all ideas of substitution, or of the innocent paying the penalty of the guilty because these ideas offend my moral consciousness.” Well, these people are “without God and without hope in the world” (Eph. 2:11-18) because the only “peace” that “reconciles” man to God is that which Jesus Christ accomplished with his vicarious death and verified by his bodily resurrection! God did not force Christ to become sin on our behalf! Christ was free from personal sin and under no obligation to suffer the consequences of any sin! That left him free to choose to become, vicariously, sin for all who were obligated by their own sin to suffer its consequences! That’s the gospel—the good news! He was not only free to choose to do so, he had the right and authority, by his perfect life, to do so if he chose. No human being may dare to gainsay Christ’s right to assume sin vicariously if he chooses unless that human being is perfectly sinless! Jesus claimed he came to be a ransom for sin (Matt. 20:28; 26:28). The New Testament is filled with statements of his vicarious atonement (1 Tim. 2:5-6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 2:24; Rev. 1:5; Gal. 3:13). It is predicted in the Old Testament (Isa. 53:1-12; Dan. 9:24-27; Zech 12:10—13:1). To reject the revelation of God about vicarious atonement is to fly in the face of a document that has been historically authenticated and validated by the eye-witnessed resurrection of Christ from the dead. To reject the vicarious death of Christ as atonement for sin is infidelity and rebellion. It is the spirit of anti-Christ. It cannot be made respectable by couching it in “moral revulsion.” To disavow what God has plainly stated offends moral consciousness! To disavow the vicarious death of Christ is rebellion against surrendering one’s mind and life to the divine perspective. That is exactly why Paul emphasized the vicarious death of Christ here in this text: because it is absolutely crucial to the divine perspective. It is the one critical pre-requisite to the “new creation.” The world-perspective arrogantly insists on atoning for its own sins. Those who glory in the flesh intend to earn their standing before God with self-righteousness. Throwing oneself upon the mercy and grace of God will not do for the “autonomous man”—such a man must rule his own thoughts, deeds and destiny. And God must be satisfied with that! That is “evil unbelief” (Heb. 3:12). Reconciliation to God with that attitude is impossible (Heb. 6:1-8). We must believe and obey God whether it seems reasonable to us or not!

Every Christian is obligated by the grace of God’s reconciliation given to him to proclaim the good news of God’s offer of reconciliation to the whole world. God has “entrusted” (Greek, *themenos*, “assigned, committed”) to all Christians the work of ministering the rationale (Greek, *logon*, “word, logic, rationale”) of reconciliation. No Christian is exempt from this assignment. Paul considered himself a “debtor” and thus obligated (by his own

redemption) to preach the gospel to as much of the world as he could humanly reach (Rom. 1:14-17). All Christians are “ambassadors” 2 Cor. 5:20 (Greek, presbeuomen, “presbyters, elders, legates, ambassadors) allowing God to make his “appeal” (Greek, parakalountos, “advocacy”) through them. The ministry of reconciliation is calling sinners to come to the side of God<sup>1</sup> Paul said the “ambassador” of reconciliation has to “beseech” (Greek, deometha, “beg, plead, pray”) people to come to the side of God for the sake of Christ. And the motivation in the message of that ministry is the vicarious atonement of Christ. Could it be that “ambassadors” of reconciliation are to have the same qualifications as “presbyters” or elders? (1 Tim. 3:1-7). One thing is certain—the world of unbelief will not be reconciled to God without the ministry of God’s ambassadors (Rom. 10:14-17). The world will not be reconciled without the message (Greek, logon, “word”) of reconciliation. People are not reconciled to God by the testimony of our lives—by their own “feelings” or assumptions or rationalizations. People are reconciled to God by the word of reconciliation (the New Testament scriptures and those alone). The word, ministered, is what produces reconciliation!

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1—7:1

That which ties chapter 6 to chapter 5 is the little word “Then” in 6:1. “Then” refers to the “grace of God” in the vicarious atonement of Christ. Paul is “working together” with God, as God’s “ambassador” to “beseech” the Corinthians to “be reconciled to God!” A strange thing to say to a “Christian church”?! Not when there is a clear danger of said “Christian church” reverting to paganism and/or Judaism. And that is the problem facing this preacher, Paul, as he writes to the Corinthian congregation. Paul is laboring (with God) to keep the Corinthian Christians from coming up empty (vain) of the grace of God. It is evidently possible to accept the grace of God vainly! Grace, even for the Christian, can become a hollow, empty pretense. Paul is laboring to keep the Corinthian Christians from reverting to paganism and Judaism and viewing everything from a human perspective. If they do, it is certain they are void of the grace of God. God’s grace demands those who have actuated divine grace in their lives to see everything from the divine perspective. To pretend to have the grace of God and have the mind (even secretly) set on that which is passing away is vanity! If those who claim to be Christians still look at people and things differently than God’s word directs them, the grace of God has been of no profit to them. Grace that does not produce gratitude (i.e., grace in exchange for grace, John 1:16) is an empty grace. It is no grace at all. It has never been acknowledged or accepted. Paul had a problem with some Christians who were responding to the grace of God with indifference like their pagan neighbors or the Judaizers. Some of those who called themselves Christian at Corinth were leaning toward the same depravity as that described in Rom. 1:18ff. Some were listening to the Judaizers, glorying in personal merit in law-keeping, and refusing to let the pure grace of God fill them so they might see all from the heavenly perspective. They were minding “self”...justifying “self”....glorifying “self” and that is the way unbelievers respond to God’s grace. Church leadership still has this problem facing it in congregations all over the world! Hundreds claiming the name “Christian” but responding to absolute grace like unbelievers—minding “self,” justifying “self,” indulging “self,” glorifying “self.” Self-ruled, egocentric, serving self, they profess to have accepted the grace of God, but their profession is hollow, vain and an insult to God.

Isaiah 49:8 is a Messianic prophecy. The “time of favor” in Isaiah’s prophecy is a synonym for the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8ff). The Year of Jubilee is a type of the Messianic age. “Jubilee” was a year of abundant grace in the Law of Moses foreshadowing the absolute divine grace that would come when the Messiah appeared (see Isa. 61:2; Luke 4:16ff). “Jubilee” was mandated by God for every 50th year, significantly to be announced on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and to be observed by 3 significant dispensations of grace: (1) liberty was granted to all Israelites who were in servitude to any of their countrymen; (2) there was to be a return of ancestral possessions to those who had been compelled to sell because of poverty; (3) it was to be a year of “rest” for the land which was



to lie fallow. Judaizers among the Corinthians were seducing some into legalism and a rejection of the dispensation of grace. Paul quotes Isaiah to refute the Judaizers, using the Jewish Old Testament to prove that the gospel he preached to the Corinthians was the true gospel of the Messiah. No one need wait for another Messiah. To procrastinate would be to miss the “acceptable time.” The “end of the ages” started with Jesus (1 Cor. 10:11). God has only one “acceptable time.” That “time in Christ.” The word now is the eschatological “now.”—the “now” of the Christian age in contrast to the “then” of the OT age. There is no other age more acceptable to God and never shall be any until time is no more! The Christian “age” ushered in by “once for all atonement” of abundant grace, eternal liberty, eternal possession of divine heritage, and entering into eternal rest (see Heb. 4). The first “acceptable” in 6:2 is the Greek word dekho and the second “acceptable” is the Greek word euprosdektos, literally, eu, “well,” and pros, “toward,” and dektos, “acceptable,” meaning, “very favorable acceptance.” Essentially, Paul is saying, “Do not be waiting for something better—there ain’t gonna be any ‘better’ until you get to heaven.” If ever the Corinthians were going to be changed from their unbelieving attitudes and ways, the time was “now.” Christ was (and is) the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. He is the fulfillment of all that God intended for man when man was created. Jesus as a man filled up full God’s purpose for man, and made that fulfillment available to all men who would receive it by grace. To put off receiving the grace of God in Jesus, to procrastinate and wait for something better (in another Messiah—or to go back to the mere shadow of the Messiah in the OT law) would be to miss the very favorable time and final (for this world) acceptance in the grace of God! And this searching and waiting for another “acceptable time” or going back to what they think is more “acceptable” in the law) is what the majority of the world is doing today—both Jew and Gentile. And it is all heathen unbelief in God’s eyes! Preachers are surrounded by those who insist God has a “better” way than grace through Jesus Christ. Some of those people are even in the church! As Paul found out! We must let grace fill us now, not yesterday, not tomorrow, not a thousand years from now. There is only one word on God’s clock—it is “NOW!” God’s time is always “Today,” “Now!” Now is the day to quit looking at things like the heathen. Now is the day to start seeing everything through the revealed divine perspective in the Bible. “Jubilee” is NOW!

The unbelief which surrounded those Christians and permeated their every circumstance and association would present itself as an easier way to deal with the crises and struggles of life. Unbelief demanded no sacrificial resistance to immorality—it demanded no forbearance, kindness or good reputation. It would be the “broad” and “easy” way. What we call Paul’s “first” letter to Corinth shows some of the Christians had already been seduced back into paganism. But the Christian way is restrictive (i.e., “narrow and difficult” Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24). The word translated “endurance” means “to remain under.” The word translated “hardships” means “constraint” or “compulsion.” Preachers (and all Christians) simply cannot think and act like unbelievers! They must bring their minds and their actions, motives and goals, under constraint to the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). The divine instrument or weapon to do that is “mighty” and able to overthrow “fortresses” (entrenched) rationalizations of unbelief or pharisaic legalism (or “imagination”) and “proud” (i.e., literally, “high thing rising up”) things against the divine perspective (“knowledge of

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

No one can conduct a ministry for the Lord without knowledge. Paul does not qualify his use of the word “knowledge” in this text. But he undoubtedly means to include knowledge of all that is good and of practical use in serving the Lord. Paul knew Greek literature and poetry (Acts 17:28). He knew the Jewish literature and culture and way of thinking. He knew about athletics, military life, farming, sea-faring ways, construction work, politics, philosophy, education. All this can be determined by Paul’s writings and the book of Acts. But above and beyond every other bit of knowledge Paul had, he knew the Scriptures. He knew how to reason from the scriptures with philosophers and theologians (Acts 17:2; 18:4,19; 24:25). This was not miraculous “knowledge”—it was knowledge of the OT scriptures. Paul learned these scriptures the same way any one else learns them. The divine doctrines he received by miraculous knowledge was “revelation” and he wrote those doctrines in his epistles. Paul put all his secular knowledge and his knowledge of the OT to use interpreting and communicating what God gave him directly (by supernatural inspiration and revelation) of the NT. But now that we have the completed New Testament (by Paul and others), we need no other “revelations” from God. We can apply our secular knowledge plus the OT and the NT to interpret and communicate “everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-5). Without this knowledge we cannot minister to the lost and hurting world! There simply is no excuse for any American Christian (or unbeliever) to be without a thorough knowledge of God’s word!

Paul includes “genuine love” (Greek, *anupokrito*, literally, “without hypocrisy) because so much love is hypocritical and not genuine! Christian love is no facade. It is not surface and superficial. Christians do not “play-like” they love. They really, genuinely, earnestly care! They care when they don’t feel like caring. They care when others are not “worthy” of being cared for. Unbelievers do not understand this kind of love. Unbelievers love those who love them (Matt. 5:43-48). Genuine love is not based on emotions or moods! That does not mean genuine love is without emotion—it simply means that genuine love cares and acts in spite of emotions. Genuine love is not controlled by something within man,

but is controlled by something within God. Man's love is a response to what God has done and is, rather than on what any man does or is or feels or believes. Genuine love is motivated by a conviction that Christ died for all and therefore all have died to themselves and are living unto Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). Genuine love is motivated by the "mercies of God" (Rom. 12:1-2). Genuine love does not indulge anyone to their hurt or harm. Genuine love disciplines and corrects in order to produce good and holiness. Genuine love gives—it gives, and gives and gives. It withholds nothing that edifies and strengthens. Genuine love keeps the commandments of God (1 Jn. 5:3). Genuine love is brave, firm, strong, abiding, self-sacrificing and unconditional. Pagan love is based on human moods and feelings. It seeks some recompense. It is given in order to get. It indulges in order to "buy" reciprocating love. It is cowardly. It is expressed only in pleasant circumstances. It is whimsical, flighty, vacillating (see 1 Cor. 13:1ff for genuine love). Christians must have it!

Paul was treated as an "unknown" by both unbelievers and Christians! Some of the Judaizing Christians continually considered Paul *persona non grata*, "unacceptable." They said he amounted to nothing since he had not been one of the original twelve apostles from Jerusalem. Jesus was practically unknown except in the land of Israel! Think of all the first century Christian heroes whose names you do not know!—people who stood up for their faith in the face of excruciating tortuous deaths by fire, wild beasts, gladiators, drowning, etc. Think of all the saints (millions of them) put to death by the Communists in Russia, China, Southeast Asia, and Muslim nations—whose names are known only to their families. Bruce Parmenter writes (in *What The Bible Says About Self-Esteem*): "It is doubtful that Paul would approve of the modern search for self-esteem. It is likely that such a search would be 'fleshy' for him...Paul could never celebrate self-esteem gained independently of Christ. His goal was to know Christ rather than to know himself, yet knowledge of Christ proved to be the way to authenticate self-knowledge...Paul did not affirm himself, he sought affirmation from Christ. Neither did the affirmation of others mean as much to him as the affirmation of Christ...the esteem of Christ rather than self-esteem was Paul's desire...To esteem Christ and be esteemed by him was sufficient...Such esteem was based on the gospel of justification by faith rather than on self-worth, personal competence, social prestige, perfectionism, achievement, or 'mental health.' Paul did not believe that becoming a Christian would relieve our neuroses. The word neurosis was not in his vocabulary, but it is likely that Paul would quickly understand the term in its modern setting and would be apt to say, 'Oh, you mean 'the flesh!'...he would not expect the gospel to provide total liberation from the weakness of human nature, any more than it gave him freedom from the thorn in the flesh...Paul would say that God can save us with or without our neuroses, for salvation is by grace, not by mental health...Just when we abandon the search for mental health, peace of mind, and psychological adjustment, just when we say, 'Christ is my esteem,' we experience a quantum leap in personal happiness." (My emphasis). That is how we must handle being "unknown."

Paul is not the only Christian to ever experience the paradoxical nature of the Christian life! To start with, Jesus came to earth to reveal that it would be so. Jesus says a person must lose his life to find it—die to live—give up all he has to get treasure—know

tribulation to have joy—look upon things not seen—love those who hate you. I once made up a list of 75-80 paradoxical statements in the New Testament. Every Christian finds unceasing paradoxes in his struggle to follow the leading of the word of God. He finds the flesh warring against the Spirit and the Spirit warring against the flesh. He finds power in weaknesses; wolves in sheep's clothing; he learns he is to "work out" his own salvation which comes totally by grace; he is to renounce the world, yet all the world belongs to him through Christ. Such a paradoxical view of life is unacceptable to the heathen and unbeliever. He wants life to be all tied up in neat little bundles of evolutionary progress, human goodness, the American dream, and fairy-story endings. The unbeliever doesn't see all the paradoxes in his own withdrawals from reality. The unbeliever is terrorized by the idea of death to self and surrender of one's will, one's thinking, ambitions and feelings to a Sovereign God. He is afraid he will lose identity, lose existence, and never be happy if he "dies" to self! But the only way any one's paradoxes of this life are ever solved is by faith! So long as this world remains, paradoxes will remain! Enigmas, questions, perplexities, what appears to be contradictions will always be a part of life in this "time" frame. "The unknowns" will continue to plague finite man. He can find a true answer to them only by a faith built on demonstrated evidence in the word of Jesus Christ! He can only survive a paradoxical life by trusting that all the paradoxes shall be resolved in the next life, in the presence of the absolute, non-paradoxical Person—God Almighty!

"Do not be mismatched with unbelievers" does not mean, "Do not marry non-Christians." First, Paul is not talking about necessary associations here. He had already granted that Christians would often have to be associated with unbelievers in mundane affairs (1 Cor. 5:9-13). He has also granted that some Christians would be married to unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:1-40). What the apostle seeks to forestall here is the "yoking" of a Christian with an unbeliever so that the Christian is actually working toward the same purpose as the unbeliever—(Greek, heterozugountes, from hetero, "different from," and zygoies, "yoked, linked, united"—i.e., "linked or united" with someone of a different kind—see Deut. 22:10; Lev. 19:19; Matt. 11:29; 1 Tim. 5:18; 6:1; Gal. 5:1; Acts 15:10; 1 Cor. 9:9; Phil. 4:3). A Christian working to destroy Christianity is his point! Paul clarifies what he means in the following contrasts and opposites. The Christian cannot be in "partnership" (yoked) with iniquity. It is an impossibility—no Christian can serve two masters—no Christian can be a friend of God and a friend of the world at the same time. The Christian can have no communion with darkness. He has no accord (Greek sumphonesis, "symphony") with Belial (i.e., "worthlessness, ruin, desperate wickedness"). Where one is the other cannot be! The believer cannot join in the same goal unbeliever has. Whatever this passage means, it cannot forbid members of the Christian church to be married to spouses who are believers from other denominations. There are "believers" in all denominations! I believe denominationalism is a spiritual error and has frustrated Christian unity and harmony throughout the world. Christ is not pleased with its perpetuation. But then Christ is not pleased with the numerous spiritual errors practiced in the Restoration movement, either! Whatever this passage means, it cannot mean the absolute prohibition of the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever. First, the context forbids any such interpretation; there is no mention made here of the marriage relationship. Second, the Greek verb, heterozugountes,

is in the present tense and would literally be translated, “do not go on being yoked to one of a different kind...” That would contradict Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7:1-40). The OT forbids Hebrews from marrying “foreigners,” but that was mainly directed against idolatry. Joseph married Asenath, daughter of an Egyptian priest (whose children became tribal inheritors). Moses married a Midianite; Hosea married a woman with “a spirit of harlotry” and when she deserted him and wound up in the slave market, he was told to go “love again” a woman who is an “adulteress.” Third, marriage is for this life only and is a means to an end for society (whether believing or unbelieving). So, then, what is Paul saying when he says “Do not be united (or yoked) with those completely different—unbelievers”? He is still discussing the matter of Christians separating themselves from those who are militantly, deliberately, aggressively opposing belief by working against Jesus and the Bible. He is, actually, talking about those “unbelievers” who had slipped into the Corinthian congregation (mainly Judaizers) working to destroy the gospel of grace! He is talking about those in Corinth trying to destroy his ministry. He is not talking primarily about marriage here. He is warning the Corinthian Christians (and us) not to be joined to pagan concepts, viewpoints, actions. Of course, the practical thing would be for believers to marry other believers! That would certainly better advance the kingdom of God! But how do you know one is truly a believer when you marry? And how do you know one is going to remain a believer after you marry? We’ve seen so many “Christian Church” marriages disintegrate and we know better than to try to make this passage demand that!

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

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

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 7:1-16

Paul has to urge these Corinthian Christians to “open” their hearts to him because he is preaching repentance to them! Few of us are “open-hearted” when we are being told we need to repent. The first, “knee-jerk” reaction is defensive, self-justifying resistance. Our pride has been wounded, self has been humiliated. We close our “hearts” i.e., minds against any further erosion of pride and self-esteem. We close our minds against further hurt. Repentance is drastic! It is an inner revolution of the soul, or as Freud would say, the “id” (i.e., personality, identity, being). Repentance is conformity. It is a slavery of the human mind unto the mind of Christ. It is the capturing of our thoughts unto obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). It is the transformation of our being by the renewing of our mentality according to the will of God (Rom. 12:1-2). It is a “journey from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ” (William Chamberlain). Repentance is a “death” to self—a destruction of pride—a humbling of the ego. It is a rearrangement of our values, our ambitions, our decisions. It is a surrender of our self-sovereignty! God made us each with a sovereign will, but, for our eternal blessedness he pleads with us to surrender, totally, that sovereign will to his Sovereignty! That is repentance! Paul is advocating here that passion (earnest love) is part and parcel with the severity that produces repentance. He has already pled with them (2 Cor. 6:11-13) to “widen their hearts” (i.e., minds) to make room for him. He has already stated that full reconciliation between them awaits only the restoration of their affections—not his. His affection has never abated. Without opening their hearts, they will not repent! The “bottom line” in repentance is an “open heart” (see Rev. 3:19-22). And each man or woman has been created with the sovereign capability of opening or closing his or her own “heart” (e.g. the parable of the soils). Taking offense at a preacher or teacher for speaking the word of God will not absolve guilt or contribute to “opening” one’s heart—it only exacerbates the “closing”! Remember, the human psyche (soul) progresses to “feeling” or “passion” from fact—to testimony—to faith—to feeling and not in reverse order! Paul is trying to get the Corinthians to know the facts about his life so they may “feel” affectionate toward him!

We do not know, exactly, the type of affliction Paul experienced in Macedonia. We do know that he was so troubled in his mind at Troas (2 Cor. 1:12-17) just before he crossed over the sea into Macedonia that he could not go through doors “opened” to him for the gospel! We do know that wherever he went, Judaizers followed, assaulting his reputation, and even inflicting bodily harm when they could arouse others to do it! Paul is expressing to the Corinthians his empathy, his pathos, with their own troubled souls and their emotional feelings toward him. This pathos on the part of Christian leaders is so necessary to the augmentation of a program of repentance in those they lead! Leaders who are trying to lead others to repentance, must experience the pressures and afflictions necessary to produce repentance in their own lives, too! Paul is saying to the Corinthians, “You are feeling the ‘afflictions’ attendant to repentance! I’ve been experiencing the same ‘afflictions.’ I know

your feelings—I know your difficulties—but you are ‘downcast’ for the very purpose of being ‘comforted’ (strengthened) by the God who strengthens the downcast.” Paul is going to elaborate on this principle in the next verses! He is even going to say that he is not sorry he made the Corinthians “grieve”! For that was the experience which triggered their repentance and in repentance they were comforted (strengthened). There is no such thing as instant empathy! Before we can really understand what others must endure to repent, we must have “walked a mile in their moccasins.” Paul had walked more than his “mile” in affliction of the soul (Romans, chs. 7-8 and 2 Corinthians chs. 1, 11, & 12)! Spiritual leaders must learn to lead by having gone through the “valley of the shadow” from which they hope to lead those entrusted to them. Paul’s life was one long pilgrimage of repentance. He repeatedly writes that he is “learning” this and “learning” that!

Preachers must understand there is no repentance without some pain! Paul had written severe rebukes—painful reproofs. He had called the Corinthians “childish” for the divisions; “arrogant” for their indifference to immorality; “shameful” and “incompetent” because they could not judge wrong-doers’ “disgraceful” in their corporate worship about the Lord’s Table; “immature” in their use of spiritual gifts; and many other verbal “slaps” across their “spiritual bottoms.” If you think Paul was “rough,” just take a look at the OT prophets! Isaiah called his congregation, “dumber than animals”! Hosea called his, “whores”! Ezekiel called his “hard-headed, stubborn, impudent and rebellious.” They were preaching to people who had no shame—people who had forgotten how to blush—people who blamed everyone else for their wickedness—people who wanted to hear illusions and untruths (Isa. 30:8-11). And don’t forget how piercing, sharp, abrupt, biting and wrathful were so many of the words of John the Baptist and Jesus! Yes! Jesus spoke rebuke even to his very special friends, the apostles (Peter, James, John, Judas, Thomas). He rebuked his mother, his brothers, Martha, the Syro-Phoenician woman, hungry multitudes (John 6), religious potentates, political potentates. And one politician he shunned altogether (Herod)—rejecting his invitation. So how do you bring a “friend” or a “loved one” to repentance? How would God do it? Do we know the “thinking” and “methodology” of God on this? Certainly!!! And it isn’t easy! There is no room for cowards in the ministry of repentance! (Remember Jeremiah, Elijah, Moses, John the Baptist, Paul). “Pain plants the flag of truth in the rebel soul”—C. S. Lewis

Paul was not sorry he had made the Corinthians “grieve” because true love causes pain when it has to do so! God had to “afflict” Israel to save a “remnant.” The Bible clearly teaches that God chastens by hurting the rebellious hoping to bring about repentance. We do not show love by withholding the truth. Paul, asked the Galatians, “Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). We often let people go on and on, in sin, saying we love them too much to hurt them, but nothing is more self-deceptive. What we usually mean by such a statement is that we do not want to hurt ourselves! Sinners usually react with anger when told the truth! And, no matter how strong and secure the “teller,” the anger hurts! No one likes rejection. Paul did not like it! But he was willing to endure it for the sake of the Corinthians (and others) let us not fool ourselves—we must be willing to be hurt if we are to assist God in bring men to repentance! C. S. Lewis, writes insightfully in The



Problem of Pain, “Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has roused him, he knows that he is in some way or other ‘up against’ the real universe; he either rebels...or else makes some attempt at an adjustment, which, if pursued, will lead him to religion...When I think of pain—if I knew any way of escape I would crawl through sewers to find it...I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made ‘perfect through suffering’ is not incredible.” The Bible repeats and repeats that God “perfects” mankind (brings him to the divine goal) through affliction, pain, suffering and tribulation. It is a primary doctrine of the Bible. It began when God “cursed the earth for man’s sake” (Gen. 3:17-18 and subjected the whole creation to futility and decay (Rom. 8:18-25). It does not end until the consummation of creation (Rev. Chs. 21 & 22). Preachers must face the stark reality that there is no repentance without pain—sometimes both psychological and physical!

William Chamberlain writes in his book, *The Message and Meaning of Repentance*, that the popular concept of repentance “has been tragically shallow; it has been perverted into emotionalism or sacramentalism...Repentance has been almost exclusively associated with an emotional crisis of sorrow for sin and fear of punishment.” He goes on to say, “A proper definition of the Greek word *metanoeo* calls for a renovation of mind...a complete change in mental outlook and of life design...” But mere reformation of behavior is not the crucial issue in repentance. To lay stress on change of conduct or reformation of behavior is to lead the minds of people away from the fact that *metanoeo* (repentance) deals primarily with the “springs of action,” rather than with the actions themselves! *Metanoeo* deals with the source of our motives (our thinking), not with conduct, or even with the motives themselves. The real meaning of the word began to be misunderstood when the New Testament was first translated into Latin (about A.D. 150) when the Greek word was translated into the Latin *poenitentiam agite*, or, “do penance.” The church began to think of so many acts of penitence to cancel a given amount of sin. The emphasis was put on feelings (remorse) and deeds (penance) while it should have been, as the Greek word shows, on ‘having the mind of Christ’—a transformation of thinking (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:14-17; 10:3-5). People may be sorry for their past and they may even reform certain outward ways of living (to keep from suffering unpleasant penalties) and still refuse to allow every thought to be brought into captivity to obedience to Christ. True repentance has little to do with emotions. It is a mental metamorphosis...in spite of one’s feelings! ‘Godly grief’ is literally in the Greek text, *elupethete gar kata theon*, or, ‘For you were grieved toward God.’ That preposition *kata* is significant—it means either ‘toward’ or ‘according to.’” So either way it makes “godly grief” a sorrow that turns the mind toward (or, according to) the mind of God! Paul says that “godly grief” produces repentance. Sorrow is only godly if it “works” repentance (Paul actually uses the Greek word *ergazetai*, “works”) . Sorrow is not repentance—it is the way of God to produce repentance. But whether sorrow “works” repentance or not depends on whether man opens his mind or closes his mind when he suffers chastening. God’s way (sorrow, chastening, suffering) brings true remorse (regret) only if it works repentance. That is because repentance (conformity to the mind of Christ) is the way we become partakers of his nature. It brings the experience of reconciliation, forgiveness, son-ship, spiritual growth, self-

worth and freedom from guilt and sin. Repentance starts with grief (within the limits of God's will) but blossoms into joyful salvation!

Worldly grief (Greek, kosmou lupe, "cosmic grief"), a grief that has the human perspective, one that is throughout the cosmos (Rom. 8:18-25), works out death—it is under judgment as evidenced in the creation (Rom. 1:18-23)! What else can it work out! That is what the cosmos reveals—nothing more—it is subjected to futility and decay! The mind of God unto grace and reconciliation is in the Bible, and there only. Nature condemns and judges. Worldly grief works death because it becomes a substitute for true repentance. It is satisfied with sorrow and not a change of mind! It is not glad about sorrow, but satisfied with it rather than surrendering to the divine outlook on everything! Worldly grief thinks it has made reconciliation happen on the basis of emotion and not on the basis of a changed mentality. Worldly grief regrets being caught in sin but secretly vows not to change the mind about sin and rebellion. It vows to be smarter, more self-sufficient, and not to be caught again. Worldly grief is the criminal mentality. It does not lead to peace and joy because it is the grief of a rebellious mind. Worldly grief starts with hurt, but it is a mixture of anger and self-pity. It is allowed to work retreat into morbid self-judgment and eventually into suicide (both physical and spiritual) or to rise up in self-justification, fighting and striking back to "get even" by its own power.

The Corinthians proved they had repented by the actions listed in 7:11-13. First, there was the eagerness to clear themselves. Paul was not attempting to justify their impenitence, his words were a passion to change their thinking. They did not react emotionally, or superficially, but with deliberation (the Greek word translated "clear themselves" is apologian, from which we get "to make apologetic response—logical, reasoned, clarification"). Second, their godly grief produced in them indignation (Greek, aganaktessin, "vexation, anger, much grief"). They were not indignant toward Paul—but toward themselves! They manifested shame for their past and their shame moved them beyond self-pity to self-abnegation. Self-abnegation, indignation or revulsion of self, usually produces a corrective attitude and action. Third, their indignation worked in them alarm (Greek, phobon, "fear"). This was, of course, godly fear. Godly fear is the very beginning of wisdom. It is a state of mind synonymous with repentance. It is the beginning of thinking God's way. Fourth, this all worked in them a "longing" for Paul who had "hurt" them or "made them sorry" to their own benefit! Fifth, they "punished" those of their membership who had been doing wrong. There was the immoral man, the pagan, living incestuously with his father's wife (1 Cor. 5)—and they had boasted of their sophistication in not involving themselves in the man's private life. Paul spoke "harshly" to them about that! Then there were the "trouble makers" (Judaizers, schismatics, maniacs for gifts, haughty worshipers, etc.). The Corinthians clearly changed their minds about these matters and "punished" (disciplined) the wrong-doers. This proved their repentance. Christ told the church at Thyatira that it must change its mind about "tolerating" the woman "Jezebel" (Rev. 3:19-29) or he would give to each of them as their works deserved! Practically every letter Paul wrote has in it instructions and pleas for repentance about failure to discipline factious, lazy or immoral members. Repentance within the church remains a crucial problem that continues

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

Repentance (redirection of the mind toward God's way of thinking) produces spiritual discoveries and spiritual growth! Paul says, "The real reason I wrote those severe things which caused you grief was to bring you to a revelation of just how much you loved me as we are all in God!" (7:12). Paul had the ultimate benefit of the Corinthian Christians in mind when he had to be harsh with them. When they repented, it proved who they were! In arrogance, they had forgotten who and whose they were. Going through the experience of repentance inevitably produces an awareness that one is a child of God (Rom. 8:1-17; Heb. 12:1-17). The chastening and discipline which leads to repentance and "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" is the experience that confirms we are the sons of God (Heb. 12:1-29). People are always wanting an "experience" in their religion—and the true "experience" of Christianity is repentance! Few ever find the true "experience" with Christ because they will not change their minds to his mind! Repentance (change of mind to conform to God's way) gives divine perspective to everything! It is as if a dark veil were lifted—as if blind eyes were suddenly given sight. History, life, origins, destinies, relationships, and things are "seen" in the light of the future glory for the sons of God. Repentance is more than sorrow for sin—it is more than reformed behavior. It is a renewed mind! Their repentance brought "relief" to Titus. It was a great blessing to Titus to be involved in bringing about the repentance of the Corinthians. It set Titus's "mind" (Greek, *pneuma*, "spirit") at rest! The church would stop its hell-bent slide back into paganism. Paul's veracity and character and apostleship would be no longer maligned. Titus would not have to return to Corinth with more condemnations from the apostle's pen. It brought great relief to Paul. Corinthian Christians were reconciled to Paul. The church was at rest. A repenting church will be a church at rest! What the church of Christ needs in this day more than anything else—more than cathedrals, causes, and collections—is repentance! Have you ever heard of a congregation implementing "a program for repentance?" Yet, repentance is the thrust of every epistle written by an apostle to any congregation—it is the main goal of the book of Revelation to the seven churches of Asia Minor—it is the goal of all the writings of the OT prophets—the goal of the law and the gospel!

The Corinthians received Titus and his message from the Lord's apostle with "fear and trembling." And they repented! William Chamberlain (op.cit.) concludes his book: "The church must redefine its task. We have had too much preaching that dealt out mild homeopathic (i.e., treating the disease with something like the disease) doses of ethical exhortation or sought to establish a social utopia by ignoring the fundamental need for a complete change in the mind and heart of mankind. Jesus and John the Baptist began with this need. The kingdom was at hand, they proclaimed, and that called for a complete metamorphosis of the mind of man. This includes the subconscious mind....the church must be told that becoming a Christian requires a new set of values, a new pattern for life, a new mind. If one's thoughts begin and end with one's personal convenience and desires, one is

disqualified for Christian living. The preacher must keep reminding the church that it must become Christian in its ideals, its desires, and its aspirations before it can become Christian in its practice, for the conduct of man hinges on his thought life. A pagan bent in one's thoughts gives a pagan tilt to one's life." What moved Titus emotionally was the obedience of the Corinthians. It was not their sorrow that impressed Titus—it was their obedience! In most cases today, people get emotional over seeing the emotions of others on display! But the impact the Corinthians had on Titus and Paul was due to their display of obedience. The fruition of repentance is obedience! How many Christians do you know who respond to exhortations to repent with fear and trembling? Is it sadistic for Paul to rejoice that the Corinthians responded with phobia (fear) and timidity? The usual response is anger, then defensiveness, then self-justification, and finally retaliation. But what Titus saw in the Corinthians was godly grief, then obedience, then fear and trembling. What a difference! The difference between rebellion and repentance—between righteousness and ungodliness. Fear plays a very significant part in holy conduct (see 1 Pet. 1:15-17). And it all starts with "godly sorrow which works repentance"!

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-24

Paul uses the word grace NINE TIMES in chapters 8 & 9! He begins his long discussion of giving (8:1) with the word “grace”...and ends it 9:14) with the word “grace.” The whole subject of giving (stewardship) is surrounded with and punctuated with the word “GRACE.” He literally makes grace synonymous with giving and stewardship. Grace is the basis for everything a human being has! Grace is the motive for every good thing a human being (especially a Christian) does! Whenever we give we only give the “grace” of God (1 Chron. 29:9-19). We are merely “managers” (stewards) of the grace of God (1 Pet. 4:10). When we study chapter nine we will see that the only Christian “method” for getting Christians to give is to appeal to the grace of God so that Christians will not give from “compulsion” or “necessity.” Any method that coerces or pressures people to give is anti-scriptural unless the approach is simply “give because of God’s infinite grace toward you!” Make no mistake. We are commanded to give. We are commanded to be wise, faithful, obedient stewards! But our motive for responding to these commands is that we stand in awe of the infinite grace of the “householder” (i.e., Christ). “The love of Christ constrains us”—not gimmicks, not manipulation, not shame, not threats, not competitiveness, not even necessity or need! Each person is to make up his own mind whether he is to give or not and how much—not even God will manipulate him. God’s only appeal is grace. How much grace has God given every Christian? “Inexpressible” (2 Cor. 9:15)! How much, then, shall we withhold???? Nothing! Everything we “have” is his!

Macedonia is the territory lying between the Balkan highlands and the Greek peninsula. The Romans had been very hard on the Macedonians expropriating their richest sources of income (gold and silver mines) taxing their very right to smelt the minerals. They had also reserved to themselves the trade in salt, timber, and shipbuilding. All of this had reduced the territory to deep poverty. (See what happens to people when governments “take over” private enterprise!). Added to the burdens of the Christians were the various persecutions which they experienced (bodily harm and confiscation of properties). Yet, they, of all Paul’s churches, were most generous in their support of him (Phil. 4:10-19; 1 Thess. 1:1-20). Both Philippi and Thessalonica were in Macedonia! The essential problem in Christian stewardship (giving) is not the amount—but the motive. We will see in chapter nine that Paul is not concerned at all about the amount, but that every Christian gives from pure motives. People must give by the grace of God—or not at all! Essentially the problem is a lack of appreciation for the grace of God—along with a lack of comprehending the concept of stewardship (management of one’s temporary possessions). This, along with a constant, pervasive, saturation of people’s minds today with ungodly, greedy, manipulative (playing on emotions) falsehoods about giving, destroys clarity about New Testament stewardship. And whose fault is it that the church today is not dealing with the essential problem of stewardship? It is the fault of the leadership of the church—elders, preachers, teachers.

The church must repent and get Christ's mind on this. Anyone can give to the Lord! No matter how severe their afflictions or how extreme their poverty! The Lord doesn't need what anyone gives—large or small (Psa. 50:7-15)! But he does want everyone to give something!

Jesus told a number of incidents where people either actually gave “beyond their means” or were asked to do so (see Mark 12:41-44; Luke 18:18ff; 21:1-4; 14:33; Matt. 26:6-13; 19:27ff; Luke 12:33). There are incidents of it in the OT (the widow to Elijah, the people giving for the tabernacle and the temple). And, the Macedonians! Out of deep poverty, they gave beyond their means, of their own free will, begging earnestly for the favor of taking part in the offering for their Judean brethren. The Bible commends the principle of getting paid for working—of providing for oneself to keep from being a burden on others—of providing for one's family. The Bible does not demand financial or material “leveling” of society (so-called Communism or Socialism). The Bible does not condemn people simply for becoming rich. The Bible does not make “vows of poverty” into superior righteousness. Jesus rebuked Judas's false concern over the “poor” when it appeared Mary was “wasting” money frivolously. But Jesus does teach us that we should be ready, at any moment, to give everything we have, including our very lives, upon demand, in his service. Jesus does command us to live one day at a time, without anxiety and to pray daily for our bread. Whatever a Christian has left over from daily needs he must surrender as an honest and wise steward, to the Master's use. It is normal that the Christian not lay up for himself treasures on earth (Matt. 6:19-21; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; Luke 16:8-9; 12:13-21). The Macedonians were following the expected requirements of Christian stewardship—all Christians today can do the same!

The Macedonians “surprised” Paul! He did not expect them to give “beyond their ability—out of deep poverty.” What was so incredible was they “begged with much begging” to give. That will surprise almost any Christian preacher or elder! If this incident were not documented from the pen of an inspired apostle, it would be unbelievable (e.g. what the widow gave into the temple treasury). Such giving is the expected norm in the NT—but it is so seldom practiced, when it happens, even apostles are surprised! The secret of such unimaginable giving is, first, giving oneself! Such giving will not come until self is surrendered to last place in one's priorities of life—(1) God; (2) others; (3) last of all, self (see Phil. 2:3-4; Rom. 12:10; 15:1-3; 1Cor. 10:24-,33; Matt. 22:34-40). The secret is having the divine perspective realizing we are “no longer our own, but have been bought with a price.” The goal of giving in such a totally unselfish way is to cultivate the virtue of grace in the giver. It is character-building. It builds in human beings the image of the divine God (Christ is formed in us, Gal. 4:19). God is the infinite Giver! Such giving is at the very core of spirituality! There is nothing more spiritual, worshipful, or virtuous than giving beyond one's means! The Corinthians, remember, desired to “excel” in spectacular demonstrations of supernatural “gifts” given to them! But Paul urges them here to “excel” in giving. He told them (1 Cor. 12:31) he could show them a “more excellent” way to practice their Christianity—love, giving, stewardship—they are all one and the same! How many “excellent” givers we you know? Are we one? We have “excellent” preachers, singers, teachers, pray-ers, attenders, callers, but how many “excellent” givers? “Excellence” in anything is a level that

exceeds the norm!

“Readiness” is from a Greek word, *prothumia*, meaning “passionate forwardness; hot-tempered toward.” But, as Paul clearly states here, “readiness” alone is not acceptable. “Readiness” coupled with whatever a man has, and has actually given, is acceptable. In other words, it is not the amount, but the “passionate desire” to give something, and the completion of the desire, that counts with God! Jesus rebuked the church at Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6) because, even though they had a “name” of “being alive,” they were, in fact, “dead.” He had not found their works “perfected” (i.e., completed). It is a serious reflection on the integrity and stability of Christ and Christianity for congregations to be “alive” with grandiose projects and plans, but “dead” to the completion or fulfillment of their promises! The same is true of an individual Christian. “Passionate” promises to the Lord about what we would do if we were rich and had lots of money or talents is unacceptable. What the Lord wants is a “readiness” to surrender (give) according to what we have now, and the actual giving of it now! Always making promises, dreaming about what we might do, but never completing what we CAN do, actually works detriment to our character. It destroys self-esteem because it is not of the Spirit and nature of God. God is faithful! What he promises he will complete! Too many Christians have used this “readiness” passage as a cop-out for giving nothing! They feel satisfied because they have had the urge, or desire to give. Not enough—says Paul (8:14)!

In verse 12 Paul says, “Give according to what a man has...” (Greek, *katho ean*, “in proportion to what one has”). Such giving is “very favorably acceptable (Greek, *euprosdekton*). We have already cited some exceptional, “surprising,” incidents where people “gave all” or “above what they were able—beyond their means.” We know that the first century Hebrew Christians had “all things common” (Acts 2:43-47) and were selling some of their properties and laying the receipts at the feet of the apostles for distribution to the needy.” But such generosity was not a requirement! When some wanted to get on the “bandwagon” of generosity and yet lie about what they gave, drastic measures were taken to show that giving must be honestly and willingly done! In every parable of Jesus about stewardship the teaching is that a steward is to be faithful in what he has, not in what he does not have! But what is the “proportion” of a Christian’s stewardship that ought to be given? Should it be 10% should it be “tithes and offerings”? If so, how much? The New Testament does not legislate specific “proportions.” The NT does not teach “tithing”—it teaches stewardship of 100% of a Christian’s “possessions.” STEWARDSHIP MEANS, ESSENTIALLY, “MANAGING, ADMINISTERING, HANDLING, OPERATING.” There are principles in the NT giving us guidelines for stewardship and giving: (1) be not covetous; (2) be not anxious; (3) we brought nothing into the world—we carry nothing out; (4) be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous; (5) provide for our own families; (6) be content with necessities; (7) be dependent on no one; (8) use what is left to minister to others; (9) don’t be idle, or unemployed. Each Christian, on the basis of these principles, is to decide for himself what he shall give—fully understanding, of course, that he is accountable for faithful, frugal and wise stewardship of what he has kept back for his use. The Christian is not permitted the “luxuries” of wastefulness or self-indulgence. Christians dare not squander

what God has given them or pamper themselves when all the cries for physical and spiritual “bread” are ringing in his ears! The Christian does not have to be rich to give. Every Christian, even the poor, is to give and act responsibly toward whatever stewardship the Lord has given him. If a poor Christian is “passionately” eager to give, and gives in “proportion” to what he has to fulfill the principles above, his gift is “very favorably accepted” by the Lord. And men had better not try to coerce, manipulate, legislate any more than that! What men had better do is constantly proclaim and exemplify the inexpressible, infinite grace of God. In 8:14 the principle of equality (Greek, isotetos) is applied to Christian giving. This does not mean that every Christian is to give the same amount. It simply means that every Christian is to give something—in “proportion” to what he has, not what he has not! Those who had little were to give in “proportion” to what little they had—those who had much were to give in “proportion” to how much they had. However much each had (and everyone had something), that “much would be required” (Lk. 12:48). It is not the amount, but the eagerness, the equality (i.e., involvement, participation) in giving of every Christian that pleases the Lord. Communism, socialism, are not Biblical! Neither Jesus nor his apostles ever attempted a financial “leveling” of society! They taught that men can be functional Christians in poverty, wealth, slavery, or freedom. An OT incident shows “equality” is enough! Some gathered much manna some gathered little, yet God made what each gathered enough for them! They could each join in the work of God, no matter what they had—much or little—because it was enough. The lesson is equality in participation! God does not need amounts. All the cattle on a thousand hills are his and if he were hungry he would not ask us. He is not served by human hands as though he needed anything. He gives to all everything they have (Psa. 50; Acts 17). But God does desire equal participation in his kingdom and he desires it because all kingdom-people need participation. A kingdom-person cannot have a “servant’s heart” until he participates in giving according to what he has. Usually the emphasis in church stewardship programs is to produce a certain amount of income. People are urged to give to meet a specific need. But the emphasis of Paul’s instructions has to do with the needs of the giver, while the amount of the gift and the need to be met are secondary! Christian people are not being edified and spiritually matured mainly because they are not being convinced (by constant teaching) that giving is primarily for their own spiritual growth and not to meet needs. We will have more teaching on this from Paul in chapter nine. Let us cease putting giving on a competitive basis. Let us begin “boasting” not on amounts given, but on total participation. Let’s encourage those whose “proportion” is small but is faithfully and eagerly given.

In 8:16-24 we have an apostolic admonition concerning carefulness in our giving! Christian stewardship (management) involves more than merely giving. It demands careful, discriminating, prudent and conscientious giving. In the U.S.A. Christian giving alone totals well over \$600,000,000 yearly. Yet much of that is wasted! Much is given to causes that ought not to be supported, or given in ways that are foolish and spendthrift. Much of it goes to line people’s pockets, to be used for the enrichment of a few and the exploitation of many. Believers desperately need to be cautious in their giving—learning to give responsibly with intelligence and care, so that the money goes to the right purposes and is used in the right way. Paul vows to the Corinthian Christians that the money they are collecting will be



administered properly, honestly and openly. It will go for the purpose for which they gave it: (1) it will be administered by more than one person; (2) two of the administrators (“the unnamed brethren”) will be people from the very congregations giving the money...”elected by a show of hands” by those congregations; (3) Titus’s integrity has been proven in person to the Corinthians. It is the responsibility of those giving and those administering money (or properties) in all “church work” to take and give account of its use! Every Christian is accountable for his stewardship to the Lord (Matt. 18:23; Luke 16:2; Rom. 14:12; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 4:5) and to men (Matt. 5:16; John 15:8; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:10-13; 1 Tim. 5:7-8; Rom. 14:18; 1 Pet. 2:12; Rom. 15:31).

All Christian churches, missionaries, and para-church organizations, whose very existence depends on the gracious stewardship (management) of individual Christians, are obligated by scriptural command and apostolic precedent to make an accounting in the presence of the Lord and in the presence of men! Verse 20 is crucial in this chapter! Paul intended that no one find fault with his administration of the funds for Judea. To avoid any hint of scandal he “took precaution” (Greek *stellomenoi*, present tense, middle, of “to place, set in order”). It should be translated, “We are making arrangements, to make our administration of the offering fully accountable to both the Lord and to men.” It is not merely Paul’s “intention” to make his work accountable, he makes arrangements that it would be so! It was, indeed, Paul’s “aim” (Greek, *pronooumen*, “thinking”) to be accounted “honorable” before Christ and men. His “aim” was not some generalized dream, it was specific—he gave thought for it. He reasoned out an arrangement to make it come to pass. It is the responsibility of individual Christians to support only those Christian works which are willing to make arrangements and give thought for sound financial auditing, accounting and reporting. Those who give must get back an open, honest, “good” report of the administration of their gifts. Such financial responsibility is “honorable” (good) before the Lord and men.

In light of all Paul has said thus far about the offering from Corinth, he now summarizes (8:24), “So, give proof, before the churches, of your love and of our boasting...” In light of the motives Paul has given them (grace), in light of the method (equality, proportional), and in light of the management (accountability), he promises, nothing should stand in their way of “completing” what they had so eagerly started a year ago. They had said much about how they loved their Judean brethren and how eager they were to help—now let them “give proof” (Greek, *endeixin*, from *deiknumi*, which means, “to show, to point out, to demonstrate, to make an impression”) of their love. Paul says, “Put your money where your mouth is!” The stewardship of giving, according to apostolic motives, methods and management, is proof of a Christian’s love! There is no getting around that! It would be difficult to find a scripture (except those general ones, like, “If a man love me he will keep my commandments”) designating any other action by which the Christian proves his love! We may equivocate and rationalize all we wish but that will not erase these words from the pen of an inspired apostle! We prove our love by our giving! And giving money isn’t the only kind of giving! Paul stated this before (8:8) and will state it again (9:13) (see also Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 10:29-37; 16:1-9; 16:19-31; 18:18-30; 1 John 3:16-18; 4:19-21, etc.). Perhaps this is

why Jesus spent so much time telling parables about stewardship and giving. It is the one, undeniable way to prove one's love—not just giving but Christian stewardship (i.e., management of the Lord's grace to you and to me). And remember this: "giving" of one's "treasures" does not always mean "money"—it also includes (and probably most important) one's time and talents (or abilities)!

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15

Paul is concerned about “appearances” between what the Corinthians earlier promised to do about giving and what they need to complete it because he is afraid some of the Macedonians will find out the Corinthians haven’t done anything about their promises. Paul had “boasted” to the Macedonians about the Corinthians “readiness” to send a gift to the Jerusalem saints. The reputation of Christ, the church, and individual saints is at stake in a Christian’s faithfulness in giving. The world knows just enough about the gospel to grasp at every flawed action of Christians. The world knows Christians are supposed to be exceedingly generous—to be faithful to their promises—to be eager to help the needy—to be 100% participants (a “community”). And when Christians do not come through as the gospel says they ought, and as they have said they will, the name of Christ is blasphemed and the world remains lost. Thousands were added to the company of first century believers because Christians “had favor with all the people” through the way they gave and their giving was not extraordinary to the gospel standard (Acts 2:43-47). The giving of the early saints “gave great power” to the testimony of the apostles concerning the resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:32-37). To become a Christian is, actually, to promise to give everything to the Lord as a manager (steward) of 100% of what one has been given in trust! Christians are “trustees”—not owners! Jesus warned people not to come to him if they were not willing to count this cost. Our “un-New Testament” giving is our biggest hindrance to evangelism!

Paul sent the “brethren” who were approved by vote by the churches to assist him in taking the offering to Judea via Corinth ahead of himself for two reasons: (a) to “prod” the Corinthians into completing their promised collection...their presence would be a graphic reminder that they could no longer procrastinate. Either they would take up the offering, now, and have it ready because Paul was coming soon—or they would not complete what they had so earnestly promised a year ago; (b) they were sent to precede Paul purposely to make the “pressure” slight. Had Paul, himself, gone immediately after he wrote this epistle, the Corinthians would have certainly felt “compulsion” and “exaction” from the presence of an apostle. Paul insists all the way through these two chapters that giving must be freely, willingly, cheerfully, self-determined, motivated by the grace of God (see 1 Cor. 16:1-4). Christians do not need to be “prodded” continually about amounts of giving. What they need to be prodded about, however, is not how much, but how to keep their promises—to give as they decided they have been “prospered” or according to their “portion” in life. They need to be prodded constantly that every Christian should give, poor or rich, young or old. I have heard preachers condemn “impulsive” giving. I personally think all giving should be impulsive. We should never kill an impulse to give! All the secret impulses and promises and decisions to give should be afforded opportunities lest they fade or are suppressed and shrivel our spiritual growth. Impulsive giving would increase if preachers would preach more on the grace of God and his trustworthiness and less on behavioristic psychology!

Paul gives a mini-parable on sowing and reaping because God has revealed some of his nature in "Nature." The creation is, in every way, an image of the character of its Creator. It is an inexorable, inevitable fact of creation that whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly! The Greek word *phaidomenos* means "to forbear, to refrain from doing" so Paul is not talking here about total amount of what is sown. To do so would contradict his statement that we are to sow in proportion to what we have—and not according to what we do not have. He is saying "Refrain from sowing at all and you will reap nothing at all. The emphasis is on the sowing. Paul will say later that no matter how much or how little you sow, God can make sure you always have enough to sow to please him—but you gotta sow! Every Christian must get into sowing! The lad at the "feeding of the 5000" had only five loaves and two fish. Andrew (Peter's brother) said, "But what are they among so many?" Jesus showed him! I am afraid all of us are so often like Andrew—what are my few dollars among so many needs in the world! So, we just keep our few dollars, thinking that those with many dollars will be much more able and willing to take care of giving (see 2 Kings 4:42-44). The Lord does not depend on amounts—he depends on willing hearts. Faith like a grain of mustard seed, if committed to the Lord, can move mountains! One talent, used, produces. One talent hidden, condemns. One dollar sown, when a man has only ten dollars can be enough with the Lord!

Yes! Christians are really free to make up their own minds about their giving! The Lord will have it no other way! Anyone who defies this principle, defies the Lord (2 Cor. 9:7). The Greek word *proeretai* is translated, "as he has made up his mind" (RSV) or "as he purposeth" (KJV), is the word from which we get the English word heresy and heretic. Literally, it means, "self-willed-choice." That's what a heretic is when he causes division, and that's what a Christian is when he gives by reluctance. Any approach to motivate people to give that would cause "reluctance" (Greek *ek lupes*, "out of sorrow or regret") would be hypocritical. It would destroy the giver! This passage condemns forever the heathen pragmatism in the philosophy of so many preachers and religious leaders today who practice any kind of "gimmick" or emotional coercion "because it works." "Works" for whom? Reluctant or coerced giving does not work for the giver! And God does not need that kind of money! God doesn't need any money! But God knows (and sent his Son to demonstrate it) that people need to give—absolutely, willingly, self-determinately, and cheerfully. The Greek words *ex anagkes* are translated "under compulsion" (RSV & NASV) and "necessity" (KJV). They mean "out of distress, constraint." If Christian work must be supported by bringing people (believer and non-believer) under "distress" or "compulsion" it is not Christian work! The mind must not be circumvented in bringing Christians into giving. It is the trick of a charlatan to slip past the mind to the emotions because emotions are so vulnerable to manipulation, coercion, "necessity" or "compulsion." If Christians are really to be left free (God leaves them free) to decide themselves what they shall give, then woe to that human being who tries to subvert that free choice. These scriptures focus the searching light of apostolic doctrine and example upon modern religious excesses in coercing and cajoling money from people. They strip the facade of false spirituality from all the manipulative schemes in today's religious, financial "flim-flam"! Much modern religious fund-raising methodology is justified under the umbrella of "public relations." But "public relations" is often

merely an euphemism for deceit, manipulation, self-serving pragmatism, and ethical relativism! The canard “If it works, it must be righteous” is from the devil, not from the Lord! There is only one time the Lord Jesus ever told anyone how much to give—when he told the rich young ruler to “sell all and give it to the poor.” Every other time he left people free to give as they decided. He said, “Render unto Caesar his things, and unto God his things.” Jesus preached to Zacchaeus and the publican decided to give “half” of all he owned to the poor and refund any one he defrauded four-fold. Mary, sister of Martha, decided to give an expensive (year’s wages) gift to Jesus. The widow decided to give all her living (Mk. 12:41-44) and Jesus said it was more than all the others were giving, put together! The Pharisees decided to give of their “left-overs” and to keep back much by declaring it “Corban” (i.e. dedicated to God). Each man decides for himself. Giving is to build character in the giver! Deciding is of the very essence of character development—for good or for bad!

The Greek word *hilaron* is translated “cheerful.” It is the word from which we get the English word, “hilarious.” The Greek word *hilaron* is translated “shine” in the Septuagint (i.e., the OT in Greek language). It is the idea of “beaming, radiant.” How many people have you observed giving “radiantly,” “beamingly” or hilariously”? Most of us “cry” when we give, or “grouch” and “grumble.” Some even “scream” like wounded monkeys whose bananas have been taken away from them! Now if the Lord loves (Greek *agape*) a “cheerful” giver (i.e., a “hilarious” giver), it seems to me the spiritual leadership of the church has a responsibility (as those who watch for the souls in their charge) to put most of their emphasis on producing “cheerful” givers! It is not just getting people to give: the important part is why and how they give—not how “much.” And how do we develop “cheerful” givers? By developing spirituality! By focusing people’s minds on the things of the Holy Spirit. By teaching what the Bible says about the grace of God in Christ. It may be expedient to point out needs to which people should give—I have my doubts about that. But making needs the emphasis will never fulfill the urgent, imperative, and unequivocal responsibility to make the focus of giving the attitude of the giver. The Christian home has a singular responsibility here too! Giving cheerfully, is either learned early in life, or hardly learned at all! Example, in the home, is of supreme importance!

A most important motivation for giving is the Christian’s trust in the ability and willingness of God to supply everything the human being needs to live and serve his Maker. Our Heavenly Father: (a) knows what we need before we ask; (b) secures every treasure we lay up in heaven; (c) provides for every creature (even birds and lilies) to have what they need to live. Jesus proved that God is not only able, but passionately eager to provide whatever is necessary to fulfill God’s purpose in every person who asks him. He healed some, but not all. He fed some, but not all. He restored some dead to loved ones on earth, but not all. God makes some rich, but not all. God gives some people multiple talents, but not all. Paul’s point in this passage is that God is able to provide every believer with every blessing in abundance, so that the believer may always have enough of everything to accomplish every good work God wants him to accomplish. Whatever any human being has he has by the grace of God and for the service of God. Whatever any human being has is all the grace, at that moment God has “caused” him to have for holy service. God forgets

nothing, omits nothing, and is never incapable of providing all the grace needed for his purposes (Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3-5). The phrase, “enough of everything” is literally, “all self-sufficiency.” The Greek word *autarkeia* is translated “contentment” in 1 Tim. 6:6, and is the word from which the English word “autarchy” comes (i.e., “absolute sovereignty”). When God supplies, it is absolutely sufficient, and we should be absolutely content with it! Too many Christians are not giving proportionately (and some not at all) because they think they do not have “enough” to give. Some are not “content” (sufficient) with what they have so they are reluctant (afraid) to give. It is urgent that teaching, emphatic teaching, be done on these verses (9:8-11) so believers will understand that whatever they have is “enough” for them to give something which will please God. Notice, Paul says the willing, cheerful-hearted man will always have enough to give. Self-sufficiency (“contentment”) for the believer is caused by God. But the believer must cooperate to make it a reality. It is the believer’s responsibility to trust that what God has given him is “sufficient” and “enough” and that he can give a proportion of his “enough” without starving to death, going naked, homeless and helpless. The less a Christian desires for his own indulgence (James 4:1-4) the more he will be content and sufficient to minister to others. Usually those who do not have “enough” to give are those who have insisted on too much for themselves! Let us all, as professors of Christ, be honest about this and we will admit that is correct! Then we need to ask forgiveness and repent. The Lord gives us “enough” to “abound” to every good work. Believers do not give “left-overs” to God (Malachi 1:6-9), they give the best and the most, taking the left-overs for the stewardship of their own needs.

Verse 9 is a quotation from Psa. 112:9 and its subject is the believer. The Greek word *eskorpsisen* means “to scatter abroad, widely, effusively.” Another Greek word in this verse is *penesin*, from which we get the English word “penury” which means “poor, destitute, abject poverty, on-the-last-leg..” The man who “fears” the Lord is unrestrained and profuse in his giving because he is content with only the necessities for himself and because he is constantly reminding himself of God’s grace. The result of scattering profusely is an enduring harvest of righteousness! Generous giving produces what is right! But “what is right” is in the character of the giver. We cannot always be sure what we give will be used for that which is good—but we can always be sure our giving is good for us! And this “goodness” of a giving character lasts forever. Like Cornelius, the centurion, our liberality will go up before God as an abiding “memorial” (Acts 10:1-4). When we say goodbye to this world, our liberality goes with us (Rev. 14:13) because it is spiritual. Money perishes along with every material “thing” it may be exchanged for. But the holy act of giving—a part of the character of the Holy Spirit of Christ—lives on in us forever. God is able to make that happen in every believer’s life—rich or poor! For, you see, it is the development of character that lasts. Thus, the amount a person is able to give is secondary! The important thing is a “giving” attitude. Of course, if a person always gives less than he should, he does not have a “giving” attitude—he has a cheating attitude. That will follow him wherever he goes in the next life (Luke 16:19-31)! The sons of light need to “wise-up” and “make friends by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may be received into the eternal habitations” (Lk. 16:1-9).

The word “supply” in verse 10 is from the Greek word *epichoregon*. The word *choregeo*, is in English, “chorus, choreography, choral.” In ancient Greece, the leader of a choir or a dance company was a *choregeo* and was charged with the responsibility of supplying all the material needs of his group. He was in charge. He supplied. His “charges” were to concentrate on their production and not be anxious about the “necessities” of life. So the word *choregeo* came to be used as a connotation of “all sufficient supplier.” God is our “choreographer.” He will take care of supplying our necessities. He is our leader. God wants us to spend our time as he has “choreographed” doing what we he directs us to do and then, let him do what he is supposed to do. There is also in verses 10 and 11 the figure of the farmer and sowing. The growth-cycle in “Nature”—from the field of the farmer—is God’s classic lesson on confidence in the Creator to choreograph a magnificent harvest from a bountiful scattering of seed. God does it over and over and over in a farmer’s field. The God who does it in the farmer’s field will also do it through the believer’s pocketbook! What the believer must trust is that the aim of God is to produce spiritual ends, not material ends. Sometimes God’s “ends” are not seen by the physical eye—they are spiritual. The believer must also maintain confidence that his giving is aimed at glorifying God (not the believer). The giver gives to produce the worship of God (“it produces thanksgiving to God”). The word “thanksgiving” is Greek, *eucharistian*—the word used for the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:24). Giving and receiving money in a congregation of Christians should be as worshipful, important, and needful of total participation as the communion.

Paul states (9:12-13) categorically that stewardship (management) is a “test of obedience” by which the Christian “acknowledges the gospel of Christ.” It acknowledges that Christ is Master and we are merely servants. It is not the only test but it is clearly a part of our Christian “confession.” Any teenager or younger child who has “confessed” Christ needs to understand this important part of his “confession”! Youngsters must give something. The word “rendering” is from *diakonia* (“ministry”). The word “service” is from *leitourgias* (English, “liturgy”) used in the Septuagint exclusively for the priestly service in the temple. Christian giving is a “ministry” and a “liturgy” (worship). It should never be done frivolously, as a matter of course, or apologetically. Giving an offering is not “paying the church,” or “Sunday’s admission fee,” or some sort of “holy tax.” Christian giving is worship—it is not just to pay the bills. It is an indispensable factor in a Christian’s function as a “priest.” It must be done whether bills get paid or not, and whether there are any bills to be paid or not. If this church had a million dollars in the bank every believer in this congregation should give regularly a “proportionate” amount of his possessions lest they all become like the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3). Paul states emphatically that giving is a “test” of our confession (9:13): (1) the Greek word *dia* (9:13) starts the sentence and means, “through” or “by this agency.” Giving is the instrumentality by which the believer “proves” his confession of Christ; (2) the word *dokimes* (“test”) is from the scientific and judicial arenas of the ancient Greek world. The KJV translates it “experiment” and NASV, “proof.”; (3) the Greek word *diakonias* (9:13) “service,” means, “ministry” and is the word from which we get “deacon”; (4) the word *hupotage*, translated “obedience,” is often translated, “submission” ( see Eph. 5:21,24); (5) the word *homologias*, “acknowledging” literally means, “say the same as”...and often translated “confession”; (6) the word *koinonias*, “contribution” would be better translated,

“participation, fellowship, partnership, or sharing.” It is the word from which we get “communion.” Christian giving is not merely some disinterested “contribution.” It is personal “participation” and “partnership” with those who receive the help. It is life plugged into to life, person joined to person, when we give! Money is merely an exchange for life that has been expended to earn it. So, when it is given, life is given! But whoever saves his life (money) will lose it!; (7) finally, Paul adds, the gospel profession of the Corinthians was proved not only by the one-time offering for Judea, but in their giving “toward all men.” Christians must “put their money where their mouths are” (see 8:8,24; 9:13). Three times, in 39 verses, he says it! He is not afraid to say it and say it and say it! The world will never see a clear confession of Christ until Christian people give as Paul instructed the Corinthian church and testified of the Macedonian churches. “Singing” hymns of praise and testimony are not worship unless we put our money where our “songs” are! You don’t prove how much you love God by singing about him—but by giving (that is the test of obedience). Singing, preaching, teaching, without giving is hypocrisy!

Christian churches do not really have a problem with stewardship—their problem is with the grace of God. Grace is not preached enough! Grace is not discussed enough. Grace is not sung enough—not prayed about enough. Human works have been stressed too much! Christians have lost touch with the reality that everything they have, everything they are, every circumstance of their existence, past, present, and future, is absolutely by the GRACE of God! Even their freedom to choose; their ability to think, feel, decide, repent, speak, pray, breathe, and live is by grace. Too many, while paying lip service to “grace,” reserve a secret smugness in their hearts that they aren’t such bad people, after all, and what they have and what they are, they have earned (at least a part of it) by their own hard work and skill. Until Christian people become possessed and obsessed with the absoluteness of the grace of God in their very existence, they will never have the power to give or exercise the “excellent” (8:7) stewardship (management) according to the apostolic challenges of these two chapters. This is what made Paul say, “thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!” The Greek word *anekdiegeto* means, “indescribable.” Human language is inadequate to give full expression to infinite grace! There is nothing in the human experience to compare with absolute goodness and graciousness, hence there is no word for it (2 Cor. 4:17). Write all the poems and songs you want, dredge up all the emotional sermon illustrations you can find, and the most astounding goodness of human actions cannot compare. The best word by which to symbolize infinite grace would be “Jesus.” He was infinite grace incarnated! He displayed it as absolutely as it could be to the finite mind of humankind. There was no lack of manifestation (John 1:1-18), the lack was in the sin-tainted minds of people keeping them from apprehending it. Surely, the extent to which we are willing to let the Spirit of Christ control us and live through us will be the extent to which we apprehend the “indescribable” grace of God. Paul found himself unable, a number of times, to find human words to express divine realities (Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 12:4)—Peter, also (1 Pet. 1:8). But we rejoice that the “Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26-27). Unable to find words to express our joy for the infinite grace of God, we certainly need not flounder for actions which will express our gratitude for it and which will be “very favorably acceptable” to the Lord—passionate, participating,



proportionate, careful, self-chosen, and cheerful giving! Thanks for the “inexpressible” grace is made by grace in return. Even our gracious giving will fall short of the divine model—but we may rejoice that every sincere attempt will be “memorialized” before the God who knows all, loves, infinitely, and is absolutely faithful (Acts 10:4; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:4; Rev. 14:13). The obsession to express “thanks” for the inexpressible grace of God is the solution to the problem of giving or stewardship.

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-18

Yes! Paul is using sarcasm in 10:1. Evidently some person in the Corinthian congregation was accusing Paul of being a “phony” apostle. They had said, “He is humble when face to face with us, but bold when he is away and writing letters.” Paul mimics what was being said. Then he both begs and threatens that he will not have to prove his ability to be “bold” when he is face to face with them. The English word “sarcasm” comes from the Greek word *sarkasmos* which means “to bite like a dog.” Sarcasm or satire is something that “bites.” Satire, sarcasm, irony, etc., are all used as methods to minister to men’s souls in the Bible. “Wisdom” literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) is filled with sarcasm and satire. Jesus used satire and sarcasm on the Pharisees, Herod, his disciples, and on others. The OT prophets used it most of the time in their writings! It is certainly one of the Biblical methods of ministry. There is a place for sarcasm in preaching and teaching the word of God today! It needs to be used sparingly—only when other kinds of communication will not work, but some occasions call for it. The preacher or teacher who uses it will not be appreciated (but, then, neither was Jesus, the OT prophets, or the apostles). The preacher or teacher who uses satire will be accused of not caring, hatefulness, egotism, and being insecure himself. But if a word of sarcasm now and then will save a soul from hell (like it did Peter and James and John), and since it is sanctioned by scriptural use, let it be used on me and you and let us be matured by it!

You had better think of your service to Christ as a war! That is what it is! It was seen that way in the OT (Joel 2:28—3:21; Dan. 10; Ezek. 38 & 39—these are all Messianic prophecies). It is seen that way in the NT over and over (Luke 14:31-33; Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 6:10ff; Jas. 4:1ff; 1 Pet. 2:11; Revelation—the whole book—2 Tim. 2:3-4; 4:7). The Christian life is not “play-time.” It is not “fun and games”! Not even for teen-agers! IT IS A STRUGGLE, A BATTLE, A DAILY FIGHT! Christianity is not “Entertainment Tonight”! There is no relaxation. Alertness, vigilance, preparedness, militancy, aggressiveness, conquest, and victory—these are the vocabulary of a Christian! “Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war!” The Greek word used for warfare here is *strateuometha*, the word from which we get the English words, “strategy, strategic, stratagem.” Christians must be strategists in their lives. That takes thinking, planning, wisdom, training, discipline, knowledge, fidelity, and courage. Fighting the good fight of faith is not something that just happens to us! Every Christian becomes a soldier when he confesses Christ! There are no “conscientious objectors” in the Christian warfare! Wars are fought to be won, not lost! “In war there is no substitute for victory”—General Douglas MacArthur said that! To lose the Christian war is to lose forever! The enemy is the devil and all for which he stands. The struggle is over evil and righteousness, truth and falsehood, illusion and reality. Victory is assured for the battling Christian soldier. He is armed with “mighty” weapons from God. So long as he is in this life the battle rages. But if he is faithful to his King until death, he will

receive the victor's wreath and the reward of praise from his "general"—a divine, "Well done!"

The kingdom of God is entered voluntarily—it is not populated through coercion or force. However, entering it causes some "violence" (Luke 16:16) to the human psyche (it's called repentance). The methods ("strategies") of the Christian's warfare are spiritual—i.e., mental, rational, persuasive, and logical. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts" Zech. 4:6—see also 2 Chron 32:7; Acts 26:17-18; 1 Tim. 1:18; James 4:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:11, etc. The book of Revelation discloses that the Christian's warfare from the wicked world not ultimately against the flesh, it is really against the wickedness in the physically-invisible world of view-points and ideas. We do not "wrestle" against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:10ff). Look at the text (2 Cor. 10:3-5) and you will see that the instruments or weapons in the Christian "strategy" are all, without exception, mental (spiritual). They are not made of matter. They are not emotional. They have to do exclusively with "thought" and with "knowledge"—especially the thoughts and knowledge of God. The same is true of Ephesians 6:10ff—truth, righteousness, gospel, faith, salvation, word of God, prayer—all are weapons of the mind and spirit. The word of God ("sword of the Spirit") because it is an inerrant and infallible record of the ultimate truth, has the power to defeat, depose, pull down, and conquer every "argument" (or rationalization) that stands in the way of anyone who honestly wants to know the truth and live with God forever. There is no argument, from any source no matter how erudite or sophisticated that can stand up to God's word, honestly studied no matter who or how many propound it. His word is able to take captive every thought of the human mind and direct it to the source of all reality and goodness and bring it into obedience to ultimate truth! There is no philosophy so well fortified or exalted against God that it cannot be overthrown and captured and brought under obedience to the control and redemptive purpose of God. There is no human mind so well fortified and exalted against God that it cannot be overthrown, captured and brought into obedience to the will of God and his redemptive salvation. I remind you of multitudes of scientists, statesmen, philosophers and other "movers and shakers" who have been "captured" by the word of God. Men like St. Augustine, George Washington, William Gladstone, James Madison, John Adams, Joseph Lister, Louis Pasteur, George Washington Carver, Gregor Mendel, C. S. Lewis, Lew Wallace. Space does not permit listing thousands more. The word of God is living and active...piercing even to the soul and spirit! This (2 Cor. 10:3-5) is one of the greatest texts in the Bible. It promises the Christian divinely powerful "weapons" with which he may conquer for Christ "every" obstacle to the knowledge of God! There is no excuse for an evangelistic entrenchment of the church. The church is to be militant, aggressive, on the offensive, "capturing" even the strongest and highest opposition to the knowledge of God! Yes! The church should be attacking false doctrines, false ideologies, immoral ethical philosophies, and deceitful hermeneutics. Remember—the Christian's warfare is not against people but against "thoughts" and "ideas" that stand in opposition to people's opportunity to know God. Christians hate falsehood, but they love people! These weapons are for use by every Christian. Every Christian must speak up, speak out, debate, teach, argue from the Scriptures, in a militant and aggressive campaign against evil ideologies and philosophies until his King calls him to his reward. IF THE CHRISTIAN DOESN'T—WHO WILL? Weapons of the world (carnal, fleshly) are coercion, manipulation, legislation, pressure

groups, compromises and demonstrations that ultimately result in raised voices, clenched fists and violence—boycotts, pickets, strikes—all these are attempts to pressure people into doing what others want. History says these do not build the kingdom! They do not even work to solve the problems of the world! The world still has the same problems it has had since the Garden of Eden. With fleshly weapons the world will never get rid of its problems—it only rearranges them so that they seem to take another form for a little while. The church has no business focusing its energies, talents and funds on legislation and enforcement. Those are fleshly weapons. They are inadequate, at best, and ultimately doomed to failure. Bringing every thought into captivity to the mind of Christ so that people see one another no longer from a human point of view is the only divine and eternal solution. Ray Stedman wrote, “The problem of history is not the world. It is the church. It is we who do not use the weapons at our disposal. Instead, we give way and go along with worldly approaches, using pressure-group tactics and petitions to seek to overcome with legislation the wrongs of our day. May God help us to understand the nature of spiritual warfare...The cause is not hopeless...we are not helpless...let a Christian act along the lines of the revelation of scripture in this regard and things will begin to change. Any one of us can change things, in our lives individually, in our homes, in our communities, where we work, in our nation itself. Let us begin to learn the truth about life from the scriptures...we will find tremendous changes beginning to occur quickly as God uses these weapons to destroy the strongholds of darkness and evil around us.” The weapon of God (truth) overthrew fortified and exalted opposition to God such as our modern world has never experienced in the ancient Roman Empire (A.D. 100-45)—by evangelism, by missions, by teaching!

Paul waged a warfare with authoritative words of truth. Authority is an indispensable method of preaching and teaching. The authority is never that of the preacher, but is always that of the Scriptures. Even Paul, the apostle, disclaimed any personal authority. He says, “Our authority, which the Lord gave [is] for building you up.” All authority belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22). Christ delegated some subordinate authority to the apostles (Matt. 28:18-20). The apostles exhorted evangelists (preachers) and teachers of the churches to preach authoritatively from the Scriptures (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:11; 5:20; 6:2; 6:17; 2 Tim. 2:14-15; 3:15-17; 4:2-5; Titus 2:1; 2:15; 3:8, etc.). The use of authority from the scriptures as a method of ministry is to be tempered with kindness, purity of life, forbearance, gentleness, and patience, but the authority of the Scripture must never be undervalued or under emphasized. When the word of God is being preached or taught, the preacher or the teacher must be listened to, even his personal life is not perfect (see Matt. 23:1-3). Authority is absolutely essential to learning! That is why there is so little learning in our public schools today. Teacher’s authority has been preempted! Philosophy textbooks today authoritatively tell you that “authority” is a very poor source of knowledge! However, the very root, the very source, the very origin of all knowledge is in authority—DIVINE, INFINITE, OMNISCIENT, OMNIPOTENT AUTHORITY! There is no knowledge, no good, no society without authority! People are averse to authority because the devil has seduced them ever since the Garden of Eden into rejecting divine authority—rejecting absolutes. The devil is a total anarchist! And those who do so, absolutely insist upon it! No authority!—they authoritatively cry!

It was not Paul's intention to merely "frighten" the Corinthians (Greek, ekphobein, literally, "terrify" from which we get English "phobia"). There was no threat to his own self-esteem if they did not obey him. He did not need, for his own ego, to scare people. He was no bully! But make no mistake, he threatened them! He was warning them—and doing so authoritatively! Preaching the fear of God and the fear of eternal damnation is a scripturally sanctioned method of ministry! God speaks in the first person this way in the OT. The prophets did it, Jesus did it. The apostles did it. Look at the threats of Jesus to the seven churches of Asia Minor in the book of Revelation! There is a difference between "frightening" people and warning people. Some people need to learn that distinction. The difference is in the motive, or in the end sought. Preachers who "frighten" people as a method to obtain decisions for the sake of building their own egos or glorifying themselves, should repent. But warning people about hell and the viewpoint or actions that will send them there, by the authority of the Scriptures, is a method used in every book in the Bible! People who regularly "frighten" their children with warnings and with threats, are often offended by preachers or teachers who use the same tactics to save their eternal souls. Much of what we purchase today is a result of some "warning" on TV. Everything we avoid is because we have been "frightened" by a listing of resulting unpleasant circumstances. God made us with the capacity to be "frightened"! Fear is a saving, protecting, innate capacity. Properly used, it is a correct tactic of ministering the awesome word of God to a world of sinners, saved and lost!

There is a difference between using other human beings for "comparison" and using them for "illustration." Evidently there were people in Corinth "comparing" themselves with one another and "measuring" (Greek, metrountes, "metric") themselves with one another in order to commend themselves. When people play that game, they always select human beings who they think are less than themselves. That makes the selector better! This is a game that Christians often play. Sometimes God's servants are tempted to do things to "commend" themselves because the devil seduces them into thinking they are competing with one another. There is no status in the kingdom of God for any human being except "servant." So, why then, should we compete with one another? Our standards of excellence for faithful service are not one another—but Jesus Christ. And since none of us ever live up to that standard completely, we must trust in grace—even apostles! We are all approved by God because of Christ's grace. Of course, we are to "examine ourselves" and "test ourselves" (see 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4). But our standard of measurement is always to be Christ (the Perfect Human). Comparisons with other humans have no place as tactics of ministry! Churches should get away from this kind of business. In many people's minds, the selection of a minister or an elder or deacon, is done by comparing people with people, instead of comparing people with the Bible! Jesus never rated people by comparing them to other people. The Jews of the OT played this game. They compared themselves to the heathen or the Gentiles in order to make themselves "look better" to themselves—they certainly weren't fooling God! The parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Lk. 18:9-14) is a classic illustration of this "comparison game."

Those in Corinth were either "measuring themselves by themselves in order to commend themselves" or were accusing Paul of doing so. Paul said anyone who does that

is “without understanding” (Greek *ou suniasin*, literally, “they don’t have it all together”). Someone in Corinth was senselessly accusing Paul of bragging about having authority in a territory where he had done nothing and inferring he should stay out of their business. Paul says he has every right to exhort and instruct the Corinthian Christians because he was the first to come to them with the gospel (see Acts 18). Paul does not brag or boast or meddle in territories where he has done no work. That is not one of the tactics of his ministry. God had given Paul the territory of Corinth to evangelize (a year and six months, Acts 18:10). The word “limits” is a translation of the Greek word *kanon* “canon, rule, standard, limit.” Someone in Corinth may have been boasting about their authority over the Corinthians (some of the Judaizers, and some puffed-up Gentile Christians) but they had just arrived, and had done no gospel work among them. In one sense of the word, God does place limits on people’s ministries. He directs people to places of ministry, and gives them specific talents for ministries by his providential leading. And one ministry is as important to the Lord as another. There is no need for one servant of God to boast “beyond his limits.” Every servant of the Lord should conduct his service faithfully where he is led by providence and be content with it. He need not “boast beyond the limits” (run outside the lane) God has assigned him. Again, a problem for preachers is caused by the competitive spirit (pride)...disciples wanting the “chief seats,” to sit on the Lord’s “right or left,” to be “the greatest.” This text has nothing to do with “comity agreements” among “denominations.”

There is no scriptural precedent set, nor any command, about how often a preacher should “move on” to a new field of service. Nor should Paul’s words here (or those in Rom. 15:17-29) be used as such. Every preacher has to make up his own mind about that! I believe the decision has to be made on the basis of a preacher’s honest evaluation of his own talents, his understanding of the Lord’s will for stability in ministry, and his own happiness in the ministry. There are some people who enjoy moving around to new places and who do a good work wherever they are. Others prefer to settle in one place for as long as possible. Paul, evidently, was a man who loved to travel and had a passion to preach the gospel where it had never been preached before. But he was also a man who instructed the churches that they should have stable, continuous, resident, long-time ministers (usually paid elders). Of course, Paul had a unique ministry to perform because he was an apostle and could give divine revelation to the churches, and work miracles to confirm the words he preached were from God. It was necessary that he move to as many young churches as possible with the work of an apostle. Think about this! There certainly is an almost overwhelming expanse of un-evangelized territory in the 21st century world! Right here in America! The church of Christ must challenge, teach, inspire, direct, and support a vast army of gospel soldiers to go where no one else has ever been with the Lord’s word! We do need to be concerned about ministerial methods! But we need to be equally (if not more) concerned with mobility! The church must move! It must move into the un-attacked territories! It has before it “open doors.” It is not “powerless,” but has mighty weapons from God! Mission Frontiers, the bulletin of the U.S. Center for World Mission, says, “According to a report received from house church leaders in China, Hu Yoabang, Gen. Sec. of the Chinese Communist Party, told a group of religious leaders that they could have the freedom to evangelize...he said that if a religion is true, the people will accept it, but if it isn’t true, the

people will reject it..." As of this writing, in a world of almost 7 billion people we have 1653 Christian Church missionaries! 972 of those missionaries are on the North American continent! And of that 972, all but 143 (829) are in the USA. That means there are 681 Christian Church missionaries trying to preach the N.T. gospel to five billion, seven hundred fifty million, people. Of course there are indigenous "preachers" in places other than the USA, but they are a small minority. About 1 out of every 1000 Christian Church members is a missionary! 500 church members giving \$20 more per week each to missions would make available \$520,000 per year for missions. How many more missionaries could be supported with \$520,000 per year? If only a husband and wife team received \$15,000 per year (some receive less), that would be about 70 more missionaries. Now if 1000 church members did this the number would double! There are 5103 languages in the world and 3418 of those have no portion of the Bible in their own language at all! How would we like to live and die without ever having read God's word? Why don't we give our money and our children to mission work where it has never gone before?

NO! Preachers (all full-time servants) and elders and deacons and teachers, are responsible for their methods of service not only to the Lord but to those to whom they minister! As needy as the world is for conversion to Christ, the kingdom is built by persuasion. Men must freely choose to follow Jesus. Therefore, methods and tactics which overtly or subtly coerce, manipulate (control, beguile, exploit, finesse, engineer, or manage) "psych," or otherwise circumvent the mental and intentional capacities of the human mind are dishonest, destructive and anti-scriptural tactics of ministry! God's Holy Spirit living in Jesus Christ and the prophets and apostles loved deeply and self-sacrificially the people to whom they preached. However, one cannot read the Bible daily without being impressed with an almost "take it or leave it" approach by these messengers! Jesus told his apostles, "and if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town..." (Matt. 10). Paul practiced this very symbolic action in Acts 13:44ff. Jesus practiced it with individuals and groups. Yes! Preachers are responsible for methods and tactics of ministry. Jesus taught his apostles, his apostles taught their "Timothies." And the church must teach its recruits (the Bible college graduates) responsibility in methods and tactics! But most of all, the church is responsible to produce "ministers" and "missionaries" (i.e., evangelists). It is responsible to support evangelists throughout the world where the gospel has never been preached! God give it the courage and faith to do so! It already has the means!

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-33

In Paul's mind, he was acting foolishly when he had to boast about his "accomplishments" in the ministry. The Greek word translated "fool" or "foolish" or "madman" (11:1,16,17,19,21,23) is *aphrona*, which literally means, "out of one's mind—brainless." All the way through these four chapters (10-13) Paul says he is doing what he despises—i.e., bragging and boasting about what he has done for the Lord! He apologizes every time he has to do so! But Paul knew that it was not his dignity and honor that were at stake, but the dignity and honor of Christ and his church! So he was willing to lower himself in his own eyes and do what was very distasteful for him (no matter what others thought of him) in order to rescue these Christians from seduction by false teachers. He reminds the Corinthians they "gladly bear with fools..." even if a man made slaves of them, or preyed upon them, or took advantage of them, or put on airs, or struck them in the face (11:19-20). While some "Christian" people think of the humble, self-sacrificing, spiritually-minded preacher or missionary as a fool for "giving up so much" and trying to be so "holy"...these same people willingly "bear with" actual fools (false teachers) who tell them what they want to hear! Why are people so willing to enslave themselves to braggarts, exploiters, who seduce them with sophistry and insult ("slap in the face") them? Why are people so eager to be fooled and follow fools? The Bible has the only answer (Isa. 30:9-11; Micah 2:6,11; 3:5; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Tim. 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1ff).

The devil attacked Eve at the most crucial point of spirituality—the mind, the thoughts (Greek *noemata*, "mind, mentality, thinking")! John R. Stott says in his book, *The Mind Matters*, "Faith is not optimism. Faith is a reasoning trust, a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God...in Scripture, the deceit of the mind is commonly laid down as the principle of all sin...Clear Biblical knowledge of God's will is the first secret of a righteous life....The battle is nearly always won in the mind. It is by the renewal of our mind that our character and behavior become transformed...self-control is primarily mind-control. What we sow in our minds we reap in our actions...Men's minds need to be fed just as much as their bodies...And the kind of food our minds devour will determine the kind of person we become..." (Emphasis mine). The devil led Eve's thoughts away from the simplicity of God's truth (Greek, *haplotetos*, "simple, sincere, open, elementary, unsophisticated")! He was "cunning" and "deceived" (Greek, *phthare*, "seduced, beguiled") her with complex, artificial, clever sophisticated falsehoods. He did not attack her body, he brought no irresistible force to bear upon her. He planted cleverly twisted thoughts in her mind by words. What he told her were lies, and they were clearly opposite from what God had told her (so Eve was not defenseless). What the devil promised was immediate and pleasurable "stroking" of the fleshly nature, so Eve succumbed! Notice, Paul says, when these Corinthians received the false teachers they received "a different spirit." This was the spirit of falsehood which characterizes the children of the devil (John 8:44ff). Eve let the



devil in her through her thinking—through her viewpoint! The devil gets in people without demons! HE DOES IT THROUGH THEIR MINDS! This is the way the devil “entered” Judas (John 13:27).

While the word “slander” is not used in this epistle, that is what some at Corinth were doing to Paul. He was at Corinth when he wrote the letter to the Romans and reported that some were slandering him (Rom. 3:8). The word slander in Greek is diabolos, literally, “devil” (see 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3). It means “accuser” (see Rev. 12:10). No wonder Paul said they had received a “different spirit” (i.e., that of the devil) when they received false teachers who were slandering him. The word unskilled in Greek is idiotes (literally, “idiot”). This word originally meant a private individual who took no part in public life. It went on to mean someone with no technical training. Paul was not a graduate of the Greek oratory schools. He was not a polished speaker who could entertain, mesmerize, or “seduce” with words! He was not in that business! They accused him of being inadequate, unschooled, inferior, and therefore, not to be heeded. Paul never pretended or claimed oratorical skill (see 1 Cor. 1:17-25; 2:1-16). But, then, he was teaching “babies” (1 Cor. 3:1ff). The gospel is actually “emptied of its power” by oratorical ostentation and philosophical sophistries! The gospel is facts, not oratory or myth. It is history—the eye-witnessed evidence of God incarnated in Jesus Christ! It needs to be reported, transmitted, announced, but not orated!!! Jesus thanked God that his words were “hidden” from the “wise” but revealed to “babes.” THE GOSPEL IS EYEWITNESSED FACTS (1 Cor. 15:1ff). Paul was not unskilled in knowledge of reality and fact. And he certainly was able to communicate the facts of the Gospel well enough to convert thousands! No one needs skill or eloquence to communicate the Gospel! THE GOSPEL PROBABLY NEEDS A LOT LESS “ELOQUENT ILLUSTRATING” THAN IT IS GETTING—AND MORE SIMPLY PROCLAIMING THE FACTS AND EVIDENCE FOR ITS REALITY! There is a difference between being skilled in oratory and skilled in knowledge! Preachers do not need eloquence, but they do need knowledge! They need knowledge of the word of God! Oh, how they need that! People who are asking questions of the soul and spirit do not want entertainment (oratory, showmanship, jokes, smoothies), they want soberness, seriousness, facts, reasoning, concern, love, kindness. One may have eloquence but be deficient in knowledge and be inadequate for God’s purposes. But one may have knowledge and be deficient in eloquence and still be very useful in the Lord’s work. Apollos was both eloquent and knowledgeable and was a powerful man—but apparently he did not have the drive Paul had to preach where the gospel had never been before. Paul converted many people, though “unskilled in speech,” because he went where people were who had not heard the gospel, and taught it. He was not afraid to declare it wherever he was, and to whomever he confronted. He was bold, blunt, and believable. He was captivated by Christ and concerned for the growth of the church. He was urgent and unashamed. He knew he had “weapons” that were mighty from God, able to bring every thought into captivity to obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). And what did Paul preach? Read the book of Acts. He preached Christ, crucified and risen from the dead; the coming judgment, repentance in response to Christ’s grace, and baptism in order to receive the remission of sins. He had no time to waste on mythologies, politics, economics, the weather, entertainment (dramas, dances, parties,

concerts). He traveled a lot! He wrote a lot! He studied a lot! He worked (making tents) a lot! And he preached (taught) a whole-lot!

Paul “robbed” other churches when he did not take financial support from them—this took away their opportunity to receive a spiritual blessing (see Phil. 4:17). He has already written to this issue in chapters 8 and 9. God does not need what any man gives. The giver is the one who needs to give so he can receive the tremendous spiritual development of his character. Man can become like God only through giving! The sooner we realize this the sooner we will begin to develop the divine nature in our souls! You see, the devil deceived Eve into thinking that to be like God one must take! But what one must do to be like God is give, serve, love, surrender self, and even “obey” (Phil. 2:1-11). When we come to worship God it is to give, not to receive! That is why so many “get nothing out of the worship” because they are there to get something! Had Paul asked the church at Corinth to support him financially, they might have had more of a sense of participating in the fruits of his labors. But someone was slandering Paul because he took nothing from Corinth in financial remuneration. According to ancient Greece, it was beneath a “freeman’s” dignity to work with his hands. In that culture teachers were supposed to make money out of teaching, Caesar Augustus (i.e., Octavian) paid Verrius Flaccus, the rhetorician, an annual salary of \$500,000. Every town was entitled to grant complete exemption from all civic burdens and taxes to a certain number of teachers of rhetoric and literature. Paul robbed Corinth of its “prestige” by being their “working” teacher! Sadly, some congregations today are still bothered by that!

Remember this—Satan is not able to transform himself INTO an angel of light. He disguises himself (Greek, *metaschematizetai*, literally, “schematizes”)—he only makes himself to appear to be “light.” The only thing Satan can do is pretend. He is able only to deceive. He is only a pseudo-ruler. He has no power to rule, to create, or to generate miracles! He can seduce, beguile (Greek, *phthare*, “corrupt, deprave”) but has no power whatsoever except what God has allowed him to have! Another word used of the “false apostles” is the Greek word *dolioi*, which means to “bait, snare, trap” (translated, “deceitful workmen”). There were some who had come to Corinth having “schematized” themselves as “apostles” but they were false (Greek, *pseudapostoloi*, “pseudo-apostles”). They boasted they had the same power and authority as Paul and were doing the same work, preaching the same message. These pseudo-apostles were demanding financial support, preaching “another” Jesus (probably a Mosaic-law Messiah), with “another” gospel, enslaving them, preying upon them, putting on airs, and slapping them in their faces (humiliating them). This was their “disguise”! People at Corinth were sure this was the way a genuine apostle of Christ would act. Paul was humble, self-effacing, not eloquent, unpretentious, poor—a working man who got his hands dirty, preaching a crucified Christ, salvation by grace, and freedom from the law! So his enemies called him a “fool”! They convinced some of the Christians at Corinth that Paul could not be an “apostle” because he was not like they were. When we talk about “leadership” let us be careful that we are not talking about “pseudo-leadership,” “ram-rods,” “bosses,” “head-honchos”!

Paul uses “biting” words to describe the stupidity of the Corinthians. They might as well bear with Paul’s “foolish” boasting about his work for the Lord and his apostleship, because they bear with the “fools” who are disguising themselves as apostles. The Corinthians were “fools” themselves (Greek, aphrona “out of their minds”) for they were willing to “bear with” men who enslaved them, preyed upon them (Greek, katesthiei, “devoured”), took advantage of them, put on airs (Greek, epairetai, “exalted themselves”), and struck them in the face (Greek, prosopon humas derei, literally, beat your face”). Only a religious fool would allow himself to be dominated, devoured, “taken,” humiliated, and psychologically slapped around. What fool but a religious fool would think that the true “spiritual leader” sent from God is supposed to dominate people and use them and abuse them? Perhaps that is why so many people want no part of Christ and his church. They have grown up under the devil’s deception and the “disguise” of pseudo-apostles, and are not fooled, and want no part of it. They think all of Christianity is represented by these “disguised” messengers of light. Paul minced no words in denouncing the pseudo-messengers of God. He pulled no punches in calling those who followed them “fools.” There is an application for every person in our city in this passage! There are a lot of “religious fools” in our city.

Paul was humble. He taught others that humility is what Christ exemplified and what God desires in all men (Phil. 2:3-11). “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves...” But here, Paul is counting himself “better” than the pseudo-apostles who were trying to seduce the Corinthian church! Is that any way to conduct a ministry? Will that rescue the Corinthians? Again, it was extremely distasteful to Paul to have to do this. He said, “I am speaking as a fool”... “I am talking like a mad man!” Nevertheless, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the gospel he preached precisely what the Corinthians needed—it had to be done! His credentials as the true apostle and authorized spokesman for God must be established. His true love for the church and the gospel must be vindicated. He spoke in plain, factual, historical terminology because he loved them. He is even doing what grinds against his conscience, and boasting, because he loves them! There are occasions, hopefully few, when true, humble, serving, working preachers have to “show” they are as knowledgeable, as caring, as able, committed, and even more so, than the hundreds of pseudo-messengers of God today! Too many people follow messengers, rather than the message. Occasionally, the messenger with the true message has to “boast” of his messenger-ship to turn the “fool” away from disguised, deceitful pseudo-messengers!

Jesus told us that we should not be anxious. In fact, he commanded us not to be anxious (Matt. 6:25-34). But not anxious about what? He told us not to be anxious about matters of the world. Paul certainly “learned” that in whatever state of the world he found himself, he could be content (Phil. 4:10-13). He even faced death, with calm faith and hope (2 Cor. 1:8-11; Phil. 1:20-23; Acts 25:11; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). But he was “pressured” and “anxious” about the churches! The word pressure is from the Greek word epistasis which literally is, “stand upon,” or “weigh upon” and the word “anxiety” is from merimna (the same word used by Matthew 6:25-34) which means, “divided mind” or “distraction” or “harassed,

tormented, troubled, worried.” It pictures someone who is trying to make two contradictory (divided) propositions both be true—a logical impossibility! Paul’s “care” for the churches was a daily thing (not monthly or annually). It was a burden he carried every day! It kept his mind occupied. His thoughts were daily distracted to the troubles of the churches. He worried about them suffering persecution. He worried about their divisiveness. He worried about their being lead astray by false teachers. He worried about their need for spiritual growth. He worried about their need to minister to others. It is not wrong to occupy our minds with cares and pressures of the church and spiritual things. Jesus wants us to be “distracted” from the things of the world and “attracted” to the things of the Spirit! If we worried and fretted and cared half as much about spiritual things as we do physical things, thousands more people would hear the gospel; thousands more parents would direct their children to be preachers and missionaries. Concern for the church is not a lack of faith! TRYING TO MAKE FALSEHOOD BECOME TRUTH IS WHAT “ANXIETY” REALLY IS!

Paul summarizes: “If I must boast, I will boast of things that showed my weakness.” Number one—the time he was let down over the way in a basket. After Paul’s conversion he was obsessed with showing the Jews from the OT that Jesus was the Messiah and converting the Jewish nation. He was eminently qualified for this ministry to the Jews. That was his burning desire (Rom. 9:2-3). So he started out to do it (Acts 9:1-31). But things kept falling apart until they reached such a terrible state that his friends, fearing for his life, took him out to the Damascus city wall and let him down from the city in a basket. “The night I became a basket case—that is the event I will boast about!” Isn’t that interesting? Looking back, with all his own plans and dreams of glory for Christ collapsed around his feet, that was the night he began to learn a great truth—appearances, physical attributes, are not what qualify a person as a servant of Christ! We are being bombarded with the philosophy that such things are what make us useable as Christians—a strong personality, an outgoing, optimistic outlook, gifts of leadership, handsome frame and body, musical ability, speaking ability—all these are the things we think that God must use! WHAT A MISTAKE, Paul says here. GOD USES WEAKNESSES! All the physical, outward attributes Paul once counted gain he decided were nothing but a pile of manure in contrast to what he learned in weakness. There is no truth the Lord wants us to learn which is greater than that! The opponents of Paul at Corinth slandered him as “weak.” Paul replies, “I gladly boast of my weaknesses..I am content with them (see 2 Cor. 12:7-10). Human strengths without Christ are dung—weaknesses with Christ are gold!

# TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-21

In the Greek N.T. Paradise is, paradeisos. In 12:2 Paul says literally, in Greek, tritou houranou, “the third heaven.” In 12:4 Paul uses paradeison, Paradise referring to “the third heaven.” Vine’s Expository Dictionary says “Paradise is an oriental word, first used by the historian Xenophon, denoting the parks of Persian kings and nobles. It is of Persian origin (Old Persian, pairidaeza, akin to the Greek peri, “around,” and teichos, “a wall”). Paradise passed into the Septuagint (the OT in Greek) where translators used it of the Garden of Eden, Gen. 2:8) and otherwise in Num. 24:6; Isa. 1:30; Jer. 29:5; Ezek. 31:8-9.” In Luke 23:43, Jesus promised the penitent thief that he would be with the Savior that very day in “Paradise.” Jesus sent a letter to the church at Ephesus and told all who “conquered” they would be granted to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7). Paul was caught up “to the third heaven”....i.e., “Paradise.” He was caught up, whether in the body or not he could not tell, beyond the heavens of the natural creation (see Heb. 4:14) into the presence of Christ. We assume “Abraham’s bosom” (Lk. 16:19-31) is the same as “Paradise.” There the beggar was “comforted” while the miserly rich man was in “torments.” Paradise is: (a) a beautiful, perfect garden where man enjoys, works, has immediate association with God; (b) where Jesus has gone having finished man’s justification before God and where he takes all who trust in him; (c) heaven, beyond this created universe, not subject to its futility, decay and doom. No hunger or thirst is there—no scorching heat—no tears (Rev. 7:15-17). It is a place of eternal joy—no death, no mourning, no sorrow, no pain, no ugliness, no cares, no darkness—a place to worship God, serve him, and bask in his beauty and goodness. Paradise is a “walled-in,” city which cannot be completely described by human language (Rev. 21:1—22:1-21). Paradise is “the new heaven and earth” where the saved will dwell in complete security and joy with God and Christ. Paradise is seen by faith. It is “granted” to us by God’s grace. We don’t deserve it, but God will as surely give it to us certainly as he raised his Son from the tomb! God is faithful to keep his word! It is beyond description in its reality! It is better than we can think or imagine! It is beyond comparison (2 Cor. 4:16-18)! It is beyond what human language can describe and beyond man’s wildest imagination! The best that can be done is Genesis chapter one and Revelation chapters twenty-one and twenty-two. The Bible talks about Paradise at its beginning and ending. It is pleasant beyond imagining, fulfilling beyond imagining, good beyond imagining, forever beyond imagining, enjoyable beyond imagining. How could God love us so? We are not worthy! And Paul saw it, heard it, and would not boast about it!

Paul didn’t boast about being caught into Paradise because he did not get there on his own power—he was an invited, transported, guest! He was “caught up to the third heaven” (Greek, harpagenta heos tritou ouranou). Harpagenta (“caught”) means, “to snatch or catch away” (Acts 8:39; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 12:5) and has the idea of “some force suddenly exercised.” Paul did not climb a golden ladder, or a bean-stalk, he was “snatched”

into Paradise instantly, but temporarily. He couldn't remember whether he was in the body or out of the body! He was so captivated by what he saw and heard he paid no attention to whether he had a body or not! That's how marvelous it will be in Paradise! Here, we pay so much attention to the body we can't enjoy life. But there it will be just the opposite. Paul had a revelation of the Lord that was (Greek, arreta hrematta), "unspeakable in words"; and (Greek, ouk exon anthropo laesai) "impermissible for man to utter.". He was undoubtedly overwhelmed with the majesty, awesomeness, perfection, holiness, power and goodness of God. He was like Isaiah—only a million times more (Isa. 6). He was like Daniel and John who fell down as if dead when they were in the presence of an angel. He was not "permitted" to speak of these things he saw and heard. God assigned certain persons the job of speaking of Paradise and God assigned only certain aspects of it to be described. God has his reasons for keeping knowledge of Paradise limited to the Bible we now have! Paul would not "boast" of his unique trip to Paradise and back! Although he, and perhaps the apostle John, were the only ones with such an experience, he would not boast because it was not his doing, but the Lord's! Perhaps he saw the same thing John saw going on there—great potentates casting down their crowns in deep humility before the throne of Christ! It was a "trip" for Paul that made all boasting utterly foolish—absolutely disgusting, repugnant, stupid and blasphemous! Not even an apostle who miraculously spoke in foreign languages, healed people, raised people from the dead, commissioned to write the living and abiding word of God for all time, and was transported to Paradise, would boast! How dare we boast of anything!

Paul says his thorn (Greek, skolopsi, "anything pointed or sharp like a stake or thorn") in the flesh (Greek, te sarki) was "given" (Greek, edothe—aorist tense, or past tense), "in order lest he should be exceedingly uplifted" (Greek, hina me huperairomai). The verb huperairomai is present tense as well as the verb kolaphize, "Harass," indicating recurrent action, or a constantly repeated attack upon his flesh. The Greek noun skolopsi, or "thorn" is probably being used metaphorically of some physical ailment that was "sharp and stabbing." This "sharp attack" upon his flesh was "given" by God in some form as "a messenger of Satan" (Greek, angelos satana). God permitted Satan to "harass" (Greek, kolaphize, "strike with clenched hands, buffet with the fist"—see Matt. 16:67; Mark 14:65; 1 Cor. 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:20) Paul continually to keep Paul from being proud, arrogant and boasting. We do not know what his "thorn" was. We might speculate, but what the thorn was is irrelevant. The fact that God permitted Satan to do it is the problem! Isn't that cruel? Why would God want to work through Satan? Couldn't God keep us humble in other ways? Paul is not the only person in the Bible, or in history, who has had a "thorn in the flesh from Satan." Remember Job? His "thorn" did not last all the days of his life on earth, but it gave him pause for thought! Every person in this congregation has an ongoing, continuing "thorn in the flesh" of some kind or another! Paul's "thorn" was (a) to keep him from elevating himself; (b) to make him a vessel of God's power in the world. It was a continual reminder to him that he was not sufficient of himself. He absolutely needed God's grace! He would be nothing but lost without God's grace. Grace was the all-sufficient need Paul had and it was administered through a "thorn in the flesh." Remember, God has "subjected all this creation to futility...and bondage to decay" so that the whole creation will "groan and travail...as it waits for adoption

as sons, and the redemption of earthly bodies” (Rom. 8:18-25).

C. S. Lewis writes in, *The Problem of Pain*, “When Christianity says that God loves man, it means that God loves man: not that he has some ‘disinterested,’ really indifferent, concern for our welfare, but that, in awful and surprising truth, we are the objects of his love. You asked for a loving God: you have one. The great Spirit you so lightly invoked, the ‘Lord of terrible aspect,’ is present: not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, not the cold philanthropy of a conscientious magistrate, nor the care of a host who feels responsible for the comfort of his guests, but the consuming fire himself, the love that made the worlds, persistent as the artist’s love for his work and despotic as a man’s love for a dog, provident and venerable as a father’s love for a child, jealous, inexorable, exacting as love between the sexes....The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who loves, is only insoluble so long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word ‘love,’ and look on things as if man were the center of them. Man is not the center. God does not exist for the sake of man. Man does not exist for his own sake. ‘Thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.’ We were made not primarily that we may love God (though we were made for that too), but that God may love us, that we may become objects in which the divine love may rest ‘well pleased.’ To ask that God’s love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God....What we would here and now call our ‘happiness’ is not the end God chiefly has in view: but when we are such as he can love without impediment, we shall in fact be happy.” I have quoted a full page from Lewis’s book to help us appreciate that God’s grace—even though it may include a “thorn in the flesh” is sufficient to make us into a person God can really take pleasure in—a person humble, dependent upon him, firm in faith and conviction of his goodness, grateful, and able to serve him and others. What did it take for Jesus to be able to work through people while he was here on earth? He worked miracles on that which was matter, physical, by sheer force—but his SPIRITUAL power he could work only through those who allowed themselves to come under the PERSUASIVE POWER OF HIS GRACE. Grace (or love) is the most persuasive power there is. If grace cannot mold a person into someone God can enjoy and take pleasure in, nothing else can! Grace is all sufficient. Paul needed nothing else. For God to say to an apostle, “My grace is sufficient for you,” is to say everything there is to be said! It is the ultimate statement from God—“My grace is sufficient”—that eliminates a long, long list of things WE think are sufficient. Money, fame, influence, comfort, political freedom, being liked, friendships, happiness, independence, pride—all these things we sometimes believe to be necessary for our sufficiency. NOT SO, SAYS THE LORD! We are not to have spiritual power just for power’s sake. The power to be spiritual, is for God’s sake! So he can love us with divine consummation. Grace is sufficient because the power of God is made perfect (i.e., reaches its goal) in weakness!

Do you have a weakness? Every human being has one—or more! If it isn’t apparent now, it will be when the “grim reaper” edges closer and closer! Every human being has a weakness called “flesh”! Some have “thorns” driven into that flesh early in life, some later, but everyone sooner or later! God said to Paul, “My power is made perfect in weakness.” The Greek word for “perfect” is teleitai, present tense. It means, God’s power is

being continually brought to its goal, its completion, its aim, in weakness. And what is the goal of weakness? It is to give us something in which we may “boast” and to make us content with God’s grace. The Greek word eudoko is translated “content” and means literally, “well pleased”! Are you content with insults (Greek, hubresin, English, “hubris, arrogance, haughtiness, insolence); hardships (Greek, anagkais, “being needy, hard-up, destitute”); persecutions (Greek, diogmois, “pursuit, chased, hounding”); calamities (Greek, stenochoriais, literally, “narrowness of place, between a rock and a hard place, short end of the stick, etc.—anguish and distress”). Are you “well-pleased” with such weaknesses and “thorns” in your life? We’re not talking here about stoic resignation...we are talking pleased—well-pleased. Are these weaknesses, with the divine assurance of grace, all you need? Could you get by on just that? Lord, deliver us from our usual reaction to weakness--- shame, complaint, resentment, excusing our sins by claiming weakness.. It is the way of the world to glorify human strength, beauty, fame, power, wealth, independence. But the way of God is diametrically opposite. The creature presumptuously declares that his Creator admires human power. The Creator declares he admires human weakness, dependency, submission, faith, gratitude—trusting totally in the Creator’s grace. No room for merit there. No room for demanding there. No room for bragging there (except in weakness). Look at the history book (the Bible) of God’s dealing with mankind. God’s power rested (Greek, episkenose, “overshadowed”) on weak men, not strong ones, i.e., Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, John.

The signs of a true apostle, as everyone knows is: (a) having seen the risen Lord; (b) miracles (including raising the dead); (c) preaching the gospel of grace by divine revelation and freedom from the laws requirements and penalties. But what Paul is dealing with here, in context, is another very important sign of a true apostle—“well-pleased” with weaknesses! Humility, dependence on God’s grace as his all sufficiency, working to edify Christians and congregations—all are signs of a true apostle. Signs of a false apostle are: (a) having not seen the risen Lord; (b) no true miracles (especially raising the dead); (c) preaching without divine revelation a gospel of law, arrogance, pride self-righteousness, displeased with weaknesses, independent, dividing the church, and tearing down individuals. There aren’t any true apostles in the world today! There can’t be! All who claim to be are arrogating to themselves position and power the Lord gave to only a few in the first century!

J. B. Phillips paraphrases 12:14-15, “Now I am all ready to visit you for the third time, and I am still not going to be a burden to you. It is you I want—not your money. Children don’t have to put by their savings for their parents; parents do that for their children. Consequently, I will most gladly spend and be spent for your good, even though it means that the more I love you the less you love me.” In context, Paul is talking about young children at home who do not support the parents—the parents support the children. Paul is not going to ask the Corinthian church (his “baby”) to support him—he will “support” (edify) them. He will “spend and be spent” for their souls. Of course, Paul would not contradict the rest of the Bible and say children have no responsibility to “honor” (i.e., support) aged parents who need it. That is the “first commandment with a promise.” Evidently, those pseudo-apostles, servants of Satan, were “preying” on the church and demanding that the church support



them. The pseudo-apostle will not “spend and be spent.” He will not be satisfied with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. This approach by Paul toward the Corinthian church shows that, while he was “severe” in his words to get them to repent, his heart toward them was like a father toward his children. He is ready to spend himself (pour out his life’s energies) in order to “lay up an heritage” for them. He wants nothing for himself—he wants to put everything aside for their use and enjoyment.

Paul puts it this way: “Are you thinking all this time that I am trying to justify myself in your eyes? Actually I am speaking in Christ before God himself, and my only reason for so doing is to help you in your spiritual life” (J. B. Phillips paraphrase). Paul’s listing of what he had suffered, what he was as a Jew and an apostle, what he had accomplished was not to build up his reputation so he could make more money, or gain more control over the Corinthians—it was to mature them in their spiritual union with Christ. It was to help them benefit from and enjoy their heritage as Christians. Paul’s “boasting” about himself was to sustain the Corinthians in giving their attention and loyalty to God’s word and keep them from being seduced by the pseudo-apostles (ministers of Satan). Paul did not want to have to constantly recite his credentials and all the proofs that he was an apostle. If Paul had to continually go around proving that he was an apostle, people would soon think that was all he was interested in and find it repugnant. They would begin to question his integrity and the reality of his apostleship. But false teachers are so cunning—so deceitful. They do not have the constraints of truth and love that Christians are bound to so they can say anything, do anything, pretend anything in order to seduce people. Therefore, Christian messengers have to continually “prove” the authority of their message over and over and over and over! I mean, WE HAVE TO KEEP ON PREACHING ABOUT THE EVIDENCES FOR THE INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY OF THE BIBLE! People still think Christians are egotists when they repeatedly take stands that conform to the word of God. Many think Christians are pig-headed, loud-mouthed, bigots when all they are trying to do is keep God’s beloved creatures from being seduced by Satan’s “angels.”

Paul’s fear about his forthcoming “third” visit to Corinth starts with his fear of what he may find when he gets there (12:20). They may not be what he wished when he gets there—and if that is so, he may not be what they wish he would be! He feared (from reports he was getting) that he might find them still “quarreling” (Greek, eris, “the goddess of strife”), “jealous” (Greek, zelos), “angry” (Greek, thumoi), “selfish” (Greek, eritheiai, “rivalrous”), “slandorous” (Greek, katalaliai, “speaking against”), “gossiping” (Greek, psithurismoi, “whispering”), “conceited” (Greek, phusioseis, “puffed up”), and “disordered” (Greek, akatastasiai, “rioting, chaotic”). To this list he adds in verse 21, “impurity” (Greek, akatharsia, “unclean”), and “immorality” (Greek, porneia, “pornographic, i.e., fornicators”), and “licentious” (Greek, aselgeia, “lewd”)—all sexual sins which were so common in Corinth. Don’t think America is “bad”—when it gets to be a “common” life-style among most people like Corinth, then it will be “bad”. Now, what Paul feared, was their continuing in gross wickedness and that would prove that his work among them had, after all, been in vain. That would be humbling to Paul. Not that Paul was afraid of humility. It was a large part of his character already. But Paul is using the word “humble” here in a different sense—a sense of

“shameful.” More than “humbling,” it would cause Paul grief, mourning, broken heartedness. He would be devastated like a father who had “spent” himself to lay up a magnificent heritage for his children only to have the children disappoint, disregard, and despise both the heritage and the father. Paul is closing his letter to Corinth—his last one—and he wants them to know he has tried to be like the “father” in the “prodigal” parable. That is what the “ministry” is all about

## TEACHER'S NOTES 2nd CORINTHIANS

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-14

We do not know the specific “charge” (RSV) or “matter” (NIV). Actually, the Greek text reads, *pan hrema*, literally, “every word.” Paul is quoting Deut. 19:15 here in 2 Cor. 13:1. In verse 2 he uses two Greek words *proieireka* and *prolego* both of which mean “told you before” to emphasize that he had already warned them about some matter. Some think his warning here goes all the way back to 1 Cor. 6 where the Corinthians had lawsuits against one another. He is trying to tell them how God wants such things settled. Others think Paul intends to “set up court” when he arrives for the third visit (an ecclesiastical court), try those who are “sinning without repenting” and execute needed punishments. In the overall context, however, I think it better to assume he is referring to some slanderous “charges” (or “words”) that his opponents have brought against him. There are innuendos and hints all the way throughout 2 Corinthians that such slander is going on. Charges are being made against him about money, about preying upon them, about his vacillations, etc. It appears he will bring these out in the open (see 2 Cor. 10:1-6) and demand that his opponents prove their “charges” with two or three witnesses, or repudiate them! If Paul’s opponents are truly followers of Christ they will be glad to clear up any “charges” against Paul. They will do so by this scripturally sanctioned procedure—evidence, by eyewitnesses, must establish every “charge.” This is the procedure Jesus ordered for his kingdom here on earth (see Matt. 18:15-20). This same procedure is to be followed in Christ’s kingdom (the church) to this very day! This is the way to deal with “charges” in the church.

Evidently, Paul had not demanded evidence and witnesses about the slanderous things being said about him when he visited Corinth the “second” time. He had let the matter pass, believing the Corinthians would know better than to be seduced by false teachers. So, what did they do? They accused him of “weakness” and “vacillation” because he tried to let the matter pass—hoping to spare Corinth pain (and spare himself pain). But the seduction worsened! Many were about to be led astray! He must face it down—the falsehoods must be challenged, tried and exposed. The liars must be repudiated. He is “practicing what he preached” to the evangelist Titus (Titus 1:9-14) He had warned them during his “second visit” that if the matter of the false teachers was not settled, he would come a “third time” and would not spare them. It appears there were some in Corinth who had been persuaded that Paul had not proved Christ’s authority in his ministry. They insinuated that he must demonstrate some proof—perhaps by a miracle or something. Paul had taken severe measures against false teachers, to prove his authority from Christ, on the island of Paphos at the start of his first missionary journey (Acts 13:6-12)—he didn’t want to have to do that at Corinth! Paul is saying, “You have asked for proof that I am what I claim—the true apostle of Christ. You shall have it, but you will not like it. I will show you my power by not sparing those who need punishment.” The Greek word used here, *phesomai*, is almost always used in connection with “sparing” some punishment. Paul had demonstrated his power to punish

false-teachers at Paphos when he miraculously made Elymas blind. What must God have reserved in eternity for false teachers? Remember Peter with Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-16), and Moses with Pharaoh.

Could it be that some of the false teachers at Corinth had led some of the church members to think Christ had been “weak” because he let himself be crucified? Do not forget that is what the Jewish Sanhedrin thought—what the majority of the populace of Jerusalem thought—what Pilate thought—even what his own apostles and disciples thought at first! There were those in Corinth having trouble with the resurrection of Christ (see 1 Cor. 15). It would have been an opportunity the Judaizers would welcome to try to persuade some that a “crucified Messiah” is a “weak” Messiah—or a Messiah not advocating the Mosaic law and Judaistic system was a “weak” Messiah. But Paul says, “The Messiah is not weak in what he is doing in you, is he? He is powerful. The very fact that you are Christians compared to what some of you were (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11) is a demonstration of his power.” Furthermore, all the powerful spiritual gifts they had been exercising by Paul’s mediation in the name of Christ was also proof of Christ’s power. Did they get all this “power” from a Christ of Mosaic law and a Jewish religious system? Many philosophies and theologies today look upon the Christ of the Bible as a “weak” Christ. So they set about to make him powerful by eliminating all the miraculous, all the grace, all the moral goodness he embodied in the Gospel record. The world arrogantly thinks it knows what “power” is and insists that any “Messiah” must conform to its catalog of “power.”

There is only one way any man or woman can really “examine” self (13:5)! That is by reading the Bible! “Know thyself,” said the Greek philosopher Plato. But you can’t know yourself said Jeremiah, the prophet of Almighty God—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt: who can understand it? I search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, says the Lord” (Jer. 17:9). This same apostle Paul verified that he would not even judge himself because he would be an imperfect judge of himself—and only the Lord could judge him (know him) perfectly (1 Cor. 4:3-5). The Bible is the living word of God, operative (“energized”) and incisive (“penetrating”) into the soul and spirit...“critiquing” thoughts and intentions of a heart! (Heb. 4:12-13). It should appear altogether logical that if one wants to “test” himself as to whether he is “holding to his Christian faith” he will compare his thinking and acting to the objective standard in which the Christian faith is delineated—the New Testament. That is what Paul is telling the Corinthians to do here—“examine” themselves according to the true word of God which he had preached and written to them which is the divinely-sanctioned objective standard—not according to “another gospel” or “another Jesus” of the false teachers. Their false teachings were purely and simply based on the false teacher’s subjective “imagination” and “arrogance.” The Greek word Paul uses for “examine” and “test” are *peirazete* and *dokimazete*. Both words are used to indicate a procedure by which something is tried, tested, submitted to examination, in order to prove genuineness, reality, truth, and factuality. Both words indicate a procedure by which something is compared with an objective standard to prove its conformity to the standard—thus passing the test or satisfying the examination. Christians are people who take the Bible in hand, read it, believe it, and examine their thoughts and

their deeds according to what Christ and his apostles say in the Bible—not according to what they, themselves, subjectively or wishfully WANT him to say. True disciples of Christ examine themselves according to what he, Christ, and the Holy Spirit HAS ACTUALLY SAID—according to what the words mean, contextually, historically, grammatically. Pooled human knowledge, social mores, technological advancement, human autonomy, has no right to say the words of Christ and his apostles must mean something different today simply because they were spoken 2000 years ago! WOULD ANYONE ASSUME THE RIGHT TO INTERPRET THE WORDS OF WINSTON CHURCHILL AS THEY WISH JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE SAID ALMOST 100 YEARS AGO? The words of Jesus and his apostles mean today what they meant when they said them. In practice, they may have to be applied with technological advances, but spiritually, morally, psychologically, philosophically their principles and standards of conduct remain the same, because they mean the same as they did then! But the huge majority of the world (including many religious people) want to “examine” the human heart by human subjective standards. They want to rewrite the Bible to conform it to subjectivism (i.e. “feeling”). It is a moral “cop-out” to usurp God’s sovereignty and enthrone man’s. Man is not to follow his own heart (Deut. 8:11,14,19; Num. 15:39).

It is very important to notice the order of Paul’s statements in these next verses (13:5-7). First, they are to examine themselves (by the word Paul preached to them) to see if they have received God’s grace. Second, if they have become Christians by receiving the gospel invitation through faith, repentance (i.e., a changed mind) and baptism, then Christ is in them. Parenthetically, Paul hopes his ministry has not failed to bring them into Christ. Third, if they have received the gospel, are in God’s grace and “in” Christ, he prays they will not do wrong (Greek, kakon, “evil”) but that they will do right (Greek, kalon, “good”), even if they have judged Paul to be a failure! Paul is not saying a person has to be “right” or “good” in order to become a Christian, but that after he has become one, by the grace of God, he should constantly examine himself according to God’s objective standard of “good” and do it by the power of Christ which is in him! We belong to God by grace. And that grace should lead us to constant examination and mental submission to God’s direction as to what is good which will result in deeds which God says are “good.” Even if the Corinthians considered Paul a “failure,” that did not justify them from examining themselves by the gospel of Christ which Paul preached (which he proved was authentic among them by miracles). Men do fail—even apostles. God never fails! His standards never vary. His grace never disappears. And if we have received it and are in Christ we must move steadily toward the good no matter what other men may do! Jesus told the rich, young, ruler that “only God is good.”

While it may appear to the Corinthians that Paul was a “failure” he asserts that his every word and action toward the Corinthians was motivated by his desire to do the truth. He would never knowingly do anything against (Greek, kata, “opposite”) the truth. He morally and conscientiously, always wanted to be for the truth. If he failed, it was not because he was against truth. Even when he was persecuting Christians, he “believed” he was “doing God a service” and standing for the truth. Now, that kind of a person, can become a follower of Jesus! But those who have no intentions of doing what is true, if truth should displease them, they can never become Christians no matter how “orthodox” their behavior (e.g. the

Pharisees). God knows that no human being can be perfect, but any one whose desires to know the truth, have the truth and do the truth will come under Christ's grace where there is no condemnation (see Rom. 7:21—8:8). The Greek word *katartisin* is translated "improvement" (13:9), but is literally, "set in order again" or "restoration" or "repair." It is the same word as is translated "mend your ways" in 13:11. It means "restoration by restitution" if necessary. In other words, Paul urges the Corinthians to return to their "newly-wed" status with Christ. They need to restore their "marriage" to Jesus and renounce any and all relationships to the false teachers who would enslave them to legalism. Paul used this same Greek word in 1 Cor. 1:10 where it is translated "united." Our relationship to Christ needs constant "repair" or "restoration" or "joining"—just like a human marriage!

Paul hopes this letter will "repair" their relationship to Christ. If it doesn't, he will have to use his apostolic authority, "severely" (Greek, *apotomos*, "sharply, curtly, cuttingly, abruptly"). Does apostolic authority wielded "curtly" edify—build up? It did in the first century! Check the book of Acts. After the experience with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things. More than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes, both of men and women. Paul's curtness with the Corinthians, Galatians, and others seems to have saved many in those congregations from false teachers. Jesus wrote "curt" letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor in Revelation. The prophets spoke "curtly" to an idolatrous nation of Israel and saved a "remnant" to bring the Messiah into the world. So, what are we dealing with here? With eternity! With heaven and hell! All the severity necessary to "restore" or "mend" a person's "marriage" to Christ will receive glad thanks as the eternity rolls on in heaven! It may not be appreciated here by those whose perspective is limited to the ease and comfort of the flesh. But then, no discipline for the moment is pleasurable (Heb. 12:11). Paul was a man who cared for people's eternal blessedness. He was willing to sacrifice their momentary displeasure with his apostolic "curtness" for their salvation! Are you?

This is not exactly a most tactful way to end a letter! Paul writes, "Finally, brethren, fare you well, restore yourselves, admonish yourselves, think and say the same thing (i.e., "agree with one another"), be at peace..." He is saying, "straighten yourselves out." The Greek words to *auto phroneite*, are literally, "the same things you all—think!" *Phroneite* is a present tense, imperative mood, verb, meaning, "I command you to go on continually being of the same thinking..." Remember, Paul started his "First" letter to the Corinthians with the same admonition (1 Cor. Ch. 1). It doesn't mean every Christian has to have the same "opinion," where opinions are permissible. But it does mean that every Christian must think the same way where the Bible specifically clarifies itself—where commandments and promises are clearly made! The Bible is GOD'S word, not man's! And when God commands, every man must see the command the same way, think the same way about it, and do the same obedience! Where there are no specific commands, every Christian must think the same way about HOW opinions are to be exercised, not WHAT opinion may be held! This matter of "thinking the same" is of utmost significance for Paul to begin and end his two epistles to Corinth with it, i.e., doctrine, teaching, apostolic authority, the gospel, is of supreme importance. What we think about the gospel and apostolic doctrine determines our

eternal destiny and that of others!

If we have the “grace of Christ” and the “love of God” and the “fellowship of the Holy Spirit” we need nothing more! That was Paul’s summary benediction upon the Corinthian church. That is what he wished for them. Sum it all up and that is what they needed! Sum it all up and in every circumstance we may find ourselves, whether starving to death, dying in a hospital, being killed by some persecutor or not—this is all we need! For this body which we so devotedly try to preserve (by eating, exercise, protecting, doctoring) must be shed before we enter Paradise! All of that which we are deceived into thinking we desperately need, in the end, is not needed at all! If we are trusting in the grace of Christ, trusting in the love of God and sharing with the Holy Spirit in his work in our lives and in the world, nothing can separate us from Paradise! As a matter of fact, we would probably be more apt to have the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit if we had less of what this world has given us! Most certainly, if we have more of this world than we need, we’d better be giving some of it away so it can make “friends” for us. Sooner or later, it will all be left behind—even this body! Let us learn to be content with weakness (transitoriness) because in that, with God’s grace, Christ’s love and the companionship of the Holy Spirit, we can be eternally powerful.

## Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

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