

# Spurgeon on 2 Corinthians Pt 2

## 2 CORINTHIANS SERMONS

BY C H SPURGEON

### Part 2

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2 Corinthians 8:9 Our Lord's Voluntary Poverty

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“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye, through his poverty, might be rich.” — 2 Corinthians 8:9

THE apostle was anxious to stir up the Corinthian church to liberality. They were a church of very great talents. They were an unusually gifted church, so that they were able to maintain in their midst a form of worship which is not often maintained, and could not conveniently become the general form in the Christian church, namely, that a large proportion of the members spoke to edification, whereas in most other churches there was no such abundance of spiritual gift. They were in the midst of a city of polished inhabitants, and it had pleased God to send in that city some of the ablest men. But they seem to have been far from taking the front rank in some respects. They needed to be exhorted to purge themselves from a sin which no church ever had tolerated that had a ministry, and which only that church would allow, because it was nobody's business to look after it, and so it was not looked after. This sin was a great lack of liberality in giving. Now, in order to excite the church at Corinth, the apostle uses as an argument, first of all, the great liberality of the far poorer church in Macedonia. He says that in the midst of their poverty they gave, not only up to their power, but generously beyond it. It is right for us to stimulate the zeal of one Christian by the example of another Christian; and it is the bounden duty of all believers so to walk that they may be worthy to be examples to the rest of the flock.

But even this argument is a poor one, compared with that which the apostle was more constantly using, namely, the example of Christ, the church's great Head and Exemplar. He deals, indeed, an efficient blow at all selfishness when leaving the churches of Macedonia out of the question he says, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh! that blessed Master of ours! Surely he is useful to us in ten thousand ways! There is not a single part of him; there is no position he takes, no action he performs, no word that drops from his lips, no thought of his heart, no aspect of his matchless character that is not serviceable to us, his people. Even in his poverty he becomes our instructor, just as in his death he becomes our Savior.

Without keeping longer from the text, we shall, first of all, ask you to consider the example presented to us, contemplating it in its various phases; and then, secondly, let me, in few but earnest words, urge you to follow his example in acts of gratitude.

#### I. The Example Presented To Us.

It is that of our Lord, of whom Paul said, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It seems, then, that Christ's coming from heaven to earth to suffer for us is here called “grace.” It was an act of grace on his part — an act purely gratuitous. He was not bound to have done it. We did not deserve it at his hands. It was no merit of ours foreseen, or of any other kind, which could have been potent to attract him from the skies and drag him to the manger and the tomb; but he came as an act of free mercy to undeserving sinners. It was grace which was the source and fountain of his coming. That eternal love of God, by which we were first chosen, was the same love which sent the Savior to redeem the chosen. It was that grace from which all covenant mercies spring — the ancient well-head of distinguishing grace — which brought the Savior here. It was because he, being God, was love; because he, being God, was full of grace, and truth, that he therefore left the realms above that he might lift us up to them by his coming down from them into the depths of our misery. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We ought to gaze upon the cross perpetually, I think, in that light of its being altogether an act of grace on Christ's part, and the result of grace towards us on the part of the divine Father.

Oh! you nothing there, sinners, towards you but grace.

Tis mercy fills the throne.

While wrath stands silent by

The wrath falls upon the Savior, but all that you have to see in Christ now to-day is grace, pure grace, grace to take away the sin

which made him bleed; grace to accept the sinner, who was guilty of his death. The cross reveals to us grace on the throne, grace at its culminating point; grace triumphant and resplendent in the uttermost degree. Who would see grace, let him behold a bleeding Savior, bearing the griefs of men upon himself, and suffering in their stead. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," the kindness, the bounty, the benevolence, the generosity, the compassion, the condescension, the tenderness, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And when Paul had thus named the deed which the Savior did, and labeled it with the title of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," he follows it up by mentioning the heights from which the Savior descended: "who through he was rich." It has been well observed that this little sentence is a clear proof that our Savior had an existence before he was born into this world, that, in fact, he was divine, for it is said that "he was rich, and that he became poor." Now, he never was rich in this life — never.

If it should be said that he was rich at one time with the Holy Spirit, as Unitarians have said, in order to get rid of the force of this verse, then he never did become poor in that sense. There was no period of the Savior's life on earth in which it could be said that he was rich, but he became poor. It must, therefore, have been in a previous state of being that our Lord was rich, and I shall now ask your thoughts to go back to the time when Jesus Christ was rich. Poor are our words! They are but an accommodation of mortal speech to an immortal theme! "He was rich." When we read the word "rich," it seems, somehow or other, to pall the description of what Jesus Christ was, for he was so infinitely more rich than anything the world knows by that description; his riches were vastly more wealthy than any of the gaudy wealth which the world can bring, which is but transient and corruptible wealth. He was rich. Yes, but he was something more than that. However, we will make such use of the term as we can.

Jesus was rich in possession As God over all, having made all things, all things were his. He could have said, "The cattle on a thousand hills are mine; mine, the mines of gold and the secret treasures of silver; mine, the places where the diamonds sparkle, and where the pearl emits its gentle ray; all things are mine; a thousand stars glisten as my lamps, and all the width of space, so full of the wonders of creation — all this is mine!" He was rich in service. A thousand angels waited at his gates. He had but to will it, and the strong-winged messengers flew upon his errands. They adored him ceaselessly. Day without night they circled his throne, rejoicing. Even when on earth, he said he could pray to his Father, and he would send him twelve legions of angels. How much more was this the case when he sat in the state of heaven, and all these were the courtiers that waited before his throne? He was rich in honor. No pompous courts of Solomon could ever compare with the courts of the Son of God. All glory centred in him. He was "God over all blessed for ever," co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. To him the perpetual song; to him the never ceasing incense; to him the golden harps; to him the swell of heaven's highest symphonies, for he was adored of all, and exalted high above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. And he was rich in love, which is the best of all wealth. His Father loved him. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Eternally was that the truth, and, besides that, there were pure spirits of his own creating, who loved him with all the force of their being. He wanted not our love to make him rich. There was love enough in God for him, and if he had willed it, he could have made a thousand races of nobler creatures than ourselves, all of whom would have loved him with the deepest love.

He was rich, too, in happiness. We cannot conceive of the Savior knowing any sorrow, or grief, or want, in heaven. He had all that even he could wish for, if such language can be used towards the infinite God: he was essentially and ineffably happiness itself. Just as we believe, concerning the Most High God, that his bosom is unruffled by a care, and his soul undisturbed by a pang, so was it with the glorious One, who afterwards condescended to be crowned with thorns, and to be pierced with the spear for our sakes. "He was rich!" Oh! the word, as I have said before, is a poor miserable word. It is the best that Paul could find, but there is such a grandeur about Christ that if we say he was rich in all respects, rich in all conception, and rich beyond imaginations utmost stretch, rich beyond everything you and I will ever be able to conceive of, even when we got into the celestial state — so rich, so infinite, so glorious, so divine — this is what he was! "He was rich."

And yet he considered us! And yet he stooped to us! Oh! my brethren, what an example for us to get the same grace and generosity, so that if in any respect we, too, are, made rich here, we, too, may be as willing to stoop as he was; but, alas! while our stoop is all so little, his stoop is all so great!

Then the apostle goes on to say, "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." Not that he was made poor. It was not an act of providence that made him so. He did not become bankrupt. He was not a king expelled from his dominions. He was not a fallen sovereign, to whom we give shelter and pity, but he "became poor." That is, it was his own voluntary act; it was his own cheerful will to become poor. And now I cannot help saying that that word "poor" does not seem to me to be strong enough. It is the best, I suppose, our language can afford, but still though never was poverty like that poverty. It is a word which does but skim the surface of the Savior's condescension. He was poor. Well, he was poor in the ordinary sense. He was born of humble parents, he was not the son of a prince or a mighty one. He was reputed to be the carpenter's son. When his mother swaddled him, she laid him in the manger. He was not like those who are born in marble halls and are wrapped in scarlet, but he was a plebeian, and he took a lowly place even in his birth. He is sent to Egypt: he becomes an early exile. Scarce any poverty in the world is like the poverty of the poor emigrant who leaves his country either from lack of bread or from fear of life, and Jesus Christ and his mother going down

to Egypt are the very picture of poverty. We are thankful if we have only a little cottage in our own land where we may dwell, but in Egypt the Son of God must tabernacle for awhile. And when he came back he sought not his acquaintance amongst even the tradesmen or the middle-classes, much less among the lofty and the proud in spirit, but he put upon himself the smock-frock of the country, "a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout"; and his intimate acquaintances were the fishermen of Galilee. Was it not said of him by David, "He hath exalted one chosen out of the people"? And Christ was emphatically chosen out of the people. He was with them in all their toils, and all their woes; so with them that none of them were more poor than he. "Foxes have holes," said he, "and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man have not where to lay my head." He was so poor that I never read he left a will about his worldly goods and chattels. All that he had of personal estate was just the garments he wore, and those the soldiers parted among them, and there he was, naked, dead, and indebted to charity. For a tomb he had not even a sepulcher of his own — not a sorry six feet of earth in which his sleeping body might have rested in its own freehold, but it was a borrowed tomb that gave the Savior a refuge. He thus became poor outwardly, but what was his poverty inwardly? He was poor as to his friends. Judas betrayed him. Peter denied him. All the disciples forsook him and fled! He was poor in servants, for although he washed his disciples' feet, yet they washed not his! And when he came to the hour when human sympathy might have somewhat comforted him, he had to say with melancholy pathos, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Oh! so poor has he become that there is not an eye to watch with him in his lonely grief! So poor was he that the comforts which are left to the most abject were taken away from him. No promise beamed to shed its light upon his soul. At one time, at any rate, no presence of God made him glad. He was forsaken of his Father and his God. "Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani," indicated a poverty of soul quite as deep as that naked and mangled body indicated of poverty outwardly. He had lost all, or rather had given up all, laid aside everything — his crown of glory exchanged for the thorns of shame; the imperial mantle of dominion cast aside that he might wear his own blood! No more adored, but spit upon! No longer revered, but despised, and made the off-scouring of men! No throne, but a cross! No golden Cup, but a draught of wormwood and of gall! No light and brightness of excessive glory, but the blackness of mid-day — midnight! No life and immortality, but "It is finished," and the giving up of the Ghost! "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor."

I wish it were in my power to go farther into this depth tonight, but neither my ability nor my time will serve me just now. Let your own meditations assist you to peer into the poverty- of the Savior; such poverty, indeed, as you and I can never know, and, prompted by his example, let us not be ashamed to be poor: nay, let us not, at the thought of being poor, feel any kind of fear about it. Let us rather rejoice that in this we shall have fellowship with our Lord, and if we serve him we must be poor; if we be obedient to his will, we must make a sacrifice of worldly goods and prosperity: let us take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. Let us, like the Master, count it all joy when we are thus stripped, for so shall we have fellowship with him "who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor."

The apostle next calls our attention to the objects of this wonderful condescending stoop of our Lord, namely, ourselves. "For your sakes he became poor"; for the sake of the Corinthians: for the sake of us.

And oh! where could there be found more unworthy objects of this amazing love than we have been? In contemplating the love which I personally received from my Savior, although I wonder at it in itself, I have often thought that I could far better understand it if it had been given to someone else, than when it is shed abroad in my own soul. I do not know how it is, but somehow the salvation of the vilest sinner that lives does not one half so much surprise me as my own, and I find it far more easy to believe in the genuine salvation of any man, than at times to believe in my own. Why should he love us? Oh! there is an amount of unworthiness at each one of us which we cannot see in our fellows that makes it wonderful that we should have been chosen. Well said the apostle, "His great love wherewith he loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins!" It is by his great love he loves us now we are alive, but it is still more wondrous love that he should spend, his life-blood to buy our humanity when it was in its former state! None shall praise God more for his grace than I will if I get the privilege to see him to his face, for none will be more indebted to his distinguishing mercy. I suppose you will feel the same, and will each one resolve in the contest of humility that none of you will yield to his fellow, but will each one lie the lowest and sing the loudest to the praise of the matchless Lover, this Heavenly Bridegroom of our souls. "For your sakes became poor." Not a thorn in that crown for himself, but for your sakes. No spittle on those cheeks, no hair plucked from them, for himself; but all for you! For you, the cruel lash, as it pitilessly furrows those holy shoulders! For you, those drops of crimson sweat as they stained the cold earth! For you, each of those cruel nails: for you, for you, the spear that pierced his side! Oh! let each Christian here really seek to lay a claim to have a personal interest in the griefs and groans of Jesus. Sweet possessions! Oh! to treasure them! Richer than all jewels! Those drops of blood — more priceless far than rubies, and those falling tears more sparkling than diamonds! Treasure up the love of Jesus! Put it into your souls. Make a heart in your heart in which to treasure it. Count it to be the richest and most precious thing you can have, or can desire to have — the love of Jesus with all its sweetness and everlasting delight! "For your sakes he became poor."

Well, now, if he did all this for the sake of us, who are so unworthy, what ought you and I to do for his sake, 'who is so worthy? And if he crippled his great self for us, who are as nothing, shall not we be ready to empty our little selves for him, who is so great!

If he gave all to us, what less than all can we give to him? And even when we have given all, we shall think it all too little for such a Lord and such a friend! Does Jesus give Jesus, and shall not we give all of ourselves?

The apostle tells us, however — to conclude the exposition of the verse and our contemplation of this great example — that Christ had an object in doing this, and the object was this — “That ye, through his poverty, might be made rich.” I like the very phraseology here, and think we should read it again ... That ye, through his poverty, might be made rich.” A person joined this church not long ago who had been, a member of quite another denomination, in which the doctrine of the Second Advent, which we also hold, takes an infinitely more prominent place than we are ever likely to give to it, for it is the gospel of their salvation. This woman, however, professed herself to have been converted to God here, and she said, “I was always taught to trust in Christ glorified; but now I come to see that my confidence must be in Christ crucified.” This was what Paul preached, and it is what we preach, I believe it is an error which is growing, that we are to be made rich through Christ glorified, I grant you that we shall be, for we are made rich by Christ in any capacity; but the text saith it is through his poverty that we shall be made rich. The brightest treasure, that can come to the Christian comes to him through Christ crucified, and we must take care in all our ideas of the Second Advent that we do not get Judaizing so as to imagine the coming of a temporal kingdom and a temporal glory, and go back to the beggarly elements of the old covenant, for if we do so we shall miss the true jewel, the spiritual treasure, the love of which is half dying out in the Christian church. Christ in his poverty should be most commonly the object, of our contemplation, for it is through that poverty that we shall be made rich.

Now, I want to ask you whether you are rich to-night? If Jesus Christ died for you, I am sure he has not missed his intention in so dying, and therefore you are rich. But you say you are poor, and you were grumbling only an hour ago to think that you were so poor. Come, now! Come now! Jesus Christ, though he was rich, became poor: shall he miss the design of that great renunciation? Shall his object fail? It is not for a moment to be supposed. Well, then, he has made you rich. You cannot count your treasures, Christian! A catalogue of them would be too long for you ever to get through it. You have no estate: you have no barn in which to store away your harvest. Perhaps there may be some of you with little more belonging to you than the garments in which you have come to this sanctuary.

But yet — you are rich: for bethink you:-

“All things are yours, the gift of God,  
The purchase of a Savior’s blood  
This world is yours, and worlds to come  
Earth is your lodge, and heaven your home.”

You have angels to be your protectors. You have Christ to be your intercessor and your friend. You have the Holy Ghost himself to be your comforter. The everlasting arms are underneath you. The divine wings are above you. The divine glory is within you. Oh! what more would you desire? You shall have all the provision that you want, for you shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Yes, Christ has made us rich in the highest possible sense of richness. He does not please to make many of his people rich in the common sense. As Luther says, he gives the husks to the hogs — the proper place for them; they can relish them; they can make the best use of them. I doubt not that he was also right in what he said of the whole Turkish Empire, which God had given to the grand Turk, who was the leading monarch of his day. He said, “It is only a sop for a dog.” So it is. All the kingdoms of this world are but so many bones, which the householder throws out to the dogs, and lets them devour them as they may. Perhaps all the time the child is kept waiting, and may be kept waiting a little while for his food, because the hour is not yet come. The dog can eat when it wills, but the child must eat at the set time which the Father hath appointed. Let us be thankful if God does not give us our portion here. It is one of the things to be dreaded — the having your portion in this life. It is said of some that, they have their portion in this life, and our Lord said of the Pharisees, “Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.” Oh! let us pray God not to give us our reward here. If we have helped the poor, and have only received ingratitude, let us be very thankful that it proves that our reward is not here. If we labor for Christ, and are misrepresented, let us be thankful, for again it proves that our reward is not of men and in time, but is of God, and for all eternity. To have our reward here, and our portion from men, is a thing to be deprecated with tears, and cries, and groans. God grant us to know our riches to be of a better sort than that which the worldling covets.

Well, if it be so, that Christ has made us rich, I hope it is not fiction or fancy to any one of you. You are rich in your soul: you know you are; you are wealthy, and the argument from this is that you should be devoted to your Master. If he has made you rich, serve him. If he has enabled you to be contented, at ease, and happy, if you have blessed enjoyment in your soul: if you are at peace with God through Jesus Christ — why, who should serve God as you should? Highly favored as you are, the very stones would cry out against you if you were not liberal in your Master’s service and praise. And this brings me to the last matter, which is, in a few words:

## **II. To Exhort You Practically To Carry Out The Example Of Christ.**

There have been some advanced Christians — I say not this of all — but there have been some advanced Christians who have been made able literally to carry out the example of the Savior. How should we honor the memory of such men as John Wesley, for instance? He might have been a fellow — as he was, indeed — of the University, and have had excellent emolument. “The Church,”

so called, was open to him, and no doubt a bishopric would soon have rewarded his exertions and his eloquence. But he lived through life purely to serve his Master according to his knowledge and conviction, and when an inventory was to be made of his plate, he had but two spoons, one at Bristol and one in London, and when he died, what had he to leave? His treasure had all gone before him into heaven, and he died in poverty, having served his God with all he had, and making that the aim of his life, to live with all he had wholly to his Master's service. And such have been the lives of some of our missionaries. They have cut themselves away from all the claims of kindred, and have given themselves, like the old Roman heroes in the battle, 'who stood upon the sword and consecrated themselves to God. They have given themselves up to live and to die, with never a thought of gain in this world, nay, never dreaming of possessing anything as long as they lived. Such was apostolical life, and such, I believe, would be more common in the Christian church if a high degree of grace were vouchsafed. I do not think it is the duty of most of you, nor that it will ever fall to the lot of ninety-nine out of a hundred of you, but there are, some of you, and there ought to be more, who, being called of God to some special work, should feel that if they be rich, if they possess rank, if they possess standing in society, they will give up the most brilliant, earthly prospect for that yet more brilliant prospect of bearing the cross and inheriting the crown. I look forward, if God should ever send a revival of religion in England, not only to the time when the poor and the middle-classes shall find in their midst consecrated ministers, but when, from the very highest spheres of society, there will come to us men who might have worn the coronet, but who would rather proclaim the gospel; men who might have piled up their wealth until it became like Babel's tower, but, who will rather become poor, that in their poverty they may make many rich. It is not given unto all thus to do, but this is the dictate of Christianity, and where it can be done absolutely, and be carried out to the fullest extent, it brings much glory to God.

Well, but, the principle seems to me to be binding upon us all. I will venture to say — and I should not wonder that some of you will not like it to be said, that I believe it is and-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the object of accumulating wealth.

You will say, "Are we not to strive all we can, and to get all the money we can?" You may do so; you should do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do good service to the cause of God. But what I said was this, that to live with the object of accumulating wealth is and-Christian. There are thousands of men with whom that is the only thing they are living for — to save, save, save, and make a fortune. And when they die, what then? Well, then it will be in the newspapers that So-and-so died worth so much, and some will say, "Guess what he died worth. It will be talked of all over the city, "Why, they paid probate duty on so ninth!" Yes! Well, now, if you had a steward — I will ask you a question — if you had a steward and that steward were to die, and you should hear that he died worth £100,000, what would you say? You would say, "Ah! I know whose money that was! He was only a steward, and yet he died worth £100,000. I know where that money came from." You would not want to, ask the question, but you would say, "Ah! he was a thief, an old rogue!" I am not certain whether every man is not who does that; at least, unless he happens to, occupy a very high and prominent position. A man says he is a steward. That is what he says himself. We do not tell him so, but he says he is. He stands up and thanks God that he is a steward, but the old fellow has got some uncommonly heavy bags about him, more than a steward would have if he had handled his master's money properly. To say that the most of you ought to spend all you earn would be simply ridiculous. To come into the pulpit and say to those of you who are in business and so on, 'that you ought to give to the cause of God every year all that you have would be, I think, most intolerable stupidity on my part.. I do not say that at all. Let your children, by all manner of means, have that which they can lawfully claim of you. Make a fair provision if you are able to make it. Let your children be liberally educated. Let there be no stint in the house, so that there should be complaints of want there. God has put you into a position, and you may spend according to your station. What I mean to say is this — if you make it your object in this world, to live simply to get together a certain amount of money, and die and leave it, you are living with an and-Christian object, and your spirit is apart from the spirit of your Lord Jesus Christ.

My Master did not make a fortune. There is none of you will leave less than he left. We read some time ago of a bishop, whose will was sworn to be under £150,000, and someone said, "He was a true successor of the apostles, for he would be bound to say that if the apostle Paul's will could have been sworn to, it too would have been under £150, 00'0 "; and I think it is very likely that it would!

Ah! but such an occurrence as that always provokes a sneer in the world. They say, "Oh! yes, yes, yes; this is a 'picture of making the best of both worlds!" But it is not the picture of the Savior, living wholly for the cause of God and the cause of truth, but quite the reverse. I would like to see you my dear friends, who are poor, feeling that out of your poverty it is your privilege to give continually to him who loved you and gave himself for you, not casting the burden of God's work upon the few rich that may be among us, but every man honestly taking his share in the church's burden, which, indeed, is not her burden, but her privilege and her delight. I would like to see you bring in your gifts to God's treasury, not because you are asked to do so, or prompted, or driven to it, but because you love to do it out of love to him. Well, then, those of you who are prospered in business — and may there be more of you! — will always find that it will sweeten what is left to yourselves if the full and fair proportion be given to your Master. I am afraid you will not be likely to imperil yourselves, or bring yourselves to poverty by what you do for the cause of Christ. Sorry should I be if, by any extravagance or imprudence of that kind, such a thing should occur; but on the whole it is not a very likely thing, so that I need not guard you particularly much against it. But if you give to God, you shall find that, if you give by spadefuls, God will give it back to you by cart-loads; and if you give by cart-loads, his wagons shall be driven to your door, and he will bless you in proportion as you give to him.

I have thus applied the principle to wealth, but it should also be applied to everything the Christian has. I hope some of you have a good reputation. There was a time when I had one, but preaching the gospel very frequently brings upon you all sorts of misrepresentations. I remember pretty well the first stinging article I read in a newspaper concerning myself — as full of lies as an egg is full of meat, and I could not help wincing somewhat under it-but soon I learned the lesson that I could not afford to keep a reputation if I were a Christian minister, that I must be prepared to serve God with all my heart, and soul, and strength, and, let man or devils say whatever they liked, to take no notice whatever of them, but go on serving God, and then I counted it a sweet thing to sing: —

If on my face for thy dear name,  
Shame and reproach shall be,  
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame  
If thou'lt remember me.

Now, there is a young man over yonder who thinks he is a Christian, but he has been laughed at by the other young fellows in the shop, and he has half a mind to give up. What, what! When Jesus Christ, who was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, are you ashamed to be laughed at by a few simpletons? And there is a young woman here, who is placed just now in a family where they are very godless. She hardly likes to show her colors for Christ. Oh! my sister, think of the Master, and of the shame and the spitting that he endured for you, and let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Stoop, stoop, my brother! Stoop, my sister! The way to heaven is downhill in a certain sense. The way to rise is to fall in your own esteem, and when you shall think yourself to be less than nothing, and your own repute, and your own wealth, and everything you have, to be all Christ's property, and you freely give it up to him, then will you realize what it really is to be a Christian, and not till then.

Would to God some here were wholly devoted to the Master! I have been looking to see whether God would raise up among us some unusual spirits, some fiery souls, some consecrated men and women, who have got the old heroic blood of ancient Christendom within their veins! May such yet arise, and may each seek to follow where the Master leads the way, to the praise and glory of his grace!

Now, there are some of you who have heard all this, but I have not addressed myself to you, and yet I meant you all the while — I mean even you who are unconverted. Think of the love of Jesus in coming into the flesh, and may that sweet love be a sort of latchkey to your hearts, with which Christ shall open them, and let himself in. If he has knocked and you have not opened, I trust he will open the door himself by his own love, and may you be his to-night! If you so become his, be really his. You have served the devil: now serve him. If you must serve Christ, do not serve him with half your hearts. Serve him and no mistake. Give him your whole soul. If he is worth having, he is worth having altogether, and worth giving your whole soul. So may you do, and the Master shall have the praise evermore. Amen.

## **2 Corinthians 12:9 A Wafer of Honey**

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“Thy grace is sufficient for thee.” — 2 Corinthians 12:9.

LET no Christian imagine that he will ever have immunity from trouble while he continues in the body. Should you be favored with visions and revelations of the Lord, caught up to the third heaven, admitted into Paradise, and privileged to hear things which it were not lawful for a man to utter, conclude not that you have escaped the rod; rather expect that such high privilege will need heavy affliction to balance it. If God has given you the great sail and the prosperous wind, he will also give you the heavy ballast to keep your keel deep in the stream. Do not expect, dear brethren, that because you have been strengthened in the faith, you will therefore be loosed from the burden of the flesh; neither because you may have been the means of strengthening others, that, therefore, trouble will be light to you. Even into your ship the deep waters may come. Think not that it is so water-tight that the billows will only dash against it. You may be called to feel heaviness, your faith may be all but staggered, and your soul may have to cry out from the depths, because of the slender strength you possess.

The Lord has such ways of chastising his children as make them feel. We think, some of us, after we have suffered a certain amount of trouble, that we have been so inured to it we shall no longer be moved as we used to be. The apostle Paul had been beaten with rods, tossed about in shipwrecks, yet he had suffered hunger and thirst and nakedness, till he felt that, if any man had a right to glory

after the flesh, he had. Still, even he found that the Lord had a way of getting at his heart, and making it smart. He had thorns in the flesh, messengers of Satan that did most effectually buffet him. We, too, must have trials, — briars of a kind that shall come right home to us, and touch us in our bones and in our flesh.

Neither let us think, dear friends, that even the privilege of the mercy seat will shield us from the rod. When chastened we run to prayer; but we shall not, therefore, escape the chastisement. Paul, an apostle, prays; he, who certainly must have understood “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man”, beseeches the Lord thrice, yet the thorn in the flesh was not blunted, much less removed; he still had to suffer as he had done aforetime. Oh, how often we think we can use the mercy-seat for our own lust! is not prayer too sacred a thing for us to make a selfish use of it? When God gives us the key of his storehouse, and bids us take what we will, shall we use even a single promise of his Word merely to pander to our own desires, and to enable us to escape from enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ! If we thus misuse prayer, we may be excused for it, but we shall not be accepted in it. Even Paul is nonsuited when he asks ease for the flesh. He gets no release from trouble. He gets something better, however; for the Lord says to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Thus, beloved, we must reckon upon the adversities that are sure to befall us. “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” This is one of the divine shells and wills. The Lord will chasten those whom he loves, and his children shall suffer it, of a surety. It is as sure as any other thing in the world, “Ye shall have tribulation.”

### **I. To these who have proved the truth of this declaration, the text will be peculiarly sweet.**

There Are Certain Sore Vexations Of Spirit, For Which Grace Is The Only Balm. The Lord does not say, “My providence shall protect thee.” Nothing of the kind; — grace is the remedy in this case, and, I take it, this was because the apostle was suffering in the very core and center of his being. There are many trials, the grief of which may be fully assuaged by ordinary providences; but these, that come and wound a man to the quick, require grace as their only effectual balm.

Past experience of grace is of no avail in such a case; it is present grace that is promised in the text, and it is present grace that is required. When we have sometimes been bowed down, and walked in darkness, and seen no light, we have called the remembrance our song in the night, and our spirit has made diligent search; but that very song has been turned into howling in the remembrance, and all that we thought we felt, and thought we knew, has vanished from before our eyes. I do not know how it has been with you, but there have been times with me when I could set no value upon my past experience. The devil has said it was all a delusion, my faith mere presumption, my hope mere excitement, and all my joys but the effusion of animal spirits. There will be a time when he will bid you look back, and all the way will look like the valley of the shadow of death. You cannot see one hopeful sign in it; and you turn over the books of experience, and read them, and you think, “Well, my spot is not the spot of God’s children, and my footprints do not seem to be at all like the footprints of the flock.” I tell you, if you have ever done business in deep waters, you have found that anchors at home are of no use in a storm, and that the anchor which stood so well a year ago, if it is left at home on shore, is of no use to you now in the storm. It is present grace, nothing but present grace, that will do now. You have eaten all the cold meats, and you have brought out from the cupboard every moldy crust you can find, and now your soul is reduced to the very last, and fainteth within you, and now you must cry to your God in your trouble, and get present grace in this your time of need.

And if past experience is of no avail, much less is past success. Somebody might have touched the apostle on the shoulder, and have said, “Paul, Paul, Paul! What must you feel the buffetings of Satan? Did you not establish the church at Corinth, and plant churches throughout all Asia Minor! Who has served his God so faithfully as you have done? Have you not been in journeyings often, in perils by waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the sword, in watchings and fastings? Have you not had the care of all the churches? Has not your Master highly distinguished you, and made you not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles? What multitudes of spirits are now before the throne that were born, under God, through your ministry! And what thousands are still on the road who call you their spiritual father, and to whom you have been as a nursing mother in the faith! “If you had said this to the apostle, he would have replied, “Yes, sometimes this might have comforted me; if it had been a question of my apostle-ship, this would have been satisfactory; if the point in hand had been a question, as to whether my ministry has been owned of God, this would have been decisive; but I am touched in another place now, and the wound is so deep, my sore is grievous, and my heart is so exceedingly heavy, that no kindly thought of others, and no pleasant musings of my own, bring me the slightest relief. O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me! The Lord knows how to succor him, and therefore he gave him that gracious assurance, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

I think it is well, dear friends, to remember the Lord’s past goodness; but we must not live on that, we must go and get fresh supplies from heaven. Old manna, to this day, though it came from heaven, will always breed worms, and stink, if it is kept. There is no alteration in it from the days of Moses; it is the manna at this moment. You must eat the manna as you get it, and go constantly for more; but the old manna will be of very little use to you. It is only on Sabbath days, when your soul is perfectly at rest and quiet, — it is only at these sweet resting seconds, which the soul sometimes enjoys, that the remembrance of the past becomes very sweet. You must have daily present dispensations of manna from the throne of God.

In such a case as this, to which the apostle was brought, we feel sure that the fact of his high office, and his eminent attainments of grace, would not have been a sufficient consideration. Paul, who shall match thee? So deep in knowledge, and so ardent in zeal, thou seemest to have a seraph's spirit. So mighty in word, and yet, withal, so humble in thine own esteem, thou art surely a prince in Israel. Paul was not one of the young men, much less one of the babes in grace. He says, "There are not many fathers," though certainly he himself was worthy to be called a patriarch. Yet that fact would not comfort him. And, brethren, you may come to such hard pinches that your growth in grace, and the flourishing of your virtues, will not afford so much as a drop of comfort to you; you will have to go to the eternal fountain to drink, for even these marble cisterns will have been broken, and will hold no water.

Observe, further, brethren, that the Lord does not say, "The consolation of your brethren shall be sufficient for you." Oh, how sweet it is to be comforted by our fellow-Christians! Let those who will, walk in isolation; give me sweet communion, for, to tell one's trial to a true brother in Christ is often to lighten the weight, as if half of it were removed. Sometimes, it is to be wholly relieved, for the words of some wise men in our Israel are indeed as balm that bringeth speedy healing to the wound. But there are wounds which the stranger intermeddleth not with, nay, that even the dearest friend cannot touch; there are certain vexations of spirit, and disquietudes of soul, that mock human agency. I have had, sometimes, to converse with some members of the church, and I have never felt so much the littleness of my own power as when I have tried to comfort them, and failed. I thought it was because I was but as a little child in experience, and could not talk with them as a father in Israel might have done, whose years might have given him more wisdom; but I have found that even the fathers have failed, and that years have not always sufficed to give sufficient knowledge to comfort the troubled conscience, or to remove the burden from the called shoulder. No, there are cases that mock the ordinary practitioner, and must be taken straight away to the great Physician, for the only thing that will survive the purpose is the grace, the present grace of an all-sufficient God.

I might prolong this catalogue; but you, who experimentally know the truth, will know, from your own experience, that there are trials and there are points in affliction where nothing can possibly console but the immediate outpouring and receiving of the grace of God.

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## **II. And now, beloved, in the second place, let me say that Sufficient Grace Is A Sure Balm, that even for the most acute disorder, the most chronic disease, "grace" is "sufficient."**

Why, do you not perceive that it just meets the fear which trial excites. What is the Christian's fear when he is buffeted, tried, and afflicted. I know him in his sober senses, he has a fear of sin. Listen to him. "I am afraid of being poor," says he, "not because I dislike poverty, but I am afraid of my faith, lest I should murmur against God. I am not afraid of suffering," says he; "if God send it to me, I am willing to receive it; but I am afraid of my faith, lest the pangs should be too severe, and I should doubt my God. I am not," says he, "afraid of slander or of persecution. I have learnt to rejoice in this, for so am I made a member of the goodly fellowship of the martyrs; but I am afraid lest I should deny my Lord, or be ashamed of him, or prove an apostate, after all. As I look forward to the temptations of the world, and the suggestions of Satan, and the corruptions of the flesh which shall yet assail me, I am not afraid of their coming if I can but be guaranteed that they shall not cause me to sin; "for the only real wound the Christian gets is when he has sinned. Sufferings are only scars, flesh wounds; same are the real woundings. We are never trampled on by Satan, however low our spirits may sink; it is only when we give way, and would fain capitulate in very terror, and begin to be afraid, that Satan is really victorious. The battle of sin is the battle in which Satan gains the victory; but suffering, and shame, and distress, and peril, and nakedness, and sword, are no triumphs to Satan, for "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

You see then, brethren, that grace just meets the danger because it deals with sin. You are afraid that your patience will give out, so the Lord says, "My grace shall operate upon thy patience, and make thee to endure." You think your faith will fail, so the Lord says, "My grace gave thee thy faith, and my grace, like oil secretly applied to the fire by One standing behind the wall, shall keep thy faith burning while the devil pours on his floods to quench it. It was my grace that first taught thee to love my great name; so, when persecuted, my grace shall make thee love me better. I have kept thee from apostasy until now, and, let what will come, my grace, by which I guaranteed thy final severance, shall be sufficient for thee, and thou shalt come out of all thy trials and troubles like silver out of the furnace, not defiled, but cleansed and purified by the flames." You see then, brethren, that this assurance does actually touch the fear which the Christian ever has before his eyes; nay, it does not merely touch the fear, but it absolutely touches all the real danger. It is as though the Lord should say to one of his servants, who was standing alone, while thousands of his enemies were shooting at him with their arrows, "They shall shoot at thee, but I have covered them with armor from head to foot." Or it is as if you or I trembled at the thought of crossing the deep sea, and the Lord had said, "The sea is deep, and thou must cross it; but I will be by thee, and thou shalt go through it dryshod." Or it is as if he said, "The fire is hot, and thou must walk through the midst of it, those glowing coals thy foot must know; but I will so cover thee by my power that the flames shall not hurt thee; thou shalt walk through the fire, and not so much as the smell of it shall pass upon thee."

What matters it how much we suffer if we have grace to endure it? Put a believer where you will, if his Master gives him grace, he is in the best place he can be for security. I have heard brethren sometimes say, "Such a minister is in great danger; his position is

lofty, his head will be burned." Ah! brethren, if he had had the keeping of his own head, it would have been turned long ago. And your head will turn even if you are on the ground if you have the keeping of it; but if God set a man as high as the stars, and if he kept him there, he would be able to sing, "Thou makest my feet like hinds' feet, and maketh me to stand on high places." It is the grace we have, not the position we occupy, that is the important matter. If a man had grace enough, you might put him in the worst haunts of sin, and he would be the better for being there. Now, do not think I say what I do not know. Solomon saw hyssops grow on walls, and cedars on Lebanon; howbeit, I have seen cedars grow on walls, and hyssops on Lebanon. I have seen the smallest Christians in the best places, and the best Christians in the worst positions. I have seen, in the midst of the haunts of the harlot, grace shining in all the purity and chastity of lovely womanhood; and in the haunt of the thief and of the burglar, God has been pleased to have some choice saint, that, for honesty, integrity, and holy living, might, have been worthy to have walked in a bishops palace, or to have adorned the best Evangelical drawing-room in England. Brethren, it is not the position that is the main thing; the best of men may grow in the worst places, and some of the meekest of believers may be found where there ought to have been the bravest. I will leave this point, therein, by repeating that, whatever may be the trial of heart which a man may have to endure, this assurance just meets the case, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

### **III. And, lately, Should Not The Assurance That We Shall Receive Sufficient Grace Make Us Exceedingly Glad?**

"My grace is sufficient for thee," — what then? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities," — not only gladly, but "most gladly." Nothing else will make you happy. The grace of God comes to meet your case, and now how happy you should be! Think about the sureness of this fact, that sufficient grace will be ours. My dear brethren, I am not careful about preaching tonight, I merely talk right on about some, things that you know, and can testify. It has been so, has it not, in your experience? If there be one saint here who has an accusation to make against his Lord, let him speak. He might well say to you, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? Which of you have I failed to succor? When have I violated my promise? You have been in the waters, — were you drowned? You have passed through the fire, — were you burned? What loss have you ever sustained by your troubles?" Did I ever refuse to hear your cry when you called upon me? When was it that, in the day of battle, I did not cover your head, and that I left you as a prey to the destroyer? "My answer is, — O Lord, thou knowest all things, and thou knowest that thy servant's witness is, —

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,  
Has gather'd thick and thunder'd loud,  
He near my soul has always stood,  
His lovingkindness, oh, how good"

And is not that your case, my brother, my sister in the Lord? I am sure it is. Well, then, this ought to make you glad. "My grace is sufficient for you," says the Lord. Your past experience proves it. Gladly, therefore, rejoice that you have an opportunity yet again of testing and trying the good Word of the Lord.

Again, is not God's grace sufficient for you in your present emergency? Have you had some trouble today? I suppose you have had quite sufficient, too, for I never did find a day yet that had not enough trouble in it, and sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; — well, but, have you not had sufficient grace today? Do you feel dull, and heavy, and gloomy in God's house of prayer? Well, but there is grace to be had; and, therefore, looking to him ere you go to your bed, you may still have another day to sing of the sufficient grace which was given in the needful hour. "Oh, but," you say, "it is not now; I can trust God for today; but there are clouds looming before me, and I fear to enter the cloud." Well but, my dear friend, if he is faithful to thee today, add that to the fact that he was faithful yesterday; is he not the same yesterday, today, and for ever; and oughtest thou not at once to rejoice in him? Furthermore, ask thy father, and he shall tell thee; turn thou to the records of inspiration, and they shall teach thee; were the righteous ever forsaken, and when did the Lord cast off his chosen? They have been certainly in quite as deep waters as you have ever known; you have not yet been brought to lose all that you have, to lose every child; not-yet do you sit among the ashes, and scrape yourself with a potsherd, as Job did; not yet to the fullest extent can you say, "They that walked in the streets did condemn me;" not yet have ye drunk of that cup, and been baptized with the baptism of him who said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

"His way was much rougher and darker than thine," —

and yet your Lord triumphed; and all his people, in all ages, and under every circumstance, have triumphed in him. If you could find one child of God who has been left, and if you could find one instance in which God has been untrue to you, then it would be fair for you to be depressed in spirit; but until then, most joyful should you be.

Recollect also, brethren, that we should never know how sufficient grace was if it were not for these troubles; therefore, we ought to be glad of all the lessons that assure us how ample and sufficient this grace is. I know not whether all soldiers love the thought of war, but there are many who plead for a campaign. How many an officer of low rank has said, "There is no promotion, no hope of rising, no honors, as if we had to fight. If we could run to the cannon's mouth, there would be some hope that we might gain promotion." Men get few medals to hang upon their breasts who never know the smell of gunpowder. The brave days, as men call them, of Nelson and Trafalgar, have gone by, and we thank God for it; but still we do not expect to see such brave old veterans, the

offspring of this age, as them who are still to be found lingering in our hospitals, the relics of our old campaigns. No, brethren, we must have trials if we are to get on. Young men do not become midshipmen altogether through going to the school at Greenwich, and climbing the mast on dry land; they must go out to sea, and be on deck in the storm; and if we are to be amongst the worthies, we must have stood side by side with King David, we must have gone down into the pit to slay the lion, or have lifted up the spear against the eight hundred, as Adino did. Conflicts bring experience, and experience brings that growth in grace which is not to be attained by any other means.

Besides, brethren, how is God's grace to be seen by other men in the world except by our trials? Grace is given to keep us from sin, which is a great blessing; but what is the good of grace except it is in the time when the trial comes? certainly, the grace that will not stand in the hour of temptation or affliction, is a very spurious sort of grace; and we had better get rid of it, if we have it. When a godly woman's child dies, the infidel husband sees the mother's faith. When the ship goes down, and is lost in the sea, the ungodly merchant understands the resignation of his fellow-man. When pangs show through our body, and ghastly death appears in view, people see the patience of the dying Christian. Our infirmities become the black velvet on which the diamond of God's love glitters all the more brightly. Thank God I can suffer, thank God I can be made the object of shame and contempt; for, in this way, God shall be glorified. This shall be the wonder of many, and to the praise of his own grace, that so mean and so contemptible a thing was made the instrument of effecting his purpose.

I will say no more, except to commend this assurance to you, and ask you to take it home, and lay it on your tongue; it will be like a wafer made with honey. Mind you have it for your breakfast tomorrow morning, and let it be your constant daily meal; live on it: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Let the word "thee" come home to your heart, as though God spoke it to you, and as if he had never spoken it to anyone before.

There are some of you to whom the text does not apply, except in this light. You have many sins; but if you trust Christ, his grace is sufficient for you. You have been head over heels in the kennel of sin; but the power of his blood is sufficient to make you white; and even if you have become a very prince and peer in the dominions of evil, the grace of Christ is sufficient to wash you whiter than the driven snow. May the Lord add his blessing on these feeble rambling remarks, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

## **Exposition of 2 Corinthians**

### **by C H Spurgeon**

### **2 Corinthians 1**

#### **2 Corinthians 1:1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,—**

Paul is very careful to remind the Corinthians of that fact, since some of them had gone the length of denying his apostleship altogether.

Paul is very jealous of his apostleship. There were some in Corinth who denied it, and therefore he takes care, at the very commencement of this Epistle,—as he does in beginning most of his letters,—to write concerning himself, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." But with what humility of mind does he associate Timothy with himself! Frequently he puts Timothy, his own convert, one so young, and so much beneath him in position and attainments, on a level with himself; and if we also can help our younger brethren, how willingly should we put our—selves side, by side with them!

#### **1. And Timothy our brother,—**

Whom, in all humility, he associates with himself, although he was a younger man, of far less consequence; but Paul loved him very much, and therefore he put his name at the beginning of this Epistle side by side with his own: "and Timothy our brother,"

#### **1, 2. Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.**

What a wonderful source of grace and peace! "God our Father." How can he give other than grace and peace to his own children? "And from the Lord Jesus Christ," our redeeming Savior, who has given himself for us, and who has graven our names on the palms of his hands;—is there not an abundant supply of grace and peace to be found in the very music of his name?

Christianity is a religion of benedictions. Whereas worldly people often use the language of courtesy towards one another without meaning what they say, the saints of God put a fullness of meaning into their expressions, and really wish every good thing to those to whom they write. "Grace be to you." That comes first, and then peace follows. Peace without grace is a very dangerous possession; but a peace that grows out of the possession of grace is a gracious peace, and will lead to the peace of glory ere long.

This grace and peace are to come “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” There is no grace for us apart from the Lord Jesus Christ; and though the Father is full of love, and will give grace and peace to his people, yet the Lord Jesus Christ must always be the channel through which these incomparable favors must flow to them.

**3, 4. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.**

Let me read those titles again: “The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.” Do not the second and third titles derive much of their significance from the first one? It is because God is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” that he becomes “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.”

Nothing less, then, shall be given to the tried people of God than that same comfort which was enjoyed by the apostle Paul; it shall be shared by all who are resting where Paul rested.

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

Experience teaches the first rank of God’s servants, and their experience of sorrow and consolation is often the means of enabling them to be the means of blessing to others. Almost everything that the minister of the gospel enjoys or endures will be found to be sent to him for the elect’s sake, that he may know how to teach them the lessons he has himself learned.

The apostles were the most tried, but they were the most comforted. They had to stand the brunt of the battle, but the Lord was their strength in a very special sense. Observe the balance in this verse: “as the sufferings,” “so our consolation;” and “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” With little trial, we may expect little comfort. It is better to leave the whole matter entirely with God, or else we might almost desire to be digged about by the spade of affliction, that we might receive more of the living waters of consolation.

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

Are we not willing to endure the greater suffering that we may enjoy the greater consolation?

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

That is the grand object of Christians, to live for others. When God has helped us to receive both our comforts and our sorrows as matters of trust that we are to take care of for the benefit of our fellow-Christians, then have we learned the lesson which Christ would teach us by them.

We receive both suffering and consolation for the sake of others, and we are bound to give out again all that we receive. It is the essence of the true Christian life first to be dependent upon God for everything, and then to give forth to all around us that which God has poured into our spirit. The heart would soon die if it pumped in the blood, and never pumped it out again; but it is by that perpetual process of giving out what it has received that it continues in life; and the highest form of Christian life is the reception of all that comes to us out of the fullness of Christ, and then the free giving out of what he has bestowed.

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

How these things are put together! God does not call his people to the one without the other,— no consolation without affliction; and, blessed be his name, no affliction without consolation!

No doubt Paul did preach all the better and with the greater confidence in God because he preached, like Richard Baxter, “as a dying man to dying men.” His life was frequently in danger, and on this occasion it was so in a very remarkable degree; so, when he was again able to testify for his master, he realized that he had no time to waste, and therefore he wrote and spoke with the utmost earnestness. He felt himself in jeopardy every hour, and therefore he fell back upon his God, and trusted alone in him. Anything that works to this end for us also is an undisguised blessing.

**8. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:**

Why would Paul have them know this but that they might understand that he had to suffer as they did, and even more. Sometimes, God’s people are apt to think that their ministers are not cast down as they themselves are. They look upon them as a sort of superior order of beings who have no doubts and fears, no want of strength, no despair; but that is an idle fiction, and the sooner it

is gone from our minds, the better; for those who lead the people of God will rather have more afflictions than less. Seeing that they need more instruction than others need, and that instruction usually comes with the rod, in all probability they will have more of the rod than others will. Paul, therefore, is anxious that the Corinthians should know in what sea of trouble he had to swim.

**9, 10. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we: should not trustt in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;**

It is supposed by some that the apostle was in danger of being put to death in same extraordinary way,— perhaps by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. We know that he speaks of having fought with beasts at Ephesus; we cannot tell whether there is here any allusion to that trial, or what it was; but it was evidently some death which, to the apostle, seemed to be exceedingly terrible; and when he was delivered from it, it was to him like a resurrection. He speaks of it as having been wrought by God that raiseth the dead; and he puts down this deliverance, together with some other of which he was at that very time the subject,— “and doth deliver,” — and upon these experiences he builds his expectation that God “will yet deliver.”

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

When many pray, after the blessings is received, many will give thanks. Paul rejoices to have been the object of interest to a large number of Christians everywhere in the time of his great peril; and when he escaped, he believed he would still be the object of their interest, and that there would be more prayer in the world, and more praise, too, because of the dangers from which God had delivered him. It is worth while for any of us to be in sore sickness, or in great straits, if thereby the quantity of prayer and praise in the world shall be increased to God's glory.

Much prayer leads to much thanksgiving. It should be a great cause for joy when numbers of Christians unite in praying for any Christian minister, for they will unite also in praising God on his behalf, when that which they asked for him is granted.

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

For to them he had been specially particular, that in no point they should speak of him as having used the wisdom of words. Among them, he determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified; to them, he was like the nurse who administers milk to babes.

There had been whispers, among these Corinthians, that Paul had concealed a double meaning in some of his writings, and also that he had made a promise which he never intended to keep; so now he calls upon them to bear witness that he never was a man to act according to policy, but he was a straightforward, honest, plain-dealing man, full of godly sincerity and unselfishness. He had abundantly proved all this to the Corinthians, for, lest they should have any occasion for speaking against him, he would not take at their hands the support to which he was entitled, but he labored at his trade of tent-making that they might not have anything to say concerning him except that he was disinterested in all his endeavors to serve them. Paul evidently felt their unkindness very much, but his conscience assured him that their accusations were unjust.

**13, 14. For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; as also ye have acknowledged us in part,—**

See how Paul restrains himself in wilting to these people, he had good cause to be offended, for they had touched him in a point about which he was very jealous, namely, his integrity; but here he speaks with great moderation of spirit, and herein lay his strength. Every Christian man, when he has to defend himself against false accusations, should use soft words and hard arguments.

Some of them disputed his apostleship; but most of them did not,—

**14. That, we are pour rejoicing, even as ye also are our's in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

What a happy condition of things it is when the teacher and the taught mutually rejoice in each other; when the teacher is the joy of the flock, and when he can rejoice in his people! This is profitable to all; but when there are discards, and fault-findings, and the like, this is neither glorifying to God nor profitable to the people.

**15-17. And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?**

He had planned to see them in his going, and also in his returning; but he could not carry out the idea which was in his mind. The wisest of men often find their plans impracticable, and even an inspired man is not always inspired. God guides him when guidance

is absolutely necessary; but, at other times, he leaves him to arrange according to his own judgment:, and to find out that his judgment is not infallible. "I had a mind," says he, "to come and see you twice."

There were some in the church at Corinth who said, "He promised to come and see us, but he did not keep his word." They declared that his promise could not be depended upon, and that he very easily changed his mind. Now, the apostle had done nothing of the kind; he had solid reasons for his change of purpose, and reasons full of love to them; but they misrepresented him. Do not, my dear friends, count the fiery trial of misrepresentation to be any strange thing. Even some of those whom you have loved, and for whom you have been willing to lay down your lives, will turn against you; it is no new thing that they should do so. They may catch up anything which you have done in the simplicity of your heart, and turn it against you. Whenever they do so, I say again, do not think that any strange thing has happened unto you; it happened to Paul, then why should not you have a similar experience?

17

"Did I make up my mind hastily, and then did I change it all of a sudden without good reason? Had I never thought before I decided, and therefore did I find it necessary to revoke my promise?"

17-18

He binds up his own ministry with himself, and he says, "You charge me with being fickle, but you know better; you are well aware that I am not one who says one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow. You know that I have been open and aboveboard in all my dealings with you, and that I have never stooped to policy and craftiness, but have spoken that which I believed, whatever might come of it."

19

He declares that he preached the truth straightforwardly and consistently, and that he did not say one thing one day and another thing a few days later.

**18-20. But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.**

Paul loved to turn from some lower subject to his Lord. When he wrote the words, "ye and nay," they suggested to him the perfect constancy of the love of Christ, and thankfulness for his faithful promises; so, as the thought came into his mind, he could do no other than put it into the Epistle he was writing, for he never missed an opportunity of praising the Lord Jesus Christ. I wish we could all imitate him, in this respect, far more than we have ever done; for our Savior is worthy of all the praise we can ever give him, and more, too.

20

Christ is no quicksand, slipping and sliding away, and so ruining those who cling to him. He is the Rock of ages, and he stands fast for ever. His gospel is one and the same at all times. You see that, as Paul grows warm, he advances in his argument. If the Corinthians suspected his honesty in making a promise, the next thing they would do would be to suspect the gospel, and after that they would suspect Christ himself, who is the truth.

**21-23. Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.**

"If had come, I should have been obliged to rebuke you and reprove you. I should have had to be like an armed man going to battle, or an officer of the law carrying out the sentence pronounced upon a criminal, and I could not bear to do that; so I felt it would be better and wiser to stay away, and therefore I did not visit you as I had proposed."

## 2 Corinthians 2

**2 Corinthians 2:1. But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.**

And they ought to have had enough confidence in him to know that he had a very good and sufficient reason for not fulfilling his conditional promise. Let us, dear friends, who, are one in Christ, trust each other; for, if suspicion be, once bred among the people of God, it will mean farewell to all fellowship.

## 2 Corinthians 4

## **2 Corinthians 4:1. Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;**

Stern was the labor of the apostles, but they felt that their work was so all-important, so divine, that they must not grow weary of it, though they were, doubtless, often weary in it.

It is a very high privilege to be called to the work of the Christian ministry, and when the minister remembers what great mercy he has himself received, what sins have been forgiven, what favors have been bestowed, he has the very best incentives in all the world to pursue his ministry with diligence and with zeal.

"We faint not," says the apostle. We do not hang our harps upon the willows. We do not pray to be allowed to retire from the battle, and give up the strife; but, feeling how great has been the mercy of God to our own souls, we are stirred up to press forward with holy zeal to win the victory. We long that others may taste of the same good things on which we have feasted.

We are sometimes ready to faint, but we cast our fainting spirits into the arms of God, and our strength is again reserved at times, the very importance of an errand first weighs down the spirit of the messenger, yet afterwards it seems to impel him to more than ordinary exertion. So is it here, having been divinely entrusted with this ministry, and being ready to faint under the tremendous responsibility that it involves, we yet are roused to action by the very pressure which seems to deprive us of the power to act, and therefore "we faint not;"-

### **1-2**

Paul's description of his own ministry and that of Timothy also should be true of every servant of Jesus Christ. There must be no dishonesty, or craftiness, or deceit about the minister of the Word, and it is by the manifestation of the truth that he must commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. He may not win every man's approval, yet even those who differ from him must perceive his loyalty to his Lord.

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

It is no part of the business of Christ's ministers to modify the truth which he has entrusted to them, or to put new meanings into it which God never meant, draining away the very life-blood of the gospel, and leaving it dead and useless; but it is both our duty and our privilege to state it just as we find it, and to proclaim it in as plain language as possible so that everybody may understand what the teaching of God really is.

There have, alas! been many preachers who have handled the Word of God in the manner described by the apostle. They have out and trimmed the truth in order to please their generation; they have kept back this, or have made unduly prominent that, instead of giving all the truth of God its proper and proportionate prominence in their ministry; but such men have not, after all, won the respect of their hearers. There is an old story told of King John of England that, when he was closely pressed by the barons, he wrote to the Emperor of Morocco, and offered to turn Mohammedan, and take an oath of allegiance to him if he would send an army to help him, and it is said that, ever after, the Emperor of Morocco abhorred and detested the very name of John, for he said he must be an abominable miscreant to be willing to change his religion for the sake of gain. Ah, my brethren! we never gain any respect, even from the world, by seeking after it in this fashion. Be thoroughly honest, especially you who are in the Christian ministry; be outspoken, blunt, and plain; and then, even if men's prejudices condemn you, their consciences will commend you for speaking what you believe to be the truth.

Far be it from the teacher of truth ever to use words in a non-natural sense, or to dissemble or equivocate, saying to the ear what he means not in the sense in which the hearer understands it. Far be it from us to mix with the Word of God anything of our own as vintners mix various kinds of wine, for such is the import of the word that the apostle here uses. Let none of us ever handle the Word of God deceitfully. There is no deceit in it; it is all pure unmixed truth. An honest mind is needed for the understanding of it, and then a truthful tongue for the telling of it to others. If we do preach undiluted, unadulterated truth, we must not expect that the natural heart of man will commend our honesty. We are to commend ourselves to every man's conscience, not by cutting and trimming the Word so as to make it palatable to our hearers, leaving one truth out to please this man, and dwelling too long upon another truth so as to please some other hearer, but by bringing out the whole teaching of the Scripture in clear truthfulness that shall command the approval of the conscience even of those who may not accept the truth that we proclaim.

## **3. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;**

It was not hidden under fine language and oratorical flourishes on the part of the apostles; there was a far more terrible barrier in the way of its entrance into the hearts of some who heard it.

It is not hidden under the flowers of our oratory, not hidden under the darkness of our speech, not hidden through the fog of our

philosophies; if it be hidden at all, it is hidden “to them that are lost.” If they had any spiritual perception or apprehension at all, if they were not utterly lost to everything: that is spiritual, they would be able to receive the gospel that we are bidden to preach, and which therefore becomes “our gospel.”

### 3-4

Without light from above, no man can perceive the beauties either of the gospel or of Christ himself. Until God the Holy Spirit sheds a spiritual light upon the person, and offices, and work of Christ, men grope in the dark as blind men do. They see not the truth, they are not persuaded of its excellence; our ministry is to them a veiled ministry, they do not comprehend it. Let those who receive not the gospel see what a miserable state theirs is, they are blinded by “the god of this world.” He has such supremacy over their intellects that he has utterly perverted and ruined them.

The light of the gospel is so glorious and bright that it is only hidden from those who have been blinded by Satan, “the god of this world.” The only hope for them is to believe in Jesus who can give sight to the spiritually blind as easily as he gave sight to the physically blind when he was here in the flesh.

### 4-5

What a miserable topic we should have if we did preach ourselves! But we do not set up ourselves as “priests” having authority to administer “sacraments” to a lower order of beings who do not possess sacerdotal sanctity; we do not claim to belong to a ministerial caste; we regard ourselves as simply on an equality with the rest of the Christian brotherhood; and, therefore, “we preach not ourselves,”-

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

Hence we learn that anything like priestcraft is altogether foreign to the Bible. The “priest” preaches up himself, the extraordinary value of his ordination, the occult influences which flow from his touch, the mysterious power which dwells in baptismal water, and in “consecrated” wafers and poured-out wine. This is preaching themselves with a vengeance; but Christ’s apostles preached not themselves, they preached up Christ and him crucified. Paul wrote, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;” and this was the constant theme of all the apostles. If they mentioned themselves at all, they simply said, as Paul does here, “Ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

“Christ Jesus the Lord” is to be the great theme of our preaching; and when it is so, we naturally take our right position with regard to our hearers, as Paul and Timothy did: “and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

### 5,6

We cannot therefore darken the gospel, or cover it up, “for God hath shined in our hearts,”-

### 6,7

God might have put the priceless treasure of the gospel into the golden vessel of cherubim and seraphim; and he might have sent angels, who would never suffer, who would never err, who would never sin, to preach the Word; but, instead of doing so, he has chosen to send the gospel to men by commonplace beings like themselves. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” and this redoundeth much to God’s glory; and, dear friends, the great object of the sending of the gospel into the world is the glory of God. He would manifest his mercy to men that his mercy might be glorified; and therefore he has committed the gospel, not to the trust of perfect men, but to the trust of poor, shallow, earthen vessels like ourselves.

### 6

There is the very glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, for he is “very God of very God,” and he who will but think of the wondrous mystery of the Incarnate Deity, and the simple but marvellous plan of salvation through Christ’s atoning sacrifice, will see infinitely more glory there than in all God’s works in creation or providence. Well does Watts say,-

“The spacious earth and spreading flood  
Proclaim the wise and powerful God,  
And thy rich glories from afar  
Sparkle in every rolling star.”

“But in Christ’s looks a glory stands,  
The noblest labor of thine hands,  
The pleasing lustre of his eyes  
Outshines the wonders of the skies.”

**4-7. In whom the god of the world hath blinded the mind of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who in the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels,**

There is nothing remarkable in us, we are in ourselves poor, frail fragile creatures, like earthen vessels of no particular value, yet this we do not regret, for there is a good reason for it: —

**6-7**

The most earnest and faithful minister of the gospel must ever remember that humbling truth. He has this precious treasure of the gospel entrusted to his charge; he knows he has it, and he means to keep it safely, but, still, he is nothing but an earthen vessel, easily broken, soon marred,-a poor depository for such priceless truth. Yet God has a good reason for putting this treasure into earthen vessels,-

**7. That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.**

If angels had been commissioned to preach the gospel, we might have attributed some of its power to their superior intelligence, and if only those had been called to preach the gospel who were men of great intellect and of profound learning, we might have considered that the talent of man was the essential qualification for a preacher. But when God selects-as he often does, nay, as he always does;-earthen vessels, and some that seem more manifestly earthen than others, then the excellency of the power is unquestionably seen to be of God, and not of us.

In Paul's case, the earthiness of the vessel appeared in the trouble which he had to bear.

**7-10. That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.**

He who wishes for an easy time of it must not become a minister of the gospel. If he is determined to preach it faithfully, fully, simply, straight from his heart, he will often find himself in such circumstances as the apostle describes in these verses.

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

The original might very fairly be rendered, "We have this treasure in oyster shells," for, just as pearls are found in the shells of oysters, so God gives to those who preach the Word the treasure of the gospel, yet they are themselves nothing but the oyster shells, nothing but the earthen vessel in which God pleases to place his priceless treasures. If you have done anything in the service of God, my brother, remember that you are nothing but the oyster shell, it is God's truth that is the pearl in you; so while you are thankful for the honor that he puts upon you, mind that you give him all the glory. It is well to take the right view of our own imperfections and infirmities, as Paul did when he wrote, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The infirmity of the creature leaves the more room for the display of the greatness of the Creator; for, if God can work such wondrous results by using such poor tools as we are, how great must be his power and skill!

**8. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed;-**

He is not so far gone as that. He sees the stormy billows raging around outside the ship everywhere, and the ship is tossed hither and thither upon the waves yet she does not leak, there is no water in the hold, and the waves will not sink the ship as long as she can keep them outside; and trouble will not distress us as long as we can obey our Lord's injunction, "Let not your heart be troubled." "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed;"-

We scarcely know what to do, but we have not given way to despair. We are perplexed, but hope has not gone from us. *Dum spiro spero*, was the old Latin proverb,-"While I live I hope;" but the Christian proverb is a still better one, *Dum expiro spero*,-"Even while I die I still have hope," for "the righteous hath hope in his death."

**8, 9. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; We are perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;**

"We are troubled on every side." There seems to be an allusion here to the Greek wrestling games. Sometimes, in wrestling, a man would be gripped by his adversary so that he could scarcely move hand or foot; yet bravely says the apostle, "We are not distressed," or, as the original seems to suggest, "We still have a plan of overcoming our adversaries; though they seem to have got us entirely in their power, there is still something that we can do to obtain our release." And he goes even further than that, for he

says, "We are perplexed," — it seemed as if there was nothing that he could do, yet he added, "but not in despair," — "not altogether without help," as the marginal reading renders it, — for, when he could do nothing, God could do everything. The death of creature-strength is the birth of omnipotent might.

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; — having no man's face to smile upon him, but still rejoicing in the light of God's countenance. "Cast down," — as if his antagonist had thrown him, and he had fallen heavily upon the ground; yet he says, as he springs up again, "Cast down, but not destroyed." Many a time the Christian wrestler is thrown by his foe, but he never has a final fall. As Paul, when he was stoned at Lystra, and left for dead, rose up again, and soon went on with his work, so the Christian, when he has been cast down by trouble, often seems to gain new life and vigor, and to go on to serve his Master even better than he did before.

The apostle is here speaking for himself and all the members of the apostolic college, and also for all the early saints. They appear to have been very much troubled, and sometimes to have been very much perplexed. I meet with certain brethren, now and then, who have no troubles; they are so supremely wise that they are never perplexed, and so eminently holy that they do not appear to belong to the ordinary democracy of Christianity, but are altogether supernatural beings. Well, I do not belong to their clique, and it does not seem to me that Paul and the apostles and the early Christians did. Those great pioneers of the Church of Christ were men who were troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, cast down; in fact, they were men of like passions with ourselves.

#### **9. Persecuted, but not forsaken;**

For there is One who, when we are persecuted, is persecuted with us, and persecuted in us, who has promised that we shall not be left desolate. He hath said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Should persecution rage and flame,  
Still truth in thy Redeemer's name;  
In fiery trials thou shalt see  
That, 'as thy day, thy strength shall be

#### **9. Cast down, but not destroyed;-**

Even if the adversary is able to cast us down, he is not able to destroy us, for "underneath are the everlasting arms." "Cast down, but not destroyed;" —

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

The apostles were always ready to die for Christ, and therefore they were enabled to live so much like Christ, imitating his life, and being prepared to follow him even to the death whenever he called them to do so.

Thus did these apostolic saints in a very high sense die daily, and so must we, when called to suffer for the truth's sake, bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

#### **10,11**

So you see, brethren, to have an anticipation of death upon one is no hindrance to one's work, but a great help to it; to bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus is a great help towards the manifestation of the life of Christ. When we begin to reckon that we shall live long, we are very apt to live loosely. To live as though to-morrow might be the judgment day, or as though to-day the King might come in his glory, that is the style of living which is the best of all. "A short life and a holy one," — lengthened as God may please, but reckoned by us as short even at the longest, — be that the Christian's motto. As the worldling says, "A short life and a merry one," we say, "A short life if God so wills it, but a holy one whether it be long or short."

#### **11. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake) that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**

The apostles were always to the front where the shots were flying the fastest, and with the deadliest aim; there they stood, the officers of the army of Christ and Paul rejoiced that, for one, he was able thus to make himself to be nothing that Christ might be the great All-in-all.

#### **11, 12**

The disinterestedness of Christian affection is here seen, in that Paul was willing even to be delivered unto death if only the church in Corinth and other Christians might receive more of the divine life. This is the motive that actuated our blessed Lord himself. He saved others; but, in order to do so, himself he could not save; and he who would be a blessing to others must expect that just in proportion to the good that he is able to impart to them must be the cost to himself.

**11-14. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.**

As, in the ease of most of the apostles, it did absolutely and literally perish by martyrdom,

There is no possibility of serving God well, especially under great trials and persecutions, without a deeply-rooted confidence in the truth of his gospel. Once have a doubt concerning that, and the strong sinews of our spiritual manhood are out. Once begin to question the evidences of our holy religion, and you cannot henceforth serve God as you did before. Oh, to be strengthened every day with might in the inner man;-to feel that in our own experience, we have continually fresh proofs of the truth of the gospel, and that, whether we have trials or delights, we are thereby the more firmly rooted in faith, even as the trees are rooted both by the March winds and the April showers;-and so rooted in faith that we grow into it, and cannot be separated from it, because it has become a part of ourselves. Religion is nothing to any of you unless it is woven into the very warp and woof of your being; it must go right into your very soul, and become a vital part of you, or else you have never received it in truth.

**12. So then death worketh in us but life in you.**

So long as Paul could be the means of the salvation of the souls of men, he did not mind what became of himself, though it should be death to him, he would count it as nothing so long as it should bring life to them.

These apostolic men lived as it were on the borders of the grave, — lived expecting to die a cruel death; and in this way spiritual life was brought to the Corinthians and others who witnessed their holy lives and heroic deaths.

**13, 14. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.**

Note the assurance of apostolic preaching and writing. There is no "if" here, no hesitation, no doubt. The apostles knew what they believed, and knew why they believed it, and they spoke with the accent of conviction; nobody was led into doubt by their hesitancy.

**13,16**

As the flesh goes down, so, by God's grace, the spirit goes up. You know that there are heavy weights that keep men down to the earth; but he who understands mechanics knows that by the use of wheels and pulleys those same heavy weights may be made to lift a man; and God often makes the weights and burdens associated with bodily decay lift up the inward spirit.

**15, 16. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not;**

Paul had said before that they did not faint, and now he reiterates it that, though his ministry was enough to bear him down, and lay him prostrate in the dust, yet he did not faint.

The sickness that crumbles away the body of a Christian often confirms his soul in the faith that he received when he was strong and well. Some of the healthiest hours that God's people ever have are the hours of their sorest sicknesses. God often sends his people fevers to make them well; he sends them losses to make them rich, he takes away their earthly friends to bring them closer to their best Friend, and he brings them to their wits' end that they may begin to be truly wise. Often, when God strips us of all our worldly possessions, it is the most soul-enriching season we have ever known; but, on the other hand, the day of temporal prosperity has often been a day of spiritual poverty. Adversity has many a time been an angel in disguise, but prosperity has been the devil in a mask. Let us take care that we cleave closely to Christ under both experiences, for then both of them shall be sanctified to us.

**16**

As our body, through pain and disease, is constantly sinking towards the grave, here is our continual consolation,-that our inner man is renewed day by day.

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

This is one of the most remarkable verses in all Scripture; the contrast here drawn is perfect, and the language is in the highest degree pertinent to the subject. When the apostle speaks of affliction, he contrasts with it glory. The affliction he calls a lightness of affliction, but the glory he calls a weight of glory; and while he describes the affliction as momentary, he rightly says that the glory is

eternal; and then, as though he would make the contract still more vivid, he says that this momentary, light affliction “worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” He can scarcely find words big enough to express the contrast between what believers now have to endure and what they shall for ever enjoy.

Notice the ant thesis here. “Light affliction” — a “weight of glory.” “Affliction” is not set in contrast with peace, or freedom from affliction, but with “glory.” The “light affliction” is “for a moment” — the “weight of glory” is “eternal.” And then, as if this were not enough, the apostle has to exhaust all ordinary powers of speech in order adequately to express the contrast between the “light affliction” and the “weight of glory.” It is “far more exceeding” — not only a soul brim-full of bliss, and overflowing, but, far more than that if there can be such a thing, — “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;” —

#### **18. While we look not at the things which are seen-**

Alas for us if we did!

#### **18. But at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal**

Temporal and temporary; see how they melt away one after another!

## **2 Corinthians 5**

**2 Corinthians 5:1. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

Is not this grand courage on the part of the apostle? With all the world against him, and himself “alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake,” he looks at the new body, the new house that God is making for him, and he reckons that, to shuffle off this mortal coil will be no loss to him, since, when he loses the tent in which he lives here, he will go to “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

**1,2**

In this poor body it is our lot often to groan, but the groan is a hopeful one, for it is a birth-pang, and it will bring joy in due time: “For in this we groan,” —

**2-4. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, —**

We are not impatient to enter the disembodied state, —

**2-6**

That is a blessed experience, “always confident.” There are some Christians who are never confident, and some who are afraid of being confident. I know some who, if they see this holy confidence in other Christians, begin to tremble for their eternal safety. Never mind about them, brother, if God gives you a holy confidence in him, hold fast to it, and do not let it go whatever anyone may say.

**4-6. But clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, —**

Note the ground of the apostle’s confidence. He is quite sure that, inasmuch as Christ rose from the dead, so all his followers must; and though they die in the Lord’s service, yet shall they not be losers thereby, but they shall the more speedily ascend to their reward. “We are always confident,” —

**6-9. Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.**

To be well-pleasing to God everywhere, in everything that we do, should be the one aim of a Christian, whether he is in the body or out of the body.

That is our main business; whether we live or whether we die is of no consequence at all, but to be accepted of Christ, so to live is to be well pleasing to God. Be this our heavenly ambition, and may the Holy Spirit graciously enable us to attain to it!

**Verses 9-11**

The outside world did not understand the preachers of the gospel; they thought them dreamy enthusiasts, earnest about nothing at all. But Paul says that God understood him, and he hoped, too, that the consciences of those to whom he was writing had also understood him. The truly faithful minister of Jesus Christ may know that there are two approvals that he will be sure to get, — the approval of his Master, and the approval of men's consciences. Their prejudice may condemn him, his mode of oratory may not suit their fancy, but their conscience must give quite a different verdict; it must approve the faithful preaching of the gospel.

**10-13. For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade them; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, —**

And men said that these apostles had gone out of their minds. Festus said to Paul, "thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad;" so Paul says, "Whether we be beside ourselves," —

**12, 13.**

Happy Paul who, as a preacher of the gospel, could write, "If you say that we are beside ourselves, that we are really mad upon religious matters, — well, it is to God that we are so. It is not every madman who can say that. "Or if you tell us that we are too serious and sober, it is your case, your cause, that makes us so." Well may we be sober and solemn when we think of the danger in which men's souls continually are.

**13. It is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.**

"In either case, we have but one object, and that is, to glorify God through your salvation."

**14-15. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.**

The life of the saved man must never be lived for himself; he is false to his profession if it is so. He must henceforth live as earnestly for God as, aforetime in his unregeneracy, he lived for himself, for he now has a new life which is not his own, to do with it as he pleases, but it belongs entirely to him who purchased it with his own most precious blood.

The true-hearted Christian judges himself to have died when Christ died, and, henceforth, he feels that he must not live for any object but the glory of Christ.

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

We do not see Christ with our natural eyes, we do not hear his voice with our natural ears, he is to us now a spiritual Personage, who communicates with our spirits through his own ever-blessed Spirit.

He is gone back to glory, so our object is not to win a kingdom for him anywhere upon earth. Our aim now is spiritual, the proclamation of his truth, the winning of a kingdom for him in the hearts of men.

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

There could not be a greater change than that which is wrought by regeneration, it is a new creation, the passing away of the old, and the making of all things new.

**17-19. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not implying their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.**

The work of reconciliation he committed to his Son; the word of reconciliation he has committed to us. It is our high privilege to tell the tidings of the wondrous work by which God is reconciled, so that, without any violation of his justice, he can have mercy upon those who have offended against him.

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

As if Christ himself stood here, and pleaded with you, he bids his ministers plead on his behalf. In the name of God, he bids us beseech you to be reconciled to God. Ambassadors do not generally beseech men; they stand on their dignity, they make demands for the honor of their sovereign; but Christ's ambassadors know of no dignity which should keep them from pleading with men.

## 2 Corinthians 6

**2 Corinthians 6:1. We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.**

God's servants are called to take many different positions. They are ambassadors under one aspect; they are workers under another. As ambassadors, they are ambassadors for Christ, as workers, they are workers together with God. Oh, how much it costs to win a soul! I mean, not only how much it cost the Savior, so that he broke his very heart over it, and poured out his life's blood, — but also how much it must cost the messenger of peace! He must know how to beseech and implore; and when even this fails, he must still go on toiling, laboring, as a worker together with God.

**2. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)**

I trust that, if I am addressing any who say that it is too late for them to be saved, and that their sin is too great to be forgiven, this text will drive away that unholy and unwarranted fear: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Then the apostle goes on to speak of himself, and the rest of the apostles and other preachers of the Word: —

**3, 4. Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God,**

As those early servants of the Lord really did.

**4-10. In much patience, in afflictions in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown and yet well known, as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.**

All these things Paul and his brethren were to be and to do in order to win souls for Christ; just as the hunters in the cold North seek after furs, and try all sorts of plans to catch the wild creatures on which they grow. They will trap them, or snare them, or shoot them; but, somehow or other, they will get them. They will be on the alert all day, and all night, too. They will learn the habits of every creature they have to deal with, but they will get the furs somehow. And so must the true minister of Christ be willing to be anything, to do anything, to suffer anything, to bear reproach and shame, to be nothing, or to be all things to all men, if by any means he may save some.

**11, 12. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.**

If they were not saved, it was not because Paul did not open his mouth to speak to them, and to warn and invite them, nor because he did not open his heart, and feel, in his very bowels, the movements of a sacred compassion for them.

Now, having thus spent himself in his endeavor to bring them to Christ, he writes to those whom he did bring: —

**13. Now for a recompense in the same,**

There must be some wages for this blessed work. The apostle wisely puts it on that footing, as if, surely, they were indebted to him, but the payment that he seeks is, of course, no personal gain to him; he only puts it in that form, but it is a gain to them.

**13. (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.**

"There has been so much earnest labor to secure your conversion, so be ye also in earnest to bring in others. Get large thoughts of God; be fully consecrated to him, spend and be spent for him. Follow a good example." Paul could well urge them to that consecration when he had given himself so completely to the work of winning souls: "Be ye also enlarged."

**14. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:**

Not in any way, — neither in marriage which is the chief of all forms for yoking, nor yet in business or other partnerships.

## **14. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?**

You must be in the same world with them, but keep yourself distinct from them. Go not into their society by your own choice, nor seek your pleasure with them.

## **2 Corinthians 8**

The apostle is writing concerning a certain collection which was being made for the poor saints of Jerusalem. It was from Jerusalem that the gospel had spread into Greece, and, therefore, those who had received spiritual things from the poor Jews at Jerusalem were bound by every tie of holy brotherhood to remember their benefactors in the time of famine. The apostle stirs up the Corinthian Church about this contribution.

Although this is rather a practical than a spiritual chapter, I hope that we shall get profit out of it by the teaching of the Spirit of God who inspired Paul to write it. Paul was writing to the church at Corinth to commend the churches of Macedonia, that he might stir up the one church by the example of the others. The saints at Jerusalem were starving because of a famine, and it came into the mind of certain Gentile churches to send help to the mother-church at Jerusalem. It was regarded as a very wonderful thing that Gentiles should be sending help to Jews. I hope it would not be thought wonderful now, but it was then; and Paul, who loved the saints at Corinth, and saw that they were a little backward in this matter stirred them up to greater diligence. He did not like the churches in Macedonia to go so far ahead of the church in Corinth which was richer, and more endowed with gifts, and therefore he set to work to stimulate their generosity. Thus he begins: —

### **Verse 1. Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;**

That is a quaint old expression, “We do you to wit.” It means, “We would let you know, we would tell you, we would inform you of what the Macedonia saints have done;” and he does not at first say, “We would let you know of the liberality which the Macedonia churches have shown;” but, “of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.” What we do for God, God’s grace has first bestowed upon us. If there be any virtue, if there be any zeal, if there be any faith, if there be any love, it is the result of the grace of God bestowed upon us. Always look upon things in that light, for then you will not grow proud. Give what you may, and do what you may, you may regard it as the elect of the grace of God bestowed upon you.

1,2

It is good to stir one Christian up by the example of another, and Paul excites those at Corinth by the example of the churches in Macedonia — especially, no doubt, the church at Philippi. He says that they were in great affliction, and they were very poor, but yet they had been so filled with the grace of God that their very poverty had enabled them to “abound to the riches of their liberality,” for what they gave became more in proportion because they were so poor.

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

They were very poor people in Macedonia but they loved God so much that they abounded in liberality. Considering how little they possessed, and how much they were tried and persecuted, they had been wonderfully generous.

### **3. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;**

Without any pressure: without even a hint — spontaneously.

They were willing to give even beyond their power. They gave up to the full limit of what they could do, and then wished that they could give even more. And notice that “they were willing of themselves.” Paul had not to stir them up to do this, nor even to mention the subject to them: “They were willing of themselves.” That is the best kind of service to God which a man ever does, that in which he is willing of himself. It is the slave who is flogged to his work, the child is willing of himself. Oh, that on the altar of God, you and I may gladly place our offerings because we have been made willing of ourselves!

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

Paul did not have to beg them to give, but they begged him to take their gifts; and when the saints of God are in a right state, they come forward voluntarily, as Paul says that these Macedonian Christians did, “praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” by going to Jerusalem and giving away this money where it was needed.

“Take upon us the communion,” for that blessed word “Koinonia,” communion, is applied not only to the Lord’s supper, and to such

fellowship as that but to communion with poor saints — fellowship with them by helping their necessities. And Paul says that the Macedonian Churches pressed it upon him that he should take their money, and go with it to Jerusalem, and distribute it. He appears to have been very reluctant to do this, but they pressed it upon him.

**5, 6. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.**

Paul said, "Titus, do not let the Corinthians be behind the Macedonians in this matter. Go and show them how they may receive similar grace."

They first gave of themselves to God, and then asked Paul to take it that he might use it for God in the distribution of Christian charity among the poor saints at Jerusalem.

**6,7**

They were a famous church — this church at Corinth, having gifted men in abundance more than other churches, insomuch that they did not use to have one man for a pastor, because they so abounded in brethren able to edify; and he urges them, as they were forward in all things, not to be backward in their liberality.

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

These Corinthians were an instructed people, they were so well taught that they were able to carry on an open meeting for years without a minister, and the natural consequences followed, they fell into sixes and sevens, and there were divisions among them, so that Paul had to counsel them to have a minister: "I beseech you, brethren, ye know the house of Stephanas that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth." They were a notable church, people of standing among them; Paul admits all that, but he says, "Do not be behindhand in your liberality to the cause of God."

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

And, Christian men and women, whenever you see other Christians excelling you in any grace, seek to catch up with them; why should you be in the rear rank? You are to run with patience the race that is set before you, so do not be outstripped by your fellow-runners. If God has given to one Christian much of any grace, he can, if he pleases, give as much to you.

**8,9**

What a touching argument! How could he find a better? Help your brethren in Jerusalem that are in need, even though that help should pinch you, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and what he did, and what he gave that you might be rich.

**9. For ye know-**

These are most precious words, worthy of being written in letters of gold: "Ye know" —

**9. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.**

"You know the wonderful story of how you are rich through Christ's poverty. What a charge it was for him from the riches of heaven to the poverty of his manhood here, and what a change it is for you from the poverty of your sin and ruin to the riches of his grace! Now you know this, you do not need anybody to tell you about it, so imitate it, distribute to the poor, and especially to the poor saints, as you have the power and the opportunity."

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

They had started a year ago, but the project had hung fire, as such things often do. Many a man is good at resolving and starting, but not so good at going on to the end.

**10**

They had begun last year — perhaps not a year ago, but some months ago in the previous year — to talk the matter over, and to make promises; and they had been among the first to undertake the work, but as yet they had not done it.

**11. Now therefore perform the doing of it;**

"Do not let your good resolves be buried, let them be turned into action: 'Now therefore perform the doing of it.'" so I might say to who are here. "You have purposed, you have determined, you have resolved a great many times; 'Now therefore perform the doing of it.' If it is a good resolve, it will be best to carry it out at once."

11

They had not a minister, you see, and what is everybody's business is nobody's business, and so the contribution was not carried out. And in general the church at Corinth is about the worst in the New Testament, and that for this very reason — that it had not any oversight. It was the pattern church of certain brethren whom we have among us this day — in the very example of them, and they quote this as an example, whereas it is put here as a beacon, and a very excellent beacon, too, to warn us against any such thing. Everything was sixes and sevens, good people as they were. Seeing that they had no order and no discipline, nothing got done, and they wearied the apostle's life because of that. God would have things done decently and in order, and he gives to his churches pastors after his own heart, and when he does, then is the church able to carry out her desires and her activities with something like practical common-sense. But here a year ago, months ago, they had talked the matter over, and made a promise, and now he has to say to them, "Now therefore, perform the doing of it." They had no deacons to look them up, I will be bound to say.

**11, 12. That as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.**

This is how we should always act,—see what we can do, and do it, not wait till we can do twice as much. There is a great waste of holy effort and of holy giving because so many people are ashamed to do a little, and therefore do nothing because they cannot do much. That is not the way for God's children to act. With your willing mind do what you can, and God will help you to do more.

12-14

It is in the Christian Church alone that we shall ever find liberty equality, and fraternity thoroughly represented. There, by the life of Christ within his people spiritually, that shall be realised, and the apostle backs up this thought of his, which Bengel has beautifully put when he says "We ought to minister of our luxuries to the comfort of others, and of our comforts to the necessities of others." So we should, to keep up a balance that, when one suffers wants and another abounds, there may be an equality made.

**13, 14. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:**

Paul would have the rich church at Corinth give to the poor church at Jerusalem for the Corinthians themselves might be in need some day, and then the church at Jerusalem would in turn give to them. This is the law of the kingdom; if God prospers you, help another who is not being prospered just now; and then, one of these days, he also may help you in your time of necessity.

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

That was the law of the manna in the wilderness. Some people brought in a good deal, for they had a great many children, and so it was all eaten up. Some brought in a little, but God multiplied it, so that there was no lack. So, if, in providence, God gives you a large supply of good things, divide it among a large number of needy ones; and if he gives you only a small measure, be content, and do your best with it.

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

Titus thought of them as Paul did; they were like-minded in this as in many other matters.

**17, 18. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;**

I do not know who "the brother" was. There have been many guesses but perhaps none of them were right. You see that human praise, even in the church, is not a very lasting thing. There was somebody whom all Christians praised; yet, now, nobody knows him. So, if you get to be esteemed among men, you may be unknown, even as this good man is; but if you have the praise of God, he will never forget you.

And what brother was that? Nobody knows. And a brother who has praise in all the churches may be well content to have his name forgotten. Oh! it would be a sweet thing to have praise in all the churches anonymously, so that it all might go up to God. It may have been Luke. Probably it was. It may not have been Luke. Probably it was not. We do not know who it was. But it does not signify. What matters it? As Mr. Whitfield used to say, "Let my name perish, but let Christ's name last for ever." "And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches."

**19. And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace,**

Paul did not like handling the money at all. They had to press him to do it, and then he sent Titus and somebody else to take charge of it, and to keep a strict account so that they should never be blamed in the matter of this distribution. So, beloved, see that you so serve God that even the devil cannot find fault with you. Be so exact, especially with what is given to God's cause, that no man shall ever even think that you have taken any of it to yourselves.

**19-21. Which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

The apostle is very particular and careful, and herein he sets an example to all of you who have anything to do with any work for God. Do not let it rest on yourselves alone; have others associated with you to share the responsibility, and help you to look after it.

He had other brethren associated with him, lest anybody should even hint that Paul was benefited thereby. And, oh! in the distribution of the Lord's money, it becomes us to be exceedingly careful. Paul adds this.

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

That the thing might be so clear and transparent that, while God knew that Paul was honest, everybody else might know it too, for others had been associated with him.

**22, 23. And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but not much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you. Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you:**

"If anybody outside wants to know who Titus is, say that I have sent him to be the leader in this particular work. If you want to know who he is, he is 'my partner and fellow helper concerning you.'" Well said, Paul.

How beautiful to see Paul so praising his brethren — very humble, commonplace persons as compared with himself, but he admires the grace of God in them. How very different from the general spirit of depreciation that you find even among Christian men — afraid to praise anybody, lest they should be exalted above measure. You might leave that to the devil. He will take care that they are not exalted above measure but you need not be as particular about that. Often the best thing that can be done for God's servant is to encourage him, for, though you may not know it, he may have a multitude of depressions, heavy toil and earnest care, and much watching, which may bring him down. Paul speaks well of the brotherhood: let us try to do the same. But how does he call these simple-minded men, who are going with him to distribute this money? Does he call them the glory of Christ? Yes; Christ is the glory of God, and his people are the glory of Christ. He glories whenever he is glorified by them. They are the result of the travail of his soul, and in that sense they are his glory.

**23. Or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ.**

This is the reply to any enquiry about the other brethren, they were probably poor men, humble men, plain preachers of the Word, yet Paul calls them "the glory of Christ." What a wonderful thing it is that any man should be the glory of Christ! An honest, upright character a holy gracious conversation does bring glory to Christ. Men say, "If that man is a follower of Christ, he does credit to his Master." Dear brothers and sisters, let us think of this; and if we are not the messengers of the churches, we may be "the glory of Christ."