

LEST SATAN SHOULD GAIN AN ADVANTAGE

2 CORINTHIANS 1:10 – 2:13



~ Do you have discontentment, disappointments and difficulties in your life? We all do. So, how is the Christian to deal with problems? How should we view God in light of dire circumstances and insurmountable challenges that will inevitably come our way? The apostle Paul had many adversities, sorrows and hardships to deal with in his life, too; and he is an example we should all be able to learn from in the Word of God. In our first report in second Corinthians, I stated that I felt my writing abilities had been exhausted. As I edit this report I wrote many years ago, I feel totally and completely inadequate to lift out the great truths that only the Holy Spirit can reveal to our hearts in this epistle – unworthy to handle the jewels of Christ that are provided as an indispensable comfort to our hearts.

Comfort is a word Paul has been emphasizing in second Corinthians. Comfort from God is much more than sentiment or sweet, sensational sayings. What we need is a present help; one where God comes to our side and encourages us tangibly, physically lifts our hearts up, provides materially for us, and strengthens our feet as we walk with Him. Thankfully, we can be sure God's comfort encompasses all of those dynamics. These things are the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and it seems most Christians don't know nearly enough, if anything, about the functional ministry of the third Person of the Godhead in the world today.

Paul has taught us that the Lord permits suffering in our lives for very definite reasons – many of which we may never know. One of the main reasons is that we might understand properly comforting others. We will never be capable of comforting others until we ourselves have experienced the comforting only God can provide. Paul had much experience with suffering. He was likely near unto death from a health perspective – and he was always in danger of the mob – having escaped narrowly from many terrible situations since his conversion....

I

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

~ Paul understood from experience it was God Himself Who delivered him from the myriad problems crashing around him. It is a wonderful thing to be able to say, in confidence, that God has delivered us, is delivering us, and will deliver us always! There's no arrogant or proud boasting here; Paul is actually walking extremely softly as he says all of this with blessed assurance. Paul says he trusts God will deliver him – and us – always. Paul knew these things were true; and he rejoiced that God was permitting him to give out the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ all across the known world at the time in which we are studying....

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.

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.

~ When a man can truthfully and sincerely give the testimony as Paul gave in verse twelve, then you have a man you can trust to teach you the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Word of God. Paul had acted in wholesomeness and sincerity towards the Corinthians. Unfortunately, most so-called Christians are not acting ethically towards the Lord. Paul knew God, whom he served, was faithful; and Paul wanted to pass that hope along to these people — and to you and me — at this time....

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

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

15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

~ Paul had promised the Corinthian church that he would return to visit them, but had not had that opportunity when he wrote this epistle. As a result, the enemy was saying they couldn't depend on Brother Paul because he had failed to keep his word. They said he promised something but would never make good. Well, Paul was forced to address that criticism because he had, indeed, given his word to them in his first epistle that he would return. Paul wasn't being fickle; telling them he would come, but then changed his mind. No, Paul is telling them that it is *GOD* Who directed his steps, God was and is faithful – and that it was God Himself Who was hindering Paul from returning to them at this time....

16 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 Judaea.

17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

19 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.

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

~ Everything in Jesus Christ is positive – even the negative is positive. “A-Men” is His Name in the book of Revelation. Everything we do must – *MUST* – be for the glory of our faithful True and Living God the Father, the sure certainty of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the indwelling

power of the Holy Spirit providing His ministry of comfort and revelation through us to others. Quite frankly, the entire present earthly ministry of the Holy Spirit can be summed up in verse twenty-one and twenty-two. The work of the Holy Spirit is to establish us in Christ. He does that by convicting us of sin, righteousness and judgment. After we are convicted, if we confess our sins and accept Christ as our Savior, then the Holy Spirit regenerates, indwells, baptizes us, and comforts us. There is a hymn that says “... *safe in the arms of Jesus*” – well, we’re not in His arms – we’re part of His Body! The Holy Spirit places us *INTO* His body. By the way, this is all *present tense* regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit....

²¹ Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

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

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

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

~ The correct teaching of the anointing of the Holy Spirit is, sadly, the single-most neglected aspect of Bible teaching today. This is where we transfer from the realm of reason into reality; from hypothetical to experimental; from fiction to fact — where we rise from theoretical death to actual physical living where, if we are risen with Christ, we will seek those things which are above, where Christ is: at the right hand of God the Father! John says, “... *but ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things....But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him....*”

I cannot over-emphasize the all-important aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, friends. Again, it is almost totally and completely

neglected today. See, the Spirit of God isn't going to give us a mail-order degree; and discernment is not knowledge that comes gift-wrapped in a box. Most people make this HUGE fatal error in interpretation. The Holy Spirit is our teacher, and He Alone can open the Scriptures to our understanding. That just happens to be what makes the Word of God a miracle book. All genuine Christians depend on the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, *"I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot receive them now."* Only when the Spirit of God comes upon us will we be led into all truth. That's what God wants to see happen to us in our lives today.

The Holy Spirit also "seals" believers as a function of His earthly ministry. We're told to "grieve not the Holy Spirit" — which I believe we all do on some level — and almost constantly. Maybe you don't know anything about feeling as if you've failed the Lord. I do. I thank Him we can never grieve Him away because we are sealed unto the day of redemption. The Holy Spirit isn't going to fail to deliver us someday to the Lord. Let's thank God He is faithful; even when we are not.

We have a marking — a branding — which is the mark of God's ownership set upon believers when we are sealed in the Spirit of God. As sheep of His, we can never get lost. We may wander far from His will, but Jesus is going to come find us. That is our Blessed Assurance. What we are given is the *"earnest"* of the Holy Spirit — which is basically a down payment meaning the rest must be rendered. It's a wonderful thing to understand there is so much more of the Holy Spirit to come. God isn't going to defect as the buyer, either — because He paid for us with His Blood.

The Holy Spirit begins to operate through the life of a believer, and gradually brings them into the full-orbed experience of knowing God. What is it you need today? Do you need mercy? Do you need power? Do you need joy? Do you need wisdom? Do you need discernment? What kind of help do you need? Why don't you go ask Him for what you need? These are the comforts God offers; and Paul knew that from experience. You are reading the writings of Andrew Hunt — who just happens to also know it. I know it because I have experienced it — and there's no other way to know.

If Paul had returned to Corinth at the time he said he would, then he would have simply repeated his first epistle to them. The first letter Paul wrote was filled with scathing corrections and stern rebuke. Paul wanted them to work it out themselves; because he wasn't the bishop of their souls – and he didn't want to be that. Paul wanted them to have freedom in Christ – not someone lording over of them. Well, you are going to have to stand in your own faith, my friends. The only way to strengthen them that they might grow in their faith was for Paul to stay away. This is exactly the reason God permits many of us to undergo hardship, difficulties, hinders our ministry, and experience sorrows in our own lives, too, by the way....

II

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

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

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

⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

~ Many people fall out with their preacher when a severe message is given. Most people seem to think harsh messages are inappropriate and ought never be presented. Well, if that type of message is never heard, then you don't have a faithful pastor. We are told to be instant in season and out of season; and to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering.

Any minister or Bible teacher worth their salt has a tremendous responsibility to rightly divide the Scriptures. I am accused *CONSTANTLY* of not being loving. Well, if you find me opposed to you, it is because I love you – and no other reason. There are a whole lot of things I could do besides write these reports and talk to *YOU*. A faithful pastor shows his love for the congregation by teaching the Word of God as it is – not by buttering up a bunch of little babies for a few minutes once a week.

Remember, Paul had severely rebuked the church at Corinth in his first epistle for permitting gross immorality; specifically, incest within the congregation. They shut their eyes to this abomination, and yet, they were running around bragging about speaking in tongues. They were a bunch of carnal, baby Christians. Paul told them to straighten the problem out – and they straightened it out! Well, I wonder today if we aren't almost totally and completely ignorant of Satan's devices. Paul had told these people that they must not tolerate evil and that they must put it away — and that's

what they did. By the time this second epistle is penned the offending man had come forward and acknowledged his sin — and repented.

So, they were told to forgive him. And they did. The devil can easily cause our hearts to be hardened. I'm not going into that too deeply, but one problem in the body of believers are the stiff-necked fundamentalists who can never forgive anything. Unforgiveness can be the work of the devil. That's where Satan gets a huge advantage over many people. There are two things we don't seem to hear anything about in our churches today: people asking for forgiveness by saying they're wrong, and those who will forgive other people. Recognizing our unforgiving spirit is *CRITICAL* to a proper walk with and for Christ Jesus.

Well, our Spiritual Safari ends this report with Paul staying in Troas preaching the Gospel — because that was the will of God for his life. Instead of being fickle, Paul was faithful to God. Even so, Paul was grieving in his heart, because Titus hadn't brought him word concerning the church at Corinth yet. And, as we move forward, we're going to examine one of the most wonderful aspects of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in our present day ~

