

**The Second Epistle
Of The Apostle Paul
To The Corinthians (KJV)**

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INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 1

This epistle, according to the subscription at the end of it, was written from Philippi of Macedonia; and though the subscriptions annexed to the epistles are not always to be depended on, yet it seems very likely that this was written from thence; for the apostle not finding Titus at Troas, as he expected, went into Macedonia, where he met with him, and had an account from him of the success of his first epistle; of the state and condition of the church, and of the temper and disposition of mind in which the members of it were, and which gave him great satisfaction; upon which he immediately wrote this second epistle, and sent it by the same person to them; see 2Co 2:12,13 Co 7:5-7 8:6,16-18. It is very probable it might be written the year after the former; and so it is placed by Dr. Lightfoot in the year 56, as the former is in the year 55; though some place this in the year 60, and the other in 59. The occasion of this epistle was partly to excuse his not coming to them according to promise, and to vindicate himself from the charge of unfaithfulness, levity, and inconstancy on that account; and partly, since what he had wrote about the incestuous person, had had a good effect both upon him and them, to direct them to take off the censure that had been laid upon him, and restore him to their communion, and comfort him; likewise to stir them up to finish the collection for the poor saints they had begun; as also to defend himself against the calumnies of the false teachers, who were very industrious to sink his character and credit in this church; which he does by observing the doctrines of the Gospel he preached, which were far more glorious than, and abundantly preferable to, the ministration of the law of Moses, which those men desired to be teachers of; as likewise the success of his ministry in every place; the many sufferings he had underwent for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; the high favours and privileges he had received of the Lord, as well as the signs, wonders, and miracles done by him in proof of his apostleship; and in which are interspersed many things useful and instructive.

This chapter contains the inscription of the epistle, the salutation of the persons to whom it is written, the preface to it, and the first part of it, in which is the apostle's defence of himself from the charge of fickleness and inconstancy. The inscription is in 2Co 1:1, in which an account is given of the person, the writer of this epistle, by his name Paul, and by his office, an apostle of Jesus Christ, which is ascribed to the will of God as the spring and cause of it; and with himself he joins Timothy, whom he calls a brother: also an account is given of the persons to whom the epistle is inscribed, who are both the church at Corinth, and all the saints throughout the region of Achaia, of which Corinth was the chief city: the salutation, and which is common to all the epistles of the Apostle Paul, is in 2Co 1:2, and the preface begins 2Co 1:3, with a thanksgiving to God, who is described by the relation he stands in to Christ, as his Father, by the manifold mercies and blessings he is the author and donor of, and by the consolation he administers; an instance of which is given, 2Co 1:4, in the apostle and his companions, who had been comforted by him; the end of which was, that they might be instruments of comforting others in like troubles with the same consolations; the great goodness of God in which is illustrated by proportioning their consolation by Christ to their sufferings for him, 2Co 1:5, and the end both of their afflictions and their comforts is repeated and explained; and by a dilemma it is shown, that both were for the good of the saints at Corinth, 2Co 1:6, and a strong assurance is given, that as they shared in sufferings for Christ, they would partake of consolation by him as they had done, 2Co 1:7. Next the apostle, in proof of what he had said, gives an instance of the trouble he had been in, and of the comfort and deliverance he had received, which he would not have the Corinthians ignorant of: he mentions the place where it was, in Asia, and gives an account of the nature of the affliction, how great it was; it was out of measure, above the strength of man, and induced despair of life, 2Co 1:8, so that the apostle, and those that were with him in it, expected nothing but death, and were under the sentence of it in their own apprehensions; the end of God in suffering which, was to take them off of all self-confidence, and to engage their trust in God, to which the consideration of his power in raising the dead is a strong argument, 2Co 1:9. And indeed this deliverance, which God wrought, for the apostle, and his friends, was a deliverance as it were from death, and a very great one; and which had this effect upon them, the designed and desired end, trust and confidence in God for future deliverance, having had an experience of past and present, 2Co 1:10, which deliverance the apostle acknowledges, was owing to the prayers of the Corinthians, as a means or helping cause of it; and which favour was bestowed thereby for this end, that as it came by the means of many, thanks might be returned by many for it, 2Co 1:11. And the reason why the apostle, and his fellow ministers, had such an interest in the prayers of the Corinthians, was their agreeable conversation in

the world, and particularly at Corinth, which their consciences bore witness to, and they could reflect upon with pleasure; it being through the grace of God with great simplicity and sincerity, and not with carnal craft and subtlety: or this is mentioned by the apostle to remove the charge of levity, and to vindicate himself and others from it, 2Co 1:12 , which he next enters upon, premising that the constant course of their lives was such as before described, and which there was no reason to doubt would always continue such; for the truth of which he appeals to what they had seen, and owned to be in them, 2Co 1:13 , and that it was acknowledged, at least in part, that the apostles were their rejoicing, or of whom they boasted as to their conduct and conversation, even as they were persuaded they would be matter of rejoicing in the day of Christ to them, 2Co 1:14 . And then the apostle acknowledges his intention and promise of coming to them, which was in confidence of their value for him, and of their being real Christians and persevering ones; and for this end, that he might establish them in the grace which they had received, 2Co 1:15 , and also, after he had passed by them into Macedonia, and was returned from thence to them again, that he might be helped on by them in his journey to Jerusalem, with the collection for the poor saints there, 2Co 1:16 . But then he denies that he used levity, or carnal policy and purposes, or was guilty of any contradiction; all which expresses by certain interrogations, 2Co 1:17 , which confirms by the ministration of the Gospel among them, which was all of apiece, without contradiction for the truth of which he calls God to witness; and so argues from the uniformity of his ministry, to the constancy of his word of promise, 2Co 1:18 . Which argument he amplifies and enlarges on, by observing the subject matter of the Gospel ministry, which is Jesus Christ the Son of God; and which, though preached by different ministers, himself, Silvanus, and Timothy, yet was the same, had no contrariety in it, as preached by the one, and by the other, 2Co 1:19 , and therefore there was no reason to conclude that he was fickle and inconstant in his promise to them, when he was so invariable in his ministry among them: besides, as all the promises of God are sure and certain, being made by the God of truth, and being in Christ, and the performance of them being for the glory of God by the saints; so the promises of every good man, in imitation of God and Christ, are firmly and constantly observed, as much as can be by frail and finite creatures, 2Co 1:20 ; and that the apostle, and his fellow ministers, were not so fickle and changeable as they were represented, neither in their principles, nor in their practices, the apostle takes notice of some blessings of grace, which they enjoyed in common with other saints, and with the Corinthians; such as stability in Christ, the unction of divine grace, the seal and earnest of the Spirit in their hearts; all which they had from God, and which kept them close to God, and preserved them in his grace, and from a fickle variable temper of mind, and from changeableness either in doctrine or conduct, 2Co 1:21,22 . And then the apostle proceeds to give the true reason why he had not as yet come to Corinth, according to his promise, which was on their account, and not his own, that they might not come under that severe discipline and correction, which their faults required; and for the truth of this he calls God to witness, 2Co 1:23 . But lest it should be objected that this was assuming a dominion over them, a lording it over God's heritage, he observes, that he and his fellow ministers did not pretend to have dominion over their faith, only to be helpers of their joy, 2Co 1:24 .

2 CORINTHIANS 1

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

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

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

4 Who 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.

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

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

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

the consolation.

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

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

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

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.

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;

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.

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 .

2 Corinthians 1:1

Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God

The inscription of this epistle is pretty much the same with that of the former; only whereas here he styles himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, there he says he was “called” to be one: for he did not assume that character and office without the call of Christ, and will of God; and which he chooses to mention, in opposition to the false apostles, who had neither. Likewise, in the inscription of the former epistle Sosthenes is joined with him; in this Timothy, whom he calls

our brother,

not so much on account of his being a partaker of the same grace, as for his being a minister of the same Gospel: and he the rather mentions him, because he had sent him to them, to know their state, and was now returned to him with an account of it, and who joined and agreed with him in the substance of this epistle. Moreover, the former epistle is directed as “unto the church of God which is at Corinth”; so to all that call upon the name of Christ in every place; and this is directed also to the same church, together with all the saints which are in all Achaia; which was a very considerable part of Greece, and of which Corinth was the metropolis: and the apostle’s intention in directing it in this form was, that copies of this letter might be sent to them, who equally, with this church, stood in need of the reproofs, exhortations, and instructions which are in it.

2 Corinthians 1:2

Grace be to you

This salutation is the same with that in the former epistle, and is common to all his epistles; (See Gill on Romans 1:7).

2 Corinthians 1:3***Blessed be God***

This is an ascription of praise and glory to God, for he can only be blessed of men, by their praising and glorifying him, or by ascribing honour and blessing to him: and in this form of blessing him he is described, first by his relation to Christ,

even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

whose Son Christ is, not by creation, as angels and men, nor by adoption, as saints, but in such a way of filiation, as no creatures are, or possibly can be: he is his only begotten Son, his own proper Son, his natural and eternal Son, is of the same nature with him, and equal to him in perfections, power, and glory. This is rightly prefaced by the apostle to the other following characters, since there is no mercy nor comfort administered to the sons of men but through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners. And next he is described by his attribute of mercy, and the effects of it, or by his merciful disposition to his creatures,

the Father of mercies.

The Jews frequently address God in their prayers F1 under the title or character of, (Mymxrh ba) , “Father of mercies”. The plural number is used, partly to show that God is exceeding merciful; he delights in showing mercy to poor miserable creatures, and is rich and plenteous in the exercise of it: nothing is more common in the Talmudic writings, than to call him (anmxr) , “the merciful”, and this is partly to express the multitude of his tender mercies, of which he is the “Father”, author, and giver, both in a temporal, and spiritual sense; for there are not only innumerable providential mercies which the people of God share in, and partake of, but also a multitude of spiritual mercies. Such as redemption by Christ, pardon of sin through his blood, regeneration by his Spirit, supplies of grace out of his fulness, and the word and ordinances; all which are owing to the mercy of God, which they have abundant reason to be thankful to him, and bless him for, being altogether unworthy and undeserving of them. God is also described by his work of comforting the saints,

and the God of all comfort;

most rightly is this character given him, for there is no solid comfort but what comes from him; there is none to be had in, and from the creatures; and whatever is had through them it is from him: and all spiritual comfort is of him; whatever consolation the saints enjoy they have it from God, the Father of Christ, and who is their covenant God and Father in Christ; and the consolation they have from him through Christ in a covenant way is not small, and for which they have great reason to bless the Lord, as the apostle here does; for it is from him that Christ, the consolation of Israel, and the Spirit, the Comforter, come, and whatever is enjoyed by the Gospel.

FOOTNOTES:

F1 Seder Tephillot, fol. 55. 8. Ed. Basil. fol. 77. 1. & passim, Ed. Amstelod. Sapher Shaare Zion, fol. 54. 1. Vid. Kabbala Denudata, par. 1. p. 7.

2 Corinthians 1:4***Who comforteth us in all our tribulation***

The apostle in this verse gives a reason of the former thanksgiving, and at the same time confirms the above character of God, as “the God of all comfort”, by his own experience, and that of his fellow ministers; who,

though they had been in great tribulation and affliction for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel, yet were not left destitute of divine help and support under their trials; but had much consolation and sweet refreshment administered to them by the presence of God with them, the application of his promises to them, the shedding abroad of his love in them, and the fellowship and communion they enjoyed with Father, Son, and Spirit. The end of this, or why God was pleased to comfort them in such a manner, was not so much on their own account; though it showed that they were loved, and not hated and rejected of God, but for the good of others:

that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God;

many are the troubles and afflictions of the saints in this life, but it is the will of God that they should be comforted: and the persons he employs and makes use of in this way are his ministering servants, whose principal work and business it is to speak comfortably to the people of God; see (Isaiah 40:1 Isaiah 40:2) , and that they may be able to do so, that they may be fitted and furnished for so good a work, they are blessed with a rich experience of divine consolation in themselves, under the various troubles and exercises they are attended with in the course of their ministry; and such persons are, of all others, the fittest, and indeed the only proper persons to speak a word in season to weary souls.

2 Corinthians 1:5

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us

By “the sufferings of Christ” are not meant those which he suffered in his own person for the sake, and in the room and stead of his people, the fruits and effects of which abound to them, and in them; but those which he suffers in his members, or which they suffer for his sake; and which are said to “abound in” them, because of the variety and greatness of them; though not as if they were more or greater than what Christ suffered in his soul and body, when he was made sin and a curse for his people: yet notwithstanding the abundance of them, such is the goodness and grace of God, that he proportions comforts to them; as their afflictions increase, so do their comforts; as their sufferings for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel, are more and greater,

so,

says he, our consolation aboundeth by Christ:

meaning, either that consolation which they felt and enjoyed in their own souls, under all their tribulations, which abundantly answered to them, and which they ascribe to Christ, from and by whom it comes to them; or else that consolation, which, by preaching Christ, abounded to the relief of others who were in distress and trouble.

2 Corinthians 1:6

And whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation

The apostle repeats and explains the end of both his comforts and his troubles, and shows, by a dilemma, a strong way of arguing, that the afflictions and consolations, the adversity and prosperity of him, and the other ministers of the Gospel, were for the good of the saints: and it is as if he should say, when you see us continue to preach the Gospel with so much boldness and cheerfulness, amidst so many reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, you must be the more established in the faith, and confirmed in the truth of the Gospel; and this cannot fail of ministering much peace, satisfaction, and comfort to your minds. This animates you to hold fast the rejoicing of your hope, and the profession of your faith firm unto the end; and with the greater cheerfulness and pleasure meet with, and endure afflictions yourselves for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel: nay, he says, that the afflictions of Christ’s ministers were not only for their consolation, but also for their

salvation, which is effectual,

or is effectually wrought

in,
or by

the enduring,
patient bearing,

of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

Not that the afflictions of the saints, or of others, and their patient enduring of them, are the cause of their salvation; for Christ is only the efficient cause, he is the sole author of spiritual and eternal salvation; but these are means the Spirit of God makes use of, as he does of the word and ordinances, to bring the saints to a satisfaction as to their interest in it, and are the ordinary way in which they are brought to the possession of it.

Or whether we be comforted it is for your consolation and salvation:

for whatsoever comfort God is pleased to communicate to us, it is not kept in our breasts, and for our own use, but we immediately and readily impart it to you, that you may share with us the advantage of it, and be comforted together with us; that your faith in the doctrine of salvation may be established, your hope of it increased, and that you may be more comfortably assured you are in the way to it, and shall enjoy it.

2 Corinthians 1:7

For our hope of you is steadfast

We have long ago entertained hopes of you, that the work of God is begun upon your souls, and will be carried on, and that you will hold on in the profession of your faith unto the end, and not be moved by the afflictions you see in us, or endure in yourselves; and so will pass on cheerfully in your Christian race, in the midst of all your troubles, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, you may expect to be possessed of; and this hope, for or concerning you, continues with us firm and immovable.

Knowing,

which may refer either to the Corinthians; so the Arabic version, “be ye knowing”, or “know ye”; you may, or should know; this you may assure yourselves of: or to the apostle and other ministers; so the Syriac version, (Nnyedy) , “we know”, we are persuaded of the truth of this,

that as you are partakers of the sufferings;

that is, of Christ, and the same which we also suffer for him:

so shall ye be;

or rather, “so you are also of the consolation”; for the apostle seems to respect not future happiness and glory, in which, as there will be no afflictions and troubles, so no comfort under them, but present consolation, which the saints enjoy here as a pledge and earnest of that fulness of joy which they shall have with Christ for evermore.

2 Corinthians 1:8

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble

The apostle was very desirous that the Corinthians might be thoroughly acquainted with the trouble that had lately befallen them; partly because it would clearly appear from hence what reason he had to give thanks to God as he had done; and partly, that they might be encouraged to trust in God, when in the utmost extremity; but chiefly in order to remove a charge brought against him by the false apostles; who, because he had promised to come to Corinth, and as yet had not come, accused him of lightness and inconstancy, in as much as he had not kept his promise. Now to show that it was not owing to any such temper and disposition of mind in him, he

would have them know, that though he sincerely intended a journey to them, yet was hindered from pursuing it, by a very great affliction which befell him: the place where this sore trouble came upon him, is expressed to be in Asia: some have thought it refers to all the troubles he met with in Asia, for the space of three years, whereby he was detained longer than he expected; but it seems as though some single affliction is here particularly designed: many interpreters have been of opinion, that the tumult raised by Demetrius at Ephesus is here meant, when Paul and his companions were in great danger of their lives, (Acts 19:21-41) , but this uproar being but for a day, could not be a reason why, as yet, he had not come to Corinth: it seems rather to be some other very sore affliction, and which lasted longer, that is not recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: the greatness of this trouble is set forth in very strong expressions,

as that we were pressed out of measure.

The affliction was as an heavy burden upon them, too heavy to bear; it was exceeding heavy, (kay' uperbolhn) , even to an "hyperbole", beyond expression; and

above strength,

that is, above human strength, the strength of nature; and so the Syriac renders it, (Nlyx Nm) , "above our strength"; but not above the strength of grace, or that spiritual strength communicated to them, by which they were supported under it: the apostle adds,

insomuch that we despaired even of life;

they were at the utmost loss, and in the greatest perplexity how to escape the danger of life; they greatly doubted of it; they saw no probability nor possibility, humanly speaking, of preserving it.

2 Corinthians 1:9

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves

By the sentence of death is meant, not any decree of heaven, or appointment of God that they should die; nor any sentence of condemnation and death passed on them by the civil magistrate; but an opinion or persuasion in their own breasts, that they should die; so far were they from any hopes of life, that they looked upon themselves as dead men, as the Egyptians did, when their firstborn were slain, and said, "we be all dead men", (Exodus 12:33) , and to this extremity they were suffered to be brought by the wise counsel of God, for the following purposes, to learn to lay aside all self-trust and confidence:

that we should not trust in ourselves;

in our strength, wisdom, and policy, to make our escape, and preserve our lives; and also to teach and encourage them to trust in God alone, and depend on his arm, on his almighty power:

but in God which raiseth the dead;

who will raise the dead at the last day, and so is able to deliver persons when they are in the most distressed condition, and in their own opinion as dead men.

2 Corinthians 1:10

Who delivered us from so great a death

Accordingly, being enabled to trust in God, when all human hope and helps failed, to believe in hope against hope, then the Lord appeared for them, and delivered them from this heavy affliction; which, because by reason of it they were not only in danger of death, and threatened with, but were even under the sentence of it, is therefore called a death, and so great an one, see (2 Corinthians 11:23) . The apostle expresses the continuance of the mercy,

and doth deliver;

which shows that they were still exposed to deaths and dangers, but were wonderfully preserved by the power of God, which gave great encouragement to them to hope and believe that God would still preserve them for further usefulness. The Alexandrian copy leaves out this clause, and so does the Syriac version.

In whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

all the three tenses, past, present, and future, are mentioned, which shows that an abiding sense of past and present deliverances serves greatly to animate faith in expectation of future ones.

2 Corinthians 1:11

You also helping together by prayer for us

Though the apostle ascribes their deliverance solely to God, as the author and efficient cause of it; yet he takes notice of the prayers of the saints for them, as helping causes or means of their obtaining it. It was a very laudable practice in the churches, and worthy of imitation, to pray for the ministers of the Gospel, and especially when under affliction and persecution; see (Acts 12:5) , and the prayers of those righteous ones were heard by God, and often effectual for the deliverance of them, as they were in the present case: for

by the means of many persons,

who wrestled together in prayer with God,

the gift

of deliverance from so great a death, which the apostle looked upon as a wonderful mercy, (carisma) , “a free grace gift”, was “bestowed upon” them, which was granted for this end,

that thanks may be given by many on our behalf;

which is but reasonable, and ought to be observed; for since many were concerned in asking for, and obtaining the mercy, they ought to join in thanksgiving for it: and the apostle’s view in this is to stir them up to a joint acknowledgment of the deliverance with them, which better became them than to side with the false apostles in their charge against him.

2 Corinthians 1:12

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience,

&c.] This rejoicing or glorying of the apostle’s in the testimony of their consciences, to the goodness of their hearts, actions, conduct, and behaviour, was not before God, and in his sight, but before men, who were ready to accuse their good conversation in Christ: nor are these words to be considered as they generally are by interpreters, as if it was the testimony of a good conscience, which was the ground of their faith and confidence, that God would deliver them, and was an helping cause, together with the prayers of the saints, of their present deliverance. They refer to the charge exhibited against the apostle, that he had falsified his word in not coming to Corinth according to his promise; under which charge he could sit easy, having a witness within him, which was better than a thousand others, that

we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards;

the Corinthians, of which they themselves must be conscious:

in simplicity;

in opposition to double mindedness; they did not say one thing, and mean another, and act contrary to both; their heart and mouth went together, and their conduct agreed with both; what they promised they meant to perform; and where there was a want of performance, it was owing to intervening providences, which hindered,

and not to any deceitfulness in them: the conscience of the apostle bore him witness, that he behaved in the simplicity and singleness of his heart; and also in

godly sincerity,

or “in the sincerity of God”; that is, such as God requires, gives, and approves of, and which will stand in his sight, will bear his examination, and to which he gives his testimony; and that his conduct was

not

influenced

with fleshly wisdom:

he used no artful sophisticated methods to impose upon, and delude persons, for any sinister ends, or worldly advantage:

but by the grace of God;

which was bestowed upon him, implanted in him, and which taught him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world.

2 Corinthians 1:13

For we write none other things to you

The things we write unto you concerning our conduct; and behaviour, are no other

than what you read;

not in our letters to you, but in our lives and conversations, when we were among you, and which you must own and acknowledge to be just and right; we can appeal to you, that what we say, and are obliged to say of ourselves, in our own defence, is what, upon a recollection, you will easily remember to have seen and observed:

and I trust;

or “hope”, through the grace of God, we shall be enabled so to walk, as that

you shall acknowledge even to the end;

that our conversations are as become the Gospel of Christ, and are clear of that hypocrisy and deceit our adversaries would insinuate concerning us.

2 Corinthians 1:14

As also you have acknowledged us in part

This may refer either to the thing known and acknowledged, namely, the integrity of the apostle’s conversation, and others; which though they did not know thoroughly and perfectly, yet did in part, and that so far as that they might acquit them from the charge brought against them; or to the persons who knew this, as that there were some in the church of Corinth, a part of them, though not all, who knew and had acknowledged them to be upright and sincere ministers of the word, and had declared that they had reason to rejoice and bless God that ever they heard them: and

that we are your rejoicing:

or “glorying in”, or “unto the day of the Lord Jesus”: when he shall come to judge the world in righteousness, then they should before him, angels and men, rejoice and glory in this, that they had been blessed with such sincere and faithful ministers, who sought not any worldly advantage, but the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls:

even as,

adds the apostle,

ye also are ours;

we do now, and so we shall then, rejoice and glory in this, that our labour among you was not in vain, but was blessed for your conversion and edification.

2 Corinthians 1:15

And in this confidence I was minded

Being fully persuaded of your affection for me, as having been instrumental in the conversion of many of you, and of your esteem of me as a faithful and upright minister of the word, and of your being my rejoicing in the day of Christ, I was desirous, and had determined, and so promised,

to come to you before;

when I sent my first epistle to you, or before now, or before I went into Macedonia; and what I now say was the sincere intention of my mind; I thought really to have done what I had such an inclination to: and my view in it was,

that you might have a second benefit;

the meaning of which according to some is, first by his letter to them, and then by his presence with them; or as others, one benefit when he should pass by them to Macedonia, and a second, when he should return to them from thence, according to the following verse; or rather, as the first benefit which they received from him, and under his ministry, was their conversion, so this second benefit may design their edification, and establishment in the faith, their growth in grace, and improvement in spiritual knowledge.

2 Corinthians 1:16

And to pass by you into Macedonia

It was his first intention and determination to have come first to Corinth, and then to Macedonia, to have took this city in his way thither; which was an argument of his love to them, and his great desire to see them; since he might have gone, as he did, a nearer way to Macedonia, than by Corinth:

and to come again out of Macedonia to you;

when he had gone through that, and done his business there unto the Corinthians; and after some stay with them,

of you to be brought on my way towards Judea;

where he intended to go, with the collections he had made for the poor saints at Jerusalem, in the several churches in Asia; but though this was his first resolution, which he had signified either by letter, or messengers, yet he afterwards changed his mind, for some reasons within himself; it may be, having heard some things disagreeable of them, which he thought more convenient to acquaint them with in an epistle first, and to try what effect that would have upon them, before he came in person: that he changed his mind, appears from the former epistle, (1 Corinthians 16:5) , where he says, "I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia"; and upon this account it is he excuses and vindicates himself in the following verse.

2 Corinthians 1:17

When I was therefore thus minded, did I use lightness?

&c.] When I had thus determined to come to you, and had signified the same by writing, or messengers, did I use lightness in my resolutions and promises? did I act rashly, unadvisedly, and without consideration? did I promise certainly that I would come, without annexing any condition to it? did I not say, I would come to you shortly, if the Lord will? see (1 Corinthians 4:19) .

Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh?

do I consult myself? my own interest and advantage? do I seek the gratification of any carnal affection, as covetousness, ambition, or vain glory? &c. what sinister end could have been obtained, if I had come as I purposed, or is answered by my not coming? or when I have purposed anything, have I resolved upon it in my own strength? have I thought it lay in my own power to effect it?

that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?

as if I could make my “yea” continue “yea”, and my “nay, nay?” when all actions are weighed by God, and all events are at his dispose; man appoints, and God disappoints; and who can help these things? or thus, has there appeared such contradictions in my words, and such inconstancy in my conduct, that my “yeas” are “nays”, and my “nays yeas?” that I say one thing at one time, and another at another time, or both in the same breath? that I should say one thing, and mean another, on purpose to deceive, and change my mind and conduct without any reason?

2 Corinthians 1:18

But as God is true

It seems that the false apostles had insinuated, that as the apostle had not kept his word in coming to them as he had promised, that he was not to be depended upon in his ministry; that he might as well contradict himself, and deceive others in the one, as well as in the other: wherefore he appeals to God in a very solemn manner, calls him to witness to the truth of his doctrine; for these words may be considered as the form of an oath; or he argues from, the truth and faithfulness of God, to the certainty and invariableness of the word preached, who is so true and faithful as that he will never suffer his word to be yea and nay: for when the apostle says, that

our word towards you was not yea and nay,

he does not mean his word of promise to come to Corinth; but the word of his preaching, the doctrine of the Gospel, which was not uncertain, changeable, sometimes one thing, and sometimes another, and contradictory to itself. And by this the apostle would intimate, that since he was faithful and upright, uniform, consistent, and all of a piece in preaching the Gospel to them; so they ought to believe, that he was sincere in his resolutions and promises to come and see them, though as yet he had been hindered, and had not been able to perform them.

2 Corinthians 1:19

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ

The apostle having asserted that the Gospel preached by them was not yea and nay, variable and different, or what was affirmed at one time was denied at another, proceeds to point out the subject of the Gospel ministry,

the Son of God, Jesus Christ;

that Christ is “the Son of God”: this article he began his ministry with, (Acts 9:20) , and all the apostles affirmed the same thing; and which is of the greatest moment and importance, and ought to be abode by, insisted on, and frequently inculcated; as that he is the eternal Son of God, existed as such from everlasting, is of the same nature, and has the same perfections with his Father; and therefore is able to destroy the works of the devil, for which he was manifested in the flesh, and every way equal to the business of redemption, which he has finished; and

having passed into the heavens under this character, is a powerful advocate with the Father; and which renders him a sure foundation for the church, and a proper object of faith: that the Son of God is Christ, anointed to bear and execute the office of a mediator in the several parts and branches of it; a prophet to teach his people, a priest to make atonement and intercession for them, and a King to govern and protect them: and that the Son, who is become the Lord's Christ, is Jesus, a Saviour; and that salvation is alone by him, to which he was appointed from eternity, and was sent in the fullness of time to effect it; and by his obedience, sufferings, and death, is become the author of it, and is the only able, willing, and suitable Saviour for poor sinners. This is the principal subject and strain of the Gospel ministry; and which makes it good news, and glad tidings to lost perishing sinners. The agreement between the faithful ministers of the Gospel is here plainly hinted,

who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus.

These ministers being mentioned by the apostle with himself, shows his humility in putting them on a level with himself; and his modesty and candour in not monopolizing the Gospel to himself, but allowing others to be preachers of it as well as he: and his design herein seems to be for the confirmation of the Gospel, and to show that he was not singular and alone, and could not be blamed by them, without blaming others; and chiefly to express the harmony and unanimity of Gospel preachers. The prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New, agreed in all the doctrines and truths of the Gospel; so did the apostles themselves; and so all faithful dispensers of the word have in all different times and places agreed, and still do agree; which serves greatly to corroborate the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel being faithfully preached by these persons,

was not yea and nay;

it had no contradiction in it; each part agreed together, was entirely harmonious, and consistent. Their doctrine was, that Christ is the Son of God, truly and properly God; that he took upon him the office of a Mediator, and executes it; that he is the only Saviour of sinners; that God has chosen a certain number of men in Christ before the foundation of the world, has made a covenant with them in Christ, and blessed them in him; that Christ has redeemed them by his blood; that these are regenerated by the Spirit and grace of Christ, are justified by his righteousness, and shall finally persevere, and be partakers of eternal life; which is all of a piece, and in it no yea and nay. Yea and nay doctrines are particular election, the possibility of the salvation of the non-elect, the salvability of all men, and universal redemption; justification by faith, and, as it were, by the works of the law; conversion, partly by grace, and partly by the will of man; preparatory works, offers, and days of grace; and final perseverance made a doubt of: but such is not the true ministry of Christ and his apostles,

but in him was yea;

the Gospel, as in Christ, and as it comes from him, and has been preached by his apostles, and faithful ministers, is all of a piece; its constant and invariable strain, and by which it may be known and distinguished, is, to display the free, rich, and sovereign grace of God, to magnify and exalt the person and offices of Christ, to debase the creature, and to engage persons to the performance of good works, on Gospel principles, and by Gospel motives, and for right ends. The apostle using those words, "yea and nay", conforms to the language of the Jews, his countrymen, who to magnify their doctors and Rabbins, and to raise their credit, say such things of them;

“yea, yea”, are the words of the house or school of Shammai; (הבית הגדול) , “yea, yea”, are the words of the school of Hillel F2.”

And in another place F3;

“the receiving and giving, or the dealings of a disciple of a wise man, are in truth and faithfulness. He says, (הבית הגדול) , “concerning nay, nay, and concerning yea, yea””

But what is here said better agrees with the principles and practices of the disciples and followers of Christ.

FOOTNOTES:

F2 T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 20. 1.

F3 Maimon. Hilch. Dayot, c. 5. sect. 13.

2 Corinthians 1:20***For all the promises of God in him***

[are]

yea

This is a reason or argument proving what is before said, that “in” Christ “was yea”, since “all the promises of God in him are yea”; and shows, that God has made many promises to his people: mention is here made of “promises”, and of “all” the promises; or, as the words may be rendered, “as many promises of God”. There are some which concern the temporal good of the saints; as that they shall not want any good thing; and though they shall be attended with afflictions, these shall work for their good, and they shall be supported under them. Others concern their spiritual good; some of which relate to God himself, that he will be their God, which includes his everlasting love, his gracious presence, and divine protection. Others relate to Christ as their surety and Saviour, by whom they are, and shall be justified and pardoned, in whom they are adopted, and by whom they shall be saved with an everlasting salvation: and others relate to the Spirit of God, as a spirit of illumination, faith, comfort, strength, and assistance, and to supplies of grace by him from Christ: and others concern everlasting life and happiness, and are all of them very ancient, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; are exceeding great and precious, suited to the various cases of God’s people; are free and unconditional, immutable and irrevocable, and will all of them have their certain accomplishment. These promises are all “in” Christ; with and in whom could they be but in him, since he only existed when they were made, which was from everlasting? with and in whom should they be of right, but in him with whom the covenant, which contains these promises, were made, and who undertook the accomplishment of them? where could they be safe and secure but in him, in whose hands are the persons, grace, and glory of his people? not in Adam, nor in angels, nor in themselves, only in him. Moreover, these promises are “in him yea”,

and in him amen;

they are like the Gospel which exhibits them, consistent, and all of a piece; like the covenant which contains them, and is ordered in all things, and sure; and like the author of them, whose faithfulness and lovingkindness to his in Christ shall never fail; and like Christ himself, in whom they are, who is “the amen, the true and faithful witness, the same today, yesterday, and for ever”; by whose blood, the covenant, and all the promises of it, are ratified and confirmed, and in whom, who is the truth of them, they are all fulfilled. And these are

unto the glory of God by us;

these serve to illustrate and advance the glory of God, when they are preached by us, and held forth by us in the Gospel, just as they are in Christ, free, absolute, and unconditional; and when they are received “by us” as believers in Christ; for the stronger we are in the faith of the promises, the more glory we give to God; faith by laying hold on, and embracing the promises, glorifies the veracity, faithfulness, power, and grace of God. The Syriac version puts the “Amen” into this last clause, and reads it thus, “therefore by him we give Amen to the glory of God”.

2 Corinthians 1:21***Now he which stablisheth us with you***

Two things are in this verse ascribed to God. First, the establishing of the saints in Christ; in which may be observed, that the people of God are in a firm, settled, established state and condition; they are encircled in the arms of everlasting love; they are secure of the favour of God; they are engraven on his hands, and set as a seal on his heart, from whence they can never be removed; they are taken into his family by adopting grace; and

will never be turned out; they are in a state of justification, and shall never enter into condemnation; they are regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit of God, and shall never finally and totally fall from that grace they have received. This their establishment is “in” Christ, and in no other. They had no stability in Adam, nor have they any in themselves; their standing is alone in him; the unchangeable love and favour of God, which is their grand security, is in Christ; the covenant of grace, in which is all their salvation, is made and stands fast with him; their persons, with all their grace and glory, are put into his hands, and made his care and charge, and there they are safe. They are espoused unto him, made one with him, incorporated into him, and are built upon him the rock of ages, where they are so established, that hell and earth cannot shake them, so as to remove and unsettle them from this foundation: one and all of them, and all together, are established in him,

us with you;

all the elect of God are alike, and together in Christ, and have the same place and standing in his love, power, and care; they make up one body, of which Christ is the head, and not one of them shall be lost, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, ministers or private believers; for so this phrase may be interpreted, “us” Jews “with you” Gentiles, or “us” ministers “with you” believers. This work of establishing the saints in Christ is wholly the Lord’s act; he

is God

that does it; which does not contradict the word and ordinances being means of establishment; nor does it hinder or discourage persons making use of means for their stability; for the apostle here is not speaking so much of the stability of hearts, frames, and exercise of grace, as of state; though a firm, steady, and stable assurance of interest in Christ, is what God gives by his Spirit. The apostle’s view seems to be this, that whatever steadfastness and stability the saints have, whether ministers or people, they ought to ascribe it entirely to God, Father, Son, and Spirit. “Secondly”, the anointing of them:

he hath anointed us;

which is to be understood either of the unction of ministers, with the gifts of the Spirit for ministerial service; or rather of the anointing of private Christians with the grace of the Spirit, compared to oil or ointment, in allusion to the anointing oil under the law, by which the tabernacle, and its vessels, Aaron, and his sons, were anointed, who were typical of the saints and priests of God under the Gospel; or to the lamp oil in the candlestick, which was pure, and for light; or to oil in common, for its sweet smell, refreshing nature, and for its usefulness for ornament and healing. This also is the Lord’s work, and not man’s; this unction comes from the God of all grace, through Christ, by the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 1:22

Who hath also sealed us

“Two” things more are here attributed to God; “first”, the sealing of his people. The use of seals is various, as to denote property in things, to distinguish one thing from another, to show esteem and affection for persons or things, and for security and protection, and to hide and conceal; all which might be applied to sealing, as expressive of the grace of God to his people, in claiming a property in them, distinguishing them from the rest of the world, setting his affections on them, securing and protecting their persons, and hiding them under the shadow of his wings: but sometimes a seal is used to certify, make sure, or assure the truth of a thing; see (John 3:33) (1 Corinthians 9:3) (Jeremiah 33:10) in which sense the word “sealing” is used here, and intends that assurance which God gives his people of their interest in his love, and the covenant of grace; of their election of God, and redemption by Christ; of their interest in Christ, and union with him; of their justification by him, and adoption through him; of the truth of grace in their hearts, their perseverance in it, and sure and certain enjoyment of eternal glory. The persons thus sealed are not carnal and unconverted persons, only believers in Christ, and these, after they commence such; the seal by which they are sealed, is not any of the ordinances, as circumcision under the Old Testament, or baptism, or the Lord’s supper under the New; for these are no seals, nor are they ever so called; but the Spirit of God himself, as the Holy Spirit of promise; for the same who, in the next clause, is

called the earnest, is the seal; see (Ephesians 1:13) . “Secondly”, the giving of the earnest of the Spirit:

and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts:

by “the Spirit” is meant, not the gifts and graces of the Spirit merely, but the Spirit of God and Christ himself; who was concerned in the creation of the world, in inditing the Scriptures, in forming and filling the human nature of Christ, and in his resurrection from the dead; he himself is given as an “earnest”: the word (arrabwn) , here used, and in (2 Corinthians 5:5) (Ephesians 1:14) is the Hebrew word (Nwbre) , and comes from (bre) , which signifies “to become a surety, to give a pledge”; and is used for a pledge in covenants and bargains, both in Scripture, see (Genesis 38:17 Genesis 38:18 Genesis 38:20) , and in Jewish writings F4; which is given as an earnest, and in part of what it is a pledge of, and is never returned: the Spirit of God is an earnest or pledge of the heavenly inheritance, which is not only prepared for us, and promised to us, and Christ is in the possession of in our nature, in our room and stead, and as our representative; but the Spirit of God also is sent down “into our hearts” as a pledge of it; where he dwells as in his temple, supplies us with all grace, witnesses to us our sonship, and assures us of the heavenly glory: and as such he is “given”; and an unmerited free grace gift he is; for him to be given in this manner, and for such a purpose, is a wonderful display of the love of the Father, and of the Son, and is a surprising instance of his grace and condescension of the Spirit, and for which we should be abundantly thankful.

FOOTNOTES:

F4 Midrash Megillath Esther, fol. 94. 2. Maimon. Hilch. Mechira, c. 7. sect. 1. & c. 11. sect. 4.

2 Corinthians 1:23

Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul

The apostle having asserted his stability, both as a minister and a Christian, which, with others, he had from God, appeals to him in the most solemn manner, in full form of an oath, for the truth of what he was about to say; and is all one as if he had said, I swear by the living God, the searcher of all hearts; I call upon him to attest what I say, and bear witness to my soul, that it is true,

that to spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth;

however fickle, unstable, and inconstant, it may be insinuated to you I am, or you may take me to be, I do assure you in the name and presence of God, that the true reason of my not coming to you hitherto, since I gave you reason to expect me, was, that I might not be burdensome or chargeable to you; or I have delayed coming to you, hoping for a reformation among you, that when I do come, I may not come with a rod, and severely chastise you for the many disorders among you; that I might not use sharpness according to the power God has given me, in an extraordinary way, as an apostle, to punish for offences committed. Hence we learn, that an oath is a solemn appeal to God, and may be lawfully made in cases of moment and importance, as this of the apostle’s was; whose character was traduced, and with which was connected the usefulness of his ministry; and it being an affair that could not be determined in any other way, and an oath being for confirmation, and to put an end to strife, he makes one in this serious and awful manner.

2 Corinthians 1:24

Not for that we have dominion

Since he had spoke of “sparing” of them, lest it should be thought that he and his fellow ministers assumed to themselves any tyrannical power over the churches, or lorded it over God’s heritage, these words are subjoined: in which there is something denied of the ministers of the Gospel, as that they

have not dominion over your faith:

by which may be meant both the grace and doctrine of faith: they cannot give or produce in the heart the grace of faith; that is the gift of God; of which Christ is not only the object, but the author; it is of the operation of the Spirit, and the effect of almighty power; it flows entirely from the free grace of God; all that ministers can do is to propose the object of faith, and, by arguments taken from the word of God, encourage souls to believe in the object proposed, and so are, through a divine blessing on their ministrations, instruments by which some believe; but they themselves cannot command faith in any; nor can they increase or add unto it where it is; this also is the Lord's work: nor have they any dominion over the doctrine of faith; they are to deliver nothing to the people but what is contained in the Scriptures, and the people are obliged to believe no more than what they find there; no alteration is to be made in the rule and doctrine of faith; ministers have no power to make and impose new articles of faith, though they may require and insist upon an assent to those truths which they deliver, according to the word of God. Likewise, something is asserted of them,

but are helpers of your joy.

“Joy” is a grace wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, of which Christ is the object; it goes along with faith, and as that improves, so does this; it is often interrupted by the corruptions of the heart, the temptations of Satan, and divine desertions, and so is in this life imperfect; though it may be increased, as it sometimes is, and that by the ministration of the Gospel; for as the ministers of it are the means and instruments of that joy which is first felt in conversion, so likewise of increasing it by their comfortable doctrines and instructions; for their ministry is, and is often blessed, for the furtherance and joy of faith. A reason of which is given,

for by faith ye stand;

and so are not subject to men, nor to any tyrannical government of ours; nor have we anything to charge you with concerning your faith: which may design the grace of faith, and express its use in the perseverance of the saints, who stand not upon their faith, but “by it”; and by it, not as a cause but as a means of their perseverance; by which they rely on the power and faithfulness of God, lean upon Christ, and walk on in him, live upon him, continually receive from him, and in his strength stand against the temptations of Satan, and snares of the world: and it may also denote the strength and continuance of faith; a man may be said to stand by it, when he strongly believes his interest in God, in his love, and the covenant of his grace, his interest in Christ, and salvation by him; is satisfied about the truth of grace on his soul, makes no demur upon the promises, nor hesitates about the doctrines of grace, or his future happiness, but rejoices in hope of the glory of God; as also, when he continues in the exercise of faith, notwithstanding the corruptions of his nature, the temptations of Satan, the hidings of God's face, and the many afflictions and trials he meets with in the world. Moreover, this passage may be applied to the doctrine of faith, in and by which the saints may be said to stand, in opposition to any wavering or hesitation about it, to a cowardly spirit in giving way in the least to the adversaries of it, or to a departing from it; which by no means should be done, though a greater number is on the other side, and they be the rich and learned; though the doctrines of it are disagreeable to the carnal reason of man, are loaded with reproach, and followed with the rage, malice, and persecutions of men: or these words may relate to a profession of faith: care should be used in taking up a profession of faith; where the true grace of God is, it ought to be done; when it is made, it ought to be stood in, and abode by; and it is the honour of saints to stand in it, and to it, and hold it fast.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 2

The apostle, in this chapter, goes on to give reasons of his not coming, as yet, to Corinth; and removes the charge of severity, which some might think him guilty of, in what he had written in his former epistle concerning the incestuous person, who having repented of his sin, he would now have comforted, and the censure laid on him by the church taken off; after which he gives an account of the success of the Gospel in several parts, of its power and purity, and of the faithful dispensation of it by himself and others: in 2Co 2:1, he assigns this as a reason why he had determined with himself not to come to Corinth as yet, and why he deferred his coming, that when he came he might not be sorrowful himself, nor make others sorrowful, which necessarily involve each other; for if he made others sorrowful by his sharp rebukes, which as things had been he could not but in faith-

fulness give, he must be in sorrow himself, since there would be none to make him cheerful, but such whom he made sorrowful, 2Co 2:2 , wherefore to meet together under such circumstances must be uncomfortable; and hence he chose to put off his coming until things took another turn; and this was the reason of his writing with so much seeming severity concerning the incestuous person, in the former epistle, to bring him and them to repentance, and so prevent that sorrow which he otherwise must have had, had he in person come to them whilst they were unconcerned about that affair; and that he might have that joy, which he was confident of everyone was desirous he should have, 2Co 2:3 , and he was so far from being of a cruel and uncompassionate disposition, that it was with an aching heart, and with flowing eyes, that he wrote that letter to them; nor was it written with that view merely to grieve them, but to let them know the tender and affectionate concern he had for their welfare, 2Co 2:4 . Besides, this affair of the incestuous person was not only matter of grief to the apostle, but to them all; or he was not the only person he was grieved with, but with them all, and therefore it was necessary to use greater severity and roughness, 2Co 2:5 . However, inasmuch as the end he had in view was answered, the humbling of the delinquent, and bringing him to repentance, nothing more was to be done, the punishment of excommunication was sufficient, 2Co 2:6 , and that ought now to be removed, and the man forgiven, and comforted, lest he should be overwhelmed with sorrow, and be reduced to despair, 2Co 2:7 . Wherefore the apostle entreats them to give some fresh assurances of their love to the repenting brother, and signify it by their hearty reception of him into communion again, 2Co 2:8 , in doing which they would give proof of their obedience to him the apostle, which was an end he had in writing to them before, concerning the excommunication of the same person, 2Co 2:9 , and which he urges them to from his own example, who was ready to join with them in forgiving him, out of love to them, and in the name of Christ, 2Co 2:10 , and the rather it became them to do so, lest Satan should get an advantage of them, and establish a bad principle and practice among them, that such as fall into sin, though they repent, should not be restored to the communion of the church, of whose devices in different forms and shapes, to do mischief to the churches of Christ, and particular believers, the apostle and others were not ignorant, 2Co 2:11 . Moreover, what had took up his time, and had prevented him from coming to Corinth as yet, was his being called to, and employed in the preaching of the Gospel elsewhere, particularly at Troas, where he was the rather inclined to stay, and there was a necessity of it, because there was a door opened for it, 2Co 2:12 , and yet not finding Titus, there, as he expected, he was uneasy, and departed thence into Macedonia, in quest of him, 2Co 2:13 , where, as in other places, he preached the Gospel with success, which he ascribes to God, and gives him thanks for it, 2Co 2:14 , which success he illustrates by dividing the persons to whom he preached the Gospel, into two classes, they that are saved, and they that perish, 2Co 2:15 , on whom it had different effects, diffusing death, and adding death to death in the one, and communicating life, and adding life to life in the other: and lest he should be thought to arrogate too much to himself, and other ministers of the word, of whom he speaks, he acknowledges his and their insufficiency to preach the Gospel, and make it effectual; and that all fitness for it, and all the virtue and efficacy of it, were from the Lord, 2Co 2:16 , and then gives the reason why he, and the rest of the faithful ministers of the Gospel, were a sweet savour to Christ, as he had asserted, because they did not, as others, corrupt this box of ointment, but faithfully and sincerely poured it out, without mixing and adulterating it; and this they did as being in the view of the omniscient God, to whom they could appeal for their integrity and honesty, 2Co 2:17 .

2 CORINTHIANS 2

- 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.

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

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

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

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

2 Corinthians 2:1

But I determined with myself

The apostle having removed the charge of levity and inconstancy brought against him, goes on to excuse his delay in coming to them, and to soften the severity, which some thought too much, he had used in his former epistle: he determined with himself, he took up a resolution within his own breast some time ago, says he,

that I would not come again to you in heaviness;

that he would not come with sorrow and heaviness, bewailing their sins not repented of, and by sharp reproofs and censures, which in such a case would be necessary, be the cause of grief and trouble to them; wherefore he determined to wait their repentance and amendment before he came again. The word "again", may be connected with the phrase "in heaviness"; and the sense be, that in his former epistle, which was a sort of coming to them, he made them heavy and sorry, by sharply rebuking them for some disorders that were among them; and since it has been a settled point with him, that he would not come in heaviness again: or with the word "come"; and then the meaning is, as his first coming among them was to the joy of their souls, so it was a determined case with him, that his second coming should not be with grief, either to them or himself, or both; and this is the true reason why he had deferred it so long.

2 Corinthians 2:2

For if I make you sorry

That is, should he come among them, and be the means of fresh grief and sorrow:

who is he then that maketh me glad?

such was his love and affection for them, and sympathy with them, that should they be grieved, he should grieve also; they were the only persons he could take any delight in at Corinth; wherefore should they be in heaviness, he would be so too, and then what pleasure would he have in being among them? since not a man of them would be in a condition and capacity to make him cheerful:

but the same which is made sorry by me.

The Ethiopic version without any authority reads this clause, "except he whom I have made glad"; but the apostle is to be understood either of some particular man, the incestuous person, who had been made sorry, by that

awful punishment of being delivered up to Satan, inflicted on him; or else the singular number being put for the plural collectively, is to be understood of all the members of the church at Corinth, who had been greatly grieved by the sharp reproofs he had given them; and therefore unless this trouble was removed, he could not expect to have much comfort and pleasure with them.

2 Corinthians 2:3

And I wrote this same unto you

Not what he had written in the preceding verse, or in (2 Corinthians 1:23) , where he says, that his not coming to them as yet was to spare them; but what he had written to them in his former epistle, concerning the excommunication of the incestuous man, which had so much grieved both him and them; and this the apostle chose rather to order by writing, than in person; hoping to hear of their repentance and amendment, before he came among them:

lest,
says he,

when I came,
or should come,

I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice;

some copies and the Complutensian edition read, “sorrow upon sorrow”; and so does the Vulgate Latin version, which seems to be transcribed from (Philippians 2:27) , that is, he took this method of sending a reproofing letter, in order to bring them to a sense and acknowledgment of sin; lest should he come in person, some would have been a grief and trouble to him, having fallen into sin not repented of; who ought to have been matter of rejoicing to him, as being the seals of his apostleship, and his work in the Lord: and this step he was the more encouraged to take, through the confidence he had of them,

having confidence in you all;

being fully persuaded of their affection for him, and opinion of him:

that my joy is the joy of you all;

that their joy and grief were mutual and common; that what he rejoiced in, they did likewise; and what was displeasing to him was displeasing to them; and therefore upon the first hint given, he took care to remove the occasion of such displeasure, that their mutual comfort might take place; assuring them, and of which they might be assured, that it was no joy to him to grieve them; he could have none when theirs was gone; his ultimate view in writing to them in the manner he had, was not to grieve, but to bring them to repentance and reformation, which issued in the mutual joy of him and them.

2 Corinthians 2:4

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart

Being greatly pressed in his spirit, and grieved at his heart, for the abominable iniquities among them, which they seemed to take no notice of, and to be unconcerned about, yea, rather to be puffed up with:

I wrote to you with many tears;

as signs and expressions of, and by which were vented, the inward anguish and distress of his soul; and the letter he sent to them in some measure bore witness to it: which was written,

not that you should be grieved;

that is, not merely for the sake of grieving of them, in which he took no pleasure; not but that the apostle designed and desired to affect their minds with a holy grief and godly sorrow for sin, and hereby their amendment; but his chief view was, next to their spiritual good, and God's glory, to express the greatness of his love to them: as he says,

that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you;

as his love was very vehement towards them, he was desirous they should know it, and how exceeding abundant it was; and that it was even greater towards them, than to others; and he thought he could not give a greater proof and evidence of it, than by reproving them faithfully, and that sharply too, as the necessity of the case required.

2 Corinthians 2:5

But if any have caused grief

The incestuous person is here manifestly designed, though he is not named, who had been the cause and occasion of much grief and sorrow, both to himself and others; for the apostle is not to be understood, as though he doubted whether he had caused grief or not, but rather takes it for granted, as a certain point; "if", seeing, or although he has caused grief:

he hath not grieved me but in part;

or in some measure; as it has reflected dishonour on God and his ways, truths and ordinances; and has brought trouble upon himself, and the church of which he is a member; for the apostle now rejoiced, that he was truly humbled for his sin, and sincerely, and in an evangelical manner, repented of it; his grief was over, and it was as if it was not; and the offence he took was now wholly removed: besides, though this man did grieve him, it was but in part; he was not the sole cause of his grief: they also greatly added to it by their unconcernedness of him, and negligence in reproving him, though he takes notice only of this single man:

that I may not overcharge you all;

bear hard upon them, aggravate their sin, and increase their trouble: or thus, that man has not grieved me only, but in some measure all of you; for the phrase "all you", may be considered, not in connection with the word "overcharge", but with the word "grieved"; and the reading and sense of the whole be this, "he hath not grieved me, but in part, or in some measure"; or as the Syriac reads it, (בִּיר קָלִיל לְכָלֶכֶן) , "almost all of you": but this, as if he should say, I do but just mention, would not dwell upon it, "that I may not overcharge" him, or be thought to be overbearing, or should aggravate his sin and sorrow: for,

2 Corinthians 2:6

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment

By this punishment is meant, the excommunication of the incestuous person, or the censure that was laid upon him by the church: for this

was inflicted by many;

not by the pastor only, or by the elders or more eminent persons in the church, but by the multitude, by the whole congregation, at least (upo tw̄n pleionwn) , "by the more"; the greater, or major part; and not by one, or a few only: in inflicting this punishment, or laying on this censure in the public manner they did, they were certainly right, and to be commended; but inasmuch as there appeared signs of true repentance, it was sufficient, it had answered the purpose for which it was inflicted, and therefore it was high time to remove it: from whence we learn, that in case of gross enormities, there ought to be a public excommunication; and that this is to be done by the vote, and with the consent of the whole church, or the major part of it; and that in process of time, when the person thus dealt with has given the church satisfaction as to the truth and genuineness of his repent-

ance, the censure ought to be taken off and he be cordially received into the communion of the church again. This “punishment”, or “rebuke”, (επιτιμια) , “by many”, is the same which the Jews call F5 (התוכחה ברבים) , “a reproof by many”; which is given by many, or in the presence of many.

FOOTNOTES:

F5 R. Eliahu in Adderet, c. 3. apud Trigland. de Sect. Karaeorum, p. 166.

2 Corinthians 2:7

So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him

On the other hand, so far the apostle suggests they should be from inflicting any other punishment on him, or by any means adding to, and increasing what was inflicted, that they ought to forgive him his offence, by taking off the censure from him, which had been sufficient for the purpose, and had continued on him a sufficient time:

and comfort him;

by restoring him to the communion of the church, and to an enjoyment of all the privileges and ordinances of the house of God: and this was necessary to be done,

lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow:

be overwhelmed with trouble, engulfed in despair, and so become unfit for the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty; to prevent therefore such dangerous and pernicious consequences, it is incumbent on the churches of Christ, as soon as ever they observe that censures have answered the end in bringing persons to a sense and acknowledgment of sin and amendment of life, to remove them, and restore such to fellowship.

2 Corinthians 2:8

Wherefore I beseech you

Or exhort you:

that ye would confirm your love towards him:

express your love to him in the most kind and tender manner, show the same, and as strong love to him as you did before, and as if he had never offended; receive him as a brother in the most affectionate manner, and embrace him with the most endearing expressions of respect and friendship; and let your reception of him in this kind and friendly way be with the full consent, and by the joint vote and suffrage of the whole church, for so the word translated “confirm” signifies; for as the ejection of a person out of a church must be done by the decree and vote of the church, or it is not authentic, so the reception of a person into it must be in like manner; and since this was to be done by the suffrage of the church, the apostle beseeches and exhorts them to do it.

2 Corinthians 2:9

For to this end also did I write

Or “I have written”, both in this and in his former epistle to them, and in both with this view,

that I might know the proof of you;

that he might try, prove, and know them:

whether ye be obedient in all things;

he wrote unto them in his former epistle, to put away that wicked man from them; which he did not do, merely to reproach the man, and fix a brand of infamy on him; nor merely to grieve and afflict their minds; nor only to

show his own power and authority, which he as an apostle had received from Christ, but to make trial of their obedience; and he had had a proof of it in their rejection of him; and now he writes unto them, that since this man was truly humbled for his sin, and had repentance unto life not to be repented of, that they would as cheerfully receive him, and restore him to his place; that as the apostle had a proof of their obedience in the one, he might also have in the other, and so in all things: hence it appears, that though it belongs to the whole church, and that only, to reject or receive members, yet as ministers of the Gospel are set over the churches, to govern, guide, direct, and go before in matters of discipline; so whatever they propose, according to the rule of God's word, ought to be carefully attended to and obeyed.

2 Corinthians 2:10

To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also

This may extend to the forgiveness of any person, in any case; either in time past, or at the present time, or in time to come; though it has a particular respect to the forgiveness of the incestuous man, which the apostle had determined in his own mind, and was very ready to come into, and very desirous to join with the church in, as they had joined with him in the excommunication of him; and in order to engage them in such a temper and disposition, he tells them it was on their account he did it:

for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgive I it;

which is as if he should say, whenever I have forgiven any offender, as I now do forgive this man, I always do it for your sake; either at your request, or in confidence of this, that you yourselves have forgiven; or for your good, peace, and welfare: and besides, what I do of this kind, I do it

in the person of Christ;

in his sight and presence, who knows that what I do this way, I do it sincerely, and with my whole heart and soul; or rather I do it in his name, and by his authority; and since I forgive this man for your sakes, and in the name of Christ, you ought to do so likewise.

2 Corinthians 2:11

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us

Or make gain of us, or we should be circumvented by him; a metaphor taken from covetous persons, who take every occasion, and make use of every advantage to circumvent and deceive persons in trading with them: Satan gets an advantage of the churches, when church discipline is brought into neglect and contempt, or turned into tyranny; or when he can draw off any person from a church, or keep him out of it: wherefore the apostle's argument is, that since the incestuous person had true repentance for his sin, he ought to be forgiven, comforted, and received into the church; lest by too great severity, and a too long continuance of the censure on him, he should be either plunged into despair, or be drawn into a denial of the faith, or into an open scandalous course of wickedness; and so the church entirely lose a member, that might, by the proper use of discipline, have been an useful one, and Satan gain one:

for we are not ignorant of his devices;

and cunning stratagems; some of his crafty contrivances and designs are known, though not all of them; and this particularly, that he sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light, and under pretence of showing a just indignation against sin, and keeping up a strict and righteous discipline, destroys souls, ruins churches, and brings religion into contempt. This was one of his devices in former times, that persons who fell into any gross sin after baptism, and a profession of religion, were never to be restored and received into the communion of the church again, let their repentance be ever so sincere. This cruel and inexorable spirit, under the show of strict religion and discipline, is what the apostle here would caution against, as one of the wiles of Satan.

2 Corinthians 2:12

Furthermore, when I came to Troas

The apostle proceeds, in this latter part of the chapter, to take notice of and remove the charge of ostentation and insincerity in preaching the Gospel, and hints at other reasons of his not coming to Corinth; particularly that he took a journey to Troas, expecting to meet with Titus there, who was to give him an account of the affairs of the church at Corinth, which he was desirous of knowing before he went thither; but missing of Titus, is uneasy, and goes for Macedonia; though he was first detained awhile at Troas, having a good opportunity of preaching the Gospel there, with a prospect of success. Troas was a city of the lesser Asia near the Hellespont, formerly called Troy; of Paul's being at this place more than once, see (2 Timothy 4:13) (Acts 16:7 Acts 16:8) (20:6) , and of this place (See Gill on Acts 16:8), and of the church there, (See Gill on Acts 20:7). Hither he came,

to preach Christ's Gospel;

that Gospel, of which Christ is both the author and subject; and is no other than the good news and glad tidings of peace, pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation, by a crucified Jesus; this was his work and business; his heart was in it, he took delight in this service, and it was what he pursued in every place wherever he came; and in this place he had much encouragement; for he adds,

and a door was opened unto me of the Lord;

such an one as was opened to him at Ephesus, (1 Corinthians 16:9) ; he had a good opportunity of preaching the Gospel to many souls, many were inclined to attend his ministry, from whence he conceived great hopes of doing good; a door of utterance was given to him to preach the Gospel boldly and freely, and a door of entrance for the Gospel to pass into their hearts: all which was not of men, "but of the Lord"; who has the key of David, who opens and no man shuts, shuts and no man opens.

2 Corinthians 2:13

I had no rest in my spirit

Though there was such a door opened to preach the Gospel, and such an opportunity of doing good, yet he was greatly distressed in his mind; very restless and uneasy in his spirit, and could not be satisfied to stay; which shows, that though he was so great a man, he was but a man, and of like passions with others: and the occasion of this dissatisfaction and uneasiness was,

because,

says he,

I found not Titus my brother;

whom he so styles, not merely because he was a fellow Christian, but because he was a fellow labourer in the Gospel; and by calling him so, puts an honour upon him, and expresses his affliction for him: now not finding him as he expected, he grew uneasy: not that he wanted him as an interpreter for him, or his assistance in preaching the Gospel at Troas, where so many were inclined to hear the word; but because he was exceedingly desirous of knowing from him the state of affairs in the church at Corinth; so that this whole account is given, to show his affectionate concern for, and care of that church: which he goes on with, saying,

but taking my leave of them;

the disciples at Troas, and ordering and prescribing, as the word here used signifies, how things should be managed for the best after his departure; for as there was a door opened for the ministry of the word, it cannot be thought he would leave it thus, without fixing proper persons to go on with the work, and proper directions how to conduct themselves; and very likely he ordained Carpus to be their elder, bishop, or overseer: and having done this, he

went into Macedonia;

in quest of Titus, whom he so earnestly desired to see, and by whose coming to him he was greatly refreshed and comforted; see (2 Corinthians 7:5-7) .

2 Corinthians 2:14***Now thanks be unto God***

The apostle having mentioned the door that was opened for him at Troas, to preach the Gospel with success, calls to mind the great and manifold appearances of God for him and his fellow ministers, in blessing their labours to the conversion of many souls; which causes him to break forth into thanksgiving to God, on this account: what he takes notice of, and is thankful to God for is, that he

always causeth us to triumph in Christ;

not only had done so, but continued to do so: some versions ascribe this act of triumph to God, as his act, reading the passage thus, “now thanks be unto God, who triumphs over us”, or “by us in Christ”; who has conquered us by his grace, and made use of us as instruments for the conversion of sinners; and so first triumphed over us, having subdued us to himself, and then over others by us, in whose hearts the arrows of his word have been sharp and powerful: so the word is used for the person’s own act of triumph spoken of, (2:15) , but here it signifies, as words do in the Hebrew conjugation “Hiphil”, which most commonly denotes an effect upon another, or which is caused and produced in another, and is rightly rendered, “which causeth us to triumph”; and refers not to the triumph of faith, common with the apostles to other believers; though this is in Christ, in his righteousness, death, resurrection, ascension, session at God’s right hand, and intercession; and is what God causes, and to whom thanks is to be given for it: but this is a triumph peculiar to ministers of the Gospel, who are made to triumph over men and devils, over the world, the reproaches, persecutions, smiles, and flatteries of it; over wicked men, by silencing them, stopping the mouths of gainsayers, refuting false teachers, and preserving the Gospel pure, in spite of all opposition; and by being made useful to the turning of many souls from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: and this is

in Christ:

it is owing to the victory he has got; it is by his strength, it is in his name, for his sake, and because of his glory herein concerned: and

always;

wherever the ministers of Christ are called to labour, and wherever the Gospel is purely and powerfully preached by them, some good is done; and they are made to triumph over hell and earth, over sin, Satan, and the world; and for all this, thanks is due to God; for he it is that causes them to triumph, or they never could; as will easily appear, if we consider what poor weak instruments they themselves are; what opposition is made against them; what wonderful things are done by them; by what means they triumph, by the preaching of the cross, and that in the midst of the greatest pressures and afflictions. Thanks are also given to God, that he

maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place;

by “his knowledge” is meant, either the knowledge of God, who causes the ministers of the Gospel to triumph; or the knowledge of Christ, in whom they triumph; or rather of both, of the knowledge of God in Christ; and designs the Gospel, which is the means thereof: and which is said to have a “savour” in it, and denotes the acceptableness of it to sensible souls; and the good name, fame, and credit, which Christ has by the faithful ministration of it; and is an allusion to (Song of Solomon 1:3) . Now this, God is said to make manifest; it was hid before, hid in himself, and to the sons of men; it was like a box of ointment shut, but now opened by the preaching of the word, which diffuses a fragrant smell; and therefore he is said to make it manifest “by us”: the ministers of the Gospel, who openly, boldly, and faithfully preach it; and “by manifestation of the truth”; spread

the savour of it, and that “in every place”, where they come; their commission being at large, to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.

2 Corinthians 2:15

For we are unto God a sweet savour

Here a reason is given, why the savour of the knowledge of God in Christ is made manifest by the ministers of the Gospel, because they themselves are a sweet savour; not that they are so in themselves, for they have the same corrupt hearts and natures, and complain of them as other men; but as having the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, comparable to fragrant and sweet smelling ointments, (Song of Solomon 1:3) (4:10) , by which they are enabled to preach the savoury doctrines of the Gospel, and to adorn and recommend them by their exemplary lives and conversations: the allusion is to Aaron and the priests under the law, who were anointed with the anointing oil, which was poured upon their heads, ran down upon their beards, and descended to the skirts of their garments, so that they were all over a perfume, a sweet smell and savour; and so are the ministers of the word, being anointed with that, which the other was typical of. They are said to be a sweet savour

of Christ,

because they have their gifts, grace, and Gospel from him, and he is the subject of their ministry; so that this sweet savour of theirs, is not properly theirs, but his, whose person, blood, righteousness, sacrifice, grace, and the fulness of it, as held forth in the Gospel ministry, are sweet and savoury to believers. Moreover, it is “unto God” they are such a savour, not unto men, mere carnal men, for with them they are the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; but they are grateful and well pleasing to the Lord, as their ministrations make for, and show forth his honour and glory: and this they are

in them that are saved,

who are chosen by God unto salvation, for whom Christ has wrought it out, to whom it is applied by the Spirit of God, who are heirs of it, and are kept unto it, and for it, by the power of God, and shall certainly enjoy it: yea, they are a sweet savour

in them that perish,

all mankind are, through sin, in a perishing condition: some of them shall never perish; but are, and shall be saved with an everlasting salvation: others will perish in their sins, to which they are abandoned; and what sense the ministers of the Gospel are a savour in these is shown in the following verse.

2 Corinthians 2:16

To the one we are the savour of death unto death

Who are for death, or appointed to it; see (Jeremiah 43:11) . What the apostle says of the Gospel, and Gospel ministers, the Jews his countrymen used frequently to say of the law, and to which he seems to refer;

“saith Rabba F6, to them that go on the right hand of it, (the law,) it is (מא דחיי) , “the savour of life”; but to them that go on the left hand of it, it is (מא דמותא) , “the savour of death.””

Again F7,

“everyone that studies in the law for the sake of it, to him it becomes (מ דחיי) , “the savour of life”, according to (Proverbs 3:18) (8:35) , but everyone that studies in the law, not for the sake of it, to him it becomes (מ דמותא) , “the savour of death;”

once more F8,

``if a man is worthy or righteous, to him the law becomes (בְּחַיִּיב) , “the savour of life”; but if he is not righteous, it becomes to him (בְּמִיֹּחֵד) , “the savour of death.”

and this they not only say of the written law, but also of their oral law F9, and are not contented with those general descriptions of persons to whom the law is so, but particularly mention the Gentiles;

``the words of the law (say they F11) are (בְּחַיִּיב) , “the savour of life”, to the Israelites; and (בְּמִיֹּחֵד) , “the savour of death”, to the nations of the world:”

that the law should be the savour of death, since it is the ministration of it, and cannot give life, see (Galatians 3:21) , is no wonder; but that the Gospel and the ministers of that, should be the savour of death unto death, may seem strange, but so it is. These preach up salvation by the death of Christ, and so are the sweet savour of the death of Christ; but this being despised and rejected by the sons of men, is “unto the death”, and issues in the eternal death of the despisers and rejecters of it; likewise this doctrine preached by them, strikes with death all a man’s wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, and declares that life and salvation are only by Christ and his righteousness; and besides, is attended with persecution and death, and therefore is foolishness to them that perish; and so becomes “the savour of death unto death”; a savour, but not a sweet savour, nor the sweet savour of Christ; a sweet savour indeed to God, whose justice, holiness, power, and wisdom, are displayed in the death and righteous destruction of sinners, but not to them:

to the other, the savour of life unto life;

those who are ordained to eternal life. The Gospel preached by Christ’s faithful ministers is the means of quickening souls, and giving them “spiritual life”; and of supporting and maintaining that life, and of nourishing them up unto “eternal life”; and so becomes “the savour of life” spiritual, “unto life” eternal. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, and so the Ethiopic version, read both clauses, “from death to death, and from life to life”; with which compare (Romans 1:17) (2 Corinthians 3:18) , and then the meaning may be, either as Grotius observes, that the ill report of the Gospel from men dead in sin, brings death to those who give credit to it; and the good report of it from God, the author of life, to which may be added from ministers, who are alive in a spiritual sense, is the means of life to others: or they are the means of adding death to death, death eternal, to death spiritual, or moral; death for sin, to death in sin, the Gospel being despised; and of increasing spiritual life, the comforts of it; and of adding eternal life to spiritual life: upon the whole of which, the apostle makes this exclamation,

and who is sufficient for these things;

the meaning of which is either, who is able to search and find out the reason of this different influence of the Gospel ministry upon the souls of men? no man can do it; it must be ascribed to the sovereign will and pleasure of God, who hides the Gospel from some, and reveals it to others; or who is sufficient for the preaching of the Gospel? no man is sufficient of himself, very insufficient in the best sense, and none so but by the grace of God, and gifts of his Spirit; or who is sufficient to give success to the Gospel when preached? none can do this; Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God alone that gives the increase.

FOOTNOTES:

F6 T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 88. 2.

F7 Taanith, fol. 7. 1.

F8 Yoma, fol 72. 2.

F9 Zohar in Gen. fol. 19. 3.

F11 Vajikra Rabba, fol. 147. 1. Debarim Rabba, fol. 233. 3. Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 9. 4.

For we are not as many

The apostle here removes from himself, and other ministers of the Gospel, a character which belonged not to them, but to the false apostles; who are described by their number many; there were great swarms of false teachers in the early times of Christianity; see (1 John 2:18) (4:1) ; some copies read, “as the rest”: and so the Syriac and Arabic versions; and also by their quality,

which corrupt the word of God;

by “the word of God”, may be meant the Scriptures in general, which are from God, contain his will, and which he uses for the good of men, and his own glory, and may be corrupted by false glosses, and human mixtures, and by adding to them, or taking from them; or the Gospel in particular, which is the word of truth, of faith, righteousness, reconciliation, and salvation, and which was corrupted by these false teachers, by making merchandise of it; they huckstered the word of God, made gain of it, sought merely their own worldly interest and advantage in it, and so mixed it with their own vain philosophy, to please the carnal ears and hearts of men; they blended law and Gospel, grace and works, in the business of salvation; they did, as peddling merchants do, mix good and bad commodities together, and then vend them for sound ware; or as vintners, who mix their wine with water, and sell it for neat wine. The Septuagint interpreters on (Isaiah 1:22) , translate the last clause of that verse thus, (οι καπηλαιο σου μισγουσι τον οινον υδατι) , “thy vintners mix wine with water”; which may be understood in a moral or spiritual sense; so did these men mix, and hereby corrupt the Gospel, the word of God; and so the Syriac version reads the words (דַּבְרֵי מִשְׁכָּחִים) , “who mix the word of God”: now the apostle says, they did not do so; they delivered out the word pure and unmixed, without any corruption or adulteration:

but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God,

says he,

speak we in Christ;

they spoke “in Christ”, in the name of Christ, of or concerning him, and him only, and freely, fully, and plainly, as God’s free gift, and the only way of salvation without the works of men: and they spoke, “as of sincerity”; what they delivered was the sincere milk of the word; the manner in which they did it was sincere, with all integrity and faithfulness; and so were their views, which were not their own profit and applause, but the glory of God and the good of souls; they spoke in Christ, and with all sincerity, “as of God”; by whom they were called and sent forth to speak in his name, and from whom they received the Gospel, and gifts, and abilities to preach it; and all this they did, in the sight of God, as the searcher of hearts, and to whom they knew they must give an account of their ministry another day.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 3

In this chapter the apostle clears himself from the charge of arrogance and self-commendation, and ascribes both the virtue and efficacy of his ministry, and his qualifications for it, to the Lord; and forms a comparison between the ministration of the Gospel, and the ministration of the law, showing the preferableness of the one to the other; and consequently how much more happy and comfortable the state and condition of the saints under the Gospel dispensation is, than under the legal one: on account of what the apostle had said in the latter part of the preceding chapter, concerning the excellency, usefulness, and success of the Gospel ministry, he foresaw an objection would arise; that he and his fellow ministers were proud and arrogant, and commended themselves, which was unseemly, and not agreeably to the character they bore; which objection he obviates, 2Co 3:1, by putting some questions, signifying that they were not guilty of vain boasting; nor did they need any commendations of their own, or others, nor any letters to recommend them, either from Corinth to other places, or thither: a practice which, he suggests, the false teachers made use of; and in 2Co 3:2 he gives the reason why they did not stand in need of such letters, because the members of the church at Corinth were their epistle or letter, declaring to all men the efficacy and success of their ministry among men; but lest he should be charged with arrogating to himself and others, he declares, 2Co 3:3 that though the Corinthians were their epistle, yet not

so much theirs as Christ's; Christ was the author and subject, they only were instruments; the writing was not human, but the writing of the Spirit of God; and that not upon outward tables, such as the law was written upon, but upon the tables of men's hearts, which only God can reach; however, that they had been useful, successful, and instrumental in the conversion of souls, through the ministry of the word, that he was confident of, 2Co 3:4 though the sufficiency and ability to think, study, and reach, were not of themselves, and still less to make the word effectual for conversion and comfort, but of God, 2Co 3:5 wherefore he ascribes all fitness, worthiness, and ability to preach the Gospel, to the grace and power of God, by which they were made ministers of it; and hence he takes occasion to commend the excellency of the Gospel ministry above that of the law, which he does by observing their different names and effects; the Gospel is the New Testament or covenant, or an exhibition of the covenant of grace in a new form; the law is the Old Testament, or covenant, which is vanished away; which, though not expressed here, is in 2Co 3:14 the Gospel is spirit, the law the letter; the one gives life, and the other kills, 2Co 3:6 wherefore the apostle argues from the one to the other, that if there was a glory in the one which was only a ministration of death, as the law was, 2Co 3:7 then the Gospel, which was a ministration of spiritual things, and of the Spirit of God himself, must be more glorious, 2Co 3:8 and if that was glorious which was a ministration of condemnation, as the law was to guilty sinners; much more glorious must be the Gospel, which is a ministration of the righteousness of Christ, for the justification of them, 2Co 3:9 yea, such is the surpassing glory of the Gospel to the law, that even the glory of the law is quite lost in that of the Gospel, and appears to have none in comparison of that, 2Co 3:10 to which he adds another argument, taken from the abolition of the one, and the continuance of the other; that if there was a glory in that which is abolished, there must be a greater in that which continues, 2Co 3:1 and from hence the apostle proceeds to take notice of another difference between the law and the Gospel, the clearness of the one, and the obscurity of the other; the former is signified by the plainness of speech used by the preachers of it, 2Co 3:12 and the latter by the veil which was over Moses's face, when he delivered the law to the children of Israel; the end of which they could not look to, and which is a further proof of the obscurity of it, Co 3:13 as well as of the darkness of their minds; which still continues with the Jews in reading the law, and will do until it is taken away by Christ, 2Co 3:14 and that there is such a veil of darkness upon the hearts of the Jews, when reading the law of Moses; and that this continues to this day, is again asserted, 2Co 3:15 and an intimation given that there will be a conversion of them to the Lord, and then it will be removed from them, 2Co 3:16 and who that Lord is to whom they shall be turned, and by whom they shall have freedom from darkness and bondage, is declared, 2Co 3:17 and the happy condition of the saints under the Gospel dispensation, through the bright and clear light of it, is observed, 2Co 3:18 in which the Gospel is compared to a glass; the saints are represented as without a veil looking into it; through which an object is beheld, the glory of the Lord; the effect of which is a transformation of them into the same image by degrees; the author of which grace is the Spirit of the Lord.

2 CORINTHIANS 3

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

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

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

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

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

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

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

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon* their heart.

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

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

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

2 Corinthians 3:1

Do we begin again to commend ourselves?

&c.] The apostle having asserted that he and his fellow ministers always triumphed in Christ, and made manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place; were a sweet savour of Christ to God, did not corrupt the word of God, as some did, but sincerely and faithfully preached Christ; some might insinuate from hence, that he was guilty of arrogance and vain glory; wherefore to remove such a charge, or prevent its being brought, he asks, “do we begin again to commend ourselves?” we do not; what we say, we say honestly, sincerely, in the simplicity of our hearts, without any view to our own glory and applause among men, or for any worldly profit and advantage, or to ingratiate ourselves into your affections; we have no such views: some read these words without an interrogation, “we do begin again to commend ourselves”; as we have done already, in this and the former epistles; and as it is but just and right that we should vindicate our characters, support our good name and reputation, and secure and maintain our credit, which some would maliciously deprive us of:

though we have no need, as some others, of epistles of commendation

to you, or letters of commendation from you;

our persons, characters, and usefulness are too well known, to require commendatory letters front others to you, or from you to others. The false apostles are here struck at, whose practice it was to get letters of commendation from place to place; which they carried about and made use of for their temporal advantage, having nothing truly good and excellent in them to recommend them to others. The apostle does not hereby condemn letters of recommendation, which in proper cases may be very lawfully given, and a good use be made of them; only that he and other Gospel ministers were so well known, as to stand in no need of them.

2 Corinthians 3:2

Ye are our epistle

Here a reason is given why they stood in no need of letters of commendation, to or from the church at Corinth, because that church was their living epistle, and which was much preferable to any written one. The apostle calls them their epistle in the same sense, as they are said to be his “work in the Lord, and the seal of his apostleship”, (1 Corinthians 9:1 1 Corinthians 9:2) they were so as persons regenerated by the Spirit and grace of God, in whose conversion he was an instrument; now it was the work of conversion in them, which was the epistle said to be

written in our hearts;

some think it should be read, “in your hearts”; and so the Ethiopic version reads it; and it looks as if it should be so read, from the following verse, and from the nature of the thing itself; for the conversion of the Corinthians was not written in the heart of the apostle, but in their own; and this was so very notorious and remarkable, that it was

known and read of all men;

everyone could read, and was obliged to acknowledge the handwriting; it was so clear a case, what hand the apostle, as an instrument, had in the turning of these persons from idols to serve the living God; and which was so full a proof of the divinity, efficacy, truth, and sincerity of his doctrine, that he needed no letters from any to recommend him.

2 Corinthians 3:3

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared

But lest it should be thought that the apostle attributed too much to himself, by saying that the Corinthians were our epistle; here he says, they were “manifestly declared”

to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us;

so that the apostles and ministers of the word were only amanuenses, Christ was the author and dictator; yea, he himself is the very matter, sum, substance, and subject of the epistle; he is formed in the hearts of his people in conversion, his image is stamped, his grace is implanted, his word, his Gospel dwells richly, his laws and ordinances are written here; he also is the exemplar, believers are but copies of him, in grace and duty, in sufferings, in the likeness of his death and resurrection: and they are “manifestly declared” to be so, by the impresses of Christ’s grace upon them; by the fairness of the copy; by the style and language of the epistle; by their likeness to Christ; by their having not the form only, but the power of godliness; and by their lives and conversations: now in writing these epistles, the ministers of the Gospel are only instruments, “ministered by us”. They are made use of to show the sinner the black characters which are written upon him, and that what is written in him, and to be read by him, by the light of nature is not sufficient for salvation; they are employed as instruments in drawing the rough draught of grace in conversion, and in writing the copy over again, fairer and fairer; being the happy means blessed by God, for the building up of souls in faith and holiness, in spiritual knowledge and comfort. These epistles are

not written with ink;

of nature’s power, or of rhetorical eloquence and moral persuasion;

but with the Spirit of the living God:

every grace that is implanted in the soul is wrought there by the Spirit of God; or he it is that draws every line, and writes every word and letter; he begins, he carries on and finishes the work of grace on the soul; and that as “the Spirit of the living God”: hence saints become the living epistles of Christ; and every letter and stroke of his making, is a living disposition of the soul in likeness to him; and such are written among the living in Jerusalem, and shall live and abide for ever as the epistles of Christ: again, the subjects of these epistles, or that on which they are written, are

not tables of stone;

such as the law was written upon, on Mount Sinai: of these tables there were the first and second; the first were the work of God himself, the latter were hewed by Moses, at the command of God, (Exodus 32:16) (34:1) the former being broken when he came down from the mount, which by the Jewish writers are said to be miraculously made, and not by the means and artifice of men F12; yea, that they were made before the creation of the world F13, and which, they commonly say, were made of sapphire; (See Gill on 2 Corinthians 3:7) these, as the

latter, were two stones, which, Jarchi says F14, were of an equal size; and were, as Abarbinel says F15, in the form of small tables, such as children are taught to write upon, and therefore are so called: some pretend to give the dimensions of them, and say F16, that they were six hands long, and as many broad, and three thick; nay, even the weight of them, which is said F17 to be the weight of forty “seahs”, and look upon it as a miracle that Moses should be able to carry them; on these stones were written the ten commands; and the common opinion of the Jewish writers is, that five were written on one table, and five on the other; this is the opinion of Josephus F18, Philo F19, and the Talmudic writers F20; and the tables are said to be written on both sides, (Exodus 32:15) . Some think that the engraving of the letters perforated and went through the tables, so that, in a miraculous manner, the letters were legible on both sides; others think, only the right and left hand of the tables are meant, on which the laws were written, five on a side, and which folded up like the tables or pages of a book; though others are of opinion, that they were written upon, both behind and before, and that the law was written twice, both upon the fore part and back part of the tables, yea, others say four times; and some think the phrase only intends the literal and mystical, the external and internal sense of the law: however, certain it is, as the apostle here suggests, that the law was written on tables of stone, which may denote the firmness and stability of the law; not as in the hands of Moses, from whence the tables fell and were broken, but as in the hands of Christ, by whom they are fulfilled; or else the hardness of man’s heart, his stupidity, ignorance of, and not subject to the law of God:

but fleshly tables of the heart:

alluding to (Ezekiel 36:26) and designs not carnal hearts, but such as are made soft and tender by the Spirit of God. The table of the heart is a phrase to be met with in the books of the Old Testament; see (Proverbs 3:3) (7:3) (Jeremiah 17:1) and very frequently in the writings of the Jews F21.

FOOTNOTES:

F12 R. Levi ben Gersom in Pentateuch, fol. 113. 2.

F13 Zohar in Exod. fol. 35. 1.

F14 Perush in Exod. xxxi. 18.

F15 In Pentateuch, fol. 209. 2. & 211. 3.

F16 T. Hieres Shekalim, fol. 49. 4. Shemot Rabba, c. 47. fol. 143. 2. Bartenora in Misn. Pirke Abot, c. 5. sect. 6.

F17 Targum Jon. in Exod. xxxi. 18. & in Deut. xxxiv. 12.

F18 Antiqu. l. 3. c. 5. sect. 8.

F19 De Decalogo, p. 761, 768.

F20 T. Hieros. Shekalim, fol. 49. 4. Shemot Rabba, sect. 47. fol. 143. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 35. 1.

F21 Vid. Targum Jon. in Dent. vi. 5, & in Cant. iv. 9.

2 Corinthians 3:4

And such trust have we

This refers to what he had said in the latter end of the foregoing chapter, and the beginning of this; as that they made manifest the savoury knowledge of God and Christ everywhere, and were the sweet savour of Christ to many souls; were sufficient in some measure, through the grace of Christ, to preach the Gospel sincerely and faithfully, and were attended with success, had many seals of their ministry, and particularly the Corinthians were so many living epistles of commendations of the power and efficacy of their ministry; such confidence and firm persuasion of the truth of grace on your souls, and of our being the happy instruments of it, we have

through Christ,

the grace of Christ,

to God-ward:

who is the object of our confidence and hope, and the ground thereof.

2 Corinthians 3:5**Not that we are sufficient of ourselves**

Though we are sufficient for this work to which God has called us, and have such trust and confidence that he has blessed and owned us, and done such great things by us; yet we do not ascribe anything to ourselves, to any power of ours, to any self-sufficiency in us: for “we are not sufficient of ourselves” neither for the work of the ministry, nor for the conversion of sinners, nor for faith and hope in God, nor for any spiritual work whatever; not even to think anything as of ourselves; any good thing, either for our own use and benefit, or for the advantage of others; we are not able of ourselves to meditate with judgment and affection upon the word of God, to study the Scriptures, to collect from them things fit for the ministry; and much less with freedom and boldness to speak of them to edification; and still less able to impress them upon the heart: for though you who are the epistle of Christ are ministered by us, yet not by any power and self-sufficiency of ours;

but our sufficiency is of God;

to think, to speak, and to act for his glory.

2 Corinthians 3:6**Who also hath made us able ministers**

This is an answer to the question in (2 Corinthians 2:16) who is sufficient for these things? no man is of himself; we are indeed sufficient for them, but not of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God, he hath made us able, or sufficient ministers: such ministers as are not of men’s, but God’s making, are sufficient ones; and none are sufficient but whom God makes so; and those he makes able and sufficient, by giving them spiritual gifts, fitting them for the ministry: and these are ministers

of the New Testament,

or “covenant”; the covenant of grace, of which Christ is the Mediator and surety; called “new”, not because newly made, for it was made with Christ from everlasting; nor newly revealed, for it was made known to Adam after his fall, and to all the Old Testament patriarchs, and was exhibited under the legal dispensation, though but darkly, in types, shadows, sacrifices which therefore waxing old is vanished away; and the covenant of grace is now more clearly revealed under the Gospel dispensation, free from all the obscurity it before laboured under; and therefore is called “new”, as well as because it will always continue so, and never give way to another covenant: now the Gospel, and the ministry of it, is nothing else but an exhibition of the covenant of grace, its blessings and promises; and the work and business of those who are ministers of it is not to insist upon the covenant of works, the terms, conditions, obligations, promises, and threatenings of that covenant; but to open and explain the nature, promises, and blessings of the covenant of grace: for such who are fit and proper ministers, are ministers

not of the letter, but of the spirit;

which is to be understood, not of any difference between the books of the Old and the New Testament, for a faithful minister of the word may and will bring forth things new and old, out of the one as well as the other; nor of the literal and allegorical, or mystical sense of the Scriptures, as if the latter and not the former was only to be attended to; nor of the difference of communicating the Gospel by letters, and preaching it by word of mouth; since both methods may be used for the spread of it, as were by the apostles themselves; but of the difference there is between the law and the Gospel. The law is “the letter”, not merely because written in letters, for so likewise is the Gospel; but because it is a mere letter, hereby showing what is to be done or avoided, without any efficacy in it, or communicating any to enable persons to obey its commands, to give life to its observers, or either to sanctify or justify any who are under it, or of the works of it; it is a mere letter, as observed by an unregenerate

man, who only regards the externals of it, being unacquainted with its spirituality. The Gospel is “the spirit”; see (John 6:63) it contains spiritual things, and not things merely natural, moral, and civil, as does the law, but spiritual blessings and promises; it penetrates into the spirit and soul of man, and comes from, and is attended with the Spirit of God. The law is

the letter

that

killeth,

by irritating and provoking to sin, the cause of death, which though not the design and natural tendency of the law, and therefore not to be blamed, yet so it is, through the corruption of human nature; and by convincing of sin when the sinner is killed, and it dead in his own apprehension; and by not only threatening with death, but by cursing, condemning, and punishing with it:

but

the Gospel is

the spirit,

which

giveth life;

it is a means in the hand of the Spirit of God, of quickening dead sinners, of healing the deadly wounds of sin, of showing the way of life by Christ, and of working faith in the soul, to look to him, and live upon him; it affords food for the support of the spiritual life, and revives souls under the most drooping circumstances. The apostle may allude to a distinction among the Jews, between the body and sou] of the law; the words, they say, are (hrwt apwg) , “the body of the law”; and the book of the law is the clothing; and besides these, there is (atyrwad atmvn) , “the soul of the law”; which wise men look into F23.

FOOTNOTES:

F23 Zohar in Numb. fol. 63. 2.

2 Corinthians 3:7

But if the ministration of death

The apostle having observed the difference between the law and the Gospel, the one being a killing letter, the other a quickening spirit, enlarges upon it, and more, fully explains it; and proceeds to take notice of other things in which they differ; and to show the superior glory and excellency of the one to the other; for that by “the ministration of death”, he means the law, as delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, is clear from its being said to be

written and engraven in stones;

as that was by the finger of God himself: rightly does the apostle say, that it was both “written” and “engraven”; for the two tables of the law are expressly said to be written with the finger of God, (Exodus 31:18) meaning either the Spirit of God, who is sometimes so called, (Luke 11:20) compared with (Matthew 12:28) or the power of God, which at once caused this writing to exist; and it is in so many words affirmed, that “the writing” was “the writing of God”; and not of man, nor of any creature, no not of an angel, (Exodus 32:16) yea, even the two tables which were hewn out by Moses, after the first were broken, were written upon by the Lord himself, and not Moses, (Exodus 34:1) . So that as the work of the tables was the work of God, and wonderfully made, the form of the letters, as Abarbinel F24 observes, were miraculously made by him; for this law was, (en grammasi) , “in letters”, as the apostle here says; and as it was written in the Hebrew language, very likely it was in the same

form of letters now in use with the Jews; though some have thought that the Samaritan letters are the original ones: moreover, the law was not only written, but “engraven”; for so it is said, that the writing was graven upon the tables, (Exodus 32:16) and though the word so rendered is no where else used but there, it is rightly rendered graven, as appears by the apostle in this place; and which may lie confirmed by the Targumist on that, who renders it by (qyqx) , “engraven”; and by the Septuagint (kekolammenh) , which signifies the same; and so in the book of Zohar {y}, the letters are said to be (wpylgtā) , “engraven” on the tables: and that the tables were tables of stone, it is certain; they are often so called, (Exodus 24:12) (31:18) (34:1) (Deuteronomy 9:9 Deuteronomy 9:10) (10:1) wherefore the apostle very properly says, that the law was engraven “in stones”; but what stones these tables were made of cannot be said; the Jews, who affect to know everything, will have them to be precious stones, but what they were they are not agreed in; for though they generally say

FOOTNOTES:

F26 they were made of the sapphire stone, and sometimes say F1 they were hewed out of the sapphire of the glorious throne of God; yet at other times they call them marble tables F2; and Aben Ezra F3 was of opinion, that the tables which Moses hewed were not of any precious stone, for he asks where should a precious stone of such size be found? though others pretend to say F4, that Moses in a miraculous manner was shown a sapphire quarry in the midst of his tent, out of which he cut and hewed the stones; but very likely they were common ones; however, certain it is, that the tables of stone, as written and engraven by the Lord himself, were made, as the apostle here says, “in glory”, (egenhye en doxh) ; and so Jarchi on (Exodus 32:16) “and the tables were the work of God”, says, this is to be understood literally (wdwbkbw) , “and in” or “for his glory”; or by his glorious power he made them: now this law, though thus written and engraven, and glorious, it was “the ministration of death”; and is so called, because it threatened and punished the transgressors of it with a corporeal death; they that sinned against it died without mercy upon proper evidence and witnesses; every precept of it had this penalty annexed to it, in ease of disobedience; as the having any other goals but one, making of graven images, taking the name of God in vain, the violation of the sabbath, dishonouring of parents, murder, adultery, theft, and covetousness; instances there are of each of these being punishable by this law with a bodily death: and besides, it is the ministration of eternal death, the wages of sin the transgression of the law; which is that wrath of God, a sense of which it is said to work; the curse it threatens with and the second death or lake of fire it casts into: and may be said to be the “ministration” of it; as it shows persons they are deserving of it, pronounces the sentence of it on them, and will execute it upon them, if grace prevent not; now though it was the ministration of death, yet it

was glorious.

There were many things which made it so; but what the apostle here particularly takes notice of is the glory that was upon the face of Moses, when he received it and brought it from the Lord, which was very great;

so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away.

The history of this may be read in (Exodus 34:29 Exodus 34:30 Exodus 34:35) it was a real visible glory that was upon the skin of his face, so that it shone again; it is said, “the skin of his face shone”; and this shining of his face the apostle very properly calls “the glory of his countenance”: agreeably to the Septuagint version, which renders it, “the appearance of the skin, or colour of his face, was glorified”; and still nearer to the paraphrase of Onkelos, which is, “the splendour of the glory of his countenance was great”; and to the Targum of Jonathan, which also assigns the reason of it, and which seems to be the true one, “the splendour of the form of his countenance was glorious, because of the splendour of the glory of the majesty of God, at the time he talked with him”. The Vulgate Latin version has led many wrong, to paint Moses with two horns, rendering it, “his face was horned”, the Hebrew word having the signification of an horn in its derivative; because glory darted from him like horns, as rays of light do from the sun; see (Habakkuk 3:4) and this brightness and glory were so very great, and so dazzling, that Aaron and the people of Israel were afraid to come nigh; which Jarchi, a Jewish writer, imputed to their sin, and shame, and fear, having worshipped the calf; but our apostle ascribes it to the lustre of his counte-

nance, which was such that they could not steadfastly look upon it; they saw it indeed, as it is said in (Exodus 34:35) yet they could not look wistly at it, nor bear the splendour of it; though this was only a glory, which was to continue but a while; according to the opinion of Ambrose F5, this glory continued on Moses's countenance as long as he lived; but be it so, it at last was done away: now this glory was put there to bear a testimony to the divine authority of the law, that it came from God, and was to be received at the hands of Moses, with awful reverence as from God, and to make them afraid of violating a law which came with such majesty and glory; and also to command awe and respect from the Israelites to Moses, whom they were inclined at every turn to treat with contempt, and to let them see that he had communion with God, which this was the effect of: now this was a circumstance which rendered the law glorious, and was expressive of a real glory in it; which, though as this on Moses's face, "was to be done away"; wherefore the apostle argues;

F24 In loc.

F25 In Exod. fol. 35. 1.

F26 Zohar ib. Targum Jon. in Dent. xxxiv. 12.

F1 Targum in Cant. 1. 11. Targum Jon. in Exod. xxxi. 18.

F2 Targum Jon. in Deut. ix. 9, 10.

F3 In Exod. xxxii. 15.

F4 Jarchi in Exod. xxxiv. 1. Pirke Eliezer, c. 46.

F5 Comment. in Psal. cxix. 135.

2 Corinthians 3:8

How shall not the ministration of the Spirit

By "the ministration of the Spirit", is meant the Gospel; so called not only because it ministers spiritual things, as peace, pardon, righteousness and salvation, spiritual joy and comfort, and even spiritual life; but because it ministers the Spirit of God himself, by whom it is not only dictated, and by him at first confirmed, and who qualifies persons for the preaching of it; but by it he conveys himself into the hearts of men, and makes it powerful for illumination, consolation, edification, and an increase of every grace; and therefore must be rather glorious, or much more glorious than the law, the ministration of death.

2 Corinthians 3:9

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory

So the Jews call the law, for they say, (אין כבוד אלא תורה) , "there is no glory but the law" F6; this is another head of opposition or difference between the law and the Gospel, from whence the superior glory of the one to the other is argued. The law is "the ministration of condemnation"; as sin is a transgression of the law, it accuses for it, convicts of it, pronounces guilty, and adjudges to death on account of it; which is the condemnation it ministers; and this it does to all Adam's posterity, and for his sin too; and to all the actual transgressors of it, to all unbelievers, to all that are under it; even to God's elect themselves, as considered in Adam, and in themselves as transgressors; and this it ministers to their consciences when convicted, though it is never executed on them, because of the suretyship engagement and performances of Christ. The Gospel is

the ministration of righteousness;

not of a legal one, or a man's own, but of the righteousness of Christ, by which the law is honoured, justice is satisfied, and God's elect justified from all sin and condemnation; this being perfect, pure, and spotless, and for ever: the Gospel is "the ministration" of it, as it is a means of stripping a man of his own righteousness, of revealing Christ's to him, and of working faith in him, and encouraging him to lay hold upon it for himself; and thus it is not to righteous persons, but sinners, to all believers, to all the second Adam's posterity; now as

much more

as righteousness exceeds condemnation, and a justified state a condemned one, so “much more” does the Gospel

exceed

the law

in glory.

FOOTNOTES:

F6 Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Lev. fol. 33. 4.

2 Corinthians 3:10

For even that which was made glorious

The apostle grants that there was a glory in the law: it “was made glorious”; it was glorious in the author of it, who is God; it was of his appointing and ordaining, agreeable to his nature, and a declaration of his will; his authority was stamped upon it, and it was written by himself, which cannot be said of any other law whatever; it was glorious in its promulgation, God himself appeared in great glory at the giving of it; Christ was then present; it was ordained by angels, and by them delivered into the hands of Moses, on whose face such a glory was left as could not be steadfastly looked upon; and it was attended with thunderings, lightnings, the sound of a trumpet it was glorious in the matter of it, it contained great and excellent things; the substance of it is love to God, and to our neighbour; and it was glorious in its properties, being, in its nature and substance, holy, just, good, spiritual, perfect, immutable, and eternal; but yet

had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

There is such an excelling glory in the Gospel, that the other is swallowed up and lost in it; it excels it in those things in which it was so glorious: in the author of it, which, though the same, yet with this difference; the law was given by God as a judge, the Gospel by him as a Father, as the Father of Christ, and of his people in him; the law is the birth of his holiness and righteousness, the Gospel of his wisdom, grace, and love; the law declares his will with respect to duty, the Gospel with respect to salvation; the authority of God is stamped on the law, but the Gospel is the image of Christ; the law was written by the finger of God, but the Gospel was hid in his heart, and came from thence: in the promulgation of it, through the long train of patriarchs and prophets, that went before it to usher it in; it was published by Christ, the Son of God himself, confirmed by the gifts and miracles of the Holy Ghost, and in it is a greater display of the glory of God; it was attended with angels too, and a voice from heaven delightful and not terrible; and there was a glory on Christ’s countenance, far exceeding that of Moses’s: in the matter of it; which is the love, grace, and mercy of God; the Lord Jesus Christ, in all the glories and fulness of his person and offices; salvation by him, spiritual blessings, exceeding great and precious promises; neither of which are to be observed in the law: the ordinances of it vastly exceed the legal ones; and it has greatly the advantage of it in its effects on the souls of men, when accompanied by the Spirit of God.

2 Corinthians 3:11

For if that which is done away

Here another difference is pointed out, which subsists between the law and the Gospel, and proves that the one is more excellent and glorious than the other. The law is “that which is done away”; not merely the ceremonial law, or the judicial law, but the whole ministry of Moses, and particularly the law of the Decalogue: for the better understanding of this, distinguish between the matter and ministry of it; the ministry of it by Moses is done away, the matter of it so far as of a moral nature abides: distinguish between the law, as in the hands of Moses and

of Christ; as in the hands of Moses it is broken to pieces and abolished, as in the hands of Christ, as King in his church, it remains: distinguish between precepts and precepts; some are mixed, being partly moral, and partly ceremonial, as the fourth and fifth commands, and others are not; what is ceremonial, or purely related to the Jews whilst in their civil policy, and in the land of Canaan, is done away; but what is purely moral, is, as to the matter of it, still obliging: distinguish between the law as a covenant of works, and as a rule of walk and conversation; as a covenant of works it is done away, as a rule of walk and conversation it still continues: distinguish between persons and persons; to them that are redeemed from it, it is done away; to them that are under it, it remains; and lastly, distinguish between a right and a wrong use of it; as to any use of it to justify us before God, by our obedience to it, it is done away; but as it may be of use to convince sinners of sin, and to direct saints in a course of righteousness, so it abides. The Gospel is “that which remaineth”; which denotes the continued efficacy, the incorruptibleness, the inexpugnableness, and duration of it; notwithstanding all the opposition of men and devils to it, still its blessings, promises, doctrines, ordinances, and effects continue; it remains in the Scriptures, in the church, in the hearts of believers, and in the world too, until all the elect of God are gathered in: now as things that remain are much more glorious than those which are done away, so the Gospel must be much more glorious than the law.

2 Corinthians 3:12

Seeing then that we have such hope

Having this confidence, and being fully persuaded that God has made us able and sufficient ministers of the Gospel, has called and qualified us for such service; and since we have such a ministry committed to us, which so much exceeds in glory the ministry of Moses, a ministry not of death and condemnation, but of the Spirit and of righteousness; not which is abolished and done away, but which does and will remain, in spite of all the opposition of hell and earth:

we use great plainness of speech;

plain and intelligible words, not ambiguous ones: or “boldness”; we are not afraid of men nor devils; we are not terrified by menaces, stripes, imprisonment, and death itself: or “freedom of speech”; we speak out all our mind, which is the mind of Christ; we declare the whole counsel of God, hide and conceal nothing that may be profitable to the churches; we are not to be awed by the terror, or drawn by the flatteries of men to cover the truth; we speak it out plainly, clearly, with all evidence and perspicuity. The apostle from hence passes on to observe another difference between the law and the Gospel, namely, the obscurity of the one, and the clearness of the other.

2 Corinthians 3:13

And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face

This he did, because there was such a glory upon his face when he came down from the mount, that the Israelites could not bear to look upon him; and also to take off that dread of him which was upon them, for they were afraid to come nigh him; and that so they might be able to hearken and attend to the words of the law, he delivered to them: the account of Moses’s putting on this veil is in (Exodus 34:33) where Onkelos renders it by (ypa tyb) , “the house of the face”, or a “mask”: and Jarchi on the place says it was a “garment”, which he put before his face; and both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem call it (ardwo) , “a linen cloth”: now this veil upon his face had a mystery in it; it was an emblem of the Gospel being veiled under the law, and of the darkness and obscurity of the law in the business of life and salvation; and also of the future blindness of the Jews, when the glory of the Gospel should break forth in the times of Christ and his apostles; and which was such,

that the children of Israel,

the Jews, as in the times of Moses, so in the times of Christ and his apostles,

could not steadfastly look to;

not upon the face of Moses, whose face was veiled; not that they might not look, but because they could not bear to look upon him; but they could not look

to the end of that which is abolished;

that is, to Christ, who is the end of the law, which is abrogated by him: to him they could not look, nor could they see him to be the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness; which being fulfilled, is done away by him; and this because of the blindness of their hearts, of which blindness the veil on Moses' face was typical: though the Alexandrian copy and the Vulgate Latin version read, "to the face of him which is abolished".

2 Corinthians 3:14

But their minds were blinded

This confirms the sense given of the foregoing verse, and shows, that not the Israelites only in Moses's time, but the Jews in the times of the Gospel, had their minds so blinded, that they could not behold the glory of the Gospel, nor Christ the end of the law; see (Romans 11:7 Romans 11:8 Romans 11:25).

For until this day,

to this very time,

remaineth the same veil untaken away;

not the selfsame veil that was on Moses's face, but the veil of blindness, darkness, and ignorance, upon the hearts of the Jews:

in the reading of the Old Testament;

the books of the Old Testament, which were used to be read in their synagogues every sabbath day; the true spiritual meaning of which, as they respect Christ and the Gospel dispensation, they understood not; of which darkness, the veil on the face of Moses was a type and emblem:

which veil is done away in Christ;

can only be removed by Christ, by his Spirit and grace, and through the light of the Gospel of Christ, shining into the heart; and so dispel that blindness and ignorance which is in the understanding; whereby the books of the Old Testament are understood, and appear to agree exactly with the Gospel of Christ, in the books of the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 3:15***But even unto this day, when Moses is read***

These words are an explanation of the former, and show that by the Old Testament is designed, more especially, Moses, or the writings of Moses; which were frequently read, and preached upon in the Jewish synagogues; see (Acts 13:15) (15:21) and that by "the veil untaken away", is meant,

the veil upon their heart;

that is, the veil of blindness, ignorance of Christ, and the Gospel; of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and even of the law itself, its nature, use, and end; preferring the traditions of their fathers, before the written law of Moses.

2 Corinthians 3:16

Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord

The heart, upon which the veil now is; or the body of the Jewish nation, as in the latter day; when they “shall turn”, or “be turned”, by the Spirit, power, and grace of God, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn, and embrace him as the true Messiah and only Saviour:

the veil shall be taken away;

the veil of blindness and ignorance, respecting themselves, case, state, and condition, and the way of salvation by Christ; the veil of unbelief, with regard to his person, offices, and grace, and of error in points of the greatest moment and importance; then all the darkness and obscurity that is upon the books of Moses and the prophets, and which is now upon their hearts in reading them, will be gone. The prophecies of the Old Testament will be seen in their proper light, and to be evidently fulfilled in Christ; the true nature, use, and end of the law, will be discovered; and both they and that will be freed from all darkness that now attends them. The Jews themselves acknowledge, that though the law is light, yet there is an obscurity in it, by reason of the several ways of interpreting it; and therefore,

“he that studies in it, has need to remove, (hwom rxa hwom) , “veil after veil”, which is upon the face of it, in order to come at the light of it F7:”

and intimate, that the veil on Moses’s face was an emblem of this obscurity, which agrees with what the apostle hints in this context; and also own, that there is now upon them a veil of ignorance; and, say they F8, God has promised to remove, (מב הכלות מל שכלנו) , perhaps it should be (מוה) , “the veil of folly off of our understanding”, referring, as is thought, to (Isaiah 25:7) .

FOOTNOTES:

F7 R. Abraham Seba in Tzeror Hammor, fol. 90. 2.

F8 Chobat Halebabot, par. 1. c. 3. apud L. Capell. in loc.

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is that Spirit

“The Lord”, to whom the heart is turned, when the veil is removed, is Jesus Christ; and he is “that Spirit”, or “the Spirit”: he, as God, is of a spiritual nature and essence; he is a spirit, as God is said to be, (John 4:24) he is the giver of the Spirit of God, and the very life and spirit of the law, without whom as the end of it, it is a mere dead letter: or rather as by Moses in (2 Corinthians 3:15) is meant, the law of Moses, so by the “Lord” here may be meant the Gospel of Christ: and this is that Spirit, of which the apostles were made ministers, and is said to give life, (2 Corinthians 3:6) .

And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;

which may be understood of the third person in the Godhead; where he is as a spirit of illumination, there is freedom from former blindness and darkness; where he is as a spirit of regeneration and sanctification, there is freedom from the bondage of sin, and captivity of Satan; where he is as a comforter, there is freedom from the fear of hell, wrath, and damnation: where he is as a spirit of adoption, there is the freedom of children with a father; where he is as a spirit of prayer and supplication, there is liberty of access to God with boldness, Though rather the Gospel as attended with the Spirit of God, in opposition to the law, is here designed; and which points out another difference between the law and the Gospel; where the law is, there is bondage, it genders to it; it has a natural tendency to it: quite contrary is this to what the Jews

FOOTNOTES:

F9 say, who call the law, (חִירוֹת) , “liberty”: and say,

“that he that studies in the law, hath (חִירוֹ מִכֻּלָּא) , “freedom from everything”.”

whereas it gives freedom in nothing, but leads into, and brings on persons a spirit of bondage; it exacts rigorous obedience, where there is no strength to perform; it holds men guilty, curses and condemns for non-obedience; so that such as are under it, and of the works of it, are always under a spirit of bondage; they obey not from love, but fear, as servants or slaves for wages, and derive all their peace and comfort from their obedience: but where the Gospel takes place under the influence of the Spirit of God, there is liberty; not to sin, which is contrary to the Gospel, to the Spirit of God in believers, and to the principle of grace wrought in their souls; but a liberty from the bondage and servitude of it: a liberty from the law’s rigorous exaction, curse, and condemnation, and from the veil of former blindness and ignorance.

F9 Zohar in Gen. fol. 90. 1. & in Exod. fol. 72. 1. & in Numb. fol. 73. 3.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all with open face

We are not like Moses, who had a veil on his face; nor like the Jews, who have one on their hearts: “but we all”; not ministers and preachers of the Gospel only, but all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, greater or lesser believers, who are enlightened by the Spirit of God, and are converted to Christ: “with open face”; which may regard the object beheld, the glory of Christ unveiled, that has no veil on it, as Moses had on his face, when he delivered the law; or the persons beholding, who are rid of Jewish darkness; the veil of the ceremonial law, and of natural darkness and blindness of mind; and so clearly and fully, comparatively speaking,

beholding as in a glass;

not of the law, but of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; not with the eyes of their bodies, but with the eyes of their understandings, with the eye of faith; which sight is spiritual, delightful, and very endearing; throws a veil over all other objects, and makes souls long to be with Christ: the object beheld is

the glory of the Lord;

Jesus Christ: not the glory of his human nature, which lies in its union to the Son of God, and in its names which it has by virtue of it; and in its being the curious workmanship of the Spirit of God, and so is pure and holy, and free from all sin; and was outwardly beautiful and glorious, and is so at the right hand of God, where we see him by faith, crowned with glory and honour; and shall behold him with the eyes of our bodies, and which will be fashioned like to his glorious body; but this sight and change are not yet: rather the glory of his divine nature is meant, which is essential and underived, the same with his Father’s; is ineffable, and incomprehensible; it appears in the perfections he is possessed of, and in the worship given to him; it was manifested in the doctrines taught, and in the miracles wrought by him; there were some breakings forth of this glory in his state of humiliation, and were beheld by the apostles, and other believers, who saw his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. Though the glory of Christ as Mediator, being full of grace and truth, seems to be chiefly designed; this he has from God, and had it from everlasting; this he gives to his people, and is what makes him so glorious, lovely, and desirable in their eye: and whilst this delightful object is beheld by them, they are

changed into the same image;

there was a divine image in man, in his first creation; this image was defaced by sin, and a different one took place; now in regeneration another distinct from them both is stamped, and this is the image of Christ; he himself is formed in the soul, his grace is wrought there; so that it is no wonder there is a likeness between them; which lies in righteousness and holiness, and shows itself in acts of grace, and a discharge of duty. The gradual

motion of the change into this image is expressed by this phrase,

from glory to glory:

not from the glory of the law to the glory of the Gospel; or from the glory of Moses to the glory of Christ; rather from the glory that is in Christ, to a glory derived in believers from him; or which seems most agreeable, from one degree of grace to another, grace here being signified by glory; or from glory begun here to glory perfect hereafter; when this image will be completed, both in soul and body; and the saints will be as perfectly like to Christ, as they are capable of, and see him as he is: now the efficient cause of all this, “is the Spirit of the Lord”. It is he that takes off the veil from the heart, that we may, with open face unveiled, behold all this glory; it is he that regenerates, stamps the image of Christ, and conforms the soul to his likeness; it is he that gradually carries on the work of grace upon the soul, increases faith, enlarges the views of the glory of Christ, and the spiritual light, knowledge, and experience of the saints, and will perfect all that which concerns them; will quicken their mortal bodies, and make them like to Christ; and will for ever rest as a spirit of glory on them, both in soul and body: some read these words,

by the Lord of the Spirit,

and understand them of Christ, others read them, “by the Lord the Spirit”, as they very well may be rendered; and so are a proof of the true and proper deity of the Holy Spirit, who is the one Jehovah with the Father and the Son. The ancient Jews owned this;

“the Spirit of the living God, (say F11 they,) (הַיְיִנוּ הַבּוֹרֵא) , this is the Creator himself, from him all spirits are produced; blessed be he, and blessed be his name, because his name is he himself, for his name is Jehovah.”

FOOTNOTES:

F11 R. Moses Botril in Sepher Jetzirah, p. 40. Ed. Rittangel.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 4

In this chapter, the apostle declares the constancy, sincerity, and integrity of him, and his fellow ministers, in preaching the Gospel; asserts the clearness and perspicuity of it; removes the charge of pride and arrogance from them; takes notice of the afflictions he and others endured, for the sake of the Gospel; what supports they had under them, and what comforts they enjoyed: in 2Co 4:1 he observes, that seeing they were employed in such a ministry, as before described in the preceding chapter, though they met with troubles in it, they did not sink under them; the reason of which was, partly the excellency of the ministry, and partly the grace and mercy of God; and they were no less sincere than they were diligent; and were the reverse of the false teachers, who used dishonest methods, craftiness and deceit; these they disclaimed, and delivered out naked truth, with all simplicity and evidence, and as in the sight of God, in confirmation of which they could appeal to the consciences of all that heard them, 2Co 4:2 and whereas the apostle had affirmed the plainness and clearness of the Gospel ministry, both in the preceding chapter, and in the foregoing verse, he foresaw that an objection would be raised against it, which he anticipates, 2Co 4:3,4 showing, that though the Gospel was not spiritually discerned and savingly understood by some persons, yet this was not to be charged upon the Gospel, as if it was attended with darkness and obscurity; but it was owing to the unbelief of men, and the power of Satan over them, in blinding their minds; otherwise the Gospel in itself was light and glorious, in which Christ, the image of God, in a most resplendent manner appears; and those on whom Satan thus wrought were such as did not belong to God’s elect, but were of the number of them that perish: moreover the integrity of the apostle and other ministers appeared in their preaching Christ, and not themselves; and in serving the churches in that way, for the sake of Christ; so that they were far from being chargeable with pride, vanity, and arrogance, 2Co 4:5 and they

readily acknowledged, that all the Gospel light they had was from that God, who spoke light out of darkness in the first creation, whereby they were qualified to communicate light to others, in the name of Christ, 2Co 4:6 and though they had a treasure committed to their trust, and which they had within them, yet they freely owned they were but earthen vessels; and the reason why such treasure was put there was, that the power seen in the conversion of sinners by their ministry might appear to be not of themselves, but of the Lord, 2Co 4:7 and then the apostle proceeds to give an account of the afflictions endured by them, and of the divine supports they had, by which they were preserved from being overwhelmed with them, 2Co 4:8,9 one end of which afflictions, and which are signified by bearing the dying of Jesus in their bodies, and by being exposed to death for his sake, was, that his life might be manifest in them, or his power in the upholding of them, 2Co 4:10,11 and herein lay the difference between them and the Corinthians; the one were in deaths oft, and in very great distresses, and the other in prosperous circumstances, 2Co 4:12 but however, they had much consolation amidst their sorrows and troubles, and which they had partly through the Spirit of faith, and in a way of believing; and who after the example of David, and having the same Spirit as he had, believed and spake, 2Co 4:13 and partly through the hope of the resurrection of the dead, to which they were encouraged by the resurrection of Christ, 2Co 4:14 as also by considering what valuable ends were answered by their bearing afflictions for the sake of Christ, and preaching the Gospel, namely the good of the churches of Christ, and the glory of God, 2Co 4:15 and besides, they had an experience of the daily renovation of the inward man, or of the carrying on of the work of grace upon their souls; and of an increase of grace, right, and joy in them; and this kept them from fainting, though their outward circumstances and outward man were but in a poor condition, 2Co 4:16 but more especially what raised their spirits, and kept them from sinking under their afflictions, was the view they had of eternal glory and happiness, to which they had respect; and the comparison they were led to make between their present afflictions, and glory, which their afflictions were working for as, that their afflictions were light, glory heavy; their afflictions were but for a moment, their weight of glory was for ever; their afflictions were seen and temporal, their glory unseen and eternal; or the things of this world, which they often needed, and yet did not regard, were visible and temporary things; but the things of another world they had their eye upon were invisible, only visible to faith, and would endure for ever.

2 CORINTHIANS 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

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

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

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

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

2 Corinthians 4:1

Therefore seeing we have this ministry

The apostle having largely insisted on the difference between the law and the Gospel, the ministration of the one and of the other, proceeds to give an account of his own conduct, and that of his fellow apostles and ministers: “we”, says he, “faint not”; under all the reproaches cast upon us, persecutions raised against us, and tribulations that attend us; we do not sink in our spirits, or give out from the ministry; we go on cheerfully in our work, in the thee of all opposition, encouraged by the consideration of the excellency of the ministry, which they had from the Lord, were put into, and continued in; which was so valuable in itself, and so useful in its effects; being the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness, having in it such an excelling glory to the law, and attended with so much light and liberty: to which he adds the consideration of the mercy of God they were partakers of,

as we have received mercy;

which may refer either to the grace and mercy of God, which they had received in conversion; a sense of which abiding upon them, so influenced their minds, to hold forth the riches of abounding grace and mercy to poor sinners in the Gospel, that nothing could deter them from it; or to the grace, favour, and good will of God, in making, supporting, and continuing them as ministers of the word; all which, they were sensible, was owing not to men, but God; not to their merit, but to his mercy; not to their worthiness, parts, learning but to his free gift, favour, and grace, by which only they were what they were, as preachers of the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 4:2

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty

Or “shame”; this is a further account of the conduct of the first ministers of the Gospel, and very worthy of our imitation, and in which the apostle strikes at the different manner of behaviour in the false apostles: this may respect both doctrine and practice; they abhorred and rejected everything that was scandalous and reproachful to the Gospel of Christ; in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they had their conversation in the world; they were open and above board, both in principle and practice; the same men in public, as in private; they used no art to cover their doctrines, or hide their conversations; everything of this kind was detestable to them; whereas the false teachers took a great deal of pains to colour over both their sentiments and their lives; and “a shame it was to speak of the things that were done of them in secret”, (Ephesians 5:12) . Moreover, they were

not walking in craftiness;

they used no sly and artful methods to please men, to gain applause from them, or make merchandise of them; they did not lie in wait to deceive, watching an opportunity to work upon credulous and incautious minds; they did not, by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple; nor put on different forms, or make different appearances, in order to suit themselves to the different tempers and tastes of men, as did the false apostles:

not handling the word of God deceitfully.

They did not corrupt it with human doctrines, or mix and blend it with philosophy, and vain deceit; they did not wrest the Scriptures to serve any carnal or worldly purpose; nor did they accommodate them to the lusts and passions of men; or conceal any part of truth, or keep back any thing which might be profitable to the churches:

but by the manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to

every man's conscience in the sight of God;

that is, they with all plainness and evidence clearly preached the truth as it is in Jesus, presenting it to, and pressing it upon the consciences of men; where they left it, and to which they could appeal; and all this they did, in the sight and presence of the omniscient God, to whom they knew they must give an account of themselves and their ministry.

2 Corinthians 4:3***But if our Gospel be hid***

When the Gospel is called ours, the meaning is, not that ministers are the authors or subject of it; but it is so styled, because they are intrusted with it; it is preached by them; and is in opposition to another Gospel, the Gospel of the false apostles. Here an objection is obviated, which the apostle saw would be made against the clearness and perspicuity of the Gospel, asserted by him in the foregoing chapter; taken from some persons, who though they sat under the ministry of the word, were not enlightened by it, saw no glory nor excellency in it, nor were their minds in the least affected with it: to which he replies, saying, "if our Gospel be hid",

it is hid to them that are lost.

But why should the apostle put an if upon its being hid? is it not hid? is it not "the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom?" To which may be answered, that it was hid in God from the beginning of the world; and in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and in the ceremonial law, which contained types and shadows of many things in it; and was hid from whole nations, and for whole ages formerly: but now God has made known the mystery of his will; Christ is manifest in the flesh; the ceremonial law is done away, and the Gospel is preached to Jews and Gentiles; so that it is hid to none, as to the outward ministration of it: and if the internal, spiritual, and saving knowledge and experience of it is hid from any, eventually and finally, it is "to them that are lost": all mankind are in a lost and perishing condition through sin; though some will not be lost eternally, whom God has chosen, Christ has redeemed, and who by the Spirit are brought savingly to believe in Christ; but there are others, that will be lost for ever; and to these the Gospel is hid; and they are such, who are left to the native blindness of their minds, and are given up to a reprobate mind, to judicial darkness, and are suffered to be under the influence of the prince of darkness, as in the following verse; now such instances are no more an objection to the clearness and perspicuity of the Gospel, and the ministration of it, than men born blind, who never could, nor never will see light, are to the bright and clear shining of the sun noon day.

2 Corinthians 4:4

In whom the god of this world hath blinded

The description of the persons to whom the Gospel is hid, is here further carried on; in which the character of Satan is given, who is here styled "the god of this world"; just as he is by Christ, "the prince of this world", (John 12:31) (14:30) not because he had any hand in the making of it, or has any concern in the government of it, or in the disposal of men or things in it; but because of his influence over the worst, and greatest part of the world; which lies in wickedness, under the power of this wicked one, being led captive by him at his will; who have voluntarily given themselves up to him, and whose lusts they will do; and so declare themselves to be his children, and him their Father, yea, their god: the influence he has over them is, he

hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.

The apostle here seems to refer to one of the devils, which the Jews F12 frequently speak of (lamo) , “Samael”; who they say is the head of all the devils; a very malignant spirit, and who deceived our first parents; the word is compounded of (la) , “god”, and (amo) , “to blind”; him they call the angel of death, and say F13, that he hath (amle ynp Kyvxa) , “brought darkness upon the face of the world”, or the creatures, the Gentiles: agreeably to which the apostle calls the devil, “the god that hath blinded”; what he blinds in men, is “their mind”: the more excellent and knowing part of man; not the eyes of their bodies, but of their understandings; which shows the near access Satan has to the souls of men; he penetrates into their very hearts and minds, and has an influence there: the persons whose minds he blinds, are those “who believe not”; which distinguishes them from others that perish, who never enjoyed the Gospel, and therefore he says, “in”, or “among whom”; and from true believers, on whom Satan can have no such influence; and is a reason of these men’s perishing, and of Satan’s influence over them; and must be understood of reprobates, and final unbelievers: the influence he has over them is expressed by “blinding” them; which he does, by diverting them from hearing the Gospel, and by stirring up the enmity of their minds against it, and by increasing their natural darkness and blindness with respect to it. The end which Satan has in doing this is,

lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of

God, should shine unto them;

here many things are hinted, in commendation of the Gospel, as that it is the Gospel of Christ; because he was not only the greatest and best preacher of it that ever was, but also is the author and subject of it; Christ is the sum and substance of the Gospel, the principal thing in it, or person that is spoken of therein; and then Christ who is the grand subject of the Gospel is described, in order to recommend it the more, as “the image of God”. The Jews F14 call the Messiah, (la Mlu) , “the image of God”; some copies, and the Complutensian edition, and the Arabic version, read, “the image of the invisible God”, as in (Colossians 1:15) . So Christ is as the Son of God, being the natural, substantial, essential, eternal, not created, and perfect image of his Father; and so he is as man and Mediator: further, the Gospel is said to be the “glorious” Gospel of Christ, as it must needs be, since it so clearly and illustriously sets forth the glory of Christ; contains such glorious doctrines and promises in it, and is attended with such glorious effects, where it comes with power: add to all this, that “light” is attributed to it; the Jews F15 speak of the “light of the law”, and the law is called light; and say, that (hrwt ala rwa Nya) , “there is no light but the law”; but this may be more truly said of the Gospel, by which not only persons may be notionally enlightened, who never were made really partakers of the grace of God, but is the means of spiritual and saving illumination to thousands, when it is attended with the demonstration of the Spirit: now all these excellent characters of the Gospel serve to enhance the spite and malice of Satan, in endeavouring all he can to kinder the bright shining of this glorious Gospel, to and upon any of the sons of men; and his reason for so doing is, because he knows, that should the Gospel shine unto them, the interest and glory of Christ would be advanced, and his own would decline.

FOOTNOTES:

F12 Targum Jon. ben Uzziel in Gen. iii. 6. Zohar in Gen. fol. 37. 2. Vajikra Rabba, fol. 162. 3. Debarim Rabba, fol. 245. 3. Tzeror Hammor in Gen. fol. 6. 2. & 7. 3. Vid. Irenaeum. adv. Haeres. l. 1. p. 136.

F13 Zohar in Gen. fol. 31. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 93. 3.

F14 Zohar in Gen. fol. 31. 1.

F15 Targum in Job iii. 16. T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 7. 2. Tzreor Hammor, fol. 89. 4.

2 Corinthians 4:5

For we preach not ourselves

These words contain a reason why the apostles behaved themselves in the manner described, (2 Corinthians 4:2) and serve to explain in what sense this inspired writer is to be understood, when he calls the Gospel our

Gospel, (2 Corinthians 4:3) and most clearly proves the Gospel to be a glorious one, which he had asserted, (2 Corinthians 4:4) since Christ, and not themselves, is the subject of it, “for we preach not ourselves”. They did not preach any doctrine of their own devising; they did not set up themselves as lords over the faith and consciences of men; nor was their view in preaching to set forth their learning, parts, and eloquence, or to amass wealth and riches to themselves; nor did they assert the purity of human nature, or the power of man to do anything of himself that is spiritually good; or that justification and salvation are by works of righteousness done by men. To do any, or each, or all of these, as did the false apostles, is to preach a man’s self: but so did not these faithful dispensers of the word, but they

preached Christ Jesus the Lord;

that is, the doctrines respecting the person, office, and grace of Christ; as that he is truly and properly God, the eternal and only begotten Son of God, God and man in one person, the only Mediator between God and man, and the Saviour and Redeemer of lost sinners; that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the true Messiah; and that this Christ is Jesus, a Saviour, the only able and willing one; and that this Jesus Christ is “Lord” of all, especially of the saints; not only as Creator, but as their head, husband, and Redeemer; that peace and reconciliation, pardon and righteousness, life and salvation, are only by him: and they also declared themselves the servants of the churches,

and ourselves your servants.

The apostle does not say they were the servants of Christ, though they were, and esteemed it their greatest honour to be so; for he had no need to observe this, since this is included in their preaching him as “Lord”: nor does he say they were the servants of men, or menpleasers, for then they would not be the servants of Christ; but he asserts them to be the servants of the churches: and which must be understood, not with respect to things temporal, with which they had no concern; but with regard to things spiritual, particularly to the ministration of the word, and administration of ordinances: and this they professed to be,

for Jesus’ sake;

either for the sake of preaching Christ unto them; or because they were chosen and called by him to this service, and in which they were willing to continue, for the sake of his honour and interest.

2 Corinthians 4:6

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, &c.] The causal particle for, shows these words to be also a reason of the foregoing; either why they so clearly beheld the glory of the Lord, (2 Corinthians 4:18) or why they renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, (2 Corinthians 4:2) or why their Gospel could not be hid, (2 Corinthians 4:3) or why they did not preach themselves, but Christ, (2 Corinthians 4:5) because God had

shined in their hearts;

and in this light, they saw the glory of Christ; could not bear any secret, hidden, scandalous practices; and held forth the word of light and life to others; and seeing so much of their own weakness, sinfulness, and unworthiness, dared not to preach themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; in which may be observed the character of the true God, as opposed to Satan, the god of this world, who is said to blind the minds of men, (2 Corinthians 4:6) whereas the true God is represented as the author of “light”, and as producing it by a word of “command”, and that “out” of mere “darkness”; respect is here had to the creation of all things at the beginning, when “darkness was upon the face of the deep--and God said, let there be light and there was light”, (Genesis 1:2 Genesis 1:3) . Now this character of God, as creating light in this wonderful manner, is prefaced to his giving spiritual light unto his people; because of the agreement there is between light corporeal and spiritual, in their nature and production; for as there was darkness upon the earth before there was light, so there is a natural darkness in the minds of men, before any spiritual light is infused into them; and as light was the first production out of the dark

and unformed chaos, so light is the first thing that is struck into the soul in conversion; moreover, as light was the effect of almighty power, so is the spiritual illumination, or the opening of the eyes of the understandings of men, who are naturally born blind; and as light was a creation of that which was not before, so the work of grace on the soul is not an increase of, or an addition to, or an improvement of the light of nature, but it is a new light, created in the understanding; add to all this, that both corporeal and spiritual light are good, and both called “day”; the influence that God has over the hearts of men, and the effect he produces there are, he

hath shined in our hearts.

The hearts of men are like this dark terraqueous globe, having no light in them; God is as the sun, the fountain of light, which shines upon them and in them; so as to give them a true sight and sense of sin, and of their lost state and condition; so as to cause them to see the fulness and suitableness of Christ as a Saviour; so as to warm their affections, and draw out their desires after Christ, his ways, truths, ordinances, and people; and so as to give them light into the mysteries of the Gospel; particularly he so shines into the hearts of some, whom he makes ministers of the Gospel, as to give more light and knowledge into Gospel truths, than he does to others; and his end in doing this, is

to give:

that is, that his ministering servants may give

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;

men must be first made light in, and by the Lord, or they will never be fit and proper persons to hold forth the word of light, or to communicate light to others; God first shines into their hearts, and then they give light to others: by “the glory of God” is not meant the essential glory of God, or the perfections of his nature, though these are to be seen in the face, or person of Christ; but rather the glorious counsels of God, and scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ; or in other words, the glorious Gospel of God: and by “the knowledge” of it is designed, not a mere notional speculative knowledge of the Gospel, but an experimental one; a spiritual knowledge of the Gospel, of Christ in it, of God in Christ, and of an interest in God’s salvation by Christ: now when the ministers of the word are said to give the light of this to men, or to enlighten them with this knowledge, it cannot be thought that they are the efficient causes, for such are only Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit; but only that they are instrumental, and are means in the hands of God, of bringing persons to see the fellowship of this mystery: all which is done, “in the face of Jesus Christ”; this denotes the clearness and perspicuity of their ministry, and of that knowledge which is communicated by it; see (2 Corinthians 3:12) and also the authority by which they act; it is in the name and person of Christ, in which sense the phrase is used, (2 Corinthians 2:10) .

2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have, this treasure in earthen vessels

This is a further commendation of the Gospel; and by which the apostle removes an objection against it, taken from the cross and persecutions that attend it, and the outward meanness of the ministers of it. The Gospel is called a “treasure”, for not grace, nor Christ, but the Gospel is here meant; which is so styled, because it contains rich truths, and an abundance of them; comparable to gold, silver, and precious stones, for the price of them, their antiquity, distance of place from whence they come, and their duration; because it has in it rich blessings, spiritual ones, the blessings of the new covenant, solid, substantial, and irreversible ones, and a fulness of them; and because it consists of exceeding great and precious promises, of more worth than thousands of gold and silver; free, absolute, and unconditional ones, which are yea and amen in Christ, and relate both to this, and the other world; and also because it exhibits and shows forth to us the riches of God and of Christ, of grace and of glory; which are unsearchable, substantial, satisfying, and durable: the repository, or cabinet, in which this treasure is, are “earthen vessels”; by which are meant, ministers of the word, who are so in themselves, in their own esteem, and in the esteem of others; probably the apostle might have in view (Lamentations 3:2) . The doctors

and scholars among the Jews are compared hereunto;

`` says R. Eleazar F16, to what is a disciple of a wise man like, in the esteem of a man of the world? at first he is like to a golden cup; when he has conversed with him, he is like to a silver cup; and when he has received any profit by him, he is like (vrh lv Nwtyql) , “to an earthen cup”, which, when broken, cannot be repaired again: the law (say they) is not confirmed but by him, who makes himself (orx ylk) , “as an earthen vessel” F17: R. Joshua F18 was a great man in the king’s palace, and he was deformed; wherefore Caesar’s daughter said, wisdom is beautiful (rewkm ylk) , “in an ugly vessel”; and he brought her a simile in proof of it from wine, which is not kept in a silver vessel.”

The allusion is either to the earth itself, in which treasure lies, or is hid, and out of which it is dug; or to pots and vessels made of earth, into which treasure has been used to be put; or to earthen pitchers, in which lights or lamps were formerly carried; see (Judges 7:16) where Gideon’s three hundred men, are said to have empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers; they carried lamps with them to give them light, it being night when they went into the camp of Midian; and those they put into pitchers, that the Midianites might not perceive them afar off, as a Jewish commentator well observes F19; in like manner the Gospel put into earthen vessels is a glorious light to some, whilst it is hidden to others: yea, even lamps themselves were no other than earthen vessels, in which light was put; for so says Maimonides F20, a lamp, a burning light, is (vrx ylk) , “an earthen vessel”, like a reed; and on the top of it is a little ear, which joins to it; and when it is made, a piece of old cloth is put upon the burning oil, and it continues in it; also an earthen vessel is made, in which there is a hollow place for to set the light in, and in it is gathered all that flows from the oil out of the light; and it is strengthened about the head of the candlestick, that the brass might not be hurt by the oil; and this vessel is called the house in which the light subsides, or the receptacle of the light; and which receptacle, another of the Misnic commentators says F21, is an earthen vessel, made to put the light in; and the lamp, he also says, is like an earthen platter, sharp pointed below and this allusion well agrees with the context, in which the Gospel is represented as a glorious light, shining in darkness, (2 Corinthians 4:4 2 Corinthians 4:6) . The Greek word (ostrakinoiv) , the apostle uses, signifies also “shells of fishes”; and in like manner does Philo the Jew F23 compare the human body;

``I am (says he) very little concerned for this mortal body which is about me, and cleaves to me (ostreou dikhn) , “like the shell of a fish”; though it is hurt by everyone.”

And the reference may be to pearls, which are said to have been found in such shells, particularly in oysters; and is designed to express, either the frail mortal bodies of the ministers of the Gospel, comparable to brittle shells; or baked earth; or rather the outward mean despicable condition of the apostles, and preachers of the word; being men of no figure in the world, for birth, learning, or outward grandeur; and being attended with sinful infirmities also, as other men; and more especially as they were labouring under reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions, for the sake of the Gospel; see (Jeremiah 32:14) . The reason why it pleased God to put such a rich and valuable treasure into the hands of persons so mean and contemptible was,

that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us:

that is, that it might appear that the making of such persons ministers of the word was not of themselves, was not owing to their natural abilities, or to any diligence and industry, and acquirements of their own, or to any instructions they had received from others, but to the grace of God, and the effectual working of his power; and that the success which attended their ministrations in the conversion of sinners, and building up of saints, could only be ascribed to the exceeding greatness of divine power; and that the supporting of them in their work, under all the persecutions raised against them, and opposition made unto them, could be attributed to nothing else; of which power, instances are given in the following verses.

FOOTNOTES:

F16 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 52. 2.
 F17 Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 4. 2.
 F18 Juchasin, fol. 33. 2.
 F19 Laniado in Judg. vii, 16.
 F20 In Misn. Celim, c. 2. sect. 8.
 F21 Bartenora in ib.
 F23 De Joseph. p. 536.

2 Corinthians 4:8

We are troubled on every side

Or afflicted; (en panti) , either “in every place”, wherever we are, into whatsoever country, city, or town we enter, we are sure to meet with trouble, of one sort or another; for wherever we be, we are in the world, in which we must expect tribulation: or “always”, every day and hour we live, as in (2 Corinthians 4:10 2 Corinthians 4:11) we are never free from one trial or another: or “by everyone”; by all sorts of persons, good and bad, professors and profane, open persecutors and false brethren; yea, some of the dear children of God, weak believers, give us trouble: or “with every sort” of trouble, inward and outward; trouble from the world, the flesh and the devil:

yet not distressed;

so as to have no hope, or see no way of escape; so as to have no manner of comfort, or manifestations of the love of God; or so as to be straitened in our own souls; for notwithstanding all our troubles, we have freedom at the throne of grace, and in our ministry; we can go with liberty to God, and preach the Gospel boldly to you:

we are perplexed;

and sometimes know not what to do, which way to take, what course to steer, or how we shall be relieved and supplied; we are sometimes at the utmost loss about things temporal, how we shall be provided for with food and raiment; nor are we without our perplexing thoughts, doubts, and fears, about spiritual affairs:

but not in despair;

of the Lord’s appearing and working salvation, both in a temporal and spiritual sense.

2 Corinthians 4:9

Persecuted, but not forsaken

Pursued from place to place, and followed with menaces, curses, and reproaches; laid hold on, proscribed, imprisoned, and threatened with the severest tortures, and death itself; but our God never leaves us nor forsakes us; though we are followed close by evil men, and left by our friends, we are not forsaken of God:

cast down

we sometimes are, as an earthen vessel; (2 Corinthians 4:7) , which may be cast out of a man’s hands, in order to be dashed to pieces; or as a man in wrestling, see (Ephesians 6:12) may be thrown to the ground by his antagonist, so we are sometimes foiled by sin, Satan, and the world:

but not destroyed;

we are still safe in the hands of Christ, and are kept by the power of God; and, indeed, to what else can all this be ascribed? it is surprising that earthen vessels should bear and suffer so much, and not fall, or be dashed to pieces.

2 Corinthians 4:10

Always bearing about in the body

The Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, read, “in our body”; and the Syriac version, in this and the next clause, reads, “in our bodies”, and some copies in this read, “bodies”; continually carrying about with us, in these mortal bodies of ours, wherever we go,

the dying of the Lord Jesus;

by which is meant, not the doctrine of the sufferings and death of Christ, and of salvation by a crucified Saviour, which they bore and carried about with them in a ministerial way, wherever they came and preached, but the sufferings they themselves underwent: so called, because of the likeness there is between the sufferings of Christ, and theirs; as he was traduced as a wicked man, a deceiver, and a stirrer up of sedition, so were they; as he was persecuted, so were they; as he was liable to death, and at last was delivered up to it, so were they: and also because of the union and sympathy which were between them; Christ and they were one body and one Spirit; so that what was endured by the members, the head had a fellow feeling of, and sympathy with; and reckoned what was done to them, as done to himself: and besides, the sufferings they underwent, and death they were exposed unto, were for his sake, as it is explained in the next verse:

for we which live;

who are still in the land of the living, though it is almost a miracle we are, considering the circumstances we are in:

are always delivered;

that is, continually exposed

to death for Jesus' sake:

and the end of all these sufferings, which is expressed alike in both verses is,

that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body, or “mortal flesh”; the meaning of which is, that it might appear that Jesus, though he died, is risen again from the dead, and lives at the Father’s right hand, and ever lives to make intercession for us; of which there is a full proof, inasmuch as we are supported by him under all the trials and sufferings we endure for his sake; for because he lives, we live also, amidst so many dangers and deaths, which attend us.

2 Corinthians 4:12***So then death worketh in us***

This is the conclusion of the foregoing account, or the inference deduced from it; either the death, or dying of Christ, that is, the sufferings of his body, the church, for his sake, (energeitai) , “is wrought in us”; fulfilled and perfected in us; see (Colossians 1:24) or rather a corporeal death has seized upon us; the seeds of death are in us; our flesh, our bodies are mortal, dying off apace; death has already attacked us, is working on our constitutions gradually, and unpinning our tabernacles, which in a short time will be wholly took down and laid in the dust:

but life in you.

Some understand these words as spoken ironically, like those in (1 Corinthians 4:8 1 Corinthians 4:9) but the apostle seems not to be speaking in such a strain, but in the most serious manner, and about things solemn and awful; and his meaning is, ours is the sorrow, the trouble, the affliction, and death itself, yours is the gain, the joy, the pleasure, and life; what we get by preaching the Gospel are reproach, persecution, and death; but this Gospel we preach at such expense is the savour of life unto life to you, and is the means of maintaining spiritual life in your souls, and of nourishing you up unto eternal life; and which is no small encouragement to us to go on in our work with boldness and cheerfulness: or these words regard the different state and condition of the apostle,

and other ministers, and of the Corinthians; the one were in adversity, and the other in prosperity.

2 Corinthians 4:13

We having the same Spirit of faith

By faith here is meant, not the doctrine, but the grace of faith; a believing in the doctrines of the Gospel, and in the person of Christ; an exercise of that grace upon the death and resurrection of Christ; and particularly a looking by faith in full expectation of the saints' resurrection from the dead, and eternal glory, together with a reliance on the power, faithfulness, and promises of God to support under the afflictions of this life. Now of this faith the Spirit of God is the author; this is not of ourselves, of our own power, it is the free gift of God, and a valuable gift it is; it is of the operation of God, and the produce of his almighty power; and of this the Spirit of God, in conversion, is the powerful operator: hence he is here called the "Spirit of faith". So the "third" number in the Cabalistic tree of the Jews, the intelligence sanctifying, which answers to the third person in our doctrine of the Trinity, is called F24,

“(Nmwa hnwma) and (hnmah ba) , “the artificer of faith”, and “the author or parent of faith”, because from its power faith flows.”

Which is the “same” in all saints; the Spirit is the same in one as in another, and so is the faith which he is the author of; see (2 Peter 1:1) . Faith is the same in all the saints that have been from the beginning of the world, under the Old and New Testament dispensations; it was the same in all the churches in the apostle's time, in Rome as at Ephesus, in Ephesus as at Rome, and in Thessalonica as at Rome and Ephesus, and so in all the other churches; though it may be, the apostle may chiefly design the sameness of faith, and of the Spirit, in him and his fellow ministers, and in these Corinthians, though death was working in the one, and life in the other; which appeared in their free and bold ministration of the word, notwithstanding all they met with on account of it, in imitation and encouraged by the example of David,

according as it is written,

(Psalms 116:10) .

I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak:

where there is true faith, and the true Spirit of faith, there will be a speaking of, for, and in the name of Christ, as there ought to be: for as “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”. This is true of believers in common, sooner or later, at one time or another; but more especially of the ministers of the word, who have a firm and well grounded belief in the doctrines of the Gospel, and person of Christ; and therefore speak freely, and without any doubt and hesitation about these things, boldly, and without the fear of men, and sincerely and faithfully, as in the sight of God: hence they make Christ the main subject of their ministry, because they believe in him, and nothing can stop their mouths from speaking of him; faith, and a spirit of faith, fit for public work and service, and give freedom and boldness in the ministration of the Gospel, and are a great support under persecution for the sake of it.

FOOTNOTES:

F24 Sepher Jetzirah, Semit 3. p. 6.

2 Corinthians 4:14

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus

Besides having the same spirit of faith, mentioned in the preceding verse as a support under tribulation, the apostle proceeds in this, and some following verses, to take notice of other things which gave them relief under

their pressures; such as the resurrection from the dead, all their afflictions being for the good of the churches and glory of God, the inward and comfortable experiences of the love and grace of God in the midst of them, and the end and issue of them, eternal glory. The former of these is observed here; “knowing”, being firmly persuaded, and fully assured, that he “which raised up the Lord Jesus”; by whom God the Father is more especially designed, though not to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit, who were jointly concerned in raising the dead body of our Lord: shall raise us up also by Jesus; which may regard the resurrection of all the saints by Christ, not as a mere instrument, but as a co-efficient cause with the Father and Spirit: this the apostle concludes from the power of God in raising up Christ from the dead; he that is able to do the one, is certainly of power to effect the other; and also from that union there is between Christ and his people; he is the head, they are his members; and because the head is raised, the members shall be likewise. Christ’s resurrection is not only the pattern, but the pledge of the resurrection of the saints. Now this doctrine, as it was fully known, and firmly believed by the apostles, was of great use to bear them up under their outward troubles; for though they were so afflicted and persecuted, death was visibly working in them, and they might expect in a short time to be laid in the grave; yet this was their consolation, that they should be raised again immortal and glorious by Christ; some copies read, “with Jesus”, and so the Vulgate Latin version: “he shall present us with you”; that is, he will present us ministers, together with you the saints, and the rest of the elect of God; first, (hytwl) , “to himself”, as the Syriac version adds, and then to his Father, in their full number, completely righteous and holy. These words indeed may be understood of a deliverance from temporal affliction, from that death they were labouring under, and exposed unto, and the sense be this; we firmly believe that he that raised up Christ from the dead, will deliver us from the present death of affliction, which will be a sort of resurrection from the dead, and will make us to stand by you, or in your presence; or, in other words, being thus delivered, we shall have an opportunity of visiting you, we have so long desired, and you have expected, which will be to your edification and comfort.

2 Corinthians 4:15

For all things are for your sakes;

&c.] This is a very large and comprehensive expression, and reaches to all the things of Christ, as well as of his ministers. The incarnation, obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ, are all for the sake of God’s elect; and so the ministry of his apostles and servants, their gifts, graces, comforts, and experiences; and so likewise all their reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions; see (2 Corinthians 1:6) . These were endured for their sakes, and tended to their establishment in the faith; were for the furtherance of the Gospel, and of the faith and joy of saints; and this gave no small pleasure and relief to them under their sufferings, that they were of such use to others. Moreover, all their deliverances, when in any imminent danger; were for the sake of the churches:

that the abundant grace;

held forth in their ministrations, manifestly to be seen in supporting them under their troubles, and delivering them out of them:

might through the thanksgiving of many;

for such appearances of divine goodness, see (2 Corinthians 1:11)

redound to the glory of God;

which is another thing that yielded them a pleasing satisfaction, in all their distresses for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel.

2 Corinthians 4:16

For which cause we faint not

Since our afflictions are overruled for the good of others, and the glory of God, we are not discouraged by them; our spirits do not sink under the weight of them; we do not give out from the work of the ministry because of

them, but go on cheerfully therein: and the more so, since

though our outward man perish;

our outward circumstances of life are very mean and despicable; we are oftentimes in a very distressed condition through hunger, thirst, nakedness, and want of the common necessaries of life; our bodies are almost worn out with fatigue, labour, and sorrow; our earthly tabernacles are tottering, and just ready to fall in pieces:

yet the inward man is renewed day by day;

that is, continually; it answers to (Mwy Mwyw) , an Hebraism; see (Esther 2:11) (3:4) the internal hidden man of the heart, the new man is in a prosperous condition; our souls are in good health; the work of God is comfortably carried on in us; we have sweet and repeated experiences of the love of God; we are growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ; and, like the palm tree, the more weight is hung upon it, the more it thrives; and, like the children of Israel in Egypt, the more they were afflicted the more they grew.

2 Corinthians 4:17

For our light affliction

The difference between the present and future state of the saints is here expressed, the disparity between them shown, and the influence the one has upon the other. The present state is a state of “affliction”. Affliction is the common lot of the children of men, but more especially of the children of God, and is here designed by “our” affliction; for these, besides their soul trouble, meet with such in the world, and from the men of it, others do not. Afflictions are appointed for them by their heavenly Father; provision is made for them, and support under them, in the covenant of grace; they are Christ’s legacy to them, and by which they are conformed to him; they are always for their good, spiritual and eternal; and lie in their way to heaven, through which they must pass into the kingdom: now these their outward afflictions which are here meant, lie chiefly in the meanness of their outward circumstances; in poverty and distress, in disgrace, reproaches, and persecutions for their profession of Christ, and his truths: and in opposition to this their mean and despicable condition in the eyes of the world, their future state is signified by “glory”, as it often is in the word of God; and is of such a nature, that all the glories of this world, such as kingdoms, crowns, inheritances, possessions, riches, honour, and substance of every kind and degree, by all which the heavenly state is expressed, are but faint resemblances of it: it is the same glory Christ has entered into, is possessed of for, and will give to all his people; it will chiefly lie in communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, with angels, and one another; there will be a visible glory upon the bodies of the saints, which will be fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ; and their souls will be blessed with perfect knowledge and holiness. Their affliction is represented as “light” which though it is not in itself, but often very grievous and heavy to be borne, especially when any soul trouble is added to it; yet is light, when the saint is supported by the arm of the Lord, indulged with his presence, and favoured with the discoveries of his love. The afflictions of God’s people are light, when compared with their deserts, with the sufferings of Christ, the torments of the damned in hell, and the joys of heaven, which are here, by way of opposition thereunto, styled a “weight of glory”. The apostle has respect to the Hebrew word (dwbk) , which signifies both “weight” and “glory”, and is often used for riches, honour, and whatsoever is excellent, solid, and substantial: and here the phrase designs the weighty riches of glory, that massy crown of glory which fadeth not away, that bulky and more enduring substance, which Christ will cause them that love him to inherit. Again, the afflictions of the children of God are said to be

for a moment;

they are but for a while, and that a little while; at most they are but for the present time of life, and that is but as a vapour which appears for a little while, and then vanishes away; it is but as a moment, a point of time, in comparison of eternity: but the glory the saints are chosen and called unto, that weight of it which shall be put upon them is “eternal”, it will last for ever; it will know no end: hence it is called an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, an everlasting kingdom, everlasting habitations, an incorruptible inheritance, and a crown of glo-

ry that fadeth not away. Now the present affliction of the people of God has a considerable influence upon this; it is said here, that it

worketh for us

this glory. The Jews F25 introduce God speaking words much like these.

``Saith the holy blessed God, I have sent them chastisements in this world, (abh Mlwel Mtwewrz qzxl) ,
“to strengthen their arms for”, or that their arms may lay hold upon the world to come.”

Now afflictions may be said to work eternal glory for the saints, not by way of merit, for they are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed; there is no proportion between them; besides, the heavenly kingdom and glory was prepared from the foundation of the world, and is a free grace gift of their heavenly Father; but they work as means of enjoying it, as the word and ordinances do; the Spirit of God makes use of them, as of the other, to work up the saints for that selfsame thing, glory: these are means of trying, exercising, and improving their graces, of weaning their hearts from this world, and drawing out their desires, hope, and expectation of another; they are the way in which believers walk to glory, and which it last issue and terminate in it; glory follows upon them, though it is not for them.

FOOTNOTES:

F25 R. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Torah, praecept. affirm. 17.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 5

The apostle, in this chapter, enlarges upon the saints' comfortable assurance, expectation, and desire of the heavenly glory; discourses of the diligence and industry of himself and other Gospel ministers in preaching the word, with the reasons that induced them to it; and closes it with a commendation of the Gospel ministry from the important subject, sum, and substance of it. Having mentioned in the latter part of the, preceding chapter, the eternal weight of glory, the afflictions of the saints are working for, and the invisible realities of that state they are looking to, here expresses the assurance that he and others had of their interest therein; and which he signifies by an edifice, and illustrates it by its opposition to the body, which he compares to an house and tabernacle; the one is man's, the other of God, and not made with hands; the one is earthly, the other in heaven; the one is to be, and will be dissolved, the other is eternal, 2Co 5:1 and therefore it is no wonder that it should be so earnestly desired, as it is said to be in 2Co 5:2 where the desire of it is signified by groaning, which supposes something distressing, and which makes uneasy; and by an earnest longing after deliverance and happiness, and which is explained by a desire to be clothed upon with the house from heaven; where the heavenly glory is not only, as before, compared to an house, but also to a garment, which all those that are clothed with the righteousness of Christ may justly expect to be arrayed with; for these will not be found naked nor remain so, 2Co 5:3 which earnest desire after immortality and glory is more fully explained, 2Co 5:4 in which not only the body, in its present state, is again compared to a tabernacle, and the saints represented as being distressed, and so groaning whilst in it; but the cause of this groaning is suggested, which is a burden they labour under, both of sin and affliction; and yet such is the natural inclination of man to remain in the body, and his unwillingness to part from it, that he does not desire to be stripped of that, but to have the robe of immortality put upon it, that so the present mortality that attends it might be wholly swallowed up in it: and that the saints had reason to believe there was such an happiness to be enjoyed, and that they had such an interest in it is clear; because as God had prepared that for them, he had also wrought and prepared them for that; and besides, had given them his Spirit as the earnest and pledge of it, 2Co 5:5 wherefore, as they were confidently assured of it, and considering that they were but sojourners and strangers whilst in the body, and in the present state of things, and not at home in their Father's house, and absent from Christ, 2Co 5:6 as is evident from their walking by faith in the comfort-

able assurance, lively hope, and earnest expectation of things future and unseen, and not in the beatific vision of them, 2Co 5:7 . Hence they were very desirous, and chose rather to quit their present dwelling, the tabernacle of the body, that they might be at home, and enjoy the presence of the Lord, 2Co 5:8 . And this confidence and hope of eternal things wrought in the apostle, and other faithful ministers of the word, great carefulness and diligence to serve the Lord acceptably, and discharge with faithfulness the trust reposed in them, 2Co 5:9 the reason of which concern also, or what likewise animated them to a diligent performance of their duty, was their certain appearance before the judgment seat of Christ; which appearance will be universal, and when there will be a distribution of rewards and punishments to everyone according to his works, 2Co 5:10 . And besides, it was not only their own personal concern in this awful affair that engaged them to such a conduct, but the regard they had to the good of immortal souls, to whom the day of judgment must be terrible, unless they are brought to believe in Christ; and for the truth of this they could appeal both to God, and to the consciences of men, particularly the Corinthians, 2Co 5:11 . And lest this should be imputed to pride and arrogance, the apostle suggests the reason why he made mention of all this, that they might have wherewith to answer the false teachers, and vindicate the faithful ministers of the Gospel, 2Co 5:12 . However, let it be construed which way it will, as the effect of madness or sobriety, this he could with the greatest confidence affirm, that his view was the glory of God, and the good of souls, 2Co 5:13 and to this diligence and faithfulness in preaching the Gospel, he and others were not only moved by their desire and expectation of happiness, by the future judgment in which they must appear, and by their concern for immortal souls, that they might escape the vengeance of that day; but they were constrained thereunto by the love of Christ in dying for them, and in whom they died, 2Co 5:14 the end of which was, that they might live not to themselves, but to him that died and rose again, 2Co 5:15 . And as a further instance of their integrity and faithfulness, the apostle observes, that they had no regard to men on account of their carnal descent, and outward privileges, as the Jews; nor even did they consider Christ himself in a carnal view, or esteem of him as a temporal king, as they once did, 2Co 5:16 their sole aims and views being the spiritual good of men, and the advancement of the spiritual interest and kingdom of Christ; and the conclusion from hence is, that whoever is truly in Christ, and in his kingdom, is a new creature, and is in a new world, in a new dispensation, in which both the old things of the law, and of Heathenism, and of his former conversation are gone, and all things in doctrine, worship, and conversation are become new, 2Co 5:17 . And from hence the apostle proceeds to a commendation of the Gospel dispensation, and the ministry of it, from its author God, and from the subject matter of it, reconciliation of men to God by Christ, 2Co 5:18 which is more fully explained and enlarged on, both with respect to the efficient cause of reconciliation, the objects of it, and the means and manner in which it is brought about, and also the publication of it in the Gospel by the ministers of it, 2Co 5:19 and who are described as the ambassadors of Christ, acting in the name of God, and as in the stead of Christ, for the good of men, 2Co 5:20 . And closes the chapter with an account of the great propitiation, Christ, by whom reconciliation is made; as that he was in himself without sin, and yet was by imputation made sin for sinners, that they, in the same way, might be made righteous in the sight of God through him, 2Co 5:21 .

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 8 We are confident, I say, and* willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.
 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.
 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.
 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.
 12 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.
 13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.
 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:
 15 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.
 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.
 17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.
 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:1

For we know, that if our earthly house

By this house is meant the body, so called from its being like a well built house, a curious piece of architecture; as an house consists of a variety of parts fitly framed and put together in just symmetry and proportion, and with an entire usefulness in all, so is the body of man; which shows the power and wisdom of God the architect: likewise, because it is the dwelling place of the soul, which makes it appear, that the soul is more excellent than the body, is independent of it, and capable of a separate existence from it: it is said to be an "earthly" house, because it is from the earth; is supported by earthly things; has its present abode on the earth, and will quickly return to it: and the earthly house of this tabernacle, in allusion to the tabernacles the patriarchs and Israelites of old dwelt in; or to the tents and tabernacles of soldiers, shepherds, travellers, and such like persons, which are soon put up and taken down, and removed from place to place; and denotes the frailty and short continuance of our mortal bodies. So Plato F26 calls the body (ghinon skhnov) , "an earthly tabernacle"; so the Jews were wont to call the body an house, and a "tabernacle":

``every man (they say F1) has two houses, (Pwgh tyb) , "the house of the body", and the house of the soul; the one is the outward, the other the inward house."

So Abarbinel F2 paraphrases those words, (Isaiah 18:4) .

``"I will consider in my dwelling place; I will return", or again consider in my dwelling place, which is the body, for that is (vpnh Nkvm) , "the tabernacle of the soul"''

Now this tabernacle may, and will be, "dissolved", unpinned, and taken down; which does not design an annihilation of it, but a dissolution of its union with the soul, and its separation from it: and when the apostle puts an

“if” upon it, it is not to be understood as though it is uncertain whether it would be dissolved or not, unless it be said with a view to the change that will be on living saints at Christ’s second coming; but it is rather a concession of the matter, and may be rendered, “though the earthly house” or it points out the time when the saints’ future happiness shall begin, “when the earthly house” and signifies that being in the body, in some sense, retards the enjoyment of it. Now it is the saints’ comfort whilst they are in it, and in a view of the dissolution of it, that they

have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?

which some understand of the glorified body upon its resurrection, as opposed to its frail, mortal, earthly frame in its present situation; though rather all this designs the happiness of the saints, which will be begun, and they shall immediately enter into, at the dissolution of their bodies, and will be consummated at the resurrection; which is all of God’s building and preparing; not made by the hands of the creature; or obtained by works of righteousness done by men; and it lies in the heavens, and will continue for ever. So the F3 Jews speak of (avydq tyb) , “the holy house”, in the world to come, and which they suppose is intended in (Isaiah 56:5) (Proverbs 24:3) . In this the saints have a present interest; they have it already built and prepared for them; they have an indubitate right and title to it through the righteousness of Christ; they have it secured to them in Christ, their feoffee in trust, their head and representative; and they have the earnest of it, the Spirit of God in their hearts; of all which they have sure and certain knowledge: “for we know”; they are well assured of the truth of this from the promise of God, who cannot lie, from the declaration of the Gospel, the testimony of the Spirit, and the close and inseparable connection there is between the grace they have already received, and the glory that shall be hereafter.

FOOTNOTES:

F26 In Clement. Alexandr. Stromat. l. 5. p. 593.

F1 Sepher Caphtor, fol. 38. 2.

F2 Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 11. 4.

F3 Zohar in Exod. fol. 34. 3. & 35. 3.

2 Corinthians 5:2

For in this we groan earnestly

Meaning either for this happiness we groan, or rather in this tabernacle we groan. These words are a reason of the former, proving that the saints have a building of God; and they know they have it, because they groan after it here; for the groanings of the saints are under the influence and direction of the Spirit of God, who makes intercession for them, as for grace, so for glory, according to the will of God: and this groaning is further explained by

desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven;

by which is meant not the glorified body in the resurrection morn; for though the bodies of the saints will be glorious, incorruptible, powerful, and spiritual, they are not said to be celestial, nor will they be from heaven, but be raised out of the earth: besides, the apostle is speaking of an habitation the soul will go into, and is desirous of going into as soon as it removes out of the earthly house of the body, and of a clothing it desires to be clothed with as soon as it is stripped of the garment of the flesh: wherefore, by the house from heaven must be meant the heavenly glory, which departed souls immediately enter into, and are arrayed with, even the white and shining robes of purity, perfection, and glory they shall be clothed with, as soon as ever their tabernacles are unpinned and dissolved. The Jews indeed speak of a celestial body which the soul shall be clothed with immediately upon its separation from the earthly body, and much in such figurative terms as the apostle does in this, and the following verse;

“when a man’s time is come, say they F4, to go out of this world, he does not depart until the angel of death has stripped him of the clothing of body, (see (2 Corinthians 5:4)) and when the soul is stripped of

the body, by the angel of death, it goes (arxa apwg awhhb avbltmw) , “and is clothed with that other body”, which is in paradise, of which it was stripped when it came into this world; for the soul has no pleasure but in the body, which is from thence, and it rejoices because it is stripped of the body of this world, (Mylv arxa avwblb vbltaw) “and is clothed with another perfect clothing”.

And a little after,

“the holy blessed God deals well with men, for he does not strip men of their clothes until he has provided for them other clothes, more precious and better than these, except the wicked of the world, who return not to their Lord by perfect repentance; for naked they came into this world, and naked (see (2 Corinthians 5:3)) they shall return hence.”

And in another place F5,

“the soul does not go up to appear before the Holy King, until it is worthy to be clothed (alyeld avwblb) , “with the clothing which is above”.

FOOTNOTES:

F4 Zohar in Exod. fol. 62. 1, 2.

F5 Zohar in Exod. fol. 92. 2. Vid. fol. 84. 3. & in Gen. fol. 49. 3. & Caphtor, fol. 18. 2. & 78. 2.

2 Corinthians 5:3

If so be that being clothed

This supposition is made with respect to the saints who shall be alive at Christ's second coming, who will not be stripped of their bodies, and so will “not be found naked”, or disembodied, and shall have a glory at once put upon them, both soul and body; or these words are an inference from the saints' present clothing, to their future clothing, thus; “seeing we are clothed”, have not only put on the new man, and are clothed and adorned with the graces of the Spirit, but are arrayed with the best robe, the wedding garment, the robe of Christ's righteousness,

we shall not be found naked;

but shall be clothed upon with the heavenly glory, as soon as we are dismissed from hence. Some read these words as a wish, “O that we were clothed, that we might not be found naked!” and so is expressive of one of the sighs, and groans, and earnest desires of the saints in their present situation after the glories of another world.

2 Corinthians 5:4

For we that are in this tabernacle do groan

There are some of the saints who are not in the tabernacle, the body. They were in it, but now are not; their bodies are in the grave, the house appointed for all living; and their souls are in the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, in everlasting habitations, in the mansions prepared in Christ's Father's house; and they have done groaning, being delivered from every oppressor, sin, Satan, and the world; are at rest from all their labours, and are free from every burden; only the saints who are in the tabernacle of the body, in an unsettled state, groan, being in the midst of tribulation, and not yet in the enjoyment of that happiness they are wishing for. The reason of their groaning is, because they are

burdened

with the body itself, which is a clog and incumbrance to the soul in its spiritual exercises; and oftentimes by

reason of its disorders and diseases a man becomes a burden to himself; but what the saints are mostly burdened with in this life, and which makes them groan the most, is the body of sin and death they carry about with them; the filth of it is nauseous, grievous, and intolerable; the guilt of it oftentimes lies very heavy on the conscience; the weight of it presses hard, and is a great hinderance to them in running their Christian race; nor have they any relief under this burden, but by looking to a sin bearing and sin atoning Saviour, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. They are also frequently burdened with Satan's temptations, with blasphemous thoughts, solicitations to sin, the fears of death, the pangs of it, and what will follow upon it; though God is faithful, who will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able to bear; however, these temptations are great burdens, and occasion many a groan: to which may be added the various afflictions of life, which though comparatively "light", are in themselves heavy, grievous burdens, and hard to be bore; the nature, number, and continuance of them often make them so; and especially they are such, when God is pleased to hide his face, and withhold the discoveries of his love and mercy. The apostle goes on to explain what he means by desiring to be clothed,

not for that we would be unclothed;

that is, of our bodies; and this he says, not through any love and liking he had to this animal life, or to the sensual methods of living here, which make natural men in love with life, and desirous of always living here; but from a principle of nature, which recoils at death, does not like a dissolution, chooses any other way of removing out of this world than by death; a translation of soul and body together to heaven, like that of Enoch and Elijah's, is more eligible even to a good man; or such a change as will be upon the living saints at the coming of Christ, which the apostle seems to have in view, who will be not unclothed of their bodies, as men are at death,

but clothed upon;

as is here desired, with incorruption and immortality:

that mortality might be swallowed up of life;

not that the mortal body, or the substance of the body, which is mortal, might be consumed and destroyed, but that mortality, that quality to which it is subject by sin, might be no more: and he does not say, that "death may be swallowed up of life", which will be done in the resurrection morn; but mortality, which being swallowed up by a translation, or such a change as will be at the last day, will prevent death: and the phrase, swallowed up, denotes the suddenness of the change, in an instant, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and that without any pain, or such agonies as usually attend death; and also the utter, final, and total abolition of mortality; so that there will never be more any appearance of it; his desire is, that it may be swallowed up "of the life", which is properly and emphatically life, as this life is not; and means the glorious, immortal, and everlasting life, which saints enter into as soon as they are rid of their mortal bodies, and the mortality of them.

2 Corinthians 5:5

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing

By "the selfsame thing" is meant, either the cross, the burden of sorrows and afflictions, under which the saints groan whilst here, which God has appointed them unto, and therefore to be bore patiently by them; or that glory and immortality, which they, as vessels of mercy, were prepared by him for from everlasting; for which their bodies and souls are formed by him in creation, and for which they are made meet in regeneration, by the curious workmanship of his Spirit and grace upon them: and seeing he "is God", and not man, who hath wrought them for this, either by his secret purposes and preparations of grace in eternity, or by his open works of creation and regeneration in time; there is no doubt but they shall certainly enjoy it, since his counsels are immutable, and he is a rock, and his work is perfect; whatever he begins he finishes, nor is he ever frustrated of his end: one of Stephens's copies adds, "and hath anointed us", which seems to have been transcribed from (2 Corinthians 1:21) .

Who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit;

and therefore may be assured of possessing the inheritance, of which he is the earnest; see (2 Corinthians 1:22).

2 Corinthians 5:6

Therefore we are always confident

Because God has formed us for immortality and glory, and given us his Spirit as the earnest of it, we take heart, are of good courage, do not sink under our burdens, or despair of happiness, but are fully assured of enjoying what we are desirous of:

knowing that whilst we are at home in the body;

or whilst we are inmates or sojourners in the body; for the body is not properly the saints' home; whilst they are in it, they are but pilgrims and strangers; the time of their abode in it is the time of their sojourning: during which time they

are absent from the Lord;

not with respect to his general presence, which is everywhere, and attends all creatures, an absence from which is impossible; nor with respect to his spiritual presence, which though not always sensibly enjoyed, yet frequently; nor are the children of God ever deprived of it totally and finally; but with respect to his glorious presence, and the full enjoyment of that. Now the knowledge and consideration of this, that the present state and situation of the saints, whilst in the body, is a state of pilgrimage, and so of absence from the Lord Christ, and from their Father's house, serves to increase their confidence and assurance, that they shall not long continue so, but in a little time shall be at home, and for ever with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:7

For we walk by faith, and not by sight.

] Faith is a grace which answers many useful purposes; it is the eye of the soul, by which it looks to Christ for righteousness, peace, pardon, life, and salvation; the hand by which it receives him, and the foot by which it goes

to him, and walks in him as it has received him; which denotes not a single act of faith, but a continued course of believing; and is expressive, not of a weak, but of a strong steady faith of glory and happiness, and of interest in it: and it is opposed to "sight": by which is meant, not sensible communion, but the celestial vision: there is something of sight in faith; that is a seeing of the Son; and it is an evidence of things not seen, of the invisible glories of the other world; faith looks at, and has a glimpse of things not seen, which are eternal; but it is but seeing as through a glass darkly; it is not that full sight, face to face, which will be had hereafter, when faith is turned into vision.

2 Corinthians 5:8

We are confident, I say, and willing rather

We are cheerful in our present state, being assured of future happiness; though we choose rather

to be absent from the body;

that is, to die, to depart out of this world. The interval between death, and the resurrection, is a state of absence from the body, during which time the soul is disembodied, and exists in a separate state; not in a state of inactivity and sleep, for that would not be desirable, but of happiness and glory, enjoying the presence of God, and praising of him, believing and waiting for the resurrection of the body, when both will be united together again; and after that there will be no more absence, neither from the body, nor from the Lord:

and to be present with the Lord.

This was promised to Christ in the everlasting covenant, that all his spiritual seed and offspring should be with him. This he expected; it was the joy of this which was set before him, that carried him through his sufferings and death with so much cheerfulness; this is the sum of his prayers and intercession, and what all his preparations in heaven are on the account of. It is this which supports and comforts the saints under all their sorrows here, and which makes them meet death with pleasure, which otherwise is formidable and disagreeable to nature; and even desirous of parting with life, to be with Christ, which is far better.

2 Corinthians 5:9***Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent***

This may be understood either of the ministers of the Gospel in particular, who labour in the word and doctrine, are ambitious, as the word here used signifies, and strive to preach the Gospel, not to please men, but their Lord and master; or of saints in general, who are intent upon this, and whose highest ambition is, that whether living or dying they

may be accepted of him;

both persons and services: such who are born again, who are believers in Christ, and truly love him, are earnestly desirous of doing those things which are pleasing to him; and do in the strength of Christ endeavour to perform them. Faith is a diligent, industrious, and operative grace, and makes persons like itself. As none ought to be, so none are more careful to perform good works, or more ambitious to excel others in them, and thereby please their Lord, than believers. And these are the only persons that can please him, for without faith it is impossible to please him; for these act from a principle of love to him, and with a view to his glory; and may they be but accepted of him, living and dying, both in this and the other world, they have the highest favour they can wish for and desire.

2 Corinthians 5:10***For we must all appear***

This is a reason why the saints are so diligent and laborious, so earnest and intent upon it, to be accepted of the Lord, because they must stand

before the judgment seat of Christ;

who is appointed Judge of the whole earth, who is every way qualified for it, being God omnipotent and omniscient; and when he comes a second time will sit upon his great white throne, a symbol of purity and integrity, and will enter on this work, and finish it with the strictest justice and equity: and before him “we must all appear”; all the saints as well as others, ministers and people, persons of all ranks and conditions, of every nation, age, and sex; there will be no avoiding this judgment, all “must appear”, or “be made manifest”; they will be set in open view, before angels and men; their persons, characters, and actions, even the most secret will be:

that everyone may receive the things done in his body;

which he has performed by the members of the body as instruments thereof, or whatsoever he has done whilst in the body; and so this not only reaches to words and actions, but includes all the secret thoughts of the mind, and counsels of the heart, which will be made manifest: and when it is said, that “everyone shall receive” these; the meaning is, that he shall receive the reward of them,

according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;

the reward of good works will be of grace, and not of merit: good works will be considered at the last judgment,

not as causes of eternal life and happiness, to which the saints will be adjudged; but will be produced in open court as fruits of grace, and as evidences of the truth of faith, which will justify the Judge in proceeding according to what he himself, as a Saviour, has said,

he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.

The reward of bad works will be in strict and just proportion, according to the nature and demerit of them. The Jews say F6, that

“all the works which a man does in this world, (apwgb) , “in the body”, and spirit, he must give an account of in body and spirit before he goes out of the world.”

And again F7, all the works of men are written in a book, (vyb Nh) (bwj Nh) , “whether good or evil”, and for them all they must give account.

FOOTNOTES:

F6 Zohar in Gen. fol. 57. 3.

F7 Midrash Hanneelim in Zohar in Gen. fol. 75. 4.

2 Corinthians 5:11

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord

Or the fear of the Lord; by which is meant either the grace of the fear of the Lord, implanted in the hearts of the apostles, and in which they acted in their ministry, faithfully dispensing to men the mysteries of grace; from which they could by no means be moved, because the fear of God was before their eyes, and upon their hearts; or rather the terror of the Lord in the last judgment, which will be very great, considering the awfulness of the summons, arise ye dead, and come to judgment; the appearance of the Judge, which will be sudden, surprising, and glorious; the placing of the thrones, the opening of the books, the position of the wicked, the dreadful sentence pronounced on them, and the immediate execution of it; all which the ministers of the word know from the Scriptures of truth; they know the Judge, that there will be a general judgment, and that the day is fixed for it, though they know not the exact time: and therefore

persuade men;

not that their state is good because of a little outside morality, nor to make their peace with God, or get an interest in Christ, or to convert themselves, neither of which are in the power of men to do; but they endeavour to persuade them by the best arguments they are masters of, taken from the word of God, and their own experience, that they are in a dangerous state and condition, walking in a way that leads to destruction; that they are liable to the curses of the law, the wrath of God, and everlasting ruin; that present duties of religion will not make amends for past sins, nor can their tears atone for their crimes, or any works of righteousness done by them justify them before God; and that salvation is only by Christ, who is both able and willing to save the chief of sinners: and they endeavour to persuade and encourage poor sensible sinners to venture on Christ, and believe in him to the saving of their souls. So the Arabic version reads it, “we persuade men to believe”; though when they have done all they can, these persuasions of theirs are ineffectual, without the powerful and efficacious grace of the Spirit of God; however, in so doing they discharge a good conscience, and act the faithful part to God and men:

but we are made manifest unto God;

who searches the heart, and tries the reins, who knows all actions, and the secret springs of them; to him the sincerity of our hearts, and the integrity of our conduct, are fully manifest; we can appeal to him that it is his glory, and the good of souls, we have in view in all our ministrations:

and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences;

that you also can bear witness to our faithfulness and honesty, to the unwearied pains we have taken, and the hearty concern we have shown for the welfare of the souls of men. One of Stephens's copies reads, "and we trust"; which agrees with the apostle's speaking in the first person plural in this, and the preceding verses.

2 Corinthians 5:12

For we commend not ourselves again to you

We have no need to do so, being well known to you; nor do we intend it when we thus speak of ourselves, and of our ministrations:

but give you occasion to glory on our behalf;

suggest some things to you which you may make use of in our favour, for the vindicating of our characters and conduct:

that you may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart;

by whom are meant the false apostles who gloried in an outward show, in their learning, eloquence, and popular applause they had acquired, and not in the sincerity of their hearts, and the testimony of a good conscience, things which the true apostles of Christ were most ambitious of.

2 Corinthians 5:13

For whether we be besides ourselves

As some took them to be, and as Festus thought the Apostle Paul was, because of the doctrines they preached, and the self-commendation they were obliged to enter into through the calumnies of their adversaries; in which they did not so much seek their own reputation, as the honour and glory of God, which was struck at through them:

it is to God;

it is for his glory, and not our own, that we act this part, for which we are condemned as madmen.

Or whether we be sober;

think and speak meanly of ourselves, and behave with all modesty and lowliness of mind: it is for your cause; for your instruction and imitation. The glory of God, and the good of his churches, were what concerned them in every part of life. Some refer this to the apostle's being, or not being, in an ecstasy or rapture. Others to his speaking, either of the more sublime doctrines of the Gospel, on account of which he was reckoned mad, though in the delivering of them he had nothing else but the glory of God in view; or of the lower and easier truths of it, which were more accommodated to meaner capacities; in doing which he sought their edification and advantage.

2 Corinthians 5:14

For the love of Christ constraineth us

Or "containeth us"; holds and keeps us in our station and duty, as soldiers are held and kept together under a banner, or ensign displayed; to which the church refers, when she says, "his banner over me was love", (Song of Solomon 2:4) . Nothing more effectually keeps ministers, or other believers, in the work and service of their Lord, or more strongly obliges and constrains them to a cheerful discharge of their duty to him, and one another, than his love displayed in his covenant engagements, in his assumption of human nature, and particularly in his dying for them, which is the instance given in the text:

because we thus judge;

having well weighed, and maturely considered the affair,

that if one died for all, then were all dead;

or “seeing one died for all”; for it is rather an assertion than a supposition, upon which the apostle reasons. The person designed, who died for all, is Jesus Christ, though not mentioned, and is to be supplied from the former clause. The doctrine of Christ’s dying for men was well known, so that there was no need to mention his name; he is called “one”, in distinction to the “all” he died for, and as exclusive of all others, he being sufficient of himself to answer the ends of his death; and therefore is to be looked unto, and believed on, alone for salvation, and to have all the glory of it. The manner of his dying is for, or in the room and stead of all; so that he died not merely as a martyr, or by way of example, or only for their good, but as their substitute, in their room and stead, having all the sins of his people upon him, for which he made satisfaction; and this the nature of his death shows, which was a sacrifice, a ransom, a propitiation and atonement. The persons for whom Christ died are all; not every individual of mankind, but all his people, all his sheep, all the members of his church, or all the sons he, as the great Captain of salvation, brings to glory. Wherefore this text does not make for the doctrine of general redemption; for it should be observed, that it does not say that Christ died for “all men”, but for “all”; and so, agreeably to the Scriptures, may be understood of all the persons mentioned. Moreover, in the latter part of the text it is said, that those for whom Christ died, for them he rose again; he died for no more, nor for others, than those for whom he rose again: now those for whom he rose again, he rose for their justification; wherefore, if Christ rose for the justification of all men, all would be justified, or the end of Christ’s resurrection would not be answered; but all men are not, nor will they be justified, some will be condemned; hence it follows, that Christ did not rise from the dead for all men, and consequently did not die for all men: besides, the “all” for whom Christ died, died with him, and through his death are dead both to the law and sin; and he died for them, that they might live, not to themselves, but to him; neither of which are true of all the individuals of mankind: to which may be added, that the context explains the all of such who are in Christ, are new creatures, are reconciled to God, whose trespasses are not imputed to them, for whom Christ was made sin, and who are made the righteousness of God in him; which cannot be said of all men. The conclusion from hence is,

then were all dead;

meaning, either that those for whom Christ died, were dead in Adam, dead in law, dead in trespasses and sins, which made it necessary for him to die for them; otherwise, there would have been no occasion for his death; yet it does not follow from hence, that Christ died for all that are in such a condition; only that those for whom Christ died were dead in this sense, admitting this to be the sense of the passage; though death in sin seems not to be intended, since that all men are dead in sin, would have been a truth, if Christ had died for none; and much less is this an effect, or what follows upon the death of Christ; nor does it capacitate, but renders men incapable of living to Christ: wherefore a mystical death in, and with Christ, seems rather to be meant; and so the Ethiopic version reads it, “in whom everyone is dead”. Christ died as the head and representative of his people, and they all died in him, were crucified with him, and through his death became dead to the law, as to its curse and condemnation; and to sin, as to its damning power, being acquitted, discharged, and justified from it; the consequence of which is a deliverance from the dominion of it, whereby they become capable of living to the glory of Christ. The sense of the passage is not, that Christ died for all that were dead, but that all were dead for whom he died; which is true of them, whether in the former, or in the latter sense: the article (oi) , is anaphorical or relative, as Beza and Piscator observe; and the meaning is, that if Christ died for all, then all “those” were dead for whom he died.

2 Corinthians 5:15

And that he died for all, that they which live

The end of Christ’s dying for men was that they might live; live, in a legal sense, live a life of justification; and that

they which live in such a sense,

should not henceforth live unto themselves:

to their own lusts, and after their own wills, to either sinful self, or righteous self:

but unto him which died for them, and rose again;

that is, for them, for their justification; for all those for whom Christ died, for them he rose again; and who were justified, acquitted, and discharged when he was; which cannot be said of all mankind; and which is an obligation on such persons to live to Christ, to ascribe the whole of their salvation to him, and to make his glory the end of all their actions. Some copies read, “which died for them all”.

2 Corinthians 5:16

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh.

&c.] Since the death and resurrection of Christ, which has broken down the middle wall of partition, and has took away all distinction of men, we know, we esteem, we value no man on account of his carnal descent, and fleshy privileges, as being of the Jewish nation, a descendant of Abraham, and circumcised as he was; or on account of their outward state and condition, as being rich and honourable among men, or on account of their natural parts and acquirements, their learning, wisdom, and eloquence; nor do we own any man to be a Christian, that lives after the flesh, to himself, and not to Christ; nor do we make account of the saints themselves as in this mortal state, but as they will be in the resurrection, in consequence of Christ’s having died for them, and rose again.

Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh:

some of them had seen him in the flesh; others valued him on account of his being of the Jewish nation, and of his relation to them according to the flesh; and all of them had formerly entertained carnal apprehensions of him, and his kingdom, as though it would be a temporal one:

yet now henceforth know we him more;

no more in this mortal state, being risen from the dead; nor do we value ourselves upon having seen him in the flesh; for though such a sight and knowledge of him was desirable, yet a spiritual knowledge is much more preferable; and many there were who knew him in the flesh, who neither enjoy his spiritual presence here, nor will they be favoured with his glorious presence hereafter. Moreover, we do not judge of him as we did before we had a spiritual knowledge of him, and as our countrymen did, by his outward circumstances, by his parentage and education, his poverty and afflictions, his company and conversation, that he could not be the Messiah, the Son of God, and therefore was worthy of death; we have quite other thoughts and apprehensions of him now, believing him to be the Christ of God, a spiritual Saviour and Redeemer, whose kingdom is not of this world; we have relinquished all our national prejudices, and former notions, concerning the Messiah, his kingdom, and people. Some copies add, “after the flesh”; and the Arabic version, “yet now know we him no more in that”.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ

There’s a secret being in Christ from everlasting; so all that are loved by him, espoused unto him, chosen and preserved in him, to whom he was a covenant head, surety, and representative, are in him, united to him, and one with him; not in such sense as the Father is in him, and the human nature is in him, but as husband and wife, and head and members are one: and there is an open being in Christ at conversion, when a man believes in Christ, and gives up himself to him; faith does not put a man into Christ, but makes him appear to be in him: and such an one “is a new creature”; or, as some read it, “let him be a new creature”: who understand being in

Christ to be by profession, and the sense this, whoever is in the kingdom or church of Christ, who professes himself to be a Christian, ought to be a new creature: the Arabic version reads it, “he that is in the faith of Christ is a new creature”. All such who are secretly in Christ from everlasting, though as yet some of them may not be new creatures, yet they shall be sooner or later; and those who are openly in him, or are converted persons, are actually so; they are a new “creation”, as the words may be rendered: (hvdx hyyrb) , “a new creation”, is a phrase often used by the Jewish F8 doctors, and is applied by the apostle to converted persons; and designs not an outward reformation of life and manners, but an inward principle of grace, which is a creature, a creation work, and so not man’s, but God’s; and in which man is purely passive, as he was in his first creation; and this is a new creature, or a new man, in opposition to, and distinction from the old man, the corruption of nature; and because it is something anew implanted in the soul, which never was there before; it is not a working upon, and an improvement of the old principles of nature, but an implantation of new principles of grace and holiness; here is a new heart, and a new spirit, and in them new light and life, new affections and desires, new delights and joys; here are new eyes to see with, new ears to hear with, new feet to walk, and new hands to work and act with:

old things are passed away:

the old course of living, the old way of serving God, whether among Jews or Gentiles; the old legal righteousness, old companions and acquaintance are dropped; and all external things, as riches, honours, learning, knowledge, former sentiments of religion, are relinquished:

behold, all things are become new;

there is a new course of life, both of faith and holiness; a new way of serving God through Christ by the Spirit, and from principles of grace; a new, another, and better righteousness is received and embraced; new companions are sought after, and delighted in; new riches, honours, glory, a new Jerusalem, yea, new heavens, and a new earth, are expected by new creatures: or the sense of the whole may be this, if any man is entered into the kingdom of God, into the Gospel dispensation, into a Gospel church state, which seems to be the sense of the phrase “in Christ”, in (Galatians 3:28) (5:6) (6:15) he is become a new creature, or is got into a new creation, as it were into a new world, whether he be a Jew or a Gentile; for with respect to the former state of either, “old things are passed away”; if a Jew, the whole Mosaic economy is abolished; the former covenant is waxen old, and vanished away; the old ordinances of circumcision and the passover are no more; the daily sacrifice is ceased, and all the other sacrifices are at an end, Christ, the great sacrifice, being offered up; the priesthood of Aaron is antiquated, there is a change of it, and of the whole law; the observance of holy, days, new moons and sabbaths, is over; the whole ceremonial law is at end; all the shadows of it are fled and gone, the things they were shadows of being come by Christ, the sum and substance of them; and there is no more a serving God in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit: and if a Gentile, all the former idols he worshipped he turns from, and his language is, “what have I to do any more with idols? or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” all former sacrifices, superstitious rites and ceremonies, with which he worshipped them, are relinquished by him; with all other Heathenish customs, rules, and methods of conduct he had been used to: “behold, all things are become new”; to the one, and to the other; the Gospel dispensation is a new state of things; a new form of church state is erected, not national, as among the Jews, but congregational, consisting of persons gathered out of the world, and anew embodied together; new ordinances are appointed, which were never in use before, as baptism and the Lord’s supper; a new and living way is opened by the blood of Christ into the holiest of all, not by the means of slain beasts, as among the Jews, nor by petty deities as with the Gentiles; a new commandment of love is enjoined all the followers of the Lamb; and another name is given them, a new name, which the mouth of the Lord their God has named, not of Jews nor Gentiles, but of Christians; and new songs are put into their mouths, even praise to God: in short, the Gospel church state seems to be, as it were, a new creation, and perhaps is meant by the new heavens and new earth, (Isaiah 65:15 Isaiah 65:17) as well as those who are the proper members of it, are new creatures in the sense before given.

F8 T. Hieros. Roshhashana, fol. 59. 3. Vajikra Rabba, fol. 170. 4. Bemidbar Rabba, fol, 202. 3. Cosri, fol. 62. 2. & R. Levi ben Gersom in Exod, fol. 108. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 121. 2.

2 Corinthians 5:18

And all things are of God

A man's being brought into a Gospel church state is of God; the causing all old things to pass away, whether in the Jewish or Gentile world, is of God; the shaking of the heavens and the earth, and the removing of those things that are shaken, the abrogation of the ceremonial law, the putting an end to all the Mosaic rites and sacrifices, the ejection of Satan out of the Heathen temples, and the abolition of Gentilism, with every thing else that comes under the names of old, and new, are of God: it is he that causes old things to pass away, and makes all things new, see (Revelation 21:1 Revelation 21:5). Moreover, as all things in the old creation are from him, all creatures owe their beings to him, are supported in them by him, and all are made for his pleasure, and his glory so all things in the new creation are of him; the work of renovation itself is his; all the grace that is implanted in regeneration comes from him: nothing is of the creature, or to be ascribed to it. All things in redemption are of him; he drew the plan of it, called his Son to be the Redeemer, appointed and sent him as such; and particularly that branch of it, reconciliation, is of him:

who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.

The work of reconciliation, or making atonement for sin, is ascribed to the Father; not that he is the author of it, for it is properly Christ's work; but because he took the first step towards it: he formed the scheme of it; he set forth his Son in his purposes and decrees to be the propitiary sacrifice; he assigned him this work in council and covenant, in promise and in prophecy, and sent him to effect it; therefore he is said to do it "by" him; that is, by his blood and sacrifice, by his sufferings and death, to which, and to which alone, the Scriptures ascribe our peace and reconciliation: and this is made to "himself": as being the party offended, whose law was broken, against whom sin was committed, and whose justice required and demanded satisfaction:

and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

which is the Gospel of peace, the word which preaches, publishes and declares, peace made by the blood of Christ; which is a gift to ministers, and a blessing to the people. The free grace of God greatly appears in this matter; God the Father sets this work of reconciliation on foot, Christ has brought it about, and the ministers of the Gospel publish it.

2 Corinthians 5:19

To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself

This expresses and explains the subject matter of the ministration of the Gospel, especially that part of it which concerns our reconciliation with God; and declares the scheme, the author, the subjects, the way, and means, and consequence of it. The phrase, "in Christ", may be either joined with the word "God", as in our version, "God was in Christ reconciling"; that is, he was in Christ drawing the scheme, fixing the method of reconciliation; his thoughts were employed about it, which were thoughts of peace; he called a council of peace, and entered into a covenant of peace with Christ, who was appointed and agreed to, to be the peacemaker. Or with the word "reconciling", thus, God "was reconciling in Christ"; that is, by Christ; and so it denotes, as before, actual reconciliation by Christ. God, in pursuance of his purposes, council, and covenant, sent his Son to make peace; and laid our sins, and the chastisement of our peace upon him; this is the punishment of sin, whereby satisfaction was made for it, and so peace with God: or with the word "world", thus, "God was reconciling the world in Christ"; by whom are meant, not all the individuals of mankind, for these are not all in Christ, nor all reconciled to God, multitudes dying in enmity to him, nor all interested in the blessing of non-imputation of sin; whereas each of these is said of the world: but the elect of God, who are chosen in Christ, whose peace Christ is, whose sins are

not imputed to them, and against whom no charge of any avail can be laid; and particularly the people of God among the Gentiles are here designed, who are frequently called “the world” in Scripture; being the world which God loved, for whose sins Christ is the propitiation, and of the reconciling of which mention is particularly made, (John 3:16) (1 John 2:2) (Romans 11:12 Romans 11:15). And this sense well agrees with the context, which signifies, that no man is regarded for his natural descent; it is no matter whether he is a Jew or a Gentile, provided he is but a new creature: for Gospel reconciliation, and the ministry of it, concern one as well as another. Moreover, this reconciliation must be considered, either as intentional, or actual, or as a publication of it in the ministry of the word; and taken either way it cannot be thought to extend to every individual person in the world: if it is to be understood intentionally, that God intended the reconciliation of the world to himself by Christ, and drew the scheme of it in him, his intentions cannot be frustrated; his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure; a scheme so wisely laid by him in his Son, cannot come to nothing, or only in part be executed; and yet this must be the case, if it was his design to reconcile every individual of mankind to himself, since a large number of them are not reconciled to him: and if the words are to be understood of an actual reconciliation of the world unto God by Christ, which sense agrees with the preceding verse, then it is out of all question, that the word “world” cannot be taken in so large a sense as to take in every man and woman in the world; since it is certain that there are many who are not reconciled to God, who die in their sins, whose peace is not made with him, nor are they reconciled to the way of salvation by Christ: and should it be admitted that the ministry of reconciliation is here designed, which is not an offer of reconciliation to the world, but a proclamation or declaration of peace and reconciliation made by the death of Christ; this is not sent to all men; multitudes were dead before the word of reconciliation was committed to the apostles; and since, there have been great numbers who have never so much as heard of it; and even in the times of the apostles it did not reach to everyone then living: besides, the text does not speak of what God did by the ministry of his apostles, but of what he himself had been doing in his Son, and which was antecedent, and gave rise unto and was the foundation of their ministry. There was a scheme of reconciliation drawn in the counsels of God before the world began, and an actual reconciliation by the death of Christ, which is published in the Gospel, which these words contain the sum and substance of: and this reconciliation, as before, is said to be “unto himself”; to his offended justice, and for the glory of his perfections, and the reconciling of them together in the affair of salvation:

not imputing their trespasses.

This was what he resolved upon from all eternity, that inasmuch as Christ was become the surety and substitute of his people, he would not impute their sins to them, or look for satisfaction for them from them; but would reckon and place them to the account of their surety, and expect satisfaction from him; and accordingly he did, and accordingly he had it. And this will, not to impute sin to his people, or not to punish for it, which existed in God from everlasting, is no other than a justification of them; for to whom the Lord does not impute sin, he imputes righteousness, and such are properly justified.

And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;

or put it in us, as a rich and valuable treasure; for such the doctrine of peace and reconciliation, by the blood of Christ, is; a sacred deposition, committed to the trust of faithful men, to be dispensed and disposed of for the use and purpose for which it is given them.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ

Since God has made reconciliation by Christ, and the ministry of it is committed to us, we are ambassadors for him; we come with full powers from him, not to propose terms of peace, to treat with men about it, to offer it to them, but to publish and proclaim it as made by him: we represent him, and God who made it by him,

as though God did beseech you by us;

to regard this embassy and message of peace, which we bring from him; to consider from whence it takes its rise,

what methods have been used to effect it, and how it is accomplished; which should oblige to say and sing with the angels, “glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men”; and to behave in peaceable manner to all men, and one another:

we pray you in Christ's stead;

representing him as if he was present before you:

be ye reconciled to God;

you, who are new creatures, for whom Christ has died, and peace is made; you, the members of the church at Corinth, who upon a profession of faith have been taken into such a relation; be ye reconciled to all the dispensations of divine Providence towards you; let your wills bow, and be resigned to his, since he is the God of peace to you; and as you are reconciled by Christ as a priest, be reconciled to him as your King, and your God; to all his ordinances and appointments; to all the orders and laws of his house; conform in all things to his will and pleasure, which we, as his ambassadors, in his name and stead, have made known unto you. You ought to be all obedience to him, and never dispute anything he says or orders.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us

Christ was made of a woman, took flesh of a sinful woman; though the flesh he took of her was not sinful, being sanctified by the Spirit of God, the former of Christ's human nature: however, he appeared “in the likeness of sinful flesh”; being attended with infirmities, the effects of sin, though sinless; and he was traduced by men as a sinner, and treated as such. Moreover, he was made a sacrifice for sin, in order to make expiation and atonement for it; so the Hebrew word (hajx) signifies both sin and a sin offering; see (Psalms 40:6) and so (amartia) , (Romans 8:3) (Hebrews 10:6) . But besides all this, he was made sin itself by imputation; the sins of all his people were transferred unto him, laid upon him, and placed to his account; he sustained their persons, and bore their sins; and having them upon him, and being chargeable with, and answerable for them, he was treated by the justice of God as if he had been not only a sinner, but a mass of sin; for to be made sin, is a stronger expression than to be made a sinner: but now that this may appear to be only by imputation, and that none may conclude from hence that he was really and actually a sinner, or in himself so, it is said he was “made sin”; he did not become sin, or a sinner, through any sinful act of his own, but through his Father's act of imputation, to which he agreed; for it was “he” that made him sin: it is not said that men made him sin; not but that they traduced him as a sinner, pretended they knew he was one, and arraigned him at Pilate's bar as such; nor is he said to make himself so, though he readily engaged to be the surety of his people, and voluntarily took upon him their sins, and gave himself an offering for them; but he, his Father, is said to make him sin; it was he that “laid”, or “made to meet” on him, the iniquity of us all; it was he that made his soul an offering for sin, and delivered him up into the hands of justice, and to death, and that “for us”, in “our” room and stead, to bear the punishment of sin, and make satisfaction and atonement for it; of which he was capable, and for which he was greatly qualified: for he

knew no sin;

which cannot be understood or pure absolute ignorance of sin; for this cannot agree with him, neither as God, nor as Mediator; he full well knew the nature of sin, as it is a transgression of God's law; he knows the origin of sin, the corrupt heart of man, and the desperate wickedness of that; he knows the demerit, and the sad consequences of it; he knows, and he takes notice of too, the sins of his own people; and he knows the sins of all wicked men, and will bring them all into judgment, convince of them, and condemn for them: but he knew no sin so as to approve of it, and like it; he hates, abhors, and detests it; he never was conscious of any sin to himself; he never knew anything of this kind by, and in himself; nor did he ever commit any, nor was any ever found in him, by men or devils, though diligently sought for. This is mentioned, partly that we may better understand in what sense he was made sin, or a sinner, which could be only by the imputation of the sins of others, since he had no sin of his own; and partly to show that he was a very fit person to bear and take away the sins of men,

to become a sacrifice for them, seeing he was the Lamb of God, without spot and blemish, typified in this, as in other respects, by the sacrifices of the legal dispensation; also to make it appear that he died, and was cut off in a judicial way, not for himself, his own sins, but for the transgressions of his people; and to express the strictness of divine justice in not sparing the Son of God himself, though holy and harmless, when he had the sins of others upon him, and had made himself responsible for them. The end of his being made sin, though he himself had none, was,

that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;

not the essential righteousness of God, which can neither be imparted nor imputed; nor any righteousness of God wrought in us; for it is a righteousness “in him”, in Christ, and not in ourselves, and therefore must mean the righteousness of Christ; so called, because it is wrought by Christ, who is God over all, the true God, and eternal life; and because it is approved of by God the Father, accepted of by him, for, and on the behalf of his elect, as a justifying one; it is what he bestows on them, and imputes unto them for their justification; it is a righteousness, and it is the only one which justifies in the sight of God. Now to be made the righteousness of God, is to be made righteous in the sight of God, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. Just as Christ is made sin, or a sinner, by the imputation of the sins of others to him; so they are made righteousness, or righteous persons, through the imputation of his righteousness to them; and in no other way can the one be made sin, or the other righteousness. And this is said to be “in him”, in Christ; which shows, that though Christ’s righteousness is unto all, and upon all them that believe, it is imputed to them, and put upon them; it is not anything wrought in them; it is not inherent in them. “Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength”, says the church, (Isaiah 45:24) and also, that the way in which we come by this righteousness is by being in Christ; none have it reckoned to them, but who are in him, we are first “of” God “in” Christ, and then he is made unto us righteousness. Secret being in Christ, or union to him from everlasting, is the ground and foundation of our justification, by his righteousness, as open being in Christ at conversion is the evidence of it.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 6

The apostle having given a commendation of the Gospel in the latter part of the preceding chapter, does in this address the ministers of it that were at Corinth, under the character of fellow labourers, and by way of entreaty, that they would be careful to make it appear that they had not received neither the Gospel of the grace of God, nor gifts to minister it, in vain, 2Co 6:1 and in proof of the Gospel being a ministry of reconciliation, and a doctrine of free grace and salvation, which carry in them so many arguments why it should not be received in vain, the apostle in 2Co 6:2 cites a passage out of Isa 49:8 by which it appears, that the Gospel dispensation is a time of acceptance, and of salvation; and which he accommodates to the then present time in which he lived; and is true of the whole intermediate time between the sufferings and death of Christ, which was the time in which he was helped and succoured, and his second coming, when all the elect will have been gathered in: after which he proceeds to give directions how to conduct without offence, that so no blame and reproach might fall upon the ministration of the Gospel, 2Co 6:3 and proposes himself, and other faithful ministers, as examples to them, who had approved themselves as the ministers of God by their patient bearing all kind of afflictions for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel, of which a particular enumeration is given in 2Co 6:4,5 and by the exercise of various other graces, virtues, and gifts bestowed upon them, and which were illustrious in them, of which there is a particular detail in 2Co 6:6,7 though by reason of the different lights in which they were viewed by men, as well as the different appearances they made, and the different things that might be said of them, either through misrepresentation or ignorance, or as under different considerations, many very strange and enigmatical things are predicated of them, 2Co 6:8-10 which can only be unriddled by their being possessors of the Gospel of Christ, and being partakers of the grace of God. And next the apostle addresses the members of the church at Corinth; and to make way for the exhortations he had to deliver to them, and that they might be taken in good part by them, he expresses his great regard to them; how free he was to communicate anything that might be profitable to them, and how much his heart was enlarged with love to them, 2Co 6:11 that there was no straitness of Spirit in him towards them, though there was so much in them towards him, 2Co 6:12. Wherefore he entreats them,

as his children, that as he had shown paternal love to them, they would also express filial affection and obedience to him, 2Co 6:13 and then he enters upon his exhortation to have no communion with ungodly persons; and which he confirms by five arguments taken from the disagreement of righteousness and unrighteousness, of light and darkness, of Christ and Belial, of a believer and an unbeliever, and of the temple of God and of idols, 2Co 6:14-16 by which he suggests, that as the proper characters of wicked men are unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, unbelievers, and idols, or idolaters; so the names of saints were righteousness, light, Christ, believers, and the temple of God; and in proof of the latter, he produces some passages out of Le 26:11,12 Eze 36:26,27 and in the words of the prophet Isa 52:11 he calls upon the Corinthians to quit the company of sinful and unclean men, to separate from them, and have nothing to do with them in things criminal and sinful; and for their encouragement to regard such an exhortation, the promises of God are mentioned; as that he will receive such persons into his protection, and will behave as a father towards them, and treat them as his sons and daughters, 2Co 6:17,18.

2 CORINTHIANS 6

- 1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.
- 2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)
- 3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:
- 4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,
- 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;
- 6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,
- 7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,
- 8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;
- 9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;
- 10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.
- 11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.
- 12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.
- 13 Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.
- 14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?
- 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?
- 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said*, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,
- 18 And will be* a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons* and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:1

We then, as workers together with him

The ministers of the Gospel are workers or labourers; their ministry is a work, and a very laborious one, which none have strength equal to, and are sufficient for; of themselves: it is a work that requires faithfulness and diligence, is honourable; and those who perform it aright deserve respect. These do not work alone: according to our version, they are “workers together with him”; meaning either God or Christ, not as co-ordinate with him, but as subordinate to him: he is the chief shepherd, they under ones; he is the chief master builder, they under workers; but inasmuch as he is with them, and they with him, he is over them, and stands by them, great honour

is done them; they have encouragement to work; and hence it is that their work is successful. Though the phrase, “with him”, is not in the original text, where only one word, (sunergountev) , is used, and may be rendered “fellow workers”, or “fellow labourers”, meaning with one another: and since therefore reconciliation was made by Christ, and the ministry of it was committed to them, and they were appointed ambassadors for him, and were in his stead, therefore, say they,

we beseech you also;

you ministers also; as we have entreated the members of the church, to be reconciled to the order of the Gospel, and the laws of Christ in his house, so as fellow labourers with you, and jointly concerned in the same embassy of peace, we beseech you the ministers of the word in this church,

that ye receive not the grace of God in vain:

by “the grace of God”, is not meant the grace of God in regeneration, and effectual calling, which can never be received in vain; for the grace of God never fails of producing a thorough work of conversion; nor is it ever lost, but is strictly connected with eternal, glory: but by it is meant either the doctrine of grace, the Gospel of Christ, so called, because it is a declaration of the love and grace of God to sinners, ascribes salvation in part, and in whole, to the free grace of God, and is a means of implanting and increasing grace in the hearts of men. Now this may be received in vain by ministers and people, when it is but notionally received, or received in word only: when it is abused and perverted to vile purposes, and when men drop, deny it, and fall off from it; or else by the grace of God may be designed gifts of grace, qualifying for ministerial service; and the sense of the exhortation be, that they be careful that the gifts bestowed on them might not be neglected by them, but be used and improved to the advantage of the church, and the glory of Christ; by giving up themselves to study, meditation, and prayer, by labouring constantly in the word and doctrine, and by having a strict regard to their lives and conversations, “that the ministry be not blamed”; which exhortation he pursues in, and by his own example and others, in some following verses, the next being included in a “parenthesis”.

and prayer, by labouring constantly in the word and doctrine, and by having a strict regard to their lives and conversations, “that the ministry be not blamed”; which exhortation he pursues in, and by his own example and others, in some following verses, the next being included in a “parenthesis”.

2 Corinthians 6:2

For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted

These words are a citation from (Isaiah 49:8) and are spoken by the Father to Christ, declaring he had heard him, as he always did. He heard him when he put up that prayer to him, recorded (John 17:1-26) for the glorification of himself, by strengthening him as man in his work, by raising him from the dead, setting him at his own right hand, and giving him the glory he had with him before the world was; for the good of his people, the preservation of those that were called, the conversion of them that are called, and the glorification of all the Father had given him: he heard him in the garden, and answered him; the will of God was done according to his desire, and his will was conformed to the will of his Father, and he was delivered from the fear of death; his ends in his prayer there were answered, which were to show the greatness of his sufferings, the impossibility of man’s salvation in any other way, and that there could be no alteration made in the methods of obtaining it. He heard him on the cross with respect to the deliverance of him from man, with regard to his being forsaken by God, and for the forgiveness of his enemies. Now this period of time in which he was heard on account of these several things, is called a time accepted; or, as in the Hebrew text, (Nwur te) , “a time of good will, or acceptance”; a season in which God expressed good will to the sons of men, by sending his own Son to work out salvation for them; this was good will to men, and not to angels, to such as were ungodly, enemies, sinners, and the worst of sinners: it was a time very grateful to him; it was “the accepted year of the Lord”; the sufferings, sacrifice, satisfaction, and righteousness of his Son were well pleasing to him; because his purposes, promises, and covenant transactions had their accomplishment, his perfections were glorified, and his people saved. And it was a time of acceptance,

or an acceptable time to men, since it was the day of their salvation, and therefore must be exceedingly agreeable to all such who see their need of it, know the worth of it, and are sensible that there is no other way of salvation than by him.

And in the day of salvation have I succoured thee.

These words are still spoken to Christ, who whilst he was in human nature, working out the salvation of his people, by his obedience, sufferings, and death, was succoured, or helped by his Father. This help was promised to him as man, and he expected it, and exercised faith on God for it, and which was actually and punctually given him; and which is no instance of weakness in Christ, who is the mighty God, and was mighty to save; but an indication of the Father's regard to the human nature of Christ, and of his concern for the salvation of men; and also shows what power and strength were necessary to accomplish it.

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

These are the words of the apostle, applying the former to the present Gospel dispensation; which he introduces with prefixing a "behold" to each sentence, in order to raise both attention to, and admiration at what is delivered:

now is the accepted time;

not that the Gospel dispensation is a milder dispensation of things, in which God will accept of an imperfect sincere obedience to his law, in the room of a perfect one; or in which Christ is now offered to sinners, and it is left to them whether they will accept of him or not: but it is so called, because God and Christ now testify their good will to the sons of men, and are ready to accept of, and embrace poor sensible sinners coming to them; and because the Gospel publishes salvation by Christ, which, as it is worthy of their acceptance, cannot but be acceptable to them: now is the day of salvation: now is salvation preached, as being done, already obtained by Christ for sinners, the chief of sinners; it is now brought home to their souls by the ministration of the Gospel under the influence of the Spirit of God; now sinners are convinced of their need of it, and that it cannot be had elsewhere; now they are made to submit to Christ, to be saved by him, and him alone, are encouraged to believe in him, and are by him actually possessed of it. "Now" is, and not yesterday was, the day of salvation; and "now", and that for ever, that is, as long as the Gospel dispensation continues; for it will be always now till all the elect of God are gathered in. This day of grace and salvation will never be over till that time comes; it is still "now is the day of salvation": though men may have long withstood the ministration of the Gospel, and notwithstanding their manifold sins and transgressions. There is no withstanding the "now" of grace when it comes with the power of the Holy Ghost.

2 Corinthians 6:3

Giving no offence in anything

These words are in connection with (2 Corinthians 6:1) and to be considered either as a continuation of the exhortation to others, that they would take care to give no offence to any; or rather as an account the apostle gives of himself, and other ministers, by way of example; and is as if he had said, I Paul, Timotheus, Silvanus, and other ministers of the word, take all possible care to lay no stumblingblock in the way of the hearers of the Gospel; to give no offence to them that are without, or to them that are within, to Jew or Gentile, or to the church of God, neither by word nor writing, by doctrine or conversation, or in any way whatever: that the ministry be not blamed; the ministry of the word of reconciliation, which they had received of the Lord Jesus. The apostle knew there were persons enow who were waiting all opportunities, and taking all advantages to vilify and reproach the ministry of the Gospel, and so hinder its progress and spread; and that if that was once brought into contempt by the disagreeable conduct of the preachers of it, there would be but little hope of success from it. Some copies read, "our ministry"; and so the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions; the Ethiopic version reads, "your ministry".

2 Corinthians 6:4

But in all things approving ourselves

It is not sufficient for a minister of the Gospel to avoid everything that might bring any blot or scandal on his ministry; but he should in all things, and by all ways and means, proper, lawful, and laudable, approve, prove, and show himself to be a true and faithful dispenser of the word. All in such an office ought to make it appear, that they are such by behaving and conducting

as the ministers of God;

as becomes such, whom he has chosen, called, and fitted for that service; and particularly in, or

by much patience;

by a large, constant, and continued exercise of that grace; and by bearing patiently many things for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel, without murmuring at the hand of God, or being angry with men, and without fainting and sinking in their own spirits:

in afflictions;

that is, in patiently bearing, them. This word may be considered as a general word, including all sorts of afflictions whatever, of which the following are particular species:

in necessities;

want of food, drink, and raiment, being hungry, thirsty, and naked, as the apostles sometimes were: in distresses; both of bad mind; being in such straits and difficulties they know not where to look, what course to steer, or which way to turn themselves.

2 Corinthians 6:5***In stripes***

As the Apostle Paul particularly was, who was thrice beaten with rods, and five times scourged by the Jews with the scourge of forty stripes save one.

In imprisonments;

under which are included bonds, in which they often were for the Gospel of Christ:

in tumults;

and uproars of the people, when their lives were frequently in imminent danger: or “in tossings to and fro”; being drove from place to place through the fury of their enemies;

in labours;

in a laborious ministry of the word, and administration of ordinances; or by labouring with their own hands to supply their necessities:

in watchings;

being obliged to work night and day at their hand labour, and in preaching, praying, and singing psalms; which exercises they were often employed in at midnight:

in fastings;

by which are meant not voluntary, but involuntary ones, through want of food to eat.

2 Corinthians 6:6

By pureness

The apostle having observed how he, and other ministers of God, showed themselves to be such by patiently bearing everything that was afflictive and distressing to the outward man, proceeds to show how they approved themselves in other respects; and which more chiefly regard the inward man, the exercise of grace, and a spiritual behaviour: "by pureness"; of doctrine and conversation, chastity of body and mind, sincerity of heart, and integrity of life:

by knowledge;

of the Scriptures of truth, the mysteries of grace; or by a prudent conduct, a walking in wisdom with caution and circumspection:

by longsuffering:

not easily provoked to wrath, but bearing with patience every indignity and affront:

by kindness;

gentleness, sweetness of temper and manners, affability and courteousness:

by the Holy Ghost;

influencing and assisting in the exercise of every grace, and the discharge of every duty, or by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, ordinary and extraordinary:

by love unfeigned;

without dissimulation, being not in word only, but in deed and in truth towards the brethren, and to all men.

2 Corinthians 6:7***By the word of truth***

By preaching the Gospel, truly, sincerely, without any adulteration of it, which comes from the God of truth, has for its subject matter Christ, who is the truth, and into which ministers are guided by the Spirit of truth, and every doctrine of which is truth:

by the power of God;

accompanying the word to the conversion and salvation of multitudes of souls; or by the signs, wonders, and miracles which were wrought for the confirmation of it:

by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand, and on the left:

meaning, either the whole armour of God, with which a Christian is all over clothed from head to foot, and in the strength of Christ may engage any adversary without fear; or else particularly the sword of the Spirit in the right hand, and the shield of faith in the left, whereby both the offensive and defensive part may be acted; or, as others think, uprightness of conscience, and holiness of life and conversation; with which being blessed, though on the one hand he meets with prosperity, and on the other hand with adversity, he is not lifted up with the one, nor cast down with the other; he is moved by neither, but passes on unconcerned.

2 Corinthians 6:8***By honour and dishonour***

Some persons think and speak honourably of us, and behave in a reverent manner towards us; they wish us well, bid us God speed, receive us into their houses, and treat us with respect: others think meanly of us, speak of us with the utmost contempt, and use us as if we were the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; so we

pass through the world; this is the treatment we meet with on the right hand and on the left; nor are we much affected with it:

by evil report and good report;

as it fares with our persons, so with our doctrine: some speak well of it, receive and embrace it; others blaspheme it, and have it in the utmost abhorrence; we are charged with the vilest of crimes, and our doctrines loaded with the most absurd and wicked consequences, and both branded in the most infamous manner by one set of men; and by others both our persons and principles are cleared and vindicated from all such aspersions, and are highly commended and applauded.

As deceivers;

for so they were accounted, as Christ was before them, by the unbelieving Jews, and by the false apostles, as if they were the authors, or abettors, and spreaders of errors, and the instruments of leading people aside.

And yet true;

true and faithful ministers of the word; true to their Lord and master; true to the trust committed to them; true to the Gospel of Christ, and to the souls of men.

2 Corinthians 6:9

As unknown, and yet well known

Not unknown to Father, Son, and Spirit, or to one another, but to the world; and that not with respect to their outward estate, but their spiritual and eternal state; as that they were the chosen of God, the children of God, and born again; they knew not what a life they lived, or what they lived upon; and as they were unacquainted with their inward troubles, they were strangers to their spiritual joys here, and to what they shall partake of hereafter. Moreover, something more may be intended in this word “unknown”; as that they were not owned, esteemed, and approved of by them, but slighted, despised, hated, and persecuted:

and yet well known;

to God the Father, who loved them with an everlasting love, chose them in Christ, gave them to him, made a covenant with him on their account, and sent his Son to redeem them, which knowledge of them is special, eternal, affectionate, approbative, and attended with care of them; well known to Jesus Christ, who knows all that are his, specially, distinctly, perfectly, and that from everlasting, bears a strong affection for them, takes great care of them, indulges them with intimate communion with him, and openly owns and acknowledges them as his own; well known to the Spirit of God, who enlightened and quickened them, regenerated and sanctified them, wrought faith and every other grace in them, witnessed their adoption to them, led them into all truth, filled and furnished them with his gifts, and dwelt in them, and abode with them, as the seal and earnest of their future glory; and were well known to the saints, and one another: they loved each other, delighted in each other’s company; they knew each other’s experiences, joys, and sorrows, and, in some measure, their hearts, and even their spiritual and eternal estate.

As dying, and behold we live.

They were as dying men, having the seeds of mortality in them, being subject to diseases, which bring on death; and especially as they carried about with them the dying of the Lord Jesus, were continually exposed to death, and in danger of it, lived in the views of it, had the sentence of it in themselves, and were appointed to it. And “behold”, to admiration “we live”; a natural life, which we have from God, depends upon him, and is preserved by him amidst a thousand dangers and enemies to which it is exposed; and we live a spiritual life, a life of grace from Christ, a life of faith on him, and communion with him.

As chastened and not killed;

“chastened” by men, and chastened by God; not in a way of vindictive wrath, but in a fatherly manner; but “not killed”, or put to a corporeal death by our persecutors, who have sought to take away our lives, but have not yet been suffered to do it: or by the Lord, by the means of afflictions, the messengers of death; these sometimes bring very near it, and God chastens by them, but does not as yet give over to death, because our time is not yet come, and our work not yet done.

2 Corinthians 6:10

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing

As to their outward appearance they are

sorrowful,

and oftentimes really so on account of sin, their own and others, by reason of afflictions, temporal and spiritual; and as to the state and condition of the church of Christ, and the interest of religion: and

yet always rejoicing;

not in themselves, or in any creature, but in the Lord, in the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, and salvation by him. As poor, yet making many rich. It is, generally speaking, the lot of Christ’s ministers to be poor in this world; and there are some reasons for it, why it is, and should be so; as that they might be maintained by the people, which is the ordinance of God; that it might appear that Christ’s kingdom is not of this world; that the faith of men might not stand in the riches of the world, but in the power of God; that ministers might not be above their work, nor neglect it, nor drop it; and that they might not be ensnared and encumbered with the things of life.

And yet making many rich:

are instruments in making many souls rich in things spiritual; by showing them their spiritual poverty, stripping them of what they trusted in, and valued themselves upon; directing them where true riches are, and furnishing them with spiritual knowledge, with the knowledge of things more worth than thousands of gold and silver.

As having nothing, and yet possessing all things;

for the apostles left all for Christ, were sent out bare by him; what they had they gave away, and were very destitute of worldly enjoyments: “and possessing all things”; they had food and raiment, with which they were content, what was sufficient for them, and which they had in mercy, and with a blessing; and then they enjoyed all spiritual good things; they had not only a right unto them, but were possessed of them; they had all things pertaining to life and godliness; they had Christ, and all things with him, and therefore could say as Jacob did, that they had enough, yea, that they had all things.

2 Corinthians 6:11

O ye Corinthians

The apostle having exhorted the ministers of the church at Corinth to take care of their ministry, that they fulfil it, and that it might appear that the Gospel, and gifts fitting them to preach it, were not received in vain by them; all which he strengthens and encourages by his own example; and that of others, addresses the members of the church in a very pathetic manner, saying,

our mouth is open to you;

to speak our minds freely to you; we shall hide and conceal nothing from you, we shall deal with you with all plainness and faithfulness. This seems to refer unto, and pave the way for what he afterwards says about their unequal fellowship with unbelievers:

our heart is enlarged:

with love to you, and eager desires after your good; and it is from the abundance of our hearts, and hearty affection for you, that our mouth is open so freely to communicate to you.

2 Corinthians 6:12***Ye are not straitened in us***

The meaning of which is, either you are not brought into straits and difficulties by us; we do not afflict and distress you, or fill you with anguish and trouble;

but ye are straitened in your own bowels;

you are distressed by some among yourselves, who ought not to be with you, with whom you should have no fellowship and communion: or thus, you have room enough in our hearts, our hearts are so enlarged with love to you, that they are large enough to hold you all; an expression, setting forth the exceeding great love, and strong affection the apostle bore to the Corinthians; when, on the other hand, they had but very little love to him comparatively; he had a heart to hold them all without being straitened for room; and among all them they could scarce find room enough in their hearts and affections for him.

2 Corinthians 6:13***Now for a recompence in the same***

That your love to me may answer mine to you; that as you have my heart, I may have yours, and the same room in your heart, as you have in mine. The Vulgate Latin version reads, "having the same recompence"; and the Arabic version renders it, "grant to me the same recompence"; and the Syriac version, "recompence to me my usuries that are with you"; that is, repay me with affection, let love be returned for love.

I speak as unto my children;

which relation subsisting between us requires mutual affection; for as a father should love his children, so children should love their father:

be ye also enlarged;

in your love to me, as I am to you; and then, as if he should say, you will bear with, and take in good part the following exhortation and advice.

2 Corinthians 6:14***Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers***

This seems to be an allusion to the law in (Deuteronomy 22:10) and to be a mystical explanation of it; and is to be understood not as forbidding civil society and converse with unbelievers; for this is impracticable, then must believers needs go out of the world; this the many natural and civil relations subsisting among men make absolutely necessary; and in many cases is both lawful and laudable, especially when there is any opportunity or likelihood of doing them any service in a spiritual way: not is it to be understood as dehorting from entering into marriage contracts with such persons; for such marriages the apostle, in his former epistle, had allowed to be lawful, and what ought to be abode by; though believers would do well carefully to avoid such an unequal yoke, since oftentimes they are hereby exposed to many snares, temptations, distresses, and sorrows, which generally more or less follow hereon: but there is nothing in the text or context that lead to such an interpretation; rather, if any particular thing is referred to, it is to joining with unbelievers in acts of idolatry; since one of the apostle's arguments to dissuade from being unequally yoked with unbelievers is, "what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" and from the foregoing epistle it looks as if some in this church had joined with them in such prac-

tices; see (1 Corinthians 10:14 1 Corinthians 10:20-22) . But I rather think that these words are a dissuasive in general, from having any fellowship with unbelievers in anything sinful and criminal, whether in worship or in conversation:

for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

This, with what is said in the following verse, and in the beginning of the next to that, contain reasons or arguments engaging believers to attend to the exhortation given not to keep company with unbelievers. By “righteousness” is meant righteous persons, who are made the righteousness of God in Christ, to whom Christ is made righteousness, or to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed for justification; and who also have principles of grace and holiness in their hearts, or have the kingdom of God in them, which consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and who being made free from the dominion of sin, are become servants of righteousness: and by unrighteousness is designed unrighteous persons, who are destitute of a justifying righteousness, are filled with all unrighteousness, and are, as it were, a mass and lump of iniquity; now, what fellowship can there be between persons of such distant characters?

And what communion hath light with darkness?

regenerate men are made light in the Lord; they are enlightened into their state and condition by nature, to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, to behold the glory, beauty, fulness, and suitableness of Christ, so as to be sensible of their need of him, and to be able to look unto him for life and salvation; they are enlightened more or less into the doctrines of the Gospel, and the duties of religion; and their path is a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Unregenerate persons are “darkness” itself; they are dark and ignorant of God in Christ, of the way of salvation by Christ, of the work of the Spirit of God upon the heart, and of the mysteries of grace; they know not themselves, nor the sad estate they are in; they are born, and brought up in darkness worse than Egyptian darkness; they go on in it, and if grace prevent not, will be cast into utter and eternal darkness. Now, what “communion” can there be between persons so different one from another? for what is more so than light and darkness? these the God of nature has divided from each other; and they are in nature irreconcilable to one another, and so they are in grace.

2 Corinthians 6:15

And what concord hath Christ with Belial?

&c.] The word “Belial” is an Hebrew word, and is only used in this place in the New Testament, but often in the Old; this word is differently read and pronounced, some copies read it “Beliar”, and accordingly in the Ethiopic version it is “Belhor”, and by Jerom read F9 Belvir”; but he observes, that it is more rightly called Belial”: in some copies it is “Belias”, and so Tertullian F11 read it; and Jerom F12 says, that most corruptly read it “Belias”, for “Belial”: some derive it from (ylb) , “Beli”, and (hle) , “Alah”, and signifies “without ascent”; one in a very low condition, of low life, that never rises up, and comes to any thing; to which Kimchi’s etymology of the word seems to agree, who says {m}, that Belial is a wicked man, (xyluy lbw hley lb) , “who does not succeed, and does not prosper”: others say it signifies F14 one that is (lwe ylb) , “Beli Ol, without a yoke”, without the yoke of the law; so Jarchi explains children of Belial, in (Deuteronomy 13:13) without yoke, who break off the yoke of God; and so say F15 the Talmudists,

“children of Belial, are children that break off (Mymv lwe) , “the yoke of heaven” (i.e. the law) from their necks;”

lawless persons, who are under no subjection to God or man: others F16 derive it from (ley) , “Jaal”, and (ylb) , “Beli”, and so it signifies one that is unprofitable, does no good, and is good for nothing; and it is applied in Scripture to any wicked person, or thing; it is commonly rendered by the Chaldee paraphrast, a “wicked man”; and by Aquila and Suidas it is interpreted, “an apostate”, and so it is rendered here in the Arabic version; sometimes the

corruption of nature is called “Belial” by the Jews F17, than which nothing can be more contrary to Christ; it is also a name of the devil; by Hesychius, “Beliar” is interpreted “a dragon”, by which name the devil is sometimes called; and here the Syriac version is, “what concord hath Christ with Satan?” most interpreters by Belial understand the devil, who has cast off the yoke of obedience to God, and is unprofitable, yea, noxious and hurtful to men; between whom and Christ there is no concord, but a perpetual enmity; and as there is no concord between Christ personal, and Belial the devil, so what can there be between Christ mystical the church, which goes by the name of Christ, (1 Corinthians 12:12) and wicked men, the sons of Belial; who have cast away the law of the Lord, are not subject to the law of God, nor can they be, and are become unprofitable to themselves, and others?

or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

such have no part, and shall have no part or portion in one and the same thing; the believer’s part and portion are God, Christ, and an eternal inheritance; the unbeliever’s part and portion will be in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; and therefore what part, society, or communion, can they have with one another?

FOOTNOTES:

F9 De Nominibus Hebraicis, fol. 106. K.

F11 De Corona, c. 10.

F12 Comment. in Ephes. iv. 27.

F13 Sepher Shorashim, rad. (lb) .

F14 Hieronym Quaeastative Trad. Heb. in Lib. Reg. fol. 74. I. Tom. 3. & in Ephes. iv. 27. R. Abraham Seba in Tzeror Hammor, fol. 141. 4. & 142. 2.

F15 T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 111. 2.

F16 Philip Aquinas, Schindler, Cocceius

F17 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 148. 3. & 149. 2.

2 Corinthians 6:16

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

&c.] That is, what association, confederation, or covenant agreement can the saints, who are the temple of God, have with idols, or their worshippers? no more than the ark of the Lord had with Dagon, or Dagon with the ark; which when brought into his temple, and set by him, the idol fell down, and part of him was broke to pieces:

for ye are the temple of the living God;

some copies read “we are”, and so the Ethiopic version. The Corinthians, not only as particular believers, were the temples of God, both with respect to their souls and bodies, but they, as a church of Christ incorporated together, were the temple of God; wherefore the apostle does not say, ye are the “temples”, but “the temple” of the living God, in allusion to the temple built by Solomon; and that in respect to him the builder of it, who was a type of Christ, the son of David, the Prince of peace, the beloved of the Lord, who was to build the temple, the Gospel church, and to bear the glory; and as Solomon’s temple was built on an eminence, on Mount Moriah, so the church is built upon a rock, higher than men, than angels, than the heavens, and out of the reach of men and devils, so as to hurt and destroy it. The matter of the temple at Jerusalem were timber of cedar, and costly stones, hewed, squared, and fitted for the building, before they were brought thither; so the proper materials of a Gospel church are such as are born of incorruptible seed, and therefore comparable to cedars; and are lively stones, hewed, fitted, and squared by the Spirit and grace of God, and put and jointed in among the saints: Solomon’s temple was a very stately magnificent building; it was overlaid within with pure gold, expressing the internal glory of Christ’s church, which is all glorious within, having the Lord himself to be the Glory in the midst of her: the church of Christ may be compared to the temple also, for the firmness of its foundations and pillars; Christ is the foundation of his church, and that itself is the pillar and ground of truth: that temple was holy, being set apart for the worship and service of God, as the church of Christ is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and is built up a

spiritual house, to offer the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise to God: it is called the “temple of God”, because it is of his building, and where he dwells; “of the living God”, because he has life in himself, and gives both spiritual and eternal life to his people; and in opposition to the idols of the Gentiles, who have no life in them; are representations of dead men, cannot give life, nor any of the comforts of life to their votaries; and who, by worshipping them, expose themselves to eternal death. The evidence of the saints, or church of Christ being the temple of the living God, is as follows,

as God hath said,

(Leviticus 26:11 Leviticus 26:12) (Ezekiel 37:26 Ezekiel 37:27) . I will dwell in them; not by his omnipresence, so he dwells everywhere; nor by his omnipotence, so he dwells in, and with all his creatures, supporting them by the word of his power; but by his Spirit and grace, or by his spiritual and gracious presence, which he favours his people with, in the use of ordinances, and where according to his promises they may expect it:

and walk in them.

This denotes the communion God is pleased to afford his church and people, and that gracious presence of his with them, whilst they are sojourners here, and passing on to the heavenly glory; as God is said to “walk in a tent and tabernacle” with the “Israelites”, whilst they were travelling through the wilderness to Canaan; so he walks in his temple, and with his church and people, whilst they are travelling home to the heavenly Canaan; he walks in them, as in his court and palace, or as in his garden, where he takes much pleasure and delight, and great notice and care of them. R. Solomon Jarchi explains the phrase in (Leviticus 26:12) “I will walk among you”, thus; I will walk with you in the garden of Eden, or paradise, as one of you, and ye shall not be afraid of me: but the passage regards the presence of God with his people here, and not hereafter:

and I will be their God;

not as the God of nature and providence only, but as the God of all grace; as their covenant God and Father in Christ; which is the greatest happiness that can be enjoyed:

and they shall be my people:

his special people, loved by him with a peculiar love, on whom he bestows peculiar blessings; and who are made a willing people, willing to be his people by powerful grace, and are formed for himself, his service, and glory: hence it follows,

2 Corinthians 6:17

Wherefore come out from among them

Since they were the temple of the living God, built up an habitation for the Most High; since he resided among them, took his walks in the midst of them, was their God, and they were his people. These words are taken out of (Isaiah 52:11) where the several phrases here used may be observed. They seem to be directed to the Israelites, and particularly to the priests and Levites, who bore the vessels of the Lord; and are fitly applied to believers under the Gospel dispensation, who are by Christ made priests unto God. They are usually interpreted by the Jewish writers, as a call to the Jews to come out of captivity, to quit Babylon and Persia, and the several cities and countries where they were; and are applied in (Revelation 18:4) to mystical Babylon, the church of Rome, as a call to God’s people, to leave the superstitions and idolatries of that church, lest they be partakers of her plagues; and here, by the apostle, as an exhortation to believers in general, to forsake the company and conversation of the men of the world: who may be said to come out from among them at first conversion, when they are called to forsake their own people, and their Father’s house, to leave their native country, and seek an heavenly one; and when, in consequence of effectual calling grace, their conversations are different from what they were before, and from other Gentiles; when they dislike their former companions, abhor their sinful conversation, abstain from it, keep out of it, as being infectious, hurtful, and detrimental to them; when they have no fellowship with the workers of iniquity, but reprove them both by words and deeds, which is their incumbent duty: the phrase in Isaiah

is, “go ye out from the midst of her”; which Kimchi interprets, “out of the midst of every city in which thou art”; that is, in which idolaters lived; and well agrees with (ek mesou autwn) here, “out of the midst of them”:

and be ye separate, saith the Lord;

this phrase is not to be met with expressly in our version of the above text in Isaiah, but is signified by several expressions in it; the words rendered “depart ye, depart ye”, are by the Targum, or Chaldee paraphrase on the place, expressed by (wvrpta wvrpta) , “be ye separate, be ye separate”, which are the very words of the apostle here; and the phrase, “touch no unclean thing”, is explained by R. Aben Ezra, (Mlweh twmwam) (wldbyv) , “that they might be separate from the nations of the world” and another word, (wrbh) , “be ye clean”, signifies such a purgation as is made by separation, by removing the clean from the unclean, by separating the wheat from the chaff. The people of God are a separate people in election, redemption, and the effectual calling, and ought to be so in their conduct and conversation; they ought to separate themselves from all superstition and will worship in religious matters, and from the evil customs and manners of the world, though they are sure to become a prey, and to expose themselves to the contempt and rage of it:

and touch not the unclean thing.

The allusion is to several laws under the former dispensation, which forbid touching many things which were accounted unclean, whereby pollution was contracted, and the persons were obliged to a ceremonial cleansing; see (Leviticus 5:2 Leviticus 5:3) (Numbers 19:11 Numbers 19:16) . It has no regard to touching, tasting, and eating any sort of food, which was forbid as unclean by the ceremonial law; for the difference between meats clean and unclean was now removed; but if anything is particularly designed by the unclean thing, it seems to be idolatry, and to be a prohibition of joining with worshippers of idols in their idolatrous practices, whereby a moral pollution is contracted; since in the beginning of the former verse it is said, “what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” though it is rather intended in general, to forbid all communion and fellowship with unclean persons and things, not to touch them, to come nigh them, or have anything to do with them:

and I will receive you;

this, and what follows in the next verse, are said to encourage believers to keep at a distance from wicked and immoral persons, whose company and conversation are dishonourable, ensnaring, and defiling. These persons had been already received into the love of God, his best and strongest affections, from which there can be no separation; and in the covenant of grace, which as it cannot be removed, so neither could they be removed out of that; they were received into the church of Christ, and had a place and a name in it, better than that of sons and daughters; and as they had been received by Christ, when they came to him as poor perishing sinners without him, so they were still received graciously, notwithstanding their many backslidings: neither of these therefore is the sense of this passage: but, that whereas by quitting society with carnal men, they would expose themselves to their resentments; the Lord here promises, that he would take them under the wings of his protection; he would take care of them and preserve them, keep them as the apple of his eye, and be a wall of fire round about them, whilst in this world; and when he had guided them by his counsel here, would “receive” them “to glory”: this clause seems to be taken from the latter part of (Isaiah 52:12) which may be rendered, “the God of Israel will gather you”; i.e. to himself, and protect them.

2 Corinthians 6:18

And will be a father unto you

The same is promised to Solomon, (2 Samuel 7:14) and said of Israel, (Jeremiah 31:9) which is thought to be referred unto. This is not to be understood of the first commencement of this relation, as though God now began to be their Father; nor indeed of the first manifestation of it, which had been already made to their souls by the Spirit of adoption, witnessing to their spirits that God was their Father, and they were his children; but of his acting, and continuing to act the part of a father to them; which he does, by pitying his children, sympathizing with them, and supporting them under all their trials and afflictions; by taking care of them, that they have food and

raiment convenient for them; by laying up for them, as he has done in his covenant, in his Son, and in heaven; by communicating unto them, by passing by their offences and miscarriages to him, and by correcting them for their good, and at last giving them the heavenly inheritance, and putting them into the possession of it:

and ye shall be my sons and daughters.

This also does not relate to the first act of adoption, when these persons first became the sons and daughters of God; for so they were by adopting grace, in the mind, counsel, and covenant of God, from eternity; as such they were considered when given to Christ, when he assumed their nature, and died to gather them together in one; and as antecedent to faith and the work of the Spirit upon their souls: nor even of the first discovery of this grace unto them; but the meaning is, that whereas they were the sons and daughters of God, they should be treated as such; whenever he spoke to them, or dealt with them in providence, he would speak to them and deal with them as children; or it may refer to the more full and open manifestation of their sonship, before angels and men, at the appearance of Christ: to all which is added,

saith the Lord Almighty;

for confirmation sake, and to encourage the faith of the saints; since he who said all this is the Lord God Almighty, and so able to perform it; and of which, and his willingness, no question is to be made, since he has said it.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 7

This chapter begins with an inference deduced, from what is said in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, engaging to holiness of heart and life, in opposition to filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2Co 7:1 and the apostle, in order to prevail upon the Corinthians kindly to receive his exhortations, observes his own conduct, and that of his fellow ministers towards them; as that they had done them no injury by the advice they had given them, nor had they corrupted them by unsound doctrine, or had coveted their worldly substance, 2Co 7:2 not that by so saying he would insinuate as if they had been guilty of injury, corruption, and covetousness; it was far from his thoughts to suggest anything of that kind concerning them, for whom he had so great an affection, as never to separate from them, but living and dying to continue the same regards unto them, 2Co 7:3 and which he expresses, and had shown everywhere, by the freedom of speech he had used concerning them, and his boasting of them, and the joy and comfort he had in the midst of his troubles, by the good news he had received of them, 2Co 7:4, which he had in the following manner; for though when in Macedonia he had no rest, partly through outward troubles, and partly through inward fears, 2Co 7:5 yet meeting with Titus, who had been with them, and had brought an account of their state, it was a means God made use of for the comfort of him, 2Co 7:6 and it was not merely the sight of Titus that yielded him this consolation, but the comfortable reception he had met with at Corinth; and also the good effect the apostle's letter written to them had upon them, as related by Titus; what a desire they had to see him, what grief that they should sin, and by it distress him, and what a fervent affection they had for him 2Co 7:7 for which reason he did not repent of the letter he sent them, though it did produce sorrow in them, since that was of the right kind, and was but for a time, 2Co 7:8 yea, he was so far from it, that he was glad, not merely on account of their sorrow, but because their sorrow was a godly one, and issued in repentance; and so they were no losers, but gainers by the epistle, it producing such good effects, 2Co 7:9 which leads him to distinguish between a true right godly sorrow, and a worldly one, and that by their consequences; repentance and salvation following upon the one, and death upon the other, 2Co 7:10 the fruits and evidences of which godly and true repentance he makes mention of in seven particulars, by which it appeared that their sorrow and repentance were sincere and genuine, 2Co 7:11 when the apostle proceeds to observe to them the end he had in view in writing to them, upon the account of the incestuous person, in which he had used great plainness and faithfulness; and this was not merely on account of him that offended, nor only on account of the person injured by him, but chiefly to testify his care of, and concern for their welfare, as a church of Christ, 2Co 7:12 and inasmuch as though they had been grieved, yet were now comforted, it added to the consolation of the apostle and his companions, and the more delighted they were, when they understood what a

reception Titus had among them, what reverence he was had in, what respect was shown him, and care was taken of him, 2Co 7:13 and the rather, seeing the apostle had boasted of the liberality, generosity, and affectionate regard of the Corinthians to the ministers of the Gospel, Titus found it to be all true what he had said; so that he had no reason to be ashamed, as he must have been, had they behaved otherwise, 2Co 7:14 and still it gave him further pleasure, that by their behaviour to Titus, they had gained his heart, and increased his affection towards them; which he could not but express, whenever he called to mind, or made mention of the great respect, veneration, and obedience, they yielded to him, 2Co 7:15 and indeed it was not only in this instance, but in all others, the apostle had confidence concerning them, which heightened his joy and pleasure in them, 2Co 7:16 .

2 CORINTHIANS 7

- 1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
- 2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.
- 3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.
- 4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.
- 5 For*, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.
- 6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;
- 7 And not by his coming only, but* by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.
- 8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.
- 9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.
- 10 For godly* sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.
- 11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.
- 12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.
- 13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.
- 14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth.
- 15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.
- 16 I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises

That God will walk in his temple, and dwell in his churches, be their God, and they his people, that he will receive them, and be their Father, and they his sons and daughters; which promises they had not in hope, as Old Testament saints had the promises of the Messiah and his kingdom, and as New Testament saints have of the resurrection, the new heavens and new earth, and of appearing with Christ in glory; but in hand, in actual possession; for God was really become their God and Father, and they were his people and children; they had

had communion with him, and were received, protected, and preserved by him; which promises and blessings of grace, and which are absolute and unconditional, the apostle makes use of to engage them to purity and holiness; and is a clear proof, that the doctrine of an absolute and unconditional covenant of grace has no tendency to licentiousness, but the contrary: and that his following exhortation might be attended to, and cheerfully received, he uses a very affectionate appellation,

dearly beloved;

so they were of God, being his people, his sons and daughters, adopted, justified, called, and chosen by him; and so they were by the apostle and his fellow ministers, who, as he says in a following verse, were in their hearts to die and live with them; some copies read brethren, and so the Ethiopic version. The exhortation he urges them to, and, that it might be the better received, joins himself with them in it, is,

let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit:

by “the filthiness of the flesh” is meant external pollution, defilement by outward actions, actions committed in the body, whereby the man is defiled; such as all impure words, filthiness, and foolish talking, all rotten and corrupt communication, which defile a man’s own body; as the tongue, a little member, when so used does, and corrupts the good manners of others; all filthy actions, as idolatry, adultery, fornication, incest, sodomy, murder, drunkenness, revellings and everything that makes up a filthy conversation, which is to be hated, abhorred, and abstained from by the saints: by “filthiness of the spirit” is meant internal pollution, defilement by the internal acts of the mind, such as evil thoughts, lusts, pride, malice, envy, covetousness, and the like: such a distinction of (Pwgh tamwj) , “the filthiness of the body”, and (vpnh tamwj) , “the filthiness of the soul”, is to be met with among the Jews; who say F18, that when a man has taken care to avoid the former, it is fit he should take care of the latter; they also call the evil imagination, or corruption of nature, “the filth of the body” F19. Now when the apostle says, “let us cleanse ourselves”, this does not suppose that men have a power to cleanse themselves from the pollution of their nature, or the defilement of their actions; for this is God’s work alone, as appears from his promises to cleanse his people from their sins; from the end of Christ’s shedding his blood, and the efficacy of it; from the sanctifying influences of the Spirit; and from the prayers of the saints to God, to create in them clean hearts, to wash them thoroughly from their iniquity, and cleanse them from their sin: besides, the apostle is not here speaking either of the justification of these persons, in which sense they were already cleansed, and that thoroughly, from all their sins and iniquities; nor of the inward work of sanctification, in respect of which they were sprinkled with clean water, and were washed in the layer of regeneration; but what the apostle respects is the exercise of both internal and external religion, which lies in purity of heart and conversation, the one not being acceptable to God without the other; he is speaking of, and exhorting to the same thing, as in the latter part of the preceding chapter; and suggests, that it becomes those who have received such gracious promises to be separate from sin and sinners, to abstain from all appearance of sin, and to have no fellowship with sinners; to lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of haughtiness, and, under a sense of either external or internal pollution, to have recourse to the fountain opened; to deal by faith with the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, of heart, lip, and life; and which is the only effectual method a believer can make use of, to cleanse himself from sin; namely, by washing his garments, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb:

perfecting holiness in the fear of God;

by “holiness” is not meant the work of sanctification upon the heart, for that is wholly the work of the Spirit of God, and not of man; he begins it, carries it on, and perfects it of himself; but holiness of life and conversation is here designed, which in conversion the people of God are called unto, and which highly becomes them: and this they are to be “perfecting”; not that a believer is able to live a life of holiness, without sin being in him, or committed by him; this is in, possible and impracticable in the present life; but the sense of the word (epitelountev) is, that he is to be carrying on a course of righteousness and holiness to the end; to the end of his life, he is to persevere as in faith, so in holiness; as he is to go on believing in Christ, so he is to go on to live soberly, righteously, and godly, to the end of his days; which requires divine power to preserve him from sin, and keep him from falling; and the grace of God, the strength of Christ, and the assistance of the Spirit, to enable him to perform acts

of holiness, and the several duties of religion, and to continue in well doing: all which is to be done, “in the fear of God”; not in a servile slavish fear, a fear of hell and damnation, but in a filial fear, a reverential affection for God, an humble trust in him, and dependence on him, for grace and strength; it is that fear which has God for its author, is a blessing of the new covenant, is implanted in regeneration, and is increased by discoveries of pardoning grace; and it has God for its object, not his wrath and vindictive justice, but his goodness, grace, and mercy. This shows from what principle, and upon what views believers act in a course of righteousness and holiness; not from the fear of hell, nor from the fear of men, or with a view to gain their applause, but as in the sight of God, from a reverential affection to him, a child like fear of him, and with a view to his glory.

FOOTNOTES:

F18 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 111. 2.

F19 Zohar in Lev. fol. 43. 2.

2 Corinthians 7:2

Receive us

Into your affections, let us have a place in your hearts, as you have in ours: Gospel ministers ought to be received with love and respect, both into the hearts and houses of the saints; for “he that receiveth you”, says Christ, “receiveth me”, (Matthew 10:40) . Their doctrines are to be received in the love of them, and with faith and meekness; and this may be another part of the apostle’s meaning here; receive the word and ministry of reconciliation, which we as the ambassadors of Christ bring, and the several exhortations we give in his name, particularly the last mentioned: next follow reasons, or arguments, engaging, them to comply with this request,

we have wronged no man;

we have done no man any injury in his person, estate, or name. There is one among you that has done wrong, and another among you that has suffered wrong, (2 Corinthians 7:12) and we have given very faithful advice to the church how to behave in this affair; but, in so doing, we have neither wronged him nor you; and as not in this, so neither in any other case: if I or my fellow apostles have wronged you in anything, it is in not being “burdensome” to you for our maintenance, “forgive me this wrong”, (2 Corinthians 12:13) for in no other respect have we done you any: some understand this of any lordly power, or tyrannical domination they had exercised over them, denied by the apostle; we have not behaved in an insolent manner towards you, we have not lorded it over God’s heritage, or claimed any dominion over your faith, or required any unreasonable obedience and submission from you:

we have corrupted no man;

neither by our doctrines and principles, which are perfectly agreeable to the word of God, make for the good of souls, and tend to the glory of Christ; nor by our example, but have been careful to lead such lives and conversations as are becoming the Gospel of Christ, adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and are patterns to them that believe; nor have we corrupted by flatteries, or with bribes, any of the leading men among you, in order to gain their good will, and thereby respect and credit among others:

we have defrauded no man,

or “coveted no man”; no man’s silver, gold, or apparel; we have not sought yours, but you; not to amass wealth to ourselves, but that we might be useful to your souls, for your spiritual good, and serviceable to the glory of Christ; we have not through covetousness made merchandise of you, with feigned words, as the false apostles have done, therefore receive us.

2 Corinthians 7:3

I speak not this to condemn you

Referring either to the exhortations before given, to have no sinful conversation with unbelievers, and to cleanse themselves from all impurity, external and internal; and to go on in a course of holiness, in the fear of God, to the end of life; or to the account just given of himself and fellow ministers; and his sense is this, the exhortations I have given must not be so understood, as though I charged and accused you with keeping company with unbelievers, or as though you were not concerned for purity of life and conversation; or when I remove the above mentioned things from myself and others, I mean not to lay them upon you, as if I thought that you had wronged, corrupted, or defrauded any; when I clear myself and others, I do not design to accuse or condemn you; my view is only to the false apostles, who have done these things, when we have not, and therefore we have the best claim to your affections:

for I have said before, you are in our hearts;

you are inscribed on our hearts, engraven there, “ye are our epistle written in our hearts”, (2 Corinthians 3:2) ye are not straitened in us, (2 Corinthians 6:12) you have a place and room enough in our affections, which are strong towards you, insomuch that it is our desire and resolution

to die and live with you;

or together: neither death nor life shall separate our love, or destroy our friendship; there is nothing we more desire than to live with you; and should there be any occasion for it, could freely die with you, and for you.

2 Corinthians 7:4***Great is my boldness of speech towards you***

Or “liberty of speaking”, which I use with you; I very freely, and without any disguise, open my mind to you; I faithfully tell you your faults; I am free in my exhortations and counsels to you, as in the case of the incestuous person, and in other instances, which is a sign of true friendship; for had I any suspicion of you, or not cordial affection for you, I should have been more reserved, more upon my guard, and have spoke and wrote with more caution: besides,

great is my glorying,

or “boasting of you”; of your faith in Christ, your love to the people of God, respect to the ministers of the Gospel, obedience to us, and very great liberality to the poor saints, of which the apostle frequently boasts in this epistle: now as speaking freely to them when present with them, or in writing to them, so glorying in them, and speaking well of them when absent, clearly showed what an opinion he had of them, and what true hearty respect he had for them:

I am filled with comfort,

says he; not only with divine and spiritual consolations from God, but with the news Titus brought of the state of this church, of the good effect the apostle’s reproof and advice had both upon them, and the offender among them, and of their tender and affectionate regard to him: this filled him brimful of comfort, yea, adds he,

I am exceeding joyful;

I abound, I over abound in joy; such is the joy that possesses my soul, at the tidings brought me, that it super-abounds all the sorrow and anguish of spirit, out of which I wrote unto you, occasioned by the unhappy affair among you: yea, it makes me inexpressibly joyful in all our tribulation; which is not small we meet with, wherever we go, in preaching the Gospel of Christ.

2 Corinthians 7:5***For when we were come into Macedonia***

Whither Paul went in quest of Titus, not finding him at Troas, (2 Corinthians 2:12 2 Corinthians 2:13) and where he met with him, and had the agreeable account from him of the state of this church; but here, as elsewhere, they had their troubles:

our flesh had no rest;

that is, their outward man, their bodies; they were continually fatigued with preaching, disputing, fighting; what with false teachers, and violent persecutors, they had no rest in their bodies; though, in their souls, they had divine support and spiritual consolation; and it was no small addition to their joy to hear of the flourishing condition of this church:

but were troubled on every side;

from every quarter, by all sorts of enemies; see (2 Corinthians 4:8) .

Without were fightings, within were fears;

there seems to be an allusion to (Deuteronomy 32:25) . They had continual combats with false teachers, and furious persecutors, without the church, or in the world, or in their bodies; and within the church, or in themselves, in their own minds, had many fears, lest any should be discouraged by the violence of persecutions, or be drawn aside by the doctrines of the false apostles: and as it was with the apostles in these respects, so it is with private believers: without are fightings; their outward conversation in this life is a warfare; partly with false teachers, with whom they fight the “good fight of faith”, contend for the doctrine of faith, using the spiritual weapons of the Scriptures of truth; and partly with the men of the world, to whose rage and contempt they are exposed, and among whom they endure a great fight of afflictions, with patience, and in the exercise of faith, whereby they gain the victory over the world and partly with Satan, their avowed adversary, and implacable enemy, against whom they wrestle in the strength of Christ, making use of the whole armour God provided for them, by the help of which, through divine grace, they come off more than conquerors; and partly with the lusts and corruptions, or open prevailing iniquities which are in the world, to which they oppose themselves, and, by the power of God keeping them, are preserved from: not that their only fightings are thus without; for there is, as it were, a company of two armies within them, sin and grace, flesh and spirit, opposing each other: and hence, as well as from other causes, are “fears within”; about their interest in everlasting love, electing grace, and the covenant of grace; about the presence of God with them, and the truth of grace in them; about their interest in Christ, their sonship, their final perseverance, and enjoyment of the heavenly glory: and though these fears are not their excellencies, but their infirmities, yet this will be more or less their case, till that state takes place, when there will be no more fightings, no more fears.

2 Corinthians 7:6

Nevertheless, God that comforteth those that are cast down,

&c.] Or “humble ones”: such as are humbled under the afflicting hand of God, and have low and mean apprehensions of themselves; these God looks unto, dwells with, revives their hearts, cheers their drooping spirits, and fills them with comforts; he has been used to do so with such persons; he has raised comfort to them; they may expect it, and the apostle experienced it; and which he refers to God as the author of it, as he had done in the beginning of this epistle, calling him “the God of all comfort”; he was the efficient cause, the means by which it was effected was the coming of Titus:

comforted us by the coming of Titus;

to whom the apostle bore a very great affection, he being his son in a spiritual sense, a companion with him in his travels, and of great usefulness and service in the ministration of the Gospel; so that the very sight of him gave him pleasure; and the more, inasmuch as he had for some time longed to see him, that he might have some account from him of the affairs of this church.

2 Corinthians 7:7***And not by his coming only***

It was not barely by his coming, that he and his fellow ministers were so much comforted:

but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you.

The church at Corinth received Titus with all respect and reverence; treated him in the most kind and tender manner; satisfied him in the affair of the incestuous person; greatly refreshed his spirits with an account of their faith in Christ, experience of the grace of God, and their regard and close attachment to the honour of religion, and the interest of the Redeemer; many comfortable opportunities had he with them, in preaching among them, and conversing with them; and the account of this added to the apostle's consolation; for the joys and comforts of one believer yield a considerable pleasure, and are matter of joy and comfort, to another:

when he told us your earnest desire;

that is, of seeing the apostle, of satisfying him in the thing he had complained of, and of reformation in their conduct, and the discipline of Christ's house for the future:

your mourning;

for the evil that had been committed among them; the dishonour it had brought upon the doctrine and ways of Christ; their remissness, carelessness, and neglect in discharging their duty; and the grief and sorrow occasioned hereby to the apostle:

your fervent mind toward me;

in vindicating him, his character, doctrine, and conduct, against the false apostles, and others:

so that I rejoiced the more:

his joy on this narrative of things abundantly exceeded his troubles and afflictions, which surrounded him on every side, and overcame and extinguished that sorrow, which had possessed him on their account; and greatly added to the joy he felt by the coming of Titus, and the consolation that he had met with at Corinth.

2 Corinthians 7:8***For though I made you sorry with a letter***

His former epistle, relating to the incestuous person:

I do not repent, though I did repent;

not of writing the letter, which was wrote by divine inspiration; but of the sorrow occasioned by it, though now he did not repent of that:

for I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though it were but for a season;

inasmuch as the sorrow was true, hearty, and genuine, though it was but for a time, the apostle was entirely satisfied, and the more pleased, because of its brevity, since it was sincere.

2 Corinthians 7:9***Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry***

Their grief and sorrow, as a natural passion, was no matter or cause of joy to him; nor was this what he sought after, being what he could take no real pleasure in; for so far as that was a pain to them, it was a pain to him:

but that ye sorrowed to repentance;

their sorrow issued in true evangelical repentance, and this was the ground of his rejoicing; for as there is joy in heaven among the angels, at the repentance of a sinner, so there is joy in the church below, among the saints and ministers of the Gospel, when either sinners are brought in, or backsliders returned by repentance:

for ye were made sorry after a godly sort;

what gave him so much joy and satisfaction was, that their sorrow was of the right sort; it was a godly sorrow, they sorrowed after; or according to God, according to the will of God, and for sin, as it was committed against him; it was a sorrow that God wrought in them:

that ye might receive damage by us in nothing;

what added to his pleasure was, that his writing to them, and the effect it produced, had not been in the least detrimental to them; things had worked so kindly, and this sorrow had wrought in such a manner, that they were not hurt in their souls, but profited; nor in their church state, they had not lost one member by it; nay, the offender himself, which was the occasion of all this trouble, was recovered and restored by these means.

2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation

These words contain a reason, proving that they had received no damage, but profit by the sorrow that had possessed them, from the nature of it, a “godly” sorrow; a sorrow which had God for its author; it did not arise from the power of free will, nor from the dictates of a natural conscience, nor from a work of the law on their hearts, or from a fear of hell and damnation, but it sprung from the free grace of God; it was a gift of his grace, the work of his Spirit, and the produce of his almighty power; being such, which no means, as judgments, mercies, or the most powerful ministry of themselves could effect; it was owing to divine instructions; it was heightened and increased with a discovery of the love of God, and views of pardoning grace and mercy being attended with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: it had God also for its object, as well as its author; it was a sorrow, (ahla l’jmd) , “which is for God”, as the Syriac version reads the words, and also the Ethiopic; on the account of God, his honour, interest, and glory; it was a sorrow for sin, because it was committed against a God of infinite holiness, justice, and truth, goodness, grace, and mercy; and it was a sorrow, (kata yeon) , “according to God”, according to the mind and will of God; it was, as it is rendered by the Arabic version, “grateful to God”; what he took notice of, observed, and approved of; and was also such a sorrow as bore some resemblance to what in God goes by the name of grieving and repenting, as that he had made man, because of sin; there being in it a displicency with sin, an hatred of it, and a repentance that ever it was committed: moreover, this sorrow is further described, from its salutary operation, it “worketh repentance”; it is the beginning of it, a part of it, an essential part of it, without which there is no true repentance; this produces it, issues in it, even in an ingenuous confession of sin, a forsaking of it, and in bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, in the life and conversation: and this repentance is unto salvation; not the cause or author of it, for that is Christ alone; nor the condition of it, but is itself a blessing of salvation, a part of it, the initial part of it, by which, and faith we enter upon the possession of salvation; it is an evidence of interest in it, and issues in the full enjoyment of it: and this, or repentance, is such as is

not to be repented of;

or that is stable and immovable, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it; which “never returns”, or goes back, as the Syriac version, but remains the same not repented of; for to either of them may it be applied: salvation is not to be repented of; it is not repented of by God, who repents not, neither of the thing itself, nor of the way and manner in which it is effected, nor of the persons saved by it, and his choice of them to it; nor is it repented of by them, who believe in Christ to the saving of their souls: nor is true repentance, which is connected with it, to be repented of; God does not repent of giving it, for “his gifts and calling are without repentance”; nor does the repenting sinner repent of it; nor has he any occasion, since it is unto life, even “unto eternal life”, as the Ethiopic version here renders it; and as it is called “repentance unto life”, in (Acts 11:18) . This sorrow is likewise illustrated by its contrary,

but the sorrow of the world worketh death;

a worldly sorrow is such, as is common to men of the world, as Cain, Pharaoh, Judas, and others; it springs from worldly selfish principles, and proceeds on worldly views; it is often nothing more than a concern for the loss of worldly things, as riches, honours or for a disappointment in the gratification of worldly lusts and pleasures: and this worketh death; temporal and eternal death; it sometimes brings diseases and disorders on the body, which issue in death; and sometimes puts men upon destroying themselves, as it did Ahithophel and Judas; it works in the minds of men a fearful apprehension of eternal death, and, if grace prevent not, issues in it.

2 Corinthians 7:11***For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort***

The apostle proceeds to describe godly sorrow by its effects, which are so many evidences of the sincerity and genuineness of it; some of the things mentioned are peculiar to the case of the Corinthians, and others common to evangelical repentance in any:

what carefulness it wrought in you;

to remove the incestuous person from communion with them, which they were very negligent of before; to sin no more after this sort; to keep up, for the future, a more strict and regular discipline in the church; to perform good works in general, and not to offend God:

yea, what clearing of yourselves;

not by denying the fact, or lessening, or defending it; but by acknowledging their neglect, praying it might be overlooked, declaring that they were not partakers of the sin; nor did they approve of it, but disliked and abhorred it, and were highly pleased with the method the apostle advised to:

yea, what indignation;

not against the person of the offender, but against his sin; and not his only but their own too, in not appearing against him, and taking notice of him sooner; and particularly that they should act in such a manner, as to deserve the just rebuke of the apostle:

yea, what fear;

not of hell and damnation, as in wicked men and devils, who repent not; but of God, and of grieving his ministers; and lest the corruption should spread in the church, as the apostle had suggested, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump";

yea, what vehement desire;

of seeing the apostle; of giving him full satisfaction; of behaving in quite another manner for the time to come; and to be kept from evil, and to honour God by a becoming conversation:

yea, what zeal;

for God and his glory; for restoring the discipline of the church: for the doctrines of the Gospel; for the ordinances of Christ's house; for the supporting the character of the apostle, and other ministers of the word, against the false apostles:

yea, what revenge;

not of persons in a private way, vengeance belongs to God; but of all disobedience, particularly that of the unhappy criminal among them, which has shown in the punishment inflicted on him by many:

in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter;

of the incestuous person: it appeared plainly that they did not consent to, and approve of his sin; and though at first they were unconcerned about it, did not mourn over it as they ought, nor make such haste to deal with the offender as they should, yet having discovered true repentance for their sloth, negligence, and indulgence, they are acquitted, and stand, in the apostle's view of them, as if they had not offended.

2 Corinthians 7:12

Wherefore, though I wrote unto you

Meaning in his former epistle, with so much sharpness and severity, and as may have been thought too much:

I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong; not for the sake of the incestuous person only and chiefly, not merely for his correction and restoration; though these things were intended, and earnestly desired by the apostle:

nor for his cause that suffered wrong:

that is, the father of the incestuous person, who had been injured by this wicked action; it was not only or merely out of favour and respect to him, and that some compensation should be made to him in a church way, by detesting the crime, casting out the offender, and declaring themselves on the side of the injured person, and against him that had done the injury:

but that our care for you, in the sight of God, might appear unto you:

some copies, and the Complutensian edition, and the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, read, "that your care for us" and then the sense is, that you might have an opportunity of showing your affection for us, your regard to us, how readily you obey us in all things; but the other reading is to be preferred, the meaning of which is, that the apostle in writing did not so much consult and regard the private good of any particular person, either the injurer or the injured, though these were not out of his view; but he wrote in the manner he did, chiefly that it might be manifest what a concern he had for the good and welfare of the whole church; lest that should be corrupted, and receive any damage from such a notorious delinquent being tolerated or connived at among them; and that it was such a care and concern as was real, hearty, and sincere, was well known to God, and for the truth of which he could appeal to him.

2 Corinthians 7:13

Therefore we were comforted in your comfort

In the comfortable situation the church was in; not in their grief and sorrow, as a natural passion, but in the effects of it as a godly sorrow; by which it appeared that their repentance was genuine, and that they were clear in the matter that had given so much trouble; and that things had so well succeeded for the welfare and more comfortable estate of the church for the future. The comfortable estate, flourishing condition, and well being of churches, yield great pleasure and consolation to the ministers of the Gospel: the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read, "our comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we, for the joy of Titus"; not only the repentance of the Corinthians, and the blessed effects of that, occasioned joy in the apostle; but what added to it, and increased it the more abundantly, was the joy of Titus, which he had been a partaker of during his stay with them:

because his spirit was refreshed by you all;

not by one only, or a few, but by all the members of the church; he was received by them with great respect, provided for in a liberal manner, treated with all humanity and courteousness; and, above all, his mind was eased and filled with an unexpected pleasure, to find them in such an agreeable frame of mind; so sensible of their neglect of duty, so ready to reform, so united in themselves, so affected to the apostle, and so determined to abide by the order, ordinances, and truths of the Gospel, against all false teachers.

2 Corinthians 7:14

For if I have boasted anything to him of you

As of their faith in Christ, of their liberality to the saints, their affection for him, and obedience to him as children to a father:

I am not ashamed;

since these all appeared to be true; as he must have been had they been otherwise:

but as we spake all things to you in truth;

that is, our preaching among you was true; all the doctrines we delivered to you were truth; our word was not yea and nay, but uniform, and all of a piece:

even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth;

some understand this of the boasting which the apostle made concerning Titus, in his epistle to them, highly commending him, and which they found to be in all things exactly true; but the words rather design his boasting of the Corinthians unto Titus, which was found to be true by him.

2 Corinthians 7:15

And his inward affection is more abundant toward you

Or “his bowels”; denoting the tenderness of his heart, the strength of his affections, which inwardly and to a very great degree moved towards them; especially

whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all;

to him, and to me by him; to the advice and orders given, which were so readily, cheerfully, and universally complied with; and

how with fear and trembling you received him;

that is, with great humility and respect, with much deference to him: considering his character as a minister of the Gospel, and as one sent by the apostle to them, they embraced him with great marks of honour and esteem; for this is not to be understood of any inward slavish fear or dread of mind, or trembling of body at the sight of him, and because he came to know their estate, and with reproofs from the apostle to them.

2 Corinthians 7:16

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

That I can speak freely and boldly to you, reprove, admonish, and advise you, since you take it all in good part, as I design it; that I can confidently speak in your favour, boast of your love and obedience, which is found upon trial and by experience to be truth; and that I can promise myself every good thing from you, that is proper to ask of you, and lies in your power to perform; which he says partly to commend them for their past conduct, and partly to pave the way for what he had to say to them, concerning making a collection for the poor saints.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 8

In this chapter the apostle stirs up the Corinthians, to make a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, by a variety of arguments, and gives a commendation of Titus and some other brethren, who were appointed messengers to them on that account. He first sets before them the example of the Macedonian churches, who had made a liberal collection for the above persons; which the apostle calls the grace of God, and says it was

bestowed on them; and it was not the generosity of one church only, but of many, and so worthy of imitation, 2Co 8:1 which generosity of theirs he illustrates by the circumstances and condition they were in, they were not only in great affliction, but in deep poverty; and yet contributed with abundance of joy, and in great liberality, 2Co 8:2 yea, this they did not only to the utmost of their power, and according to the best of their abilities; but their will was beyond their power, they had hearts to do more than they were able; and what they did, they did of themselves without being asked and urged to it, 2Co 8:3 nay, they even entreated the apostle and his fellow ministers to take the money they had collected, and either send or carry it to the poor saints at Jerusalem, and minister it to them themselves, 2Co 8:4 and which was beyond the expectation of the apostle, who knew their case; and yet it was but acting like themselves, who at first gave themselves to the Lord and to the apostles by the will of God, 2Co 8:5 and this forwardness and readiness of the Macedonian churches, or the churches themselves put the apostle upon desiring Titus to go to Corinth, and finish the collection he had begun; and which carries in it more arguments than one to excite them to this service; as that this was not only at the request of the apostle, but of the Macedonian churches, that Titus should be desired to go on this business; and besides the thing had been begun, and it would be scandalous not to finish it, 2Co 8:6 and next the apostle argues from their abounding in the exercise of other graces, which he enumerates, that they would also in this, 2Co 8:7 for to excel in one grace, and not in another, was not to their praise and honour; however, he did not urge them to this in an imperious way, and to show and exercise his authority; but was moved unto it through the generous example of others, and that there might be a proof of their sincere love and affection to the Lord, and to his people, 2Co 8:8 but as what he wisely judged would have the greatest weight with them; he proposes to them the example of Christ, and instances in his great love to them; who though was rich became poor for them, that they might be enriched through his poverty, 2Co 8:9 and therefore should freely contribute to his poor saints. Moreover, inasmuch as the apostle did not take upon him to command, only give advice, he should be regarded; and that the rather because what he advised to was expedient for them, would be for their good, and be profitable to them; as well as prevent reproach and scandal, which would follow should they not finish what they had begun so long ago, 2Co 8:10 wherefore he exhorts them cheerfully to perform what they had shown a readiness to; and points out unto them the rule and measure of it, that it should be out of their own, what they were possessed of, and according to their ability; which be it more or less would be acceptable to God, 2Co 8:11,12 for his meaning was not that some should be eased and others burdened; but that all should communicate according to what they had, 2Co 8:13 to which he stimulates them from the hope of the recompence of reward, whenever it should be otherwise with them than it was, and things should change both with them who communicated, and with them to whom they communicated; or this was the end proposed by the apostle, that in the issue there might be an equality between them, 2Co 8:14 which he confirms and illustrates by the distribution of the manna to the Israelites, who had an equal measure, 2Co 8:15 as appears from what is said, Ex 16:18 next the apostle enters upon a commendation of the messengers, that were appointed and ordered to be sent to them upon this errand, and begins with Titus; and gives thanks to God, that had put it into his heart to be so solicitous about this matter, 2Co 8:16 and praises him for his forwardness in undertaking it of his own accord, and in performing it without being urged to it, 2Co 8:17 and next he commends another person, whose name is not mentioned, who was sent along with him; a person of note and fame in all the churches, 2Co 8:18 and who had the honour to be chosen by the churches for this service, 2Co 8:19 and the reason why more persons than one were sent, was to prevent any suspicion of converting the collections to wrong purposes; and to preserve and secure a good character, a character of honesty before God and men, 2Co 8:20,21 . To these two a third was added, whose name also is not mentioned, and who had been proved to be a diligent man, and appeared more so in this matter upon the apostle's confidence in the Corinthians, that they would readily attend to the service these were sent to promote, 2Co 8:22 and thus having separately given the characters of these men, they are all of them commended again; Titus, as the apostle's partner and fellow helper; and the other brethren as the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ, 2Co 8:23 and the chapter is concluded with an exhortation to the members of the church at Corinth, to give these messengers a proof of their love to the poor saints before all the churches, and make it appear that he had not boasted of them in vain, 2Co 8:24 .

2 CORINTHIANS 8

- 1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;
 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty* abounded unto the riches of their liberality.
 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;
 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
 5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.
 6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.
 7 Therefore, as 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 in this grace also.
 8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.
 9 For 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.
 10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.
 11 Now* therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.
 12 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.
 13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:
 14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:
 15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.
 16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.
 17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.
 18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;
 19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:
 20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:
 21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.
 22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved* diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.
 23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.
 24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

2 Corinthians 8:1

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God,

&c.] The apostle having said everything that was proper to conciliate the minds and affections of the Corinthians to him, and the matter in difference being adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties concerned; he proposes what he had wisely postponed till all was over, the making a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem; which he enforces by the example of the Macedonian churches, the churches at Philippi, Thessalonica He addresses them in a kind and tender manner, under the endearing appellation of “brethren”, being so in a spiritual relation; and takes

the liberty to inform them of the goodness of God to some of their sister churches; “we do you to wit”, or “we make known unto you”. The phrase “to wit” is an old English one, and almost obsolete, and signifies to acquaint with, inform of, make known, or give knowledge of anything. The thing informed of here, “is the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia”; by which is meant, not any of the blessings of grace common to all the saints, such as regeneration, justification, adoption, forgiveness of sin, and the like; but beneficence, liberality, or a liberal disposition to do good to others, called “the grace of God”; because it sprung from thence, as all good works do when performed aright; they were assisted in it by the grace of God; and it was the love and favour of God in Christ, which was the engaging motive, the leading view, which drew them on to it. This was

bestowed

upon them, not merited, it was grace and free grace; God may give persons ever so much of this world’s goods, yet if he does not give them a spirit of generosity, a liberal disposition, they will make no use of it for the good of others: and this was bestowed

on the churches of Macedonia;

not on a few leading men among them, but upon all the members of these churches in general; and not upon one church, but upon many; a spirit of liberality was in general diffused among them, and this is proposed for imitation. Examples have great influence, and the examples of many the greater; too many follow a multitude to do evil; here the example of many, even of many churches, is proposed in order to be followed to do good, to exercise acts of beneficence and goodness, in a free generous way to saints in distress; which as it is here called, “the grace of God”, so in some following verses, “the gift, the same grace, and this grace”, (2 Corinthians 8:4 2 Corinthians 8:6 2 Corinthians 8:7) agreeably to the Hebrew word (חַד) , which signifies “grace” and “free bounty”; and is used for doing good, or for beneficence, which the Jews call (גְּמִילוּת חַדִּימִ) “a performance of kind and bountiful actions”: which are done freely, and for which a person expects no return from the person to whom he does them: and this they distinguish from (דָּקָה) , “alms”, after this manner F20;

“an alms (they say) is exercised towards the living, beneficence towards the living and the dead; alms is used to the poor, beneficence both to the rich and poor; alms is performed by a man’s substance, beneficence both by body and substance.”

FOOTNOTES:

F20 T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 15. 3.

2 Corinthians 8:2

How that in a great trial of affliction

The apostle proceeds to show the condition these churches were in when, and the manner in which, they contributed to the relief of others. They were in affliction: they received the Gospel at first in much affliction, as did the church at Thessalonica, which was one of them; and afterwards suffered much from their countrymen for the profession of it, by reproaches, persecutions, imprisonments, confiscation of goods, &c. They were under trying afflictions, which tried their faith and patience, and in many of them. Now for persons in prosperity, when all things go well with them, to be liberal is no such great matter; but for persons in adversity, under trying dispensations of Providence, amidst many afflictive ones to communicate generously to the relief of others, is something very remarkable, and worthy of notice and imitation, which was the case of these churches: for notwithstanding this,

the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality;

so that it appears likewise that they were not only in great afflictions, but in deep poverty; had but an handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, their purses almost empty, and their coffers almost exhausted;

they had gotten to the bottom of their substance, had but very little left; and yet freely gave, with joy, even with an abundance of it. The allusion seems to be to the words of David, in (1 Chronicles 22:14) now behold, (בְּנִי) which the Septuagint render by (κατα πτωχειαν μου) , “according to my poverty, I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold” for by “the abundance of their joy”, is not so much meant the joy they felt in the midst of their afflictions, so that they could glory in them, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, as the cheerfulness of their spirits in contributing to the necessities of others; glad at heart they were that they had hearts to do good, and an opportunity of doing it; which they gladly laid hold on, observing the divine rule, “he that sheweth mercy”, let him do it “with cheerfulness”: and this they did, considering the small pittance they were possessed of, very largely; for though their poverty was deep, and their purses low, their hearts were large and full, and their hands ready to communicate; so that their poverty “abounded to the riches of their liberality”: though their poverty was great, their liberality was rich and large; though it might be but little they gave in quantity, it was much in quality, much in liberality; like the poor widow, who, of her want and penury, cast in more than all the rich besides, not in quantity, but in liberality; they only giving some, and a disproportionate part, she her all.

2 Corinthians 8:3

For to [their] power, I bear record

They gave according to their ability, to the utmost of it, which is the most that can be desired, or be given; for no man can give more than he has, nor is he required to do more than he is able:

yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

not that they did or could do beyond their power; but they were “willing” beyond their power; their hearts were larger than their purses; they would gladly have done more than they had ability to do; and to this the apostle bears testimony to give it credit, which otherwise might have been called in question: and it is to be observed, that these churches communicated in this cheerful manner and large way, considering their circumstances, to the utmost of their ability, “of themselves”; unasked, not having been put upon, pressed, and urged to such a service; for persons to give when they are asked, especially when they do it readily, at once, without demurring upon it, and with cheerfulness, is much; but to give unasked discovers a very generous and beneficent disposition: this is reckoned by the Jews as one of the excellencies in giving of alms F12},

“when a man gives into the hands of another (קודם שישאל) , “before he asks”; and the next degree to this is, when he gives to him after he asks; and the next to this, who gives less than is proper, but with a cheerful countenance.”

FOOTNOTES:

F21 Maimon. Hileh. Mattanot Anayim, c. 10. sect. 11, 12, 13.

2 Corinthians 8:4

Praying us with much entreaty

They not only gave freely, being unasked by the apostles; but they sought to them, and earnestly entreated them,

that they would receive the gift;

the beneficence, what they had so freely and generously collected: and

the fellowship of the ministering to the saints;

what they had communicated for the service of the poor saints at Jerusalem, in which they testified their having and holding fellowship with the churches of Christ; and that they would receive it at their hands, and take it

upon them, and carry it to Jerusalem, and distribute to the poor saints there, as should seem to them most proper and convenient; which they accordingly agreed to; see (Romans 15:25 Romans 15:26) .

2 Corinthians 8:5

And this they did not as we hoped

All this was unexpected by the apostles, who knew their great affliction and deep poverty, and therefore could not have hoped for such a collection from them; or that they would have desired the apostle to have ministered it for them:

but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God;

the sense of which is not barely, or only, that they committed themselves to the care of Providence in all their afflictions and poverty, trusting in God that he would provide for them for time to come, and therefore even in their strait circumstances gave liberally; and were so much under the direction of the apostles, God so disposing their minds, that they were willing to do or give anything that they should say was proper; yea, were very willing that some of their number should leave their habitations and families to accompany them, in forwarding this good work elsewhere: but the apostle seems to have respect to what these persons did at first conversion, when they gave themselves to Christ, to be saved by him, and him alone; and to serve him to the uttermost, in everything, he should signify to be his will; and when they joined themselves to the churches of Christ, and put themselves under the care, government, and direction of the apostles, who were over the churches in the Lord: and therefore though what the members of these churches collected, was very wonderful and beyond expectation; yet when it is considered that these persons had long ago given their whole selves, their all to Christ, had committed all into his hands, and devoted themselves entirely to his service; and had declared their subjection to his ministers as servants under him, and to his word and ordinances as ministered by them; it need not be so much wondered at, that they should be so liberal in giving away their worldly substance for the relief of Christ's poor members, when they had given their precious souls, their immortal all, and had committed the salvation of them entirely to him. Giving themselves to Christ, in this sense, supposes that they had a true sight and apprehension of their state and condition by nature, how sinful they were, and lost and undone in themselves; that they were destitute of a righteousness, and unable to obtain one by the works of the law; that they were in hopeless and helpless circumstances, as considered in themselves; that they were diseased from head to foot, and could not cure themselves; that they were dead in law, and liable to the curse and condemnation of it; for till men see themselves in such a case they will never give themselves to Christ, or betake themselves to him to be saved by him. Moreover, this supposes some knowledge of him as God's ordinance for salvation, as the Saviour of the Father's appointing and sending; of him, as having effected it by his obedience and death; of his being the only Saviour, a suitable one, both able and willing to save to the uttermost, even the chief of sinners that come to God by him. It is expressive of faith in Christ; of seeing the Son and the fulness of grace and salvation in him, and of going to him for it; of staying, resting, leaning, and relying upon him, venturing on him, committing all into his hands, and trusting him with all and for all. It denotes subjection to him, as their husband, to whom they give themselves as his spouse and bride, and consent to be the Lord's in a conjugal relation; and submission to him in all his offices, as a prophet to be taught and instructed by him, as a priest to be washed in his blood, and justified by his righteousness, to which they heartily submit, and as their Lord and King to the sceptre of his kingdom, the laws of his house, and ordinances of his Gospel; for they are made a willing people, not only to be saved by him, but to serve him in body and soul, and with all they have; as it is but right they should, since he has given himself, his all, for them. Giving themselves up to the apostles, signifies not a surrender of themselves to them as lords over God's heritage, to be governed and ruled over in a tyrannical and arbitrary way; but a submitting of themselves to them, as Christ's servants set over them in the Lord, whilst they minister the word and administer the ordinances, according to the will of Christ; owning them as their fathers, or instructors, and guides, and as watchmen and overseers placed in and over the churches, for their spiritual welfare: all which is,

by the will of God:

as that poor sensible sinners should give up themselves to Christ, to be saved by him, and serve him; and that they should join themselves to the churches, and be subject to the care, teachings, and government of his servants in his house.

2 Corinthians 8:6***Insomuch that we desired Titus***

Observing the very great readiness, cheerfulness, and liberality of the poor Macedonians in this matter, the apostles could do no other than desire Titus to forward, hasten, and accomplish a like liberal contribution among the Corinthians; or the sense is, that the Macedonians not only prayed with much entreaty, as in (2 Corinthians 8:4) that the apostle would be pleased to take their collection, and send or carry it to Jerusalem; but also that they would entreat Titus,

that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace

also;
that is, that as he had already moved this affair to the Corinthians while he was with them, and had made some progress in it, though what, through one thing or another, it had been retarded, and lay in some measure neglected; that he might be desired to go again, on purpose to complete so good a work, so acceptable to God, and so useful to the poor saints; which carries in it a new and strong argument to stir up the Corinthians to this service; since they had not only the example of the Macedonian churches, but it was even at their request that Titus was desired to go upon this errand; and to this sense read the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions.

2 Corinthians 8:7***Therefore as ye abound in everything***

In all gifts and every grace, in the use and exercise of them, insomuch that they were enriched in everything, and wanted nothing; see (1 Corinthians 1:5-7) , that is here expressed in general, is explained by particulars following:

in faith:

both in the doctrine of faith, which they had received and professed, held fast to, and abode by; yea, they abounded in the knowledge of it, zeal for it, and thankfulness to God on account of it; and in the grace of faith, not an historical one, nor the faith of miracles, but that which is peculiar to God's elect, is the gift of his grace and the work of his Spirit, which has Christ for its object, and works by love; in this they abounded, inasmuch as they had a large measure of it, grew in it, were full of it, and were much in the exercise thereof:

in utterance,

or "speech": meaning either the gift of speaking with tongues, which many in this church had; or the gift; of understanding and explaining the word of God with much freedom; or a liberty of mind and speech to declare their faith in Christ, and make an ingenuous confession of it to others:

in knowledge;

of God and of Christ, and of the truths of the Gospel:

and in all diligence:

their ministers were diligent in preaching the Gospel, the people in hearing the word, and attending on ordinances, and both studiously careful to keep up the discipline of the church; and very industrious to discharge the several duties of religion, and to assist one another, both in things temporal and spiritual:

and in your love to us:

the apostles and ministers of the word, whom they loved, esteemed, and honoured for their works' sake: and since they were so eminent for these graces, and the exercise of them, the apostle exhorts them to liberality to the poor saints;

see that ye abound in this grace also;

for as faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love to Christ's ministers are graces; so also is kindness shown to Christ's poor members, it is a gift of God's grace, cannot be rightly exercised without the assistance of his grace, has for its objects men who have received the grace of God, and will be rewarded with a reward of grace; persons eminent for the several graces of the Spirit of God, and the exercise of them, it may be not only desired, but expected from them, that they should abound in the exercise of beneficence to the poor. This is another argument exciting to that good work.

2 Corinthians 8:8***I speak not by commandment***

Either of God, who has not fixed the certain times when, or certain sums which persons are to give, and other circumstances, which are left to discretion; but in general has signified it as his will, that those in necessity are to be relieved by such who are in ability to do it: or as an apostle, he did not speak in an imperious manner, extorting from them a collection, or laying his apostolical injunctions upon them to make one; he did not go about to force or oblige them to it, for men in such cases must act willingly, and what they do, must do of their own accord with cheerfulness, and not through constraint or grudgingly:

but by occasion of the forwardness of others;

or "through carefulness for others"; what moved the apostle to propose this matter to the Corinthians, and exhort them to it, were either the forwardness of the Macedonians, cheerfully contributing in the midst of their poverty, and their urgent solicitations that the same good work might go on elsewhere, or else the very great care and concern that he himself had for the poor saints at Jerusalem: it was not therefore to show his apostolical authority, that he sent Titus to them to finish this service; but he was stirred up hereunto, partly by the bounty and solicitations of others, and partly by bowels of compassion within himself, and concern in his own mind for the poor saints; and also, as he adds,

to prove the sincerity of your love;

to God, to Christ, to his ministers, and to the saints, particularly the poor; that their love might appear to be true, genuine, hearty, and real to others, to all men as well as to them the apostles.

2 Corinthians 8:9***For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus***

This is a new argument, and a very forcible one to engage to liberality, taken from the wonderful grace and love of Christ, displayed in his state of humiliation towards his people; which is well known to all them that have truly believed in Christ; of this they are not and cannot be ignorant, his love, good will, and favour are so manifest; there are such glaring proofs of it in his incarnation, sufferings, and death, that leave no room for any to doubt of it:

that though he was rich;

in the perfections of his divine nature, having the fulness of the Godhead in him, all that the Father has, and so equal to him; such as eternity, immutability, infinity and immensity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence in the works of his hands, which reach to everything that is made, the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that in them are, things visible and invisible; in his universal empire and dominion over all creature; and in those large

revenues of glory, which are due to him from them all; which riches of his are underived from another, incommunicable to another, and cannot be lost:

yet for your sakes he became poor;

by assuming human nature, with all its weaknesses and imperfections excepting sin; he appeared in it not as a lord, but in the form of a servant; he endured in it a great deal of reproach and shame, and at last death itself; not that by becoming man he ceased to be God, or lost his divine perfections, thought these were much hid and covered from the view of man; and in his human nature he became the reverse of what he is in his divine nature, namely, finite and circumscribable, weak and infirm, ignorant of some things, and mortal; in which nature also he was exposed to much meanness and outward poverty; he was born of poor parents, had no liberal education, was brought up to a trade, had not where to lay his head, was ministered to by others of their substance, and had nothing to bequeath his mother at his death, but commits her to the care of one of his disciples; all which fulfilled the prophecies of him, that he should be (לָדַל) and (רָבִי) , “poor” and “low”, (Psalms 41:1) (Zechariah 9:9) . The persons for whom he became so, were not the angels, but elect men; who were sinners and ungodly persons, and were thereby become bankrupts and beggars: the end for which he became poor for them was,

that they through his poverty might be rich;

not in temporals, but in spirituals; and by his obedience, sufferings, and death in his low estate, he has paid all their debts, wrought out a robe of righteousness, rich and adorned with jewels, with which he clothes them, and through his blood and sacrifice has made them kings and priests unto God. They are enriched by him with the graces of his Spirit; with the truths of the Gospel, comparable to gold, silver, and precious stones; with himself and all that he has; with the riches of grace here, and of glory hereafter. These are communicable from him, though unsearchable, and are solid and substantial, satisfying, lasting, and for ever. Now if this grace of Christ will not engage to liberality with cheerfulness, nothing will.

2 Corinthians 8:10

And herein I give my advice

As Daniel did to Nebuchadnezzar, (Daniel 4:27) . The apostle did not choose to make use of his apostolical authority, or give orders, as he sometimes did in such cases; he did not think fit to speak by way of commandment, obliging them to what they ought to do willingly; looking upon this the most prudential step, and wisest method he could take in order to succeed, only to give his judgment in this matter, as what would be best for them, and most conducive to their real good:

for this is expedient for you;

most versions read it, “profitable”; doing acts of beneficence is profitable to persons, as to things temporal, God usually blessing such with a greater affluence of the things of life, and which indeed is often promised; and is also profitable with respect to things spiritual, for if God does not make it up to them in temporal enjoyments, yet with his presence, the discoveries of his love, the joys of his salvation, and an increase of every grace; so Gaius, that hospitable man to the apostle, and all Christian strangers, was in much spiritual health, and a prosperous condition in his soul, when but in an ill state with respect to his body: yea, such a conduct is profitable in relation to things eternal; for as it springs from the grace of God, and men are assisted therein by it, and is exercised towards persons that have received it, it will be rewarded with a reward of grace; though it may be, the apostle here does not so much argue from the utility, as the decency of it in the Corinthians;

who,
says he,

have began before, a year ago, not only to do, but also to be forward,

or “willing”: it is hard to say whether the apostle designs to commend or reprove them; and indeed, it seems as if there was a mixture of praise and dispraise in this passage; it was in their favour that they had begun before, even a year ago, and were willing and forward of themselves to this good work; yea, were the first that set it on foot, and so were an example to the Macedonian churches, and others; but then this was against them, that the other churches, which began later than they, had finished before them; whether this their charity was obstructed, as some have thought, through some affliction and persecution that befell them, which if it appeared would much excuse them; or rather it was neglected through lukewarmness and indolence; wherefore the apostle gives his sentiments, that to save their own credit, it was expedient for them to finish what they had begun; for otherwise, as their boasting of them would be in vain, so they would expose themselves to contempt and incur disgrace; and it was not only proper that they should do this, but do it willingly, and with much cheerfulness, for that is meant by being “forward” or “willing”; that they not only do it, but do it with a good will, which they at first discovered.

2 Corinthians 8:11

Now therefore perform the doing of it

This is a conclusion from the former advice, to finish what was readily willed; for as it is not enough to do a thing, unless it is done cheerfully and willingly, so it is not sufficient to express a good will to such service as is here called to, without doing it; both should go together:

that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance

also;
in some cases there is neither power nor will to do good; in others there is will, when there is not a power; but in this case of beneficence to the poor saints, as there was a willingness declared, there was an ability in the Corinthians to perform; they had it in the power of their hands, more or less, to act: and the apostle in the last clause of this verse points out the rule and measure of their liberality,

out of that which you have;

according to your abilities, and as God has prospered you; and with which he shuts up the mouths of all objectors, rich and poor: should the rich say, would you have us give away all we have? the answer is, no; but “out of that which you have”, something of it, according as you are able; should the poorer sort say, we are in mean circumstances, we have families to provide for, and can spare little, and what we can do is so trifling, that it is not worth giving or accepting; the reply is, give “out of that which you have”, be it less or more; it follows,

2 Corinthians 8:12

For if there be first a willing mind

If what is done springs from a truly noble, generous spirit, a spirit of bountifulness and liberality; and is given cheerfully and freely, and according to a man’s ability; the quantity matters not, whether it be more or less:

it is accepted;

both of God and man:

according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

The widow’s mite was as acceptable, and more so, than all the rich men cast into the treasury; a cup of cold water given to a prophet, in the name of a prophet, is taken notice of by God, and shall have its reward. The present sent by the Philippians to the Apostle Paul, and which perhaps was not very large, was “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God”, (Philippians 4:18) .

2 Corinthians 8:13

For I mean not that other men be eased and you burdened.

] Referring either to the givers; and that either to the richer and meaner sort in this church; the apostle's sense being, not to put the whole burden of the collection upon some only, whilst others were excused doing little or nothing; but that everyone should give according to his ability; or to other churches in poorer circumstances; and the apostle's meaning was, not that these churches by reason of their meanness should be entirely free from this service, as it was plain they were not, by the instance of the Macedonians; and that the whole be devolved upon the Corinthian church, and others that were rich; but that all should contribute according to their circumstances: or this may refer to the persons given to, and for whom this beneficence was asked; for the words may be rendered, "for not that there may be ease", or relaxation "to others, and to you affliction" or straitness; that is, his meaning was, not that there should be such a contribution raised for these poor saints at Jerusalem, that they should live in ease and great abundance; whilst their benefactors, through an over abundant generosity to them, were straitened, and their families reduced to great difficulties; this was what was far from his intentions.

2 Corinthians 8:14

But by an equality

All that he meant was, that there might be an equality both in givers and receivers, proportioned to their several circumstances and stations of life:

that now at this time;

which was a very necessitous time at Jerusalem, there being a famine there, and their common stock exhausted:

your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance

also may be a supply for your want;

which respects either the different abilities of givers at different times; and that whereas now the church at Corinth was rich, and wealthy, and had great abundance of the things of this world, they in this general collection were able to make up the deficiencies of other churches; and so should it ever be their case, as it might be, that they should be reduced, and these other churches increased, and enjoy a large abundance, they might hereafter in their turn supply what would be wanting in them: or else the persons given to; and the sense is, that should they ever change circumstances, as it was not impossible that they that were now rich should become poor, and they that were poor become rich; then as their abundance had been a supply to the wants of others, the abundance of others in their turn would be a supply to their wants; so that the argument is taken from the hope of retribution, in case of such vicissitudes; see (Luke 6:38) his view was,

that there may be equality;

either that in time to come an equal return may be made, should it be necessary; or that at present some sort of equality might be observed between the rich and poor; that the rich should so distribute as not to leave themselves without a proper support, according to their station of life; and yet so freely communicate, that the poor may not be without food and raiment, suitable to their lower sphere of life.

2 Corinthians 8:15

As it is written

In (Exodus 16:18)

he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack;

respect is had to the history of the manna, a sort of food God prepared for the Israelites in the wilderness; and which were gathered by them every morning, by some more, by others less; and yet when it came to be measured, every man had his "omer" and no more, one had nothing over, and the other not at all deficient; each man

had his proper and equal quantity; and which, by the Jews F23, is looked upon as a miracle that was wrought: many useful instructions may be learned from this history, as that as there was a general provision made by God for the Israelites, good and bad, and the mixed multitude that came from Egypt with them; so there is an universal providence of God which reaches to all creatures, even to the vegetable, to the birds of the air, and beasts of the field, to all the individuals of human nature, and to the bad among them as well as the good; though to the latter it is more special, who of all men have the least reason to be distrustful and uneasy: and as that provision was daily, so is that providential supply which all creatures have from God; he is to be trusted to, and depended on daily; application is to be made to him every day for daily bread; nor should there be any anxious concern for the morrow. Moreover, as the Israelites, though the manna was prepared for them, were to rise in the morning and gather it before the sun waxed hot; so notwithstanding the providence of God, and the daily care he takes of men, yet diligence, industry, and the use of means are highly commendable. And as some gathered more and others less, yet upon measuring it with the “omer”, there was an entire equality, one had not more nor less than another; so upon the winding up of things in Providence, such as have gathered much riches in the morning of life, in the evening of death will have nothing over, nor anything to show more than others; and they that have gathered little will appear to have had no lack; both will have had food and raiment, and no more, only with this difference, some will have enjoyed a richer diet and clothing, and others a meaner, and both suitable to their circumstances in life; which may instruct us to depend upon divine Providence, daily to be content with such things as we have, and to make a proper use of what is gathered, whether more or less, and not only for ourselves, but for the good of others. This discovers the egregious folly of such, who are anxiously concerned for the gathering and amassing much worldly riches together; which when they have done, they lay it up for themselves, and do not make use of it for common good, neither for the good of civil society, nor the interest of religion. Let it be observed, that those Israelites who from a selfish covetous disposition, and distrust of divine Providence, left of their manna till the morning, “it bred worms and stank”: which was by the just judgment of God inflicted as a punishment; for otherwise it was capable of being kept longer. So when covetous mortals lay up for themselves for time to come, and do not communicate to the necessities of others, such a practice breeds and produces worms, moth, and rottenness in their estates, which gradually decrease, or are suddenly taken from them, or they from them: such an evil disposition is the root and cause of many immoralities in life; it greatly prejudices professors of religion in things spiritual; and it tends to their everlasting ruin, to breed that worm of an evil conscience that will never die, and to render their persons stinking and abominable, both in the sight of God and men.

FOOTNOTES:

F23 Jarchi & Aben Ezra in Exod. xvi. 18. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 76. 3.

2 Corinthians 8:16

But thanks be to God

The apostle proceeds to give an account of the persons and their characters, who were employed in making this collection at Corinth for the poor saints, and begins with Titus; and the rather because he had been already concerned in setting afoot that good work among them; and gives thanks to God,

which,
says he,

put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you,

by “earnest care” is meant that very great carefulness, solicitude, and diligence, Titus had shown in stirring them up to a liberal contribution; and which was the same that he had expressed in the arguments just now used by him, to engage them in the same service; and this care, as it was a very earnest and hearty one, so he suggests that

it was more for them, than for the sake of the poor; the performance of acts of beneficence and liberality tending more to the advantage and account of the giver than of the receiver: and he further intimates, that these good motions in the heart of Titus were not merely natural, or the effects of human power and free will, but were of God, as every good thing is; they were wrought in him by the Spirit of God, and sprung from the grace of God, and therefore the apostle returns thanks to God for the same; and the mention of this could not fail of carrying weight with it, and of having some influence on the minds of the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 8:17

For indeed, he accepted the exhortation

The Macedonians besought the apostle with much entreaty to give unto him, (2 Corinthians 8:4 2 Corinthians 8:6) or which being moved by their example, they gave unto him, namely, that he would go and finish what he had already begun; and accordingly he did not refuse, but readily accepted the exhortation: yea, not only so,

but being more forward;

than was known or could have been expected; which shows that this was put into his heart by God, before it was moved unto him; so that if he had never been asked, or exhorted hereunto, he would have gone of himself:

of his own accord he went unto you;

so great is his care of you; so great his love unto you so willing was he to come again and pay another visit: and especially on this account, where he had before been treated with so much respect and kindness. Titus having been at Corinth already, and being well known there, the apostle forbears saying anything more in his commendation.

2 Corinthians 8:18

And we have sent with him the brother

The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “our brother”; and one of Stephens’s copies, “your brother”: who this brother was, is not certain; some think it was Luke the evangelist, the companion of the apostle in his travels:

whose praise is in the Gospel, throughout all the churches;

being known and highly commended by all the churches, for the Gospel he wrote; but it is not certain that Luke as yet had wrote his Gospel; and much less that it was so much known at present among the churches; and besides, this brother’s praise seems to be on account of his preaching the Gospel, and not writing one: others think Barnabas is intended, who was chosen and sent out by the churches along with the apostle; but these in a short time separated from each other, nor do we read of their coming together again: others are of opinion, that Apollos is designed, who was a very eloquent preacher, and of whom the apostle had given the Corinthians an intimation in his former epistle, that he would come to them at a convenient time; but to him is objected, that he never was chosen of the churches, to travel with the apostle on such an account as here mentioned: others would have it that Silas or Silvanus is meant, who was a very constant companion of the apostle, and of whom he makes mention in most of his epistles; and others have made no doubt of it, but John Mark is here meant, who not only wrote a Gospel, but was an excellent preacher of it, and was chosen by the churches to go along with Paul and Barnabas; and though there was some distaste taken to him by Paul, he was afterwards reconciled to him, and for his profitableness in the ministry was greatly desired by him; but after all, it is difficult to determine who it was, nor is it of any great moment: a “brother” he was; being not only a regenerate person, but a preacher of the Gospel; a brother in the ministry, and “one whose praise was in the Gospel”; greatly admired, and much commended, for his excellent talent in preaching the Gospel; and for this he was famous “throughout all the churches”; a very great commendation indeed; but this is not all, it follows,

2 Corinthians 8:19

And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches,

&c.] Not only famous for preaching the Gospel, but he was also appointed by the joint suffrages of the churches, which were made by the lifting up or stretching out of the hand, as the word here used signifies; this brother was not chosen to this service by a few private persons, or by a single church only, but by several churches; which does not refer to the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch, as if the apostles were appointed, and others were appointed by these churches to travel with them, in order to collect money for the poor saints at Jerusalem; of which no mention is any where made, only of their being sent out by them to preach the Gospel. James, Cephas, and John indeed, when they gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that they might go to the Heathen, desired them to “remember the poor”; (Galatians 2:9 Galatians 2:10) but these were not the churches. The church at Antioch did collect for the brethren in Judea, at the time of the famine among them, and sent their bounty by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, which seems to be the case here. This brother was chosen by the churches who collected, and not by the churches in Judea, for whom the collections were made; for it was usual, and what was right and proper, that the churches chose whom they thought fit to carry their liberality to Jerusalem; see (1 Corinthians 16:3 1 Corinthians 16:4) . Now this brother had the honour to be chosen by these churches,

to travel,

says the apostle,

with us, with this grace;

bounty or beneficence of the churches, what they had freely and liberally contributed for the supply of the poor, from a principle of grace, and by the assistance of it;

which is administered by us;

not given by the apostles, but collected by them; or what was procured by their means, in the several churches to whom they had moved it, and by proper arguments had excited them to it, with which they cheerfully complied: and this was done on a two fold account, both

to the glory of the same Lord:

Jesus Christ, who is the one Lord over all; the same Lord of the apostles, and the church at Corinth; the same Lord of the Corinthians, and the Macedonian and other churches; and the same Lord of the poor saints at Jerusalem, and the rich members of the several churches that contributed to them: and also to

the declaration of your ready mind;

or to stir up their ready mind to increase it and promote it in them, as well to make it manifest, and that it might appear to others, how readily and freely they came into this service; so that the apostle’s concern in this administration was not from any sinister and selfish ends; no, nor so much for the relief of the poor, though this was greatly designed, as for the glory of Christ, and the honour of his churches.

2 Corinthians 8:20***Avoiding this, that no man should blame us***

There is an allusion in these words to mariners, who, when sensible of danger, steer their course another way, in order to shun a rock and secure themselves. So the apostles being aware of the censorious spirits of some persons, and to prevent all suspicion of their converting any part of what they had collected to their own private use, sent Titus with it, a man of known probity and integrity; and he not by himself only, but another brother with him, one who had obtained a good report as a minister of the Gospel in all the churches: and, besides, was appointed not by the apostles, but by the churches themselves, to this service. This shows the good conduct, and great prudence of the apostle, and his care and solicitude that the ministry be not blamed; he knew he had many

enemies, and how subject such are to suspicion and jealousy, when persons are intrusted with much, which was the case here; for it is added,

in this abundance which is administered by us:

which designs the very large contributions which were made by the churches, through the means of the apostle's moving, exciting, and encouraging them thereunto; and which were committed to their care and trust, and at their entreaty they had accepted of.

2 Corinthians 8:21

Providing for honest things

Or premeditating, forecasting, or considering before hand in the mind, things that are good, that are of good report among men, as well as accounted good by God; for it becomes professors of religion, and especially ministers of the Gospel, to be careful not only to exercise a good conscience towards God; but so to behave, that they may obtain and preserve the good opinion of men; for when they have once lost their credit and reputation among men, their ministry becomes in a great measure useless; wherefore the apostle adds,

not only in the sight of the Lord:

the same Lord as before, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a diligent searcher of the hearts, and discerner of the thoughts, and observer of the ways and actions of all his people;

but also in the sight of men;

not that the apostle affected a mere outside show, popular applause, and the praise of men; but was concerned lest any weak persons, by their conduct, should be stumbled and fall, the edification of any should be hindered, and their ministry become unprofitable.

2 Corinthians 8:22

And we have sent with him our brother

This is a third person sent about this business. The apostle, in this, conformed to the customs of his nation; at least if he did not purposely do it, it agrees with the Jewish canons, which require three persons for the distribution of alms.

“The alms dish, (they say F24) is by three; nor do they appoint (פרנין פחות משלשה) “overseers” of it “less than three””

Again, they say F25,

“the poor's chest is collected by two, (ומתחלקת בשלשה) “but distributed by three”; it is collected by two, because they do not appoint governors over a congregation less than two, and it is distributed by three, even as pecuniary judgments; but the alms dish is collected by three, and distributed by three; for the collection and distribution are alike:”

who this brother was, sent by the apostle with Titus and the other person, is as uncertain as the former. Some think it was Luke, others Apollos, others Timothy, others Sosthenes, others Epaphroditus, others Silas, others Zenas the lawyer; a brother he was, and a very considerable character is given of him:

whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things;

he was a very diligent and industrious man, and so fit for this service; he had been tried and proved, and was found to be so, not only once or twice, but oftentimes; and that not in a few instances, but in many; and in noth-

ing did he ever show more diligence than in this matter:

but now much more diligent;

than ever he had been in anything before:

upon the great confidence which I have in you;

what doubled and increased this brother's diligence, and made him so eager for, and forward to this work, was, his observing the great confidence the apostle expressed of the very great readiness and liberality of the Corinthians; and which tacitly carries in it an argument exciting them thereunto: or this last clause may be read, "which he hath in you"; and so regards the confidence this brother had in them, which made him so ready to engage with, and join the other messengers.

FOOTNOTES:

F24 T. Hieros. Peah, fol. 21. 1.

F25 Misn. Peah, c. 8. sect. 7. & Jarchi, Maimonides & Bartenora, in ib. T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 8. 2. Maimon. Mattanot Anayim, c. 9. sect. 5.

2 Corinthians 8:23

Whether any do inquire of Titus

The apostle here sums up the characters of each of the above persons; as for Titus, he says,

he is my partner;

he had been his companion in his travels, a partner with him in preaching the Gospel, as well as in the troubles and persecutions he had met with; and was one with whom he had had sweet communion and fellowship:

and fellow helper;

or worker,

concerning you;

he had been a joint instrument with him, either in their conversion, or consolation, and correction; or for their edification and instruction, and setting things right, which had been out of order among them:

or our brethren be inquired of;

if their characters are asked after, as well as Titus's; by whom are meant not his fellow apostles, but the two brethren who were sent along with Titus; what may be truly said of them is,

they are the messengers of the churches;

they were chosen and sent forth by the churches, not only to preach the Gospel, but particularly to take care of the ministrations to the poor saints. They were messengers appointed by the churches for this service, and were also appointed to the service of the churches; respect seems to be had to the public minister in the synagogues, who was called (שליח) (בֹּרֵר) , "the messenger of the congregation", or "church" F26; whose business was to take care about the reading of the law and the prophets, to pray in public, and also to preach if there was no other; so we read F1 also of (שלוחי בית דין) , "the messengers of the sanhedrim"; who were sent at the proper time to reap the sheaf of the first fruits, and of others who swore the high priest before the day of atonement F2; and of (שלוחי מצוה) , "the messengers of the commandment" F3; who went to hear the exposition (of the traditions) and visit the head of the captivity:

and the glory of Christ:

meaning either that the churches were the glory of Christ, in whom he is glorified, where his glory is seen, and his presence enjoyed; or rather the messengers of them, on whom the image of Christ was stamped, who faithfully performed the work of Christ, in all things sought his glory and not their own; and in and by whom his glory was displayed, and held forth to others.

FOOTNOTES:

F26 T. Bab. Sota, fol. 37. 2. Tosephot Beracot, fol. 34. 1. Misn. Beracot, c. 5. sect. 5.

F1 Misn. Menachot, c. 10. 3.

F2 Misn. Yoma, c. 1. 5.

F3 T. Bab. Succa, fol. 26. 1.

2 Corinthians 8:24

Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches

This is the conclusion of the apostle, upon summing up the characters of these messengers; and his exhortation is, that since they were persons of so much note and worth, as they ought to be received with great marks of respect and affection, so they would take care evidently to make it appear to them who were sent by the churches, and before the churches, or before them who represented the churches; or so as that it might be known by the churches from whence they came, when they returned with their report; or be evident to the churches in Judea, when their liberality should be brought to them:

the proof of your love;

to Christ and his poor members, how hearty and sincere it was:

and of our boasting on your behalf;

how willing and forward they were to this good work, and how liberal they would be.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 9

The apostle proceeds in this chapter upon the same subject, the making a collection for the poor saints; gives the reason why he sent the brethren to them on this account; directs to the manner in which this service should be performed, and subjoins some fresh arguments to encourage them to it. As for the ministration itself, he suggests, it might seem needless to say any more about it, since he had said so much already in the preceding chapter, 2Co 9:1 and especially seeing they were so forward to it, and were even prepared for it a year ago; of which the apostle had boasted to the Macedonian churches, 2Co 9:2 and whereas it might be objected, that since there was such an inclination in them to this good work, why did he send these brethren to them? the reason of this he gives, 2Co 9:3,4 that they might get their collection ready against the time he came, lest should any of the Macedonians come along with him, and this collection not be made, his glorying of them would be in vain, and both he and they would be ashamed; wherefore he sent them before hand to prevent everything of this kind, and that their collection might appear to be not done in a covetous niggardly way, but bountifully and cheerfully, 2Co 9:5 which manner he directs unto, and encourages from the advantages of it, under the metaphorical phrases of sowing and reaping, intimating, that as a man sows, so he reaps; or in proportion to his giving, is he blessed, 2Co 9:6 wherefore he advises to give heartily, freely, and cheerfully, and that from this consideration, because cheerful giving is acceptable to God, being like himself, 2Co 9:7 who, as he loves, so he rewards the cheerful giver; and as he is able to give him abundance, so he does, whereby he is more qualified and fitted for such liberal service, 2Co 9:8 . And this is confirmed by a passage of Scripture cited out of Ps 112:9 showing, that he that gives bountifully to the poor is ever regarded by the Lord, 2Co 9:9 and which is further proved from the general course of Providence, which so multiplies and increases the seed sown in the earth, that it usually ministers seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; to which the apostle had alluded in the

use of these metaphorical expressions; or he puts up a prayer that there might, or delivers out a promise that there would be a like increase in giving liberally, as in sowing plentifully, 2Co 9:10 . And then he makes use of a new argument, stirring up to bountifulness, taken from the glory which is brought to God through thanksgiving to him, from the poor and needy, supplied by the liberality of those whose hearts he had opened, 2Co 9:11 . On which argument he enlarges, showing, that not only by this bounty the wants of the poor are supplied, and thanksgivings offered up to God on that account; but also the poor saints are led to glorify God for sending his Gospel to these their benefactors, and giving them his grace to submit unto it, which had had such an influence upon them as to cause them to communicate to their necessities in such a generous manner, 2Co 9:12,13 . To which he adds another argument, taken from the prayers of the poor saints, for those who liberally contributed to them, that they might prosper in body and soul, in things temporal and spiritual, 2Co 9:14 . And the chapter is concluded with a thanksgiving to God for the grace bestowed upon all the churches, and particularly for the gift of Christ to the sons of men; which contains in it another argument for beneficence and liberality, 2Co 9:15 .

2 CORINTHIANS 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly*, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

2 Corinthians 9:1

For as touching the ministering to the saints

It looks at first sight as if the apostle was entering upon a new subject, though by what follows it appears to be the same; for by "ministering to the saints", he does not mean the ministry of the Gospel to them; nor that mutual assistance members of churches are to give each other; but either the fellowship of ministering to the saints, which

the churches had entreated him, and his fellow ministers, to take upon them, namely, to take the charge of their collections, and distribute them to the poor saints at Jerusalem; or rather these collections themselves, and their liberality in them: with respect to which he says,

it is superfluous for me to write to you;

that is, he thought it unnecessary to say any more upon that head, because he had used so many arguments already to engage them in it, in the foregoing chapter; and because he had sent three brethren to them, who well understood the nature of this service, and were very capable of speaking to it, and of enforcing the reasonings already used; and more especially he judged it needless to dwell on this subject, for the reasons following.

2 Corinthians 9:2

For I know the forwardness of your mind

How that they were willing of themselves to engage in this good work; how readily they came into it; what a cheerful disposition of mind they showed towards it; and how forward they were to begin the collection:

for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia;

he had one it before, which had put them upon the like service, and he still continued to boast of them,

that Achaia was ready a year ago:

not that their collection was ready made so long ago; but they had shown a readiness of mind, as to every good work, so to this of communicating to the saints a year ago, when they made a beginning, though as yet had not finished. By Achaia is meant, the inhabitants of Achaia. The Arabic version renders it, the citizens of Achaia; of this country, (See Gill on Acts 18:12). It is sometimes taken in a large sense, and designs Greece, and includes the countries of Doris, Hellas, Aetolia, Locri, Phocis, Boeotia, Attica, and Megaris; and had its name, as some say, from the frequent inundation of waters; and others, from one of the three generals of the Pelasgi, who were of this name; and sometimes it is taken strictly and properly for the country of the Peloponnesus, or the Morea. And so Drusius, out of Hesychius, has observed, that the Achaeans were Greeks; but properly they were they that inhabited that part of Peloponnesus, called Achaia; and these seem to be intended here. The Gospel was preached in these parts with success; Epaenetus, whom the Apostle Paul salutes, (Romans 16:5) and the house of Stephanas he mentions, (1 Corinthians 16:15) were the firstfruits of it; and in process of time several churches were here gathered, and which continued for several ages. In the “second” century there was a synod in Achaia, concerning the time of keeping Easter, in which Bacchylus, bishop of Corinth, presided; in the beginning of the “fourth” century, the bishops of Achaia were present at the council of Nice, and in the same century bishops out of this country assisted at the synod in Sardica; in the “fifth” century there were many churches in Achaia, and the bishops of them were present in the Chalcedon synod; out of this country went several bishops, in the “seventh” century, to Constantinople, and were in the sixth synod there; and in the “eighth” century there were bishops of Achaia in the Nicene synod F4: here by Achaia are designed the churches of Christ, which were in that part of Greece in which Corinth stood, and of which that was the metropolis; so that when the apostle says Achaia was ready, his meaning is more particularly, that the Corinthians were ready:

and,

adds he,

your zeal hath provoked very many:

or “the zeal which is of you”; which sprung from, and was occasioned by them; for not the zeal of the Corinthians is here intended, as seems at first view, but that emulation which was stirred up in some of the leading persons among the Macedonians, upon hearing how ready they at Corinth were to minister to the necessitous brethren; and the zeal which appeared in these principal men, which was very warm, and yet prudent and seasonable, wrought very much on the minds of others, who, led by their example, contributed in a very generous

and unexpected manner. In the Greek text it is, “the zeal out of you”; or, as the Arabic version renders it, “the zeal that arose from you”, which was occasioned by them.

FOOTNOTES:

F4 Hist. Eccles. Magdeburg. cent. 2. c. 9. p. 125. cent. 4. c. 2. p. 5. c. 9. p. 425. cent. 5. c. 2. p. 6. cent. 7. c. 10. p. 258. cent. 9. c. 2. p. 7.

2 Corinthians 9:3

Yet have I sent the brethren

Titus, and the other two mentioned in the foregoing chapter: one manuscript reads, “we have sent”; and the Ethiopic version, “they have sent”, that is, the Macedonians; but the common reading is best. It might be objected, that since the apostle knew the forwardness of their minds, how ready they were a year ago, and had boasted so much of their liberality, that it must be unnecessary to send the brethren to them, to stir them up to this work; which objection is prevented by observing the reason of his sending them:

lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf:

or, “in this part”, in this particular thing, (לִּהְיוֹת בְּהַחֲזָא) , “concerning this business”, or affair of beneficence to the poor, as the Syriac version renders it. He had boasted of them with respect to other things besides this; but he was chiefly concerned, knowing the frailty and changeableness of human nature, and how possible it was that their forwardness might abate, and they grow cold and indifferent to such service, lest his glorying of them should be in vain in this particular instance; wherefore he sent the brethren to put them on, that as they had begun they would finish:

that as I said ye may be ready,

That as he had said to the Macedonians, that they were ready in mind, it might appear to be so; or as he had ordered them in his former epistle, they might be actually ready; have their collection ready made, so that there might be no gathering when he came.

2 Corinthians 9:4

Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me

The apostle had determined to come himself, though he was afterwards prevented by Providence, but could not be certain of the coming of the Macedonian brethren with him; however, as it was probable that some of them would come, whose hearts were so much in this work, therefore he judged it fit and proper to send the brethren before hand, in case they should come:

and find you unprepared;

not so ready for this service as had been boasted of, and the collection not finished, which had been begun a year ago.

We (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting;

or “in this same substance”, or “subsistence of boasting”: a boasting, which, he thought, they had the most solid and substantial ground and foundation to proceed upon; which, should it come to nothing, must cause shame both in the apostles, who had so largely, and with so much assurance, boasted of them; and in the Corinthians, who must be put to the blush, when it should be told them how much they had been boasted of with respect to their readiness, and yet were unprepared: so (תְּוַחֲלֵת) , “hope”, expectation, confidence, is rendered by the Septuagint (καυχῆμα) , “boasting”, (Proverbs 11:7) and in (Psalms 39:5) (υποσταςω) , the word here used. And

some copies, and also the Vulgate Latin version, only read, “in this substance”, or glorying, and leave out boasting as superfluous.

2 Corinthians 9:5

Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren,

&c.] Titus, and the other two, on whom he did not lay his commands, or apostolical injunctions, according to the authority and dignity of his office; only exhorted or besought them, and which was judged by him very needful and proper at this time:

that they would go before hand unto you;
before him, and the Macedonian brethren that might probably come with him:

and make up before hand your bounty;

or blessing; for any present sent, or delivered, by one person to another, as a token of their friendship, favour, and good will, whether in a necessitous case or not, was by the Jews called (hkrb) , “a blessing”; see (Genesis 33:11) (1 Samuel 25:27) and especially what is contributed for the relief of the poor may be so called, because it is not only a part of the bounty of Providence, and blessings of life, with which men are favoured; but is also one way of blessing God for the mercies he has blessed them with, and likewise of blessing, or doing good to fellow creatures and Christians. Moreover, because for this the poor bless their benefactors; and it is a blessing itself to do good to others. Now the apostle judged it expedient to send the brethren before hand to complete and finish this good work begun.

Whereof,

says he,

ye had notice before:

in his former epistle, (1 Corinthians 16:1 1 Corinthians 16:2) or which was promised before by them; or had been spoken of so much before by him to other churches:

that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty,

or blessing,

not as of covetousness;

that is, that the collection being ready made, largely and liberally, it might appear to be a free generous action, and show what a noble bountiful disposition they were of; and not performed as covetous men usually do what they do, sparingly, tenaciously, keeping their money as long as they can, being loath to part with it.

2 Corinthians 9:6

But this I say

This the apostle would have the Corinthians take notice of, and well consider, it being what he could aver for truth, by observation and experience; that as in things natural, so in things of a moral and spiritual kind,

he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which
soweth bountifully,
or with blessings,

shall reap also bountifully;

or with blessings; as a man sows, so shall he reap; the one is in proportion to the other. Sowing and reaping are here used in a metaphorical sense. The former signifies doing acts of beneficence and liberality. So it is used in the Old Testament, and in Jewish writings; see (Ecclesiastes 9:6) (Isaiah 32:20) . The interpretation of the latter text, give me leave to produce out of the Talmud F5 as follows, and which will serve to illustrate this of the apostle's.

``Says. R. Jochanan, in the name of R. Benaah, what is that which is written, "blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox, and the ass?" blessed are the Israelites, for when they are employed in the law, (ובגמילות חסדים) , "and in acts of beneficence", their evil concupiscence is delivered into their hand, and they are not delivered into the hand of their evil concupiscence: or, as it is elsewhere F6 said, such are worthy of the inheritance of two tribes, Joseph and Issachar; as it is said, "blessed are ye that sow beside all waters", (ואינו זרייה אלא דקה) , "and there is no sowing but alms"; or, by the word "sowing", nothing else is meant but doing of alms, as it is said, (Hosea 10:12) and there is no water but the law, or nothing else is meant by water but the law, as it is said, (Isaiah 55:1) . And as to these words, "that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass", it is a tradition of the house of Elias, for ever let a man place himself by the words of the law, as an ox to the yoke, and an ass to the burden."

There is a good deal of likeness between sowing the seed in the earth, and doing of alms, or acts of beneficence. The seed that is sown is what is selected and reserved out of the stock expended or sold off, which if not done, there would be no provision for futurity; so that which a man gives for the relief of the necessitous, is what he lays by him in store of what God has prospered him with; in doing which he may hope for a fruitful harvest, whereas otherwise he could expect none: as seed is cast from, and scattered about by the sower all over the field; so what is given to the poor, it is parted with unto them, and spread among them, everyone has a portion; and it looks like a diminution of a man's substance, and as if it would never return with any advantage; though it does, as in a natural, so in a metaphorical sense. The sower casts and scatters his seed with an open hand; was he to gripe it in his fist, or only let go a grain of corn or wheat here and there, he would have but a poor harvest; so the cheerful giver opens his hand wide, and bountifully supplies the wants of the needy; who, as the sower casts his seed on the empty field, so he bestows his bounty on indigent persons, on all men in want, especially the household of faith: and, as when he has done, he harrows the ground, and covers the seed under the earth, where it lies hid, and is very unpromising for a while, and yet he exercises faith, hope, and patience, with respect to an harvest; so the generous benefactor does what he does in as private a manner as may be; and though for a time his good deeds may seem to be attended with little prospect of reward, yet in the end they certainly shall; for as a man sows, so shall he reap: if he sows, that is, gives nothing, he shall reap nothing; if he sows but little, he shall reap little; and if he sows much, he shall reap much; and that of the selfsame kind which he sows; as he is liberal in things temporal, so shall he prosper and succeed in the same; see (Proverbs 3:9 Proverbs 3:10) (Proverbs 11:24 Proverbs 11:25) (Isaiah 32:8) (Galatians 6:7-10) .

FOOTNOTES:

F5 T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 5. 2. Zohar in Exod. fol. 2. 4.

F6 T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 17. 1.

2 Corinthians 9:7

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart

Which is not to be understood of the quantity, or any set sum he has fixed upon in his mind to give; but of the quality or nature of giving; or of the manner in which he is to give:

so let him give;

of his own will and free choice, from his very heart; not as directed and forced by others, but according to his

own counsel and determination:

not grudgingly;

or not of grief; with pain and uneasiness of mind, grieving at parting with what is given, reflecting on the persons that move him to it, or on the objects moved for. The Jews F7 reckon this the lowest degree of all in giving alms; “when a man gives to anyone” (בָּבִי) , “with grief”, to which the apostle seems to refer: who adds,

or of necessity;

of force, by coercion, being obliged to it by the influence, example, or commands of superiors; or through the powerful motives, or prevailing entreaties of others; for without these, men, according to their abilities, should give of themselves freely and liberally:

for God loveth a cheerful giver;

or one that gives (בְּבֵר פְּנִימָ יְפוּת) , “with a cheerful countenance”, as the Jews F8 say; or as elsewhere {F9}, “with a cheerful heart”: their rule is this,

“he that doth the commandment, i.e. alms, let him do it (בְּלֵב שִׂמְחָה) , “with a cheerful heart.””

Who looks pleasantly on the person or persons that move him to it, or on the object to whom he gives; who parts with his money willingly, and takes delight in doing good to others; such givers God loves: not that their cheerful beneficence is the cause of his special peculiar love to them in his own heart, which arises from nothing in man, or done by him; but the meaning is, that God does well to such persons; shows his love to them; he lets them know how kindly he takes such acts of theirs, by prospering and succeeding them in their worldly affairs. In the Septuagint in (Proverbs 22:8) are these words, “God blesses a cheerful man, and a giver”, which the apostle refers to.

FOOTNOTES:

F7 Maimon. Mattanot Anayim, c. 10. sect. 14.

F8 Maimon. Mattanot Anayim, c. 10. sect. 13.

F9 Vajikra Rabba, fol. 174. 1. Parash. 34.

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound towards you

By “all grace” is meant, not the love and favour of God, the source of all blessings enjoyed in time and eternity; nor the blessings of grace, the fruits of it; nor the Gospel which reveals them; nor the various graces of the Spirit implanted in regeneration; nor gifts of grace, fitting men for ministerial service; all which God is able to make to abound, and does, when he gives enlarged discoveries of his love, makes fresh applications of covenant grace, leads more fully into the knowledge of his Gospel, carries on the work of his grace in the soul, and calls forth grace into act and exercise, and increases gifts bestowed; nor even merely temporal blessings of every sort, which men are unworthy of, are all the gifts of his goodness, and are given to his people in a covenant way; and which he can, and often does increase: but by it is meant all that goodness, beneficence, and liberality exercised towards the poor members of Christ; God is able, and he will, and it ought to be believed that he will, cause to return with an increase, all that which is expended in relieving the necessities of the saints; that is not thrown away and lost, which is communicated to them, but shall be repaid with use and interest, be restored with abundance, any more than the seed which the husbandman casts into the earth; for as God is able, and has promised, and will, and does cause that to spring up again, and bring forth an abundant increase, so will he multiply the seed of beneficence, and increase the fruits of righteousness. This now contains a new argument to move to liberality, and an antidote against the fears of want, which persons are sometimes pressed with, and tend to prevent their bountiful

acts of charity:

that ye always having all sufficiency in all things:

that is, God is able to increase, and will so increase your worldly substance, that you shall have a sufficiency, a perfect and entire sufficiency; enough for yourselves and families, for the entertainment of your friends, and the relief of the poor; which shall give you satisfaction and contentment, and that at all times, and with respect to everything necessary for you, as to food and raiment, that so ye may abound to every good work; as to all good works, so to this of beneficence in particular, and to every branch of it, as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like.

2 Corinthians 9:9

As it is written

In (Psalms 112:9) where it is said of the good and righteous man,

he hath dispersed

(hynwmm) , “his riches”, his substance, as the Chaldee paraphrase adds by way of explanation; not in a profuse extravagant manner, but with wisdom and prudence, and yet largely and liberally, according to his ability. Just as the sower scatters his seed here, and there, and in every place, with an open and wide hand, to the good man distributes to all in necessity, and makes them all partakers of his bounty; he gives not only to one, but to many, and not to all without distinction he meets with, whether necessitous or not:

he hath given to the poor.

This explains the former phrase, and points out the persons, the objects of the good man’s bounty and compassion:

his righteousness remaineth for ever.

This is not to be understood of his justifying righteousness, as if that consisted of, and was established upon his works of bounty and charity to the poor; nor of his fame among men on account of his liberality; nor of any reward in another world; but of his beneficence itself, it being common with the Jews to call alms (דקה) , “righteousness”: (See Gill on Matthew 6:1) and the sense is, that what such a man bestows in charity on the poor shall not be lost, but shall be like the seed cast into the earth, shall spring up again, and bring forth fruit with increase, according to what follows.

2 Corinthians 9:10

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, and bread for your food

For so the words ought to be pointed and read, as is clear from (Isaiah 55:10) to which they refer; and are a “periphrasis” of God, who so blesses the seed that is cast into the earth, that it brings forth such an increase, as that there is a sufficiency of bread for food to the eater for the present year, and a sufficiency of seed to sow with again the next year; and that God, that does this every year, is able “to minister to”, or supply your present necessities;

and to multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;

though some consider these as a wish or prayer of the apostle’s, that God would do all this for them. Some copies, and the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, read all in the future tense, “he will minister” to you, or “supply” you, “and will multiply your seed sown”,

and will increase the fruits of your righteousness;

and so contain a promise of a divine blessing, encouraging to liberality with cheerfulness, by strengthening their faith in the providence of God; who as he multiplies, not the seed expended in the family, or sold at market, or as

in the barn, or laid up for a better price, but the seed sown in the field, so he will multiply the substance of men; not what they lay out on themselves and families, or lay up in their coffers, but what they give away, or bestow on Christ's poor: and all effects which follow acts of liberality, and which are here designed by "fruits of righteousness", such as a good name among men, blessing, praise, thanksgiving, and prosperity in things temporal and spiritual, these God will abundantly increase; some of which are mentioned in the following verses. So alms with the Jews is not only called (דקדק), "righteousness", but "seed sown". Thus Jarchi interprets (Psalms 37:26) "and his seed is blessed", he that (זור), "sows" righteousness or alms, its end shall be for a blessing, or in the end he shall be blessed; and the phrase, "rain righteousness", in (Hosea 10:12) is by the Septuagint rendered, (γεννηματα δικαιοσυνησ), "fruits of righteousness", the same as here, from whence it seems to be taken.

2 Corinthians 9:11

Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness

These words may be connected with (2 Corinthians 9:8-10) being included in a parenthesis; and the sense is, that God was not only able to give them a sufficiency, and would give them a sufficiency of temporal things, as food and raiment to their satisfaction, and contentment for themselves, but a fulness, an exuberancy, an overplus also; not for luxury and intemperance, but that having such an affluence in all the good things of life, they might at all times, and upon every occasion, exercise a bountiful disposition in relieving the poor:

which causeth through us thanksgiving to God;

not their riches and fulness, but their liberal distribution of them to the poor saints, to which they were stirred up by the apostles; who were thankful to God who had so well succeeded their exhortations and advice, and which was the cause of thanksgivings in others: and since therefore such beneficence tended to the glory of God, as giving of thanks makes for his glory, this then ought to be attended to, and diligently performed; and so it furnishes out a new argument to this good work, which is enlarged upon in the following verses.

2 Corinthians 9:12

For the administration of this service

Not only by the Corinthians, and others, in giving and collecting, but by the apostles in ministering and distributing their contributions to the poor saints, produced these two very good effects: for it

not only supplieth the wants of the saints;

makes up their deficiencies, relieves their necessities, and furnishes them with what is comfortable and refreshing to them under their many sorrowful circumstances, which is answering a very valuable end:

but is abundant also by many thanks givings to God;

it has over and above this excellency in it, or its excellent use is enhanced, and abundantly appears by this consideration; that many precious souls are sent hereby to the throne of grace to give thanks to God, who put it into the hearts of the apostles to move the churches on their behalf, and who wrought upon them so cheerfully and largely to contribute to their necessities.

2 Corinthians 9:13

Whiles by the experiment of this ministration

That is, the poor saints at Jerusalem having a specimen, a proof, an experience of the liberality of the Gentile churches ministered to them by the apostles, first,

they glorify God;

by giving thanks unto him, acknowledging him to be the author of all the grace and goodness which they, and

others, were partakers of; particularly

for your professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ.

The Gospel of Christ is the doctrine of grace, life, and salvation by Christ, of which he is the author, as God, the subject matter, as Mediator, and the preacher, as man: subjection to it lies in a hearty receiving of the doctrines of it, and a cheerful submission to his ordinances; and this subjection was professed, declared, and made known to the churches in Judea, by their sending so largely to their relief, which they would never have done, if they had not cordially embraced the Gospel of Christ; for true faith in the doctrine of grace, and a sincere obedience to it, are best declared and known by love to the saints; for faith works by love, both to Christ, and to his people: next they glorified God by giving thanks to him,

for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

which shows, that though they were truly grateful, and heartily thankful for the favours they themselves received, yet not for these only, but for what other poor saints, in other places, were also partakers of; yea, that in the first place they were more sensibly affected with, and more especially thankful for the grace of God bestowed on the Gentiles, in sending the Gospel among them, and bringing them to a subjection to it, than for the temporal good they received from them.

2 Corinthians 9:14

And by their prayer for you

The sense is, they glorify God on your behalf, making mention of you in all their prayers at the throne of grace, giving thanks to God for your liberality to them, and imploring all the blessings both of the upper and nether springs upon you; and this contains another argument engaging the Corinthians to liberality, taken from the prayers of the saints for them: or the words may be connected with (2 Corinthians 9:12) the thirteenth verse being in a parenthesis; and show not only that this ministering to the poor saints relieved their wants, and caused thanksgivings to God, but abounded in this fruit also; it put them upon daily and importunate supplications to God for their welfare both in soul and body.

Which long after you;

or “earnestly desire you”; that is, “to see you”, as the Ethiopic version adds; or exceedingly love you: their affections are wonderfully drawn out to you; not so much, or barely for your kindness to them, as

for the exceeding grace of God in you;

for that large measure of it which was bestowed upon them in regeneration, as their unfeigned faith, lively hope, and sincere love; and for all that grace which was displayed in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whole salvation.

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

] Meaning either the goodness of God, both to the giver and receiver; for that the one gave so liberally, and the other received so largely, was from the grace of God, who so powerfully inclines the hearts of his children to do good, and offer so willingly of what he has given them, and who so wonderfully provides for the supply of the poor and needy; or else that exceeding grace of God which was so eminently, largely, and freely bestowed on the Corinthians in their effectual calling; or, as some think, Christ himself, who is to be sure “the unspeakable gift” of God; who, though his Son, his own Son, his only begotten Son, the Son of his love, his Son and heir, yet he gave him to be a covenant to the people, the head of his church, the Saviour of sinners, and to be a sacrifice in their room and stead: none can tell how great this gift is, which is so suitable and seasonable, so large and comprehensive, nor declare the love both of the Father and the Son, expressed in it. Thankful we should be for it; and our

thankfulness should be shown by highly prizing and valuing this gift; by laying the whole stress of our salvation on Christ; by ascribing all the glory of it to him; by giving up ourselves to him, and to his interest; by walking worthy of him in all well pleasing, and by communicating to the support of his cause, and the supply of his poor ministers and members. And thus the apostle tacitly suggests one of the strongest arguments that can be used, to stir up the saints to generosity and liberality, taken from the wonderful grace of God in the gift of his Son; for if he of his free grace, and unmerited love, has given his Son to, and for his people, and with him all things freely, both the riches of grace and glory, then they ought freely and bountifully to communicate temporal good things to the poor members of Christ, for whom God and Christ have an equal love, as for themselves.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 10

In this chapter the apostle has chiefly to do with the false teachers, and it is taken up in refuting their calumnies of him, and in exposing their boasting of themselves; and as he goes along, he takes notice of the efficacy of the Gospel, and of the success and extent of it, as it was preached by him, and other Gospel ministers, and points at the proper manner and ground of glorying. And whereas the false teachers had represented him as a mean spirited man, as well as his outward aspect was contemptible, and that he had not that authority and courage he boasted of, he describes himself by those characters they had reproached him with: by his name Paul, which signified little, they suggesting that he was little in soul, as well as in body; by his modesty and humility, when he was with the Corinthians, and by his boldness, now absent from them: and he entreats them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, which he imitated, and they ought also, that they would not join in those sneers, nor reproach him for these things, 2Co 10:1 and that they would so behave, that, when he came among them, he might have no occasion of using that power and authority, which the false teachers called bluster and boldness; and which he had thought and determined in his own mind to exercise on some who traduced him and his fellow ministers as carnal selfish persons, 2Co 10:2 which calumny he removes by owning, that they walked in the flesh, in the body, and were subject to imperfections, as men; but denies that their ministerial warfare or service was managed in a carnal and worldly, or in a weak way and manner, 2Co 10:3 assigning this reason for it, because the weapons they made use of, in the warfare of their ministry, to defend truth, and annoy the enemy, to enlarge Christ's kingdom, and weaken Satan's, were not carnal, weak, and worldly, but spiritual and efficacious, through the power of God that accompanied them; and which appeared by the use they were of to the demolishing the strong holds of the flesh, and bringing down the haughty and lofty imaginations of the fleshly mind, which were opposed to the knowledge of God, and the refuting all the sophisms of fleshly wisdom, and carnal reasonings against the Gospel of Christ. This was the influence it had on some through the power of divine grace, whereby they became obedient to Christ, and subject to his word and ordinances, 2Co 10:4,5 whilst on others, as on Elymas the sorcerer, who sought to pervert the right ways of God, the apostolical power was exercised in a way of just punishment and awful vengeance, 2Co 10:6 . The apostle moreover suggests to the Corinthians, that they judged of him, and the false teachers, according to the outward appearance of things, which was wrong: however, let these men make ever so great a show in the flesh, or what pretensions soever to Christianity, to being the members and ministers of Christ, the apostle would have them observe, that he, and those with him, were, and were to be looked upon as equally the same, 2Co 10:7 nay, should he exalt himself above them, and affirm he had an authority superior to theirs, which he describes by the efficient cause of it, the Lord, and by its end, edification, and not destruction, he should have no reason to be ashamed, since he was capable of giving proof of it, 2Co 10:8 however, he would say no more of this for the present, lest he should strengthen the calumny cast upon him, that it was his way to terrify by his letters, with blustering menaces of his power and authority, 2Co 10:9 and which calumny is more fully expressed in the words of the false teachers, who said, that his letters were bold and blustering, and by which he would be thought to be a man of power and authority; though, alas! a man of no speech nor presence, when in person among men, and so not to be regarded, 2Co 10:10 . In answer to which the apostle returns, that he would have such a reviler know, that as he was in word by letters when absent, such would he be found to be in deed when present, 2Co 10:11 and then proceeds to expose the vain glorying of the false teachers, and to observe those things which he, and other faithful ministers of the word, might glory of; though they could not give themselves the liberties they did, and chose

to glory in the Lord; they could not commend themselves in that bold and insolent manner, to the contempt of others, when there was no necessity for it, as the false teachers did, 2Co 10:12 nor could they boast of things they never did; of conversions they never were instruments of; of the planting of churches they had no concern in; and of spreading the Gospel where they had never been, which was the case of these men: whereas, whenever they gloried, it was when there was an absolute necessity for it, and always with modesty, acknowledging the grace and goodness of God unto them, and ever with truth; and of their own labours, and not of others; and particularly with respect to Corinth, it was with the strictest regard to truth that they affirmed they were the first that preached the Gospel there, converted souls, and planted a Gospel church, and hoped they should be the means of spreading it further still, 2Co 10:13-16 . However, they did not desire to glory in themselves, but in the Lord, from whom they had all their gifts, success, and usefulness; and so they directed others to do, 2Co 10:17 and because, for this reason, that he that commends himself is not approved of God, but he that is commended by the Lord, 2Co 10:18 .

2 CORINTHIANS 10

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

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

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

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

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

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

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

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

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

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

Now I Paul myself beseech you

The apostle having said what was necessary and proper to stir up the Corinthians to a liberal contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem, returns to the vindication of himself against the false apostles; and earnestly entreats the members of this church,

by the meekness and gentleness of Christ,

not to regard their reproaches, and join with them in them; for did they but consider the meek and gentle deportment of Christ, so worthy of his and their imitation, they would see there was no reason to reflect on him for that part of his conduct, in which he followed his Lord and master; whose meekness was to be seen in the assumption of human nature, in the whole of his life and conversation, and in his sufferings and death; and his “gentleness” of Spirit to be observed in his coming into this world, not to judge and condemn it, but that the world might be saved; in bearing all indignities and insults, without being provoked to wrath and revenge; in rebuking his disciples for the severity of their spirits, declaring he came to save, and not take away the lives of men; in praying for his enemies, and in his silence under all the ill treatment he met with from the worst of men. As the apostle had this excellent example before him, which served both to regulate his conduct, and support him under the hard measures he met with, so he was desirous to direct others to the observance of it, which might be a check upon the ill usage of him. He here speaks of himself in the language of his adversaries, who meant by these characters to expose him to scorn and contempt: “I Paul myself”; whose name the false teachers played upon, it signifying “little”; and he being of little stature, they reproached him for it, and would insinuate, that as his name was “little”, and his person mean, his bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible, that he had a little soul, was a man of small knowledge, mean parts, and a very insignificant minister. Now it is as if the apostle should say, I am not ashamed of my name, nor of my person, and I am willing to own myself the least of the apostles, yea, less than the least of all saints; but I beg of you by the mild and gentle Spirit of my Lord and master, whom I am not ashamed to imitate, that you would not join in those sneers. I am Paul, (αυτοω) , the “same” in my principles and practice, in my doctrine and life, when present and absent; though my enemies say the contrary, as that I am such an one,

who in presence am base,

or “humble among you”: they suggested, that when he was at Corinth he was humble and modest in his conversation, mild and gentle in all his expressions and deportment; and which they interpreted of a meanness and baseness of spirit, as though he crept and cringed to curry favour with men, to avoid offence, and gain and keep an interest among them:

but being absent, am bold toward you;

wrote blustering, hectoring, terrifying letters, threatening to come with his apostolic rod and deliver them up to Satan, to fright them into a compliance with him.

2 Corinthians 10:2***But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present,***

&c.] That is, he entreated them that they would so behave for the future, that he might have no occasion, when he came among them, to use that power and authority they called boldness, which he had received from Christ for edification, and not destruction; as for that asperity and roughness with which he wrote, and which was thought to be too severe, it was in order to reclaim them, and so prevent that sharpness he was empowered by Christ to use: for though he had said in his former epistle, (1 Corinthians 4:21) “shall I come unto you with a rod or in love? and in the spirit of meekness?” he chose to come in the latter, rather than with the former; namely, not

with that confidence wherewith,

says he,

I think to be bold:

by “confidence” he means the faith of miracles he was possessed of, and particularly the power he, and other apostles had, of striking dead or blind incorrigible offenders, or of delivering them to Satan to undergo some corporeal punishment; which he had been thinking of, and reasoning about in his own mind, and was almost come to a conclusion concerning it, to inflict it upon, and with it to be bold,

against some which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh;

who not barely thought so within themselves, but reasoned the matter with others, and would fain persuade them to believe that they did walk in a carnal manner; not that they had the face to say, that they walked after the dictates of corrupt nature, or lived in open vice and profaneness; but that they walked in craftiness, had their conversation in the world with fleshly wisdom, seeking their own worldly interest and secular advantage; which is denied by the apostle, (2 Corinthians 1:12) and was the real case, and true picture of the false teachers themselves.

2 Corinthians 10:3

For though we walk in the flesh

The apostle removes the calumny of walking after the flesh, by owning that they were in the flesh, in the body, in a state of imperfection, attended with many weaknesses and infirmities, and surrounded with a variety of afflictions and sorrows; in this sense they were, and lived and walked in the flesh; but then he denies the charge exhibited against them,

we do not war after the flesh:

every Christian’s life is a warfare with Satan, and his principalities and powers, with the world, the men and lusts of it, and with the corruptions of their own hearts; and much more is the life of a minister of the Gospel, who is called forth to meet the adversary in the gate; to stand in the hottest place of the battle, and sustain the whole fire and artillery of the enemy; to fight the good fight of faith, endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ, and with the weapons he is furnished with to war a good warfare: which is not done “after the flesh”; in such a manner as the men of the world wage war with one another; or upon carnal principles; or with carnal selfish views; or in a weak way and manner; but in a spiritual way, with all simplicity and disinterested views, with great courage and intrepidity of mind.

2 Corinthians 10:4

For the weapons of our warfare

By “warfare” is here meant, not that which is common to all believers, who are enlisted as volunteers under the captain of their salvation, and fight his battles, and are more than conquerors through him; but what is peculiar to the ministers of the Gospel; and designs the ministerial function, or office, and the discharge of it. So the Levitical function, or the ministerial service of the Levites, is called (בַּא) (הַבְּרָחָה) , “the warfare of the service”, (Numbers 8:25) . The ministry of the word is so styled, because that as war is waged in defence of men’s rights, properties, and liberties, and for the weakening of an enemy’s power and possessions, and for the enlargement of kingdoms and dominions; so this is in defence of the truths and liberty of the Gospel, that they may continue and abide; for the weakening of Satan’s kingdom, by delivering the lawful captives, taking the prey from the mighty, turning souls from the power of Satan to God, and translating them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ Jesus; and so for the enlargement of his kingdom, by spreading the Gospel far and near. The “weapons” with which this warfare is managed are the Scriptures of truth, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; and which indeed are an armoury, out of which may be taken weapons of all sorts, both offensive and defensive; such as serve both to establish and secure the doctrines of the Gospel, and to refute the errors of the

wicked: to which may be added all those gifts which Christ has received for, and gives to men, qualifying them for the work of the ministry, and for the understanding of the sacred writings; together with all those means made use of by them for their improvement in spiritual knowledge; such as diligent reading the word of God, and the labours of his faithful servants, frequent meditation thereon, and earnest prayer to God for more light and experience. Also the various graces of the Spirit, with which they are endued, may be taken into the account; such as the breast plate of faith in Christ, and love to himself, his people, word, ordinances, cause, and interest; the helmet of salvation, hope, the girdle of truth and faithfulness, and the excellent grace of patience to endure all hardships, reproaches, insults, afflictions, and persecutions, cheerfully; and finally, all the acts of their ministrations, such as preaching, prayer, the administration of ordinances, and laying on of censures, with the consent of the church. Now these weapons

are not carnal;

such as the men of the world fight with, not the temporal sword; for Christ sent forth his apostles without that, naked and unarmed amidst their enemies, his kingdom not being of this world, and so not to be defended and propagated in such a way; or as the weapons the false apostles used, such as natural eloquence, fleshly wisdom, carnal reason, cunning craftiness, the hidden things of dishonesty, and great swelling words of vanity; or they were not weak and impotent, which is sometimes the signification of “flesh”; see (Genesis 6:3) (Isaiah 31:3)

but mighty through God:

powerful and effectual through the blessing of God, and the influences of his grace and Spirit for the conversion of sinners, the edification of saints, the defence of truth, the confutation of error, the destruction of Satan’s kingdom, and the enlargement of Christ’s: for these weapons are not powerful of themselves; they are passive instruments, which are only efficacious when used by a superior hand; when the Gospel ministration is attended with “the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power”; and then they are serviceable

to the pulling down of strong holds.

The allusion seems to be to the falling of the walls of Jericho, at the sound of ram’s horns, which must be ascribed not to those instruments, which were in themselves weak and despicable, but to the power of God that went along with the sound of them. By strong holds are meant, the strong holds of sin and Satan; such as unbelief, pride, hardness of heart with which the heart of man is walled (so (bl twryq) , “the walls of the heart”, (Jeremiah 4:19)) against God and Christ, and the Gospel of the grace of God, and by which Satan fortifies himself, and keeps the palace and goods in peace, until the everlasting doors are thrown open, which were bolted and barred; and these walls of defence are pulled down by the King of glory, who enters in, which is usually done by the power of God, in the ministry of the Gospel: so sins are called strong holds, fortresses, and bulwarks, by the Talmudists {k}, who give this as the sense of (Ecclesiastes 9:14)

‘‘ a little city, this is the body; “and few men in it”, these are the members; “and there came a great king against it, and besieged it”, this is the evil imagination, lust, or concupiscence; and built against it (מִדְּרִימֵי) , “great bulwarks”, or fortresses, (אֵלֶּה הַגְּבוּרֹת) , “these are iniquities””

And so Philo the Jew F12 speaks of (τα βεβαιοτητα κακιασ ερεισματα) , “the firm munitions of vice” being broken down. Or else by them may be meant the fortresses of a man’s own righteousness, holiness, good works, and moral duties, in which he entrenches, and thinks himself safe: which the Spirit of God, in the ministry of the word, blows a blast upon, and which are cast down by it, that revealing a better righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ; or else the fleshly wisdom, rhetorical eloquence, and sophisms of false teachers, with which they endeavoured to fortify themselves against the doctrines of the Gospel, but in vain.

FOOTNOTES:

2 Corinthians 10:5***Casting down imaginations***

Or “reasonings”; the carnal reasonings of the minds of natural men against God, his providences and purposes, against Christ, and the methods of salvation, and every truth of the Gospel; which are all disproved, silenced, and confounded, by the preaching of the word, which though reckoned the foolishness and weakness of God, appears to be wiser and stronger than men; and whereby the wisdom of the wise is destroyed, and the understanding of the prudent brought to nothing:

and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God;

every proud thought of the heart, every great swelling word of vanity, every big look, even all the lofty looks and haughtiness of men, with every airy flight, and high towering imagination, reasoning, and argument advanced against the Gospel of Christ; which is here meant by the knowledge of God, and so called, because it is the means of leading souls into the knowledge of God, even into a better knowledge of him than can be attained to, either by the light of nature, or law of Moses; to a knowledge of him, and acquaintance with him in Christ the Mediator, in whom the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is given; and with which knowledge of God eternal life is connected, yea, in this it consists; it is the beginning of it, and will issue in it.

And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

or “carrying captive the whole understanding”; that is, so illustrating it with divine light, that it clearly sees Christ to be the alone, able, willing, full, and suitable Saviour, and so becomes obedient to him, both as a Saviour and a King; such an enlightened soul looks to him alone for life and salvation, ventures on him, and relies upon him, and is desirous and willing to be saved by him in his own way; he receives and embraces all his truths and doctrines with faith and love, and obeys them from the heart, and cheerfully and willingly submits to all his commands and ordinances; for though he is taken by the grace of God, and all his strong holds, reasonings, and high thoughts are demolished by the power of God in the Gospel, and he himself is carried captive, yet not against, but with his will, to be a voluntary subject of Christ, and cheerfully to submit to the sceptre of his kingdom.

2 Corinthians 10:6***And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience***

Not with the temporal sword, as the civil magistrate, but with the spiritual one; meaning either censures and excommunication, which a faithful minister of the Gospel, with the suffrage of the church, has at hand, and a power to make use of, for the reclaiming of disobedient persons; or rather that extraordinary power which was peculiar to the apostles, of inflicting punishments on delinquents, such as what was exercised by Peter upon Ananias and Sapphira, by the Apostle Paul on Elymas the sorcerer, the incestuous person, and Hymenaeus and Philetus, and which still continued with him; it was ready at hand, he could exercise it whenever he pleased, he only waited a proper time:

when your obedience is fulfilled:

till they were thoroughly reformed from the several abuses, both in doctrine and practice, they had fallen into, and were brought into a better order and decorum, and appeared to have been in all things obedient to the directions he had given; being unwilling, as yet, to use the awful authority he had from Christ, lest any of the dear children of God, who were capable of being restored by gentler methods, should suffer with the refractory and incorrigible.

2 Corinthians 10:7

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance

Or “look upon things”, ironically said; or “ye do look on things”, a reproof for making judgment of persons and things, by the outward appearance of them; so many judged of Paul by the meanness of his person, the weakness of his body, the lowness of his voice, his outward circumstances of life, his poverty, afflictions, and persecutions; and despised him; whilst they looked upon the riches, eloquence, haughty airs, noisiness, and personable mien, of the false apostles, and admired them:

if a man trusts to himself that he is Christ’s:

is fully assured that he has an interest in his love and favour, is redeemed by his blood, is a partaker of his grace, and a believer in him; or rather, that he is a minister of the Gospel, and an apostle of Christ, one that is qualified and sent forth by him to preach the word:

let him, of himself, think this again, that as he is Christ’s, even so are we Christ’s;

that is, he may, and ought of himself, without another’s observing it to him, of his own accord, willingly reason and conclude, by the selfsame marks and evidences he would be thought to be a minister of Christ, that we are also. The sense is, that let a man be ever so confident of his being a true minister of the Gospel, he will not be able to point out one criterion or proof of his being so, but what he might discern in the Apostle Paul, and the rest of his fellow ministers, and therefore ought to conclude the same of them as of himself. In which may be observed the great modesty of the apostle, who does not go about to disprove others being Christ’s, who so confidently boasted of it; nor bid them look to it to see if they were or not, since all that say so are not; only as if granting that they were, he would have them look upon him, and his fellow apostles as such also, who had at least equal pretensions to this character.

2 Corinthians 10:8***For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority,***

&c.] Than as yet he had done, or used to do; or rather the sense is, should he boast of a greater authority than the false apostles, or even than the true ministers of the Gospel in common had, he should not exceed the bounds of truth and modesty; for as an apostle he not only had an authority from Christ to preach the Gospel, and administer ordinances, but also had an extraordinary power of punishing offenders, as before observed:

which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for destruction;

a power which no mere man, no creature, though ever so exalted, could have given; none but Christ, who is Lord of heaven and earth, and who has all power in his hands, could clothe with such authority as this; and which is given by him, though for the destruction of the flesh, or punishment of the body, yet for the salvation and good of the soul or spirit, as in the case of the incestuous person; and though sometimes for the destruction of the individual person or persons punished by it, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, yet for the edification, spiritual instruction, and welfare of the whole community or church, of which these were a part. So this authority was exercised on Hymenaeus and Philetus, that either they themselves might not learn to blaspheme, or cease to blaspheme Christ, or his apostles, or the truths of the Gospel; or that others might be deterred from such a practice; and so was for the edification of the one, or the other, and the preservation of the whole.

I should not be ashamed;

as one that has told an untruth, or as a vain glorious man, who has made his boast of what he has not. The apostle signifies, that he should be able to make good such an assertion, should he think fit to mention it.

2 Corinthians 10:9

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

] Here seems to be something wanting, which is to be supplied, The sense is, though I might lawfully boast of the superior authority which we apostles have above other persons, in using sharpness with men insolent and hardened in sin; yet I will not, I forbear every thing of that kind, I drop it, I do not choose to insist upon it; (מחמא אגא) , “I overlook”, or “neglect” it, “I do not care” to do it, as the Syriac version supplies it; and this he thought most prudent and advisable, lest he should give any occasion to the above calumny that he was bold, and blustering, and terrifying by his letters when absent, and only threatened that he had no power to perform.

2 Corinthians 10:10

For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful

These words contain the reason why he did not choose to say any more of his authority as an apostle to punish offenders, that he might give no occasion for such a calumny, some among them, or the false apostles, had cast upon him; that his epistles, referring particularly to his former epistle, and that part of it which respected the incestuous person, and his delivery to Satan, were blustering and thundering; were laden with sharp reproofs and severe menaces; were heavy with charges, were filled with great swelling words, with boasts of power and authority, and with threatenings what he would do, when he came among them; whereas when present, as at his first coming to them, he was mild and gentle, even to a degree of meanness and baseness, as they suggested; and so they concluded he would be, should he come again; and therefore his letters were not to be regarded:

but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible:

he made a mean figure, being of a low stature, and having an infirm body: the account the historian F13 gives of him is this, that

“he had a small and contracted body, somewhat crooked and bowed, a pale face, looked old, and had a little head; he had a sharp eye; his eyebrows hung downwards; his nose was beautifully bent, somewhat long; his beard thick and pretty long; and that, as the hair of his head, had a sprinkling of gray hairs:”

hence one in Lucian F14 scoffingly says of him,

“when the bald headed Galilean met me, with his hook nose, who went through the air to the third heaven:”

though the words of this text rather regard his mind and mien than the make of his body; and suggest that he was not a man of that greatness of soul, and largeness of mind, not possessed of those abilities and gifts, and of that freedom of speech, and flow of words, his letters promised; but instead of that, was a man of a mean spirit, very abject and servile, and to be despised; his conduct weak, and carrying no majesty and authority with his presence, his words without weight, his language vulgar, and style neglected; and, upon all accounts, a person worthy of no notice, and not at all to be either feared or regarded.

FOOTNOTES:

F13 Nicephorus, l. 2. c. 37.

F14 In Philopat.

2 Corinthians 10:11

Let such an one think this

The apostle seems to have in view some one particular person, though he does not choose to name him, who had more especially reproached him after this manner; and who was either one of the members of this church, or rather one of the false apostles: and so in the foregoing verse, instead of “say they”, in which way both the Syriac and Vulgate Latin read, and is followed in our version, it is in the original text (φησι) , “says he”, or “he

says”; and so a certain particular person seems designed in (2 Corinthians 11:4) whom the apostle would have to know and conclude with himself, and of which he might fully assure himself, that such as we are in word by letters, when we are absent, such will be also in deed, when we are present: he threatens the calumniator, that he should find him, to his sorrow, the same man present as absent; that what he sent by letters, should be found to be fact, when he came again; whose coming would not be with all that tenderness and gentleness, as when he first preached the Gospel to them, for which there was then a reason; since he and others had swerved from the truths of the Gospel, and the right ways of God, which would require the severity he threatened them with, and the execution of which might be depended upon.

2 Corinthians 10:12

For we dare not make ourselves of the number

Some understand this as spoken ironically, as if the apostle jeeringly should say, he would not pretend to join, or put himself upon a level, who was a poor, little, mean, despicable person, with such great men as the false apostles were, men of such large gifts, and of such great learning and eloquence; though they may be understood without an irony, that the modesty of the apostle and his fellow ministers would not suffer them to mingle with such persons, and act the vainglorious part they did: or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; they were not so vain and foolish, as to give high encomiums of themselves, therefore would not boast even of the authority they had, and much less say that in letters, which they could not make good in fact:

but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing

themselves among themselves, are not wise, or “understand not”; how foolish they are, how ridiculous they make themselves; they do not understand what they say, nor whereof they affirm; they do not understand themselves, what they really are; for to form a right judgment of themselves, they should have considered the gifts and abilities, the learning and knowledge of others, and thereby might have taken an estimate of their own; but instead of this, they only consulted themselves, and measured and compared themselves with themselves; which was acting just such a foolish part, as if a dwarf was to measure himself not with any kind of measure, or with another person, but with himself; only surveys himself, and his own dimensions, and fancies himself a giant. Just the reverse is this, to what is said in Philo the Jew F15,

“(thn gar ouyeneian thn emautou metrein emayon) , “I have learned to measure the nothingness of myself”, and to contemplate thy exceeding great bounties; and moreover, perceive myself to be dust and ashes, or if there is any thing more abject.”

FOOTNOTES:

F15 Quis rer. divin. Haeres, p. 485.

2 Corinthians 10:13

But we will not boast of things without our measure

Or things unmeasurable; meaning not doctrines, the knowledge of which they had not attained to, and which were not to be measured by reason or revelation, such as the Gnostics boasted of; but the sense is, that they would not glory in, and boast of actions, that were never done by them, within the compass of their ministration, as the false apostles did; who pretended that they had been everywhere, and had preached the Gospel, and had made converts in all parts of the world; but the apostle and his fellow labourer, desired only to speak of those things which were done of them, and of their successful labours:

according to the measure of the rule;

not the measure of the gift of Christ, or of faith bestowed upon them; nor the measuring rule and canon of the Scriptures, though both are truths; but the places or parts of the world, which God in his secret purpose had fixed, and in his providence directed them to preach in: or as he says,

which God hath distributed to us;

parted and divided to them; assigning such and such places to some, and such and such to others, as he himself pleased, to discharge their ministerial office in; drawing as it were a line, or setting a bound, by which and how far each should go, and no further:

a measure to reach even unto you;

the line of their ministration was drawn, or the bounds of their preaching were carried from Judea, and through all the intermediate places to Corinth, so that the Corinthians were properly under the jurisdiction of the apostles, and in their district; wherefore the false apostles had really no right nor claim to be among them; nay, their measure reached to the ends of the world, according to (Psalms 19:4) “their line” (קוֹמָה) , “is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world”.

2 Corinthians 10:14***For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure***

They did not go beyond the bounds set them by the purpose and providence of God, by going to Corinth; nor did they boast of things without their measure, when they spoke of their labours, and of the success of their ministrations among them; nor did they assume and arrogate to themselves what did not belong to them, when they claimed an authority over them, and a right of exercising their apostolical office among them:

as though we reached not unto you;

by right, or according to the will of God, and the measuring line and bounds he drew and fixed for them:

for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the Gospel of Christ.

The case is clear, it is a plain matter of fact, that they were not only come to other places, where they had preached the Gospel, and planted churches, but as far as to Corinth also, where they came “in, by, or with the Gospel of Christ”: not their own, or what was of their own invention, but Christ’s; of which he is the author, minister, and subject; they did not come without something with them; they came with the good news and glad tidings of salvation by Christ; they came preaching the Gospel, which was owned for the conversion of many souls, and for the raising a very considerable church; all which was a full proof that they were of right, and not by usurpation, come to them; that they had not thrust themselves in, where they had no business, and consequently still retained a power over them.

2 Corinthians 10:15***Not boasting of things without our measure***

The apostle here asserts what he had done before, (2 Corinthians 10:13) with a view to explain it, as he does, saying,

that is of other men’s labours;

when they boasted of the Corinthians as their converts and children, whom they had begotten through the Gospel of Christ, they did not boast of other men’s labours, as did the false apostles; who when they came to Corinth, found a church already planted by the apostle, and a multitude of believers, of whose conversion and faith he had been an instrument; and yet these men claimed them as their own, and an authority over them, when they were

the fruit of the apostle's labours:

but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be

enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly;

the sense is, that the apostle hoped, for he could not be sure, this lying in the secret will of God, that when the faith of the Corinthians was grown stronger, and more settled and established, and so would not stand in so much need of their care and instruction, they should be enlarged through their means; and that they should not stop here, but that the line, measure, or rule of their ministry, should be drawn to a greater length, and the bounds of it extended and carried abundantly further. The apostle intimates, that the weakness of their faith, and the disorders and divisions that were among them, were a hinderance to the spread of the Gospel; and that if their church state were in a better and a more settled condition, as it would give the apostles more leisure to preach the Gospel elsewhere, so it would serve to recommend it to other places beyond them; which would be an enlargement of the bounds of their ministry, and a means of magnifying of Christ and his Gospel, and of them also.

2 Corinthians 10:16

To preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you

Here the apostle clearly expresses what he hoped for, and explains what he meant by being enlarged according to rule; namely, that he should be at liberty to preach the Gospel elsewhere; and hoped he should be directed by the providence of God, to carry it into the more remote and distant parts of the world, where as yet Christ had not been named:

and not to boast in another man's line:

or enter into another man's province, glory in other men's labours, as did the false apostles: and boast

of things made ready to our hand;

that is, of places cultivated and improved, by the preaching of the Gospel, so as to bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of God; where many souls were already converted, and churches were planted and put into good order, and were in a flourishing condition; see (Romans 15:18-21) .

2 Corinthians 10:17

But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

] Not in himself, nor in his outward circumstances of life, or inward endowments of mind; not in his natural or acquired parts; not in his wisdom, knowledge, learning, and eloquence; nor in his own righteousness, labours, and services, much less in other men's labours; nor in his own sense of himself; nor in the opinion and popular applause of others; but in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the author and donor of all gifts, natural and spiritual; in his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and in his judgment and approbation of men and things, which sense the following words direct unto.

2 Corinthians 10:18

For not he that commendeth himself is approved

Such may be said to commend themselves, who ascribe that to themselves, which do not belong to them; as that they are the ministers of Christ, and sent forth by him, when they are not; who boast that they have large ministerial gifts, when they have none; and of their great service and usefulness, when it is all the produce of other men's labours; and what they have and do, they wholly impute to their own power and industry, and not to the grace and power of God: now such persons are neither approved by God, nor good men; for their own self-com-

mendation stands for nothing, and is so far from being acceptable to God or men, that it must be nauseous and disagreeable; see (Proverbs 27:2).

But whom the Lord commendeth:

they are approved by God and men, and they are such whom he highly honours, as he did Paul, by counting them faithful; and putting them into the ministry, by qualifying them for his service, by assisting them in it, and making them abundantly useful for the good of souls, and the glory of his name: by all which he bears a testimony to them, and shows his approbation of them, and at last will say, well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 11

In this chapter, the apostle continues his discourse concerning the false teachers; blames the Corinthians for their connivance at them, and subjection to them; gives a true and ample description of them; compares himself with them, and by various instances shows, that he was greatly superior to them: and whereas self commendation was necessary, and could not be avoided in this argument, and this might look like folly, and by some be deemed such, he entreats the Corinthians that they would bear with him in it, as well as in his reproofs and admonitions to them, 2Co 11:1 and assigns his godly jealousy over them, as the reason why he entered into this subject, and proceeded in such a way of reasoning on it; and the rather this might be bore with in him, since he had such a concern in espousing them to Christ; his end in which was, to present them a chaste virgin to him, 2Co 11:2 and what this jealousy was he explains, lest their minds should be corrupted by the false teachers, and they should forsake the pure and simple Gospel of Christ; which he exemplifies in the instance of Eve being deceived by the serpent, 2Co 11:3 and proceeds to blame them for preferring these false teachers to the faithful ministers of the word; seeing, put them in the best light they could, it was but the same Jesus they preached, and not another and a better Saviour; and it was but the same spirit of faith they received through their ministry, and not another and a better; and the same Gospel they brought, and did not come with better news, or more joyful tidings; had this been the case, there would have been some reason for extolling one above another, 2Co 11:4 for which there was not the least foundation, especially with respect to the Apostle Paul, who was not inferior to the chief of the true apostles of Christ, and therefore could not be at all behind these men, 2Co 11:5 and seeing it might be objected to him that he was rude in speech, when these were men of great eloquence, he allows it; but then affirms he was not so in knowledge, in which he exceeded them; for the truth of which, he appeals to the Corinthians themselves, 2Co 11:6 and he suggests, that it was very ungrateful in them, that inasmuch as he humbled himself when among them, by working with his own hands, that they might be exalted, that they should despise him on that account, and prefer these avaricious men before him, 2Co 11:7 when that he might be able to preach the Gospel freely, he took of other churches, 2Co 11:8 and particularly was supplied by the Macedonian brethren, and so was not at all chargeable and burdensome to them, and he was determined ever to remain so, 2Co 11:9 and which he confirms by an oath, that no man should ever be able to prevail upon him to take anything of the churches in the region of Achaia, in which Corinth was, 2Co 11:10 and whereas it might be insinuated that such a resolution showed that he had no true affection for them, this he denies, and appeals to the omniscient God for the truth of his love to them, 2Co 11:11 but the true reason why he had so determined, was to prevent the false teachers having any opportunity to reproach him, and exalt themselves, 2Co 11:12 and this leads him on to a description of them, by their ambition and arrogance, in assuming a title that did not belong to them; by their crafty, cunning, and deceitful manner of working, and by their hypocrisy in mimicking the apostles of Christ, 2Co 11:13 nor need this seem strange to any, when Satan himself has been transformed into an angel of light, 2Co 11:14 and whom, the apostle suggests, these men imitated; whose ministers they were, though they looked like ministers of righteousness, and on whom the apostle denounces severe punishment, 2Co 11:15 and as he saw himself under a necessity of boasting, in order to stop the mouths of these men, to vindicate himself, and prevent mischief being done by them, he renews his entreaty in 2Co 11:1 that the Corinthians would not reckon him as a fool; or if they did, that they would bear with his folly, and suffer him to boast of himself a little, 2Co 11:16 and that the Christian religion, and the Gospel of Christ, might not come

under any reproach and blame, for his conduct in this particular, he observes, that what he was about to say on this head of boasting, was not by any order or direction from the Lord, but of himself, and might have the appearance of folly in it, 2Co 11:17 and the rather he might be indulged in it, seeing many, even the false teachers, had gloried in a carnal way, and of outward things, and which made it necessary that he should glory also, 2Co 11:18 and which foolish boasting in them, even many of the Corinthians had bore with, and that with a great deal of pleasure; and therefore might suffer him, a single man, to boast a little of himself unto them, whom he ironically calls wise, 2Co 11:19 of which he gives instances, by being brought into bondage, devoured, pillaged, insulted, and abused, by the false teachers, 2Co 11:20 nor had they abused and reproached them only, but the apostle also, as weak and contemptible; but then he would not bear it, but would boldly engage and enter the lists with them, though this might be by some reckoned foolish boasting, 2Co 11:21 and then follows the comparison between him and them, by which it appears that he was upon an equal foot with them, on account of nation, descent, and parentage, 2Co 11:22 that he was superior to them as a minister of the Gospel, as was manifest by his more abundant labours in it, and by his sufferings for it, the dangers he was exposed unto on account of it, and the many hardships he endured in the ministration of it, of which he gives a variety of particulars, 2Co 11:23-27 to which he adds, besides these things, and all other outward ones, that the daily care of all the churches of Christ was upon him, 2Co 11:28 and such was his sympathy with all sorts of Christians, even the weak and offended brethren, that he was affected with them, bore their infirmities, and sought to reconcile and make them easy, which greatly increased the weight of business that was upon him, 2Co 11:29 and seeing there was a necessity of glorying, he chose to glory in his infirmities and sufferings, and on which he had mostly enlarged, 2Co 11:30 and for the glory of divine Providence, and to express his thankfulness for the mercy, he relates a particular instance of deliverance from imminent danger; for the truth of which he appeals to the God and Father of Christ, the eternally blessed One, 2Co 11:31 the danger he escaped, the manner and means of the escape, and the place where, are particularly mentioned, 2Co 11:32,33 .

2 CORINTHIANS 11

1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

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

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

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

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Corinthians 11:1

Would to God you could bear with me a little

The false apostles boasted so much of their gifts, abilities, and usefulness, that the apostle found himself under a necessity of saying some things in his own defence, for the honour of God, and the good of this church; which otherwise his modesty would not have permitted him, and which he saw would be accounted and censured as folly in him by others; and therefore he entreats their patience a little while, and that they would suffer him to say a few things in vindication of his character, and not be offended; though it would be in commendation of himself, which, were he not forced to, would look vain and foolish: and therefore says,

bear with me a little in my folly,

and which he presses with importunity,

and indeed bear with me;

he insists upon it, he urges it as what he must not be denied in; for could he have avoided it, he would not have done it; but such was the case, that if he did not do it, he must greatly suffer in his character and usefulness; the members of this church would be in great danger from these false apostles, and the honour and glory of Christ lay greatly at stake; which when considered, he hoped his request would be granted: the last clause may be rendered, but also ye do bear with me; signifying that they had done so already, and continued to do so, and therefore he could not but encourage himself, that they still would bear with him a little longer, and in a few things

more.

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy

He lets them know it was not so much on his own account, or at all with any selfish views, or for any secular interest of his own, that he was so concerned, but it was “a godly jealousy”, or a “zeal of God”; which he was inspired with by God, and which was for the honour and glory of God, even Jesus Christ, who is God overall; and for their real good and spiritual welfare, as a church of Christ, that possessed him, which put him upon saying what he was about to do; and what affected him the more was, when he considered himself as a friend of the bridegroom, who had been concerned in the betrothing of them to Christ:

for I have espoused you to one husband;

by whom is meant Christ, as the following clause explains it: Christ stands in the relation of an husband to the church catholic and universal; to the whole general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven; even to all the elect of God, that ever were, are, or shall be; and so he does to particular congregated churches, as he did to this church at Corinth, and so he does to every individual believer: which character he responds to, by loving them with a love prior to theirs, a love of complacency and delight, which is single, special, and peculiar, strong and affectionate, wonderful and inconceivable, constant, and what will last for ever; by sympathizing with them under all their afflictions, temptations, desertions, and exercises of every kind; by nourishing and cherishing them, which phrases are expressive of the spiritual food and clothing he provides for them, of that intimate communion he admits them to, and of that whole care he takes of them; by paying all their debts, supplying all their wants, supporting them with his right hand, protecting them against all their enemies, giving them grace here, and glory hereafter; and, last of all, by interesting them in his person, and all that he has, in all the blessings and promises of the covenant in his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The act of espousing, the apostle here, with respect to this church, takes to himself, though in another sense, and which is the principal one, it is ascribed to Christ himself, who betroths all his to himself in righteousness, in judgment, in lovingkindness, and tender mercies; he saw them in his Father’s purposes and decrees, in all the glory they were designed to be brought unto, when he loved them as his Father did, and desired them for his spouse and bride, which was granted to him; and then secretly in covenant betrothed them to himself, and ever after looked upon them as in a conjugal relation to him; wherefore though they fell in Adam, and became guilty and filthy, he gave himself for them as his church and bride, to sanctify and cleanse them, that he might present them to himself, just such a glorious church he had seen them before. In consequence of this, the Spirit of God attends the ministration of the Gospel, to the conversion of each of these souls, when they become willing to be the Lord’s, and give their free and full consent to have him for their husband; and this is the day of their open espousal to him, and in this the apostle had, and other ministers of the Gospel have a concern; he was a means, in the hands of the Spirit, of their regeneration, a minister by whom they believed, an instrument in directing their souls to Christ, by setting forth his unsearchable riches, the glory of his person, and fulness of his grace: as Abraham’s servant set forth the greatness of his master, and the large possessions his son was heir to, and brought out his bracelets and ear rings, his jewels of gold and silver, and thereby gained his point, a wife for Isaac; so the Spirit of God going along with the ministration of the apostle so wrought upon these Corinthians, as to give up themselves to the Lord, and take him for their head and husband, Saviour and Redeemer. This was the concern the apostle had herein, and his view, desire, and hope were, to set them before Christ their husband, pure and incorrupt:

that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ;

that is, single in their love to, him, strictly adhering to him, and him only, as standing in such a relation to them; pure in the principles of faith, sincere and upright in their worship, and holy in their lives and conversations; nothing was more desirable to him than this, that he might thus present them to Christ at the great day; whereby it would appear, that his labour was not in vain in the Lord: now having been concerned in this affair of espous-

ing them to Christ, and they not yet presented to him, or took home by him, he could not, as things were circumstanced, but entertain a godly jealousy over them in his own breast, lest the false apostles should draw them aside in any degree from their love to Christ, and faith in him.

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I fear lest by any means

Jealousy is always attended with fear, care, and solicitude, whether in things natural or spiritual. The apostle, as things were in this church, could not but express his fears, lest

as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety;

that is, the old serpent the devil, who made use of a serpent, the most subtle creature of all the beasts of the field, and seduced Eve from her obedience to God, to transgress his command, by eating the forbidden fruit. The apostle here speaks the language and sense of the Jews, who say F16, that, (שטן ונחש שם אחד להם) "Satan and the serpent have one name", i.e. are the same; and that it was the old serpent (the devil), (דפתי לחיה), "that beguiled Eve" F17, and who is said to be corrupted by him;

``the serpent (they say F18) was corrupted first, after that, (נתקלקלה חוה), "Eve was corrupted", and after that Adam was corrupted."

So the apostle was jealous and fearful, knowing that the false apostles were ministers of Satan, artful and cunning men, lest, through their craftiness and sophistry,

your minds,

says he,

should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ;

that is, lest their judgments should be misled, their minds be vitiated with corrupt principles, and be carried away in any degree with the error of the wicked, from off the pure and simple doctrine of the Gospel, which respects the person and grace of Christ; and chiefly lies in this one plain, easy, and important truth, salvation alone by him. The Vulgate Latin version reads, "your minds should be corrupted, and should fall from the simplicity that is in Christ".

FOOTNOTES:

F16 Caphtor, fol. 93. 1.

F17 Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Exod. fol. 50. 1.

F18 T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 15. 2.

2 Corinthians 11:4

For if he that cometh

Meaning either some particular man, the apostle might have had some information of, who came from Judea to Corinth, under the character of a true apostle; or anyone of the false apostles whatever, who came of their own accord, and was never sent by Christ, or by any of his churches:

preacheth another Jesus whom we have not preached;

that is, if he proposes and recommends in his ministry, a better Saviour and Redeemer than had been preached by the apostles; one that was better qualified, and more fit for the purposes of salvation; one that they could more

safely venture their souls upon, and believe in, as the alone able and all sufficient Saviour, a thing impossible to be: or the sense is, if this other apostle taught the doctrine of salvation by Christ, in another and better method and in a clearer manner, more to the honour of the Redeemer, the glory of God, and the good of their souls, they would have some reason then to pay a greater regard to him:

or if ye receive another spirit which ye have not received;

a better spirit than the Spirit of God, which the had received through the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles; either for graces, for they had received him as a spirit of regeneration and conversion, of sanctification and faith, of adoption and liberty, of peace and joy, and comfort; or for gifts, both ordinary and extraordinary, which could not possibly be; the spirit which the contrary ministers brought with it, and tended to not generate in them, must be the reverse of this, even a spirit of bondage again to fear:

or another Gospel which ye have not accepted,

or “embraced”; a better Gospel than had been preached by the apostles, and received by them; which contained more wholesome doctrines, more comfortable truths, more excellent promises, better tidings of good things, than those of peace, pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation, by a crucified Jesus; proposed a better scheme of things, more for the honour of the divine perfections, and for the comfort and safety of believers; and which laid a better foundation for faith and hope, and tended more to encourage true religion and powerful godliness:

ye might well bear with him;

receive his doctrine, submit to his authority, and prefer him to the apostles: but since another and a better Saviour than Jesus of Nazareth could not be proposed, or the doctrine of salvation by him be preached in another and better manner than it was; nor had they received, nor could they receive, another and a better spirit, than the spirit of grace and truth, which was communicated to them, through the apostle’s ministry; nor was a better and a more excellent Gospel preached to them, than what they had heard; therefore they ought not to connive at, indulge and tolerate, such a false apostle among them, which it seems they did; and was the reason of the apostle’s fears and jealousies, before expressed: and besides, supposing that this man that was among them, and caressed by many of them, did preach the same Jesus, and the same doctrine of salvation by him, and the same Spirit and power went along with his ministry, it being the same Gospel that was preached by Paul and others, there was no reason why he should be set up above them, who had been the instruments of conveying the Gospel, and the Spirit of it, to them, long before he was known by them.

2 Corinthians 11:5

For I suppose I was not a whit behind

This is very modestly expressed by the apostle; for he does not assert, and in a haughty and confident way affirm, but only supposes, or thinks that this might be admitted, that he was not inferior to, or did not come short of, in gifts, grace, and usefulness,

the very chiefest of the apostles:

such as Peter, James, and John; who seemed to be pillars, were eminent apostles, of great note among them, and such as Christ, in the days of his flesh, took particular notice of. This he says, not to exalt himself, but to show, how weakly and injudiciously the Corinthians acted in setting up the false apostle above him; or else these words are spoken ironically, and design the false teachers, who vaunted so much of their gifts, learning, eloquence, and usefulness; and extolled themselves at such a rate, as if they were (uper lian apostolwn) , “greatly above the apostles”; and therefore he jeeringly calls them

the very chiefest of

them; and yet thinks fit to put himself at least, upon an equality with them: one manuscript reads, “the chiefest of the apostles among you”; and the Ethiopic version seems to have read you.

2 Corinthians 11:6***But though I be rude in speech***

Which might be objected to him, setting himself upon a level with men so famous for their diction, and elegance of style; and to this he answers, not by owning he was so, but granting it to be so; for the Apostle Paul was not an unlearned man, an idiot in speech, unskilful in language, his writings testify the contrary; he did not indeed, in his public ministry, dress his sermons with the flowers of rhetoric, or adorn his discourses with the words of human wisdom, with bombast, and great swelling words of vanity; he chose a plainer and easier style, more accommodated to the vulgar, to the capacities of the people he was concerned with; for he had not to do with philosophers and senators, but with the common people chiefly; with persons of every sex, age, and condition of life: in this sense indeed he acted as an idiot, a plebeian, a private person; he used a popular style, or, as the Jews say of several of their Rabbins F19, he (jwydh Nwvl vrwd) , “preached”, or explained “in the common language” of people; which the common people used, and not the learned, and to which reference may be had here: but though he wisely pursued this method, as being most likely to be useful,

yet

he was

not

rude

in knowledge,

or unskilful in the mysteries of the Gospel; he was well learned in the knowledge of Christ, and in the doctrines of grace, as all his discourses, sermons, and letters testified; and however negligent he might be thought to be of his style, and take no pains or care about the elegance of his language, but rather studied a plain and popular diction, yet he was always careful to convey profitable and useful knowledge to the souls of men; and thought his discourses might not be fraught with all the beauties of oratory, and enticing words of man’s wisdom, they were full of spiritual knowledge, and showed him to have a large understanding of divine things, for the truth of which he appeals to the Corinthians:

but we have been thoroughly manifest among you in all things;

his faith and doctrine, as well as manner of life, were well known unto them; he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God unto them: his knowledge in the mystery of Christ’s person and grace, and in all the parts of the everlasting Gospel, was no secret to them; he had used no artful methods to hide himself, or conceal the truth; but by manifestation of it, had commended himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God; and by observing this, as he had witnesses now among them of the truth of it, so he strikes at the hypocrisy and deceitful methods the false teachers took to cover themselves, their practices, and principles.

FOOTNOTES:

F19 T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 104. 1.

2 Corinthians 11:7***Have I committed an offence in abasing myself***

Either by behaving among them, when he was first with them, in a very modest and humble manner, in much fear and trembling, without pride and haughtiness, or affectation of power and authority over them; or by using a popular style, suited to the capacity of the common people; or by labouring with his own hands, exercising his

trade of tent making among them, that he might provide food for himself, and not be chargeable to them; and which he suggests was so far from being criminal in him, that he ought rather to be commended for it; since it could not be thought to be with any view to himself, and his own advantage, but purely for their good:

that you might be exalted;

that nothing might lie in their way of receiving the Gospel of Christ, or prejudice them against it; that they might the more easily be brought to listen to it, come to the knowledge of it, and embrace it, and so be exalted, as they were, to a participation of the grace of Christ; to fellowship with him; to the honour and dignity of being a church of Christ; to an enjoyment of the privileges of God's house; to have a name better than that of sons and daughters, and to have a right and title to the heavenly glory: "because", or is it

because I have preached to you the Gospel of God freely?

The Gospel he preached was not his own, but God's; of which he was the author; his grace was the subject of it, and his glory the end of its ministration; which he had given to the apostle to preach; to which he had separated him, for which he had abundantly qualified him, and in which he was greatly succeeded by him. This he preached "freely" to the Corinthians at his first coming among them, without putting them to any expense, or receiving anything from them; which though he might lawfully have done, yet he judged it most advisable, at that time, to minister to his own necessities, by working with his hands, lest he should be burdensome to them; and this be an objection to the Gospel he preached, that he sought rather theirs than them; and for so doing he was not to be blamed, but to be praised: and yet such was the weakness of many at least in this church, that they highly valued the false apostles, who made merchandise of them, and treated with contempt this excellent servant of Christ, who had freely imparted the Gospel to them.

2 Corinthians 11:8

I robbed other churches

Meaning the churches of Macedonia; not that what he had of them was by force and rapine, or by plundering of them, and spoiling of their substance, and living upon them against their wills, as soldiers use a conquered people, though the allusion is to such a custom; for what he had of theirs was freely communicated to him; as appears from the following verse: but because these churches from whom he received were poor, and the Corinthians whom he served were rich, he calls it a robbing of the former, though there was no injury in the case, for it was voluntary, because it was expended for the service of the latter:

taking wages of them to do you service;

or "for your ministry"; either to supply their poor, or rather to support the ministry of the Gospel among them. The apostle continues the metaphor, taken from soldiers, to whom wages are due for their warfare; as are also to the ministers of the Gospel, the good soldiers of Jesus Christ; since no man goes a warfare at his own charges and expense but is for by those in whose service he is: and therefore, though the apostle did not think it advisable to ask for, and insist upon wages from them at that time, for his service among them, yet he took it of others in lieu of it; and this he mentions, partly to show that wages were due to him for his ministry, and partly to observe to them who they were beholden to for the support of the Gospel at first among them; as also to stir them up to be serviceable to other churches, as others had been to them.

2 Corinthians 11:9

And when I was present with you, and wanted

Whilst he was among them, preaching the Gospel to them, he wanted the common necessities of life: and yet, says he,

I was chargeable to no man,

or “benumbed no man”; a metaphor, as some think, taken from the torpedo, or cramp fish; which is of such a cold and benumbing nature, as that, when even at the hook, it will strike the fisherman with its cold, and so benumb him as to take away his feeling, and the use of his limbs: now the apostle’s meaning is, that he did not chill and benumb any man’s charity, by asking relief from him, for he importuned no man on this account; nor was he benumbed himself, to the detriment of any man; for though he was reduced to great straits, he was not slothful and sluggish in preaching the Gospel, but pursued it with as much diligence and industry as if he had been supported by it in the most handsome manner; nor did he act the part of an idle drone, sit still and starve, but laboured with his own hands, to the relief of himself and others; and whereas it could not be thought he should be able to provide this way thoroughly, both for himself and these that were with him, it was made up by other hands:

for that which was lacking to me;

which he could not make up by his own hand labour and industry:

the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied;

meaning either Silas and Timotheus, who came to him from Macedonia, whilst he was at Corinth, working at his trade with Aquila and Priscilla, (Acts 18:5) who might bring him a supply out of these parts; or else some that belonged to the churches of Macedonia, particularly the Philippians, who frequently communicated to him, and sent him presents by some or other of the brethren, as by Epaphroditus, (Philippians 4:15 Philippians 4:16 Philippians 4:18) .

And in all things,

adds he,

I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you;

he worked hard, lived sparingly, and received from others; that as in respect to his maintenance, so in everything else he might live without being a dead weight upon them, or any ways troublesome to them: not that a minister’s maintenance is, or ought to be reckoned a burden upon a people; it is but a due debt, and what is their just right; but because it is accounted so by carnal men, and such as are disaffected to the Gospel, and the ministry of it, therefore the apostle uses such language:

and so will I keep myself;

time is, for the future; he having taken up a resolution in himself not to be chargeable and troublesome to them, but to provide for himself some other way. This he adds, lest they should think that he had said what he did to stir them up to a discharge of their duty, in contributing towards his support for time to come.

2 Corinthians 11:10

As the truth of Christ is in me

To show the firmness of his resolution, and how determined he was to abide by it, he joins an oath to it; for these words are the form of an oath; and it is as if he should say, as sure as Christ is truth, who is in me; or as that the truth of grace, or the truth of the Gospel of Christ is in my heart and mouth, so sure will I constantly persevere in this determination; or let the truth of Christ never be thought to be in me, if I do not:

no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia;

or this boasting shall not be stopped in me; of preaching the Gospel freely at Corinth, and that he had not been chargeable and burdensome to them; nor would he be for time to come, neither there, nor in any part of Achaia, of which Corinth was the metropolis; (See Gill on 2 Corinthians 9:2). No man should stop his mouth from boasting of this, by putting anything into his hands, for he was determined not to receive anything from any person in these climates; not but that he reserved a liberty in himself to receive from other persons and churches,

for his comfortable subsistence, and so much the limitation of his resolution to these parts implies; for if he had not intended to have received a supply from any persons whatever, the restriction to the regions of Achaia would have been unnecessary; and he should rather have said, that no man should stop him of this boasting in any part of the world. The Vulgate Latin version reads, “this boasting shall not be broken”; and to the same sense the Syriac version, “this boasting shall not be abolished”.

2 Corinthians 11:11

Wherefore? because I love you not?

&c.] Why did the apostle do this? why did he take nothing, and resolve to take nothing of the Corinthians, for preaching the Gospel to them? why did he determine, that no man should prevent his glorying of this, in all the country of Achaia? was it because he did not love the Corinthians? some might insinuate this was the reason of it, that he had no true affection for them, and therefore would take none of their gifts, but despised both them and theirs, and loved the Macedonian and other churches better than they. To which he answers by saying,

God knoweth;

which is another form of an oath, and is a solemn appeal to God, the searcher of hearts, who knows all things, that he knew he heartily loved them; that it was not want of love to them, which was the reason of his entering into such a resolution, never to take anything of them; but it was something else, quite another thing, which induced him to it, and is mentioned in the following verse.

2 Corinthians 11:12

But what I do, that I will do

As he preached the Gospel freely at Corinth and in Achaia, so he was determined to do it for the future, for this reason only, or chiefly:

that,
says he,

I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion:

meaning the false apostles, who sought for, and were desirous of every occasion and opportunity of exalting themselves, and reproaching him: that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we; the sense of which according to some interpreters is, that whereas some of the false apostles, at least who were rich men, took nothing for preaching, but gave their labours freely, were very desirous that the apostle would receive of the churches in these parts, that they might have an occasion against him, and an opportunity of showing themselves, as in learning and eloquence, so in this respect, to be superior to him, in that they preached freely, and he for gain; wherefore to cut off such an occasion, the apostle determines he would take nothing; that in this very thing which they boasted of, that they preached the Gospel freely, they might appear to be at most to be but upon a par with the apostle, and not to exceed him. This sense would seem very appropriate, was it a clear point that the false apostles received nothing for preaching; but the contrary is most evident; wherefore the apostle's meaning is, that these men were desirous that he would take wages, because they did; that in this respect he might not excel them, and that they might be able to plead his example and authority, and so get an occasion of extorting more money from the Corinthians: wherefore to cut off all such occasion from them, the apostle resolves to take nothing himself; that whereas they boasted they were equal to, or superior to the apostles, they might be found, would they follow their example, even as they, not taking any money at all of them, and poor, and working with their own hands.

2 Corinthians 11:13

For such are false apostles

Such as those he had in view, who sought an occasion to depress him, and exalt themselves, and to get money from the Corinthians; these were “false apostles”, or apostles falsely so called; they had the name, but not the thing; they were not called and sent forth by Christ; they had not the grace of apostleship, or gifts qualifying them for that high office; the power and authority they exercised was usurped by them; they could not prove their mission by true and real miracles; nor had they any seals of their apostleship, as those who were sent by Christ had:

deceitful workers;

they went by the name of labourers in Christ’s vineyard, when they were loiterers in it; they pretended to work, but did not; and to work for Christ, when they only served themselves, and their own bellies; they took upon them to interpret the Scriptures, but in a very fallacious manner; they walked in craftiness, and handled the word of God deceitfully, and lay in wait to deceive men; and were masters of so much art and cunning, that, if it was possible, they would have deceived the very elect:

transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ:

not so much by putting on a like garb or dress, but by pretending to be of the same principles, and to follow their practices, and to pursue the same good ends in their ministrations.

2 Corinthians 11:14***And no marvel***

This need not be wondered at, nor is it any new or strange thing; nor should it be thought to be incredible that there are such persons in being:

for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light;

a good angel, one that has his abode in the regions of light; and is possessed of divine and spiritual light and understanding; who is clothed and arrayed with light, this is his form and essence. The apostle speaks agreeably to the notion, of the Jews, who say F20,

“ (שהמלאכים כלם הם אור) , “that all the angels are light”, the clothing of God himself;”

and they have a distinction between (מלאכי דיומ) , “angels of the day”, and angels of the night F21: now Satan, the enemy of mankind, sometimes appears in the form of one of these; as he did to Eve in the garden, and to Christ in the wilderness; and by such appearances he often imposes on mankind; pretends the greatest friendship, when he designs nothing but ruin; and under a notion of good, either honest, or pleasant, or profitable, draws on into the commission of the greatest evils; and, under a show of truth, introduces the most notorious falsehoods and errors; and, under a pretence of religion, all sorts of idolatry, superstition, and impiety; it is in this way he has succeeded in his enterprises and temptations; these are his wiles, stratagems, and cunning devices.

FOOTNOTES:

F20 R. Abraham Seba, Tzeror Hammor, fol. 18. 4.

F21 Zohar in Numb. fol. 91. 1. & 93. 3.

2 Corinthians 11:15***Therefore it is no great thing***

It is no strange and wonderful thing; it may easily be given into; no man need to make any doubt of it, or hesitate concerning it, since the devil himself, who is an angel of darkness, is transformed into an angel of light:

if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness;

not that they really are transformed into such ministers, but they appear and look like such; they are not really, but “as the ministers of righteousness”; they put on the form and air of faithful upright ministers of the word, and would be thought to be such; they mimic Gospel preachers, who assert the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, though they most miserably corrupt it, and blend it with something of their own; and which they endeavour to palliate, and cover from the sight of men; and especially they set up themselves as such, by pretending to be great friends to holiness and good works, which they press with much vehemence, and oppose to the doctrines of grace, with all their might and main; in doing which, they greatly serve their master, whose ministers they are; and who well knows that the doctrine of works may do much prejudice to the Gospel interest, and churches of Christ, but will never convert nor save one soul: a dreadful character these men have, for though they would pass for ministers of righteousness, friends to holiness, and men zealous of good works, they are no other than ministers of Satan, doing his work, serving his interest, and propagating his kingdom, which is a kingdom of darkness:

whose end shall be according to their works;

for either God will make public examples of them in this world, or if they are not made manifest here, though they may deceive themselves and others, they cannot deceive God; he will take off the mask, their hypocrisy shall be detected, their evil works will be laid open, and they will be judged according to them, and condemned for them to everlasting punishment.

2 Corinthians 11:16

I say again, let no man think me a fool

For praising himself, or speaking in his own commendation; which he was obliged to do, in vindication of his own character, against the false apostles, for the sake of the Gospel he preached, and for the advantage and welfare of the Corinthians; that they might not be imposed upon and carried away with the insinuations of these deceitful men; wherefore he desires them once more, that if he must be accounted a fool for speaking in his own behalf;

if otherwise,

says he, if they could not be persuaded that he acted a wise part, but must be looked upon as a fool, for what he said of himself,

yet as a fool receive me;

or “suffer me”, or bear with my folly: he desires that he might have, and use the liberty which fools have usually granted to them, to speak out the truth, and all they know, which is not always allowed to wise men:

that I may boast myself a little;

in a few instances, and for a small space of time; he suggests, that the false apostles boasted much of themselves, and they bore with them, and had done so for a great while; and therefore it was no unreasonable request he made, that they would also suffer him to boast of himself a little, especially since there was such an absolute necessity for it.

2 Corinthians 11:17

That which I speak

Meaning in vindication and commendation of himself, on this subject of glorying; or, as here expressed,

in this confidence of boasting;

for which he thought he had good ground and foundation to go upon, and therefore might express himself with the greatest assurance, see (2 Corinthians 9:4) this he declares he spoke not as from the Lord, but of himself:

I speak it not after the Lord;

or “Christ”, as some copies read; or “our Lord”, as the Syriac version; his sense is, that he did not then speak as an apostle, or one sent by Christ; he put off this character for the present, and took that of a fool upon him, that he might speak the more freely to the Corinthians, and the more severely against the false apostles; he did not pretend to any express command from Christ for so doing, or that he acted in imitation of him, who was meek and lowly; or that what he said came from the Spirit of the Lord; or, indeed, that it was agreeably to his own Spirit, and the principles of grace formed in him; but was obliged to it, through the boasts of the false apostles; which though it was not criminal and unlawful, but necessary, right, and proper, considering the reasons of it, the end for which, and the intention and view with which it was done; yet viewing the form and manner of this boasting, without attending to the circumstances of it, it had the appearance of folly: wherefore the apostle says, he spoke not as according to the commandment, or example of his Lord; or according to the Spirit of the Lord, or his own Spirit, as renewed by his grace:

but as it were foolishly;

he does not say that what he said was foolishness, but it looked like it, and would be deemed so by such who were strangers to the true springs of it.

2 Corinthians 11:18

Seeing that many glory after the flesh

Or with respect to things external, such as their high birth and parentage, carnal descent, circumcision, learned education, and the like; of which the false apostles, being Jews, boasted, who it seems were many; and though a multitude is not to be followed to do evil, yet the apostle thought, that since there were so many who were indulged by this church in this way, he might be allowed to boast also of such like things, so far as he could with truth and a good conscience, and in order to secure some valuable ends:

I will glory also;

for he was of the seed of Abraham as well as they, of the stock of Israel, and tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; but these are not all the things he could, and would, and did glory of; he gloried of these, and of others besides them, which the false apostles could not, and thereby proved himself to be superior to them, even in external things, of which they bragged so much.

2 Corinthians 11:19

For ye suffer fools gladly

They bore with the false apostles, who were fools; were continually proclaiming their folly, boasting of themselves, ascribing that to themselves which did not belong to them, and were puffed up by their fleshly minds; they indulged these men in their folly, and that with pleasure and delight; they not only winked at it, and overlooked it, but were pleased with it: seeing ye yourselves are wise; acting like men who count themselves wise, and keep fools for their pleasure, diversion, and sport. These words may be considered either as spoken seriously by the apostle, and as wondering that they should suffer such fools to go on in their vain boasts, and especially with pleasure; since they were men of wisdom, who were otherwise taught of God, and by the word; they had been made wise unto salvation, and were enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge; they had been instructed by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and in the mysteries of his Gospel; and therefore it was surprising that they could bear with such vain and foolish men, and especially with delight; for though it is the part of a wise man to bear with fools, yet not with pleasure; so that this carries in it a tacit reproof to them: or else the last clause may be considered as spoken ironically, and as a severe jibe upon their folly for tolerating

such a parcel of fools among them; as if he should say, you show yourselves to be men of wisdom, as you would be thought to be; you act the wise part, do not you, in suffering such empty headed men to converse with you, and delight in their vain talk and conversation? however, the whole furnishes out an argument for the apostle, and which he means to improve; that if they could suffer and bear with such fools, and so many of them, and that gladly, then they might and ought to bear a little with him in his folly, which is what he entreats of them.

2 Corinthians 11:20

For ye suffer if a man bring you into bondage

They not only suffered and tolerated the foolish boasting of these men with pleasure, but patiently and stupidly bore their oppressions, injuries, and insults, things that were intolerable, which no man of any sense and wisdom would ever suffer; and yet they took all quietly from them, made no objection, but patiently submitted to them, and therefore might well bear a little with him; they were voluntarily led captive, and brought into bondage by them, to the yoke of the ceremonial law, to the observance of circumcision, meats and drinks, days, months, times and years; and to the yoke of human doctrines, traditions, tenets, laws, and rules: if a man devour or eat; though they devoured their houses, as the Pharisees did; ate up their substance, were insatiable in their covetousness; were greedy dogs that could never have enough, could not satisfy their voracious appetites, without devouring and consuming all they had, yet they took it patiently:

if a man take of you;

not food and raiment, or a proper stipend, or wages which might be voluntarily raised, and cheerfully given; but they took away their goods from them by force, as the Arabic version reads it, whether they would or not, to which they quietly submitted:

if a man exalt himself;

as these men did, extolling their nation, their descent and lineage, their parentage and education, and fleshly privileges; in suiting the Corinthians as persons of a mean and base extraction, as having been Heathens and sinners of the Gentiles, yet not a word was returned in answer thereunto:

if a man smite you on the face;

though they gave them very opprobrious language, vilifying and reproaching them as uncircumcised persons, upbraiding and hitting them on the teeth with their former idolatries and manners of life; yet all was taken in good part, so much were they under the government and influence of these men.

2 Corinthians 11:21

I speak as concerning reproach

These words may be considered either as explanative of the latter part of the former verse, "if a man smite you on the face"; that is not to be understood strictly and literally, of one man's striking another on the face, but of reproach and contumelious language, used by the false apostles to the Corinthians; or they may have reference to the apostle's design in the whole, which was partly to reproach, the Corinthians for acting such a stupid part, in patiently bearing so many and such indignities from these men; and partly to expose the scandalous and reproachful usage of them by the false apostles, that if possible their eyes might be opened to see through them, and discard them: or else these words may be regarded in connection with what follows,

as though we had been weak;

and then the apostle's meaning is, that as to the business of scandal and reproach he was speaking of, this was not confined to the Corinthians only, but they the true apostles had their share of it; for the false apostles reproached them, as poor, weak, fearful, and pusillanimous men; because they did not use that authority, and exercise that

domination over them, they did not bring them into bondage, devour their substance, take away their goods from them by force, insult over them, and treat them in an ignominious and contemptuous manner; and intimated that they were upon all accounts inferior to them, and not worthy to be mentioned with them; which moved the apostle to exert himself, and boldly rise up in his own defence, saying,

howbeit, wherein soever any is bold;

to boast of his pedigree, character, office, and usefulness,

I speak foolishly;

as it might seem, and be so interpreted by some,

I am bold also;

to enter the lists with him, to compare notes, and see on which side the superiority lies; and which is done in the following verses, to the full confutation of all the pride, vanity, blind boasting of the false apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:22

Are they Hebrews? so am I

The nation of the Jews were called Hebrews, not from Abraham, as some have F23 thought, through ignorance of the Hebrew language, which will by no means admit of such a derivation and etymology of the name; wherefore the Jewish writers never make mention of this opinion as among any of them; had they took their name from Abram or Abraham, they would rather have been called Abramires or Abrahamites, and not Hebrews; besides, Abraham himself is called an Hebrew, (Genesis 14:13) and to be so called from himself, and not denominated from some other person or thing, can never be imagined, it would be most absurd and ridiculous; to which may be added, that the apostle in this verse makes mention of being the seed of Abraham, as a distinct character from that of Hebrews: others have been of opinion that the name is derived from (rbe) , “Habar”, which signifies, “to pass over”; and was occasioned by one or other of the following events; either from Abraham’s passing over the river Euphrates, when he came out of Mesopotamia into the land of Canaan, and so was called Abram, (yrbeh) “Hahibri, the passer over”, or the Hebrew F24, and so his posterity were called after him; or from the posterity of Canaan, who, after the confusion at Babel, settled in that part of Asia which lies between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean sea, and from them called the land of Canaan; and who were called by the Chaldeans, from whom they separated, and by the neighbouring nations, Hebrews, or passers over, because they passed over the river Jordan; and so Abraham passing over the river Euphrates to them, and learning their language, and continuing there, he was called an Hebrew also, and his posterity after him F25; or from Arphaxad, or Heber, passing over the river Tigris or Euphrates, and settling in the land of Canaan F26; but it is not likely that a nation should take its name from such an event: others think it a more probable opinion that Abraham was so called, and hence his posterity after him, from the name which the Canaanites gave to Mesopotamia, from whence he came; calling it Heber Hannahar, or the country beyond the river: just as we call foreigners Transmarines, or people beyond sea; and of this opinion were some of the Jewish writers F1; but not Mesopotamia, but Canaan, is called the land of the Hebrews, (Genesis 40:15) . The more commonly received opinion with the F2 Jews is, and which is most likely, that they are so called from Heber, the father of Peleg, in whose days the confusion of languages was made, and what is now called the Hebrew language being the first and original one, was retained in him and in his family; hence Shem is said to be the father of all the children of Heber, (Genesis 10:21) that is, the Hebrews, as the same people are called the children of Israel from Israel, and the children of Judah from Judah, and sometimes they go by the name of Heber, as in (Numbers 24:24) when as the Assyrians are called Ashur, from whom they have their name, so the Hebrews are called Heber, from whom they take their denomination: and it should be observed, that this is not only a national but a religious name, and those people were called so, because they were of the faith as well as the descendants of Heber; so Shem was the father of others, but in a peculiar manner the father of the children of Heber, because the religion he professed was continued with them; and so Abraham is

particularly called the Hebrew, not only because he descended from Heber, but was of the same, religion; and so his posterity, not in the line of Ishmael, but of Isaac, are so called; and not as descending from Isaac in the line of Esau, but of Jacob; and hence it was not lawful for the Egyptians to eat bread with the Hebrews, not because they were of another nation, but because of another religion, (Genesis 43:32) . It seems that these false apostles were Jews, since it is not denied by the apostle, but granted; they were some such like false brethren as those who came from Judea to Antioch, and disturbed the church there, (Acts 15:1) and whereas they boasted of their being Hebrews, the descendants of the ancient patriarch Heber in the line of Abraham; the apostle was able to match them in this, and asserts himself to be an Hebrew too, which he could do with the strictest truth, for he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, he was an Hebrew by father and mother's side:

are they Israelites? so am I.

The Jews were called Israelites from Israel, a name which was given to Jacob their ancestor, upon his wrestling with an angel, and prevailing over him; and was accounted an honourable one, or title of honour; for the people of Israel were they whom God chose for a peculiar people to himself above all others, brought them out of Egypt, fed them in the wilderness, and led them through it, and settled them in the land of Canaan, and bestowed upon them special and peculiar privileges; see (Romans 9:4 Romans 9:5) . The Jews are very extravagant in the praise of Israelites; they not only make them the favourites of God, beloved of him, because called children, and had the law given them F3, and extol them above all mankind; (See Gill on Romans 3:9) but they even make them equal to the ministering angels, and say they are pure from sin as they, especially on the day of atonement F4, yea, more excellent than they F5: in this also the apostle could answer them, for he was of the stock of Israel, and of the tribe of Benjamin, a son of Jacob, or Israel; and was an Israelite indeed, as Nathanael, for all are not Israel that are of Israel:

are they the seed of Abraham? so am I:

of this the Jews mightily boasted; see (John 8:33) they reckon themselves, even the poorest among them, as the nobles and princes of the earth F6; and even other people have been fond of being reckoned of the stock of Abraham, as particularly the Lacedemonians,

“`Areus king of the Lacedemonians to Onias the high priest, greeting: It is found in writing, that the Lacedemonians and Jews are brethren, and that they are of the stock of Abraham:” (1 Maccabees 12:20,21)

The Jews make a merciful disposition to men to be a sign and evidence of being of the seed of Abraham F7; but in a spiritual sense, an interest in Christ, and faith in him, denominate men to be truly Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise: this is to be understood here in a natural sense, and of being of Abraham's seed in the line of Jacob, for otherwise the Ishmaelites and Idumeans were of the seed of Abraham; but they were his seed in that line in which the promised seed, the Messiah, was to come; though this was of no avail, without having the same faith Abraham had, and believing truly in Christ, as his spiritual seed do, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; however, the apostle was equal to them in this respect; he was of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, and above them in another, in that he was of Abraham's spiritual seed by faith in Christ Jesus.

FOOTNOTES:

F23 Artapanus apud Euseb. praepar. l. 9. c. 18. p. 420. Ambrosius sive Hilarius in Phil. iii. 5. & alii.

F24 Hicronymus in Ezek. c. 7. fol. 183. B. Theodoret. in Gen. Qu. 60.

F25 Erpeuius.

F26 Ar. Montan. Canaan, c. 9. Vid. Sigonium de Repub. Heb. l. 1. c. 1. p. 16.

F1 Bereshit Rabba, sect. 42. fol. 37. 3. Vid. Jarchium in Gen. x. 21. & xiv. 13. & Aben Ezram in Exod. xxi. 2.

F2 Joseph. Antiqu. l. 1. c. 6. sect. 4. Targ. Jon. in Gen. x. 21. Sepher Cosri, par. 1. sect. 49. fol. 24. 2. R. Nehemiah in Bereshit Rabba, ut supra, Aben Ezra in Gen. x. 21. & xxxix. 14. & in Exod. i. 16. Kimchi in rad. (rbe) .

F3 Pirke Abot, c. 3. sect. 14.

F4 Pirke Eliezer, c. 48.

F5 lb. c. 47.

F6 Misn. Bava Kama, c. 8. sect. 6.

F7 T. Bab. Betza, fol. 32. 2.

2 Corinthians 11:23

Are they ministers of Christ?

&c.] The apostle could have answered to this question that they were not, being neither sent by Christ, nor preachers of him, and who sought their own things and not his, being false apostles, and deceitful workers; but he chose not to litigate this point with them, and by a rhetorical concession allows it; and replies,

I speak as a fool;

that is, he might be thought to speak as such an one, for what he afterwards says; and if he was, he must be content, he could not help it, there was a necessity for it, to stop the mouths of these vain boasters:

I am more;

that is, more a minister of Christ than they, more manifestly so than they were; yea, he was more than an ordinary minister of Christ, he was an apostle, the apostle of the Gentiles, and laboured and suffered more than even the rest of the true apostles of Christ, and therefore must be greatly superior to the false ones:

in labours more abundant;

in taking fatiguing journeys, preaching the Gospel constantly, administering ordinances, working with his own hands

in stripes above measure;

which were cruelly and unmercifully inflicted on him by his enemies, and which he afterwards mentions:

in prisons more frequent;

as at Philippi, and so after this at Jerusalem, and Rome, and perhaps in other places, though not recorded; Clemens Romanus says F8, that he was seven times in bonds:

in deaths oft;

that is, frequently in danger of death, in such afflictions and evils as threatened with death, and therefore are so called; see (2 Corinthians 1:8-10) .

FOOTNOTES:

F8 In Epist. ad Corinth, i. p. 14. Ed. Oxon. 1669.

2 Corinthians 11:24

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

] We have no account in the Acts of the Apostles, or elsewhere, of any one of these five scourgings, which the apostle underwent from the Jews; but there is no doubt to be made of them. The number of stripes he received at each time agrees with the traditions and customs of the Jews. The original law for scourging a delinquent is in (Deuteronomy 25:2 Deuteronomy 25:3) where it is said, “forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed”; according to the nature of the case, forty stripes and no more might be inflicted, but fewer might suffice in some cases; the apostle’s having but thirty nine at a time was not because the Jews thought his crime did not require full forty; or that they out of tenderness and compassion to him abated him one; but they proceeded with him to the

utmost rigour of this law, according to their interpretation of it; for so runs their tradition {i},

“with how many stripes do they beat him? (a criminal,) it is answered, (ארבִּימַ חַר אַחַת) , “with forty save one”; as it is said, “with the number forty”; that is, which is next to forty; R. Judah says, with full forty is he to be beaten;”

but the decision is not according to R. Judah, as the commentators say F11; and this is the general sense of their F12 interpreters of that law, and what they take to be the genuine meaning of it; so that the apostle was punished according to the extremity of it, in their account. This is a settled rule and point with them, (תורה ארבימ) (חר אחת) (מלקות) F13, “that scourging according to the law is with forty stripes save one”; Maimonides F14 observes, that

“they did not add to forty, if a man was as strong and robust as Samson, but they lessen the number to a man that is weak; for if a weak man should be beaten with many stripes, he may die; wherefore the wise men say, that if he be never so robust, they scourge him but with “thirty nine”;”

so that no mercy shown to Paul, or any regard had to his weak constitution, for it was the utmost they ever inflicted; besides, according to their manner of scourging, (See Gill on Matthew 10:17), they could not have given him another stroke, without giving him three stripes more, which would have made it forty two, and so have exceeded, which the law forbids; for they whipped with a scourge of three cords, and every stroke went for three; so that by thirteen strokes, thirty nine stripes were given, and if a fourteenth had been added, there would have been forty two stripes; agreeably to which they say F15,

“when they condemn a delinquent to how many stripes he is able to receive, they do not count but by stripes that are fit to be trebled; if they reckon he is able to bear twenty, they do not say he is to be beaten with twenty one, so that they may be able to treble, but he is to be beaten with eighteen; they condemn to receive forty, and after he begins to be beaten, they see he is weak, and they say he cannot receive more than these nine or “twelve” with which he is beaten, lo, this is free; they condemn him to receive twelve, and after he is scourged they see he is strong and able to receive more, lo, he is free, and is not to be beaten any more upon the estimation:”

so that you see that, according to their own canons, they could if they would have mitigated this punishment of the apostle’s; but such was their cruelty and malice, that they carried it to the utmost height they could.

FOOTNOTES:

F9 Misn. Maccot. c. 3. sect. 10.

F11 Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.

F12 Targum Jon. & Jarchi in Deut. xxv. 3. Zohar in Deut. fol. 119. 3. Joseph Antiqu. l. 4. c. 8. sect. 23. Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pr. Affirm. 105.

F13 T. Hieros. Nazir, fol. 53. 1.

F14 Hilchot Sanhedrin, c. 17. 1.

F15 Ib. sect. 2. Misn. Maccot, c. 3. sect. 11.

2 Corinthians 11:25

Thrice was I beaten with rods

Or “wands”, by the Romans; for this was a Roman punishment, distinct from scourging with cords used by the Jews. There is mention made but of one time only that he was so beaten, elsewhere, and that is in (Acts 16:22 Acts 16:23) which was at Philippi; but that he was so many times beaten in this way, there is no room to doubt:

once was I stoned.

This was at Lystra, at the instigation of the Jews that came from Antioch and Iconium, (Acts 14:19) by whom he was left for dead:

thrice I suffered shipwreck;

neither of which are mentioned by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles; for the shipwreck he suffered as when he went to Rome was some time after the writing of this epistle, and therefore cannot be one of these here referred to

a night and a day I have been in the deep;

some understand this of a well, called “Bythos”, or “the deep”, which was near Lystra, where the apostle was hid for such a space of time after his deliverance there; but this, were it so, he would scarcely reckon among his very great hardships and sufferings: others of a prison at Cyzicum in Asia, which, because of its very great height, was called “the depth of the sea”, in which the apostle was imprisoned for such a time; but, we nowhere read that he ever was at that place, or preached there, and much less was imprisoned there; and had he, it is not likely that he should particularly point out such a short imprisonment, but would have let it pass in the general account of being in prisons before mentioned: but rather this is to be understood of the sea, often called the “deep” in Scripture, where by some accident he was cast, and was in it, as the Syriac version has it, (**רְלֵא פִינְהָא**), “where was no ship”, or without one, being shipwrecked; or being cast, or having fallen into the sea, he was swimming in it, or was preserved by a broken piece of the ship, or by some other means, or by the wonderful providence of God for so long a time; though as sailing in those times was chiefly by coasting, this phrase may only signify that the ship in which he was was drove from the coast into the sea, and lost sight of the land for the space of a day and night, and lay floating about in the deep, which was reckoned very dangerous. The word (**νυχθημερον**), “a night day”, signifies a whole natural day, consisting of a night and a day; and is an Hebraism, and answers to (**רַב וּבֹקֶר**), “the evening and the morning”, which make a full day; see (Genesis 1:5 Genesis 1:8 Genesis 1:13 Genesis 1:19 Genesis 1:23) (Daniel 8:14) .

2 Corinthians 11:26***In journeying often***

Through several countries and kingdoms to preach the Gospel, as he did from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum:

in perils of waters;

by the floods being out, which made it very troublesome and dangerous travelling, especially to persons on foot, as was the case of our apostle:

in perils of robbers;

for though he had seldom much to lose, yet was in danger of being ill used, and of his life being taken away by such ruffians:

in perils by my own countrymen;

the Jews, who bore an implacable hatred to him, because of the doctrines of grace he preached, in opposition to the works of the law of Moses, whether moral or ceremonial; and who generally were concerned in stirring up the Gentiles against him wherever he came:

in perils by the Heathen;

the Gentiles, who were incensed against him for inveighing against their idols and idolatrous worship, and other wicked and enormous practices they were addicted to; particularly at Ephesus, by the means of Demetrius the shrine maker, (Acts 19:23-41) ,

in perils in the city;

in any and every city he came into; for bonds and affliction abode him everywhere, as at Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica

in perils in the wilderness;

by robbers and wild beasts, through hunger and thirst, and by the sands in hurricanes and tempests; though this may be understood not strictly of desert places, but of the country in distinction from the city; (See Gill on Matthew 3:1) where travelling is difficult and dangerous, and the people more rustic and uncivil: the phrase, (המדברות) , “in perils of the wildernesses”, is a Rabbinical one F16; as is also (הכנה בימי) , “peril in the sea” F17, next mentioned:

in perils in the sea;

not only by shipwreck, but through pirates, and the ill usage of mariners, want of provisions

in perils among false brethren;

who pretended to be Christians, but “judaized”, teaching the necessity of observing circumcision, and other ceremonies of the law, in order to salvation; these, as the apostle always warmly opposed, so they were sworn enemies to him, and ever sought to do him what mischief they could.

FOOTNOTES:

F16 Sepher Cosri, fol. 296. 2.

F17 Sepher Cosri, fol. 297. 2.

2 Corinthians 11:27***In weariness and painfulness***

Through long journeys and frequent preaching; or “in labour and trouble”; or in troublesome labour, for all labour is not so; as hunting, hawking, &c. though laborious, yet delightful; but the labours of the apostle were painful and troublesome to the flesh, though he had much inward spiritual delight and pleasure in them:

in watchings often;

being sometimes engaged at midnight, either in preaching, or praying, or staging psalms, and sometimes obliged to work early and late with his own hands to supply his necessities:

in hunger and thirst;

as when at sea, or in wilderness places, or where no notice was taken of him for preaching the Gospel; he doing that freely without asking the assistance of any, which in some places would have been prejudicial to his designs, and the spread of the Gospel:

in fastings often;

voluntary ones, which he engaged in, not as meritorious works, but to keep under his body, and as proper to attend the work of prayer at certain times:

in cold and nakedness;

when travelling in the winter season, and but poorly clothed to keep him from the inclemencies of the weather; and having no certain dwelling place to retire unto and abide in, during any severe season there might be, and wanting the comforts of life to support him under such inconveniences.

2 Corinthians 11:28***Besides those things that are without***

Or are omitted, which he had passed by, and had not mentioned in the account and enumeration of things he had given; for otherwise the things he had taken notice of and instanced in, were things external; but besides them and many other things which would be too tedious to relate,

that which cometh upon me daily,

is not to be forgotten; meaning the prodigious deal of business which was every day upon his hands, through the continual coming of brethren to him, either for advice, or comfort, or instruction; and through the multiplicity of letters from divers parts, which he was obliged to give answers to; and the several duties of the day, as prayer, meditation, reading, praising, preaching and to sum up the whole, and which is explanative of the phrase,

the care of all the churches;

not of ten, or twenty, or some only; but of all of them, he being the apostle of the Gentiles, and was concerned in planting, and raising them, and preaching the Gospel to most of them; and who continually stood in need of his watch and care over them, to provide ministers for some, to prevent schisms and heat divisions in others; to preserve others from errors and heresies, and warn them of the dangers to which they were exposed by false teachers; and to animate, strengthen, and support others under violent persecutions, lest their faith should fail, and they be tempted to desert the Gospel, and drop their profession of religion.

2 Corinthians 11:29***Who is weak, and I am not weak?***

&c.] What church is so? or what particular believer is so? for he had not only the care of all the churches, but of all believers upon him; whoever was weak in the faith he was concerned for them, to instruct, establish, and strengthen them; and suited his discourses, reasonings, and language, to their capacity, that they might understand him, and take in right notions of things: or whoever was of a weak and scrupulous conscience about things indifferent, and fearful of using them lest they should sin in so doing, he was cautious of offending them, or doing anything by which their consciences should be defiled, and their peace be broken: or whoever was afflicted, either in body or mind, he sympathized and bore a part with them: “who is offended, and I burn not?” whoever was stumbled and made to fall by anything he said or did, or by the words and actions of others, it gave him sensible pain, it made him very uneasy; he was as one in a flame, all on fire, full of grief and trouble till the cause of the offence was removed, and the person offended made easy and restored; the word here used answers to the Hebrew word (אָנִי), used in (Job 30:25) where it is said, “was not my soul grieved for the poor?” which Mr. Broughton renders, “did not my soul burn for the poor?” Now by all this which the apostle did and suffered, by all actions and sufferings, care and sympathy, he fully appeared to be a true and faithful minister of Christ, and abundantly more than the false apostles, who could produce none of these things as testimonies in their favour.

2 Corinthians 11:30***If I must needs glory***

The apostle signifies that glorying was not agreeable to him; he was not fond of it, it was a subject he did not delight to dwell upon; what he had done was by force, and through necessity; he was compelled to it by the boasts of the false apostles: and since he must needs glory in order to stop their mouths;

2 Corinthians 11:31***The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ***

These words are in the form of an oath, and are a solemn appeal to God, that knows all things, for the truth of the whole that he had declared in the foregoing verses, and of the remarkable deliverance related in the following. "God", says he, who is the searcher of hearts, and an omniscient being, to whom all things are open and manifest,

knoweth that I lie not;

in anyone single instance he had mentioned, nor in what he was about to declare; which because it was a fact done by a stratagem, and a good while ago, and which was not known to the Corinthians, and of which perhaps at that time he could not produce any witnesses; therefore calls God to testify the truth of it, whom he describes as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; God is his "God" as Mediator, and head of the elect, to whom as to them he is a covenant God; and as man, being his Creator, supporter, and the object of his faith, hope, love, and worship; and his "Father" as God, and the Son of God, by supernatural generation, being the only begotten of him, in a way ineffable and inexpressible: "and who is blessed for evermore"; in himself, and Son, and Spirit, and is the source of all happiness to his creatures.

I will glory,

says he, of things which concern mine infirmities; meaning not his sins, for these cause shame; but his afflictions and sufferings for Christ, under which he was supported, and from which he was delivered by the power of Christ; and that was the reason he chose to glory of them; for though they rendered him mean and despicable in the eyes of the world, yet his bearing them with so much patience, courage, and pleasure, and his many singular deliverances out of them, served greatly to illustrate the power and grace of Christ, and at the same time proved him to be a true and faithful minister of the Gospel; to whom so much honour was vouchsafed, as to suffer shame for the name of Christ, and to be so singularly marked out by him, as the object of his favour, love, and care.

2 Corinthians 11:32

In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king

Aretas or Al-Hareth was a king of Arabia, of the family of the Gassanii; among whom were many of this name F18; and who for some hundreds of years ruled over Syria, of which Damascus was the metropolis. The fourth king of that family was of this name, and perhaps is the person here meant; and after him there were four more of the same family so called; it was a name of Arabian kings in other families. The fifteenth king of the Yamanenians was of this name, and so was the "seventeenth" of the Hirensians F19, and the "third" of the kings of Cenda; in the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, there was an Aretas king of the Arabians, mentioned in the Apocrypha F20.

“In the end therefore he had an unhappy return, being accused before Aretas the king of the Arabians, fleeing from city to city, pursued of all men, hated as a forsaker of the laws, and being had in abomination as an open enemy of his country and countrymen, he was cast out into Egypt.” (2 Maccabees 5:8)

Josephus F21 also makes mention of Aretas king of the Arabians, who seems to have been king of Arabia Petraea, since his royal seat was at Petra, to whom Hyrcanus fled by the advice of Antipater, the father of Herod the great; and there was also one of this name in the times of Herod himself, who succeeded Obodas F23; yea, there was an Aretas king of Petraea, in the times of Herod the tetrarch, whose daughter Herod married, and put her away when he took Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, which occasioned a quarrel between him and Aretas, which issued in a battle, in which Herod was beaten F24; and who is thought to be the same king which is here spoken of: the name Aretas or Al-Hareth, as Hillerus F25, observes, signifies the lion; and a lion with the eastern nations was a symbol of royalty and dominion; hence such names were given to persons of illustrious birth and power; so Ali, the son-in-law of Mahomet, was called by the Arabs and Persians the lion of God: now Syria, where Damascus was, and which is called by Pliny F26 Damascus of Syria, had been of long time in the hands of the kings of Arabia; and F1 Josephus makes mention of Aretas, king of Coele Syria, who was called to the government by

those who had Damascus in their hands; very probably by Milesius, who was governor of the tower of Damascus, and commanded (των) (δαμασκηγων την πολιν) , “the city of the Damascenes”, as Josephus calls Damascus, just as it is here in the next clause; in which country of Coele Syria, Ptolomy F2 also places Damascus; and Grotius has proved from Justin Martyr F3 and Terlullian F4, that Damascus formerly belonged to Arabia, though in their times it was reckoned to Syro Phoenicia: here the apostle preached to the confounding of the Jews that dwelt there, which provoked them to enter into a consultation to take away his life; and that he might not escape their hands, they moved to the then governor who was under the king, that the gates might be watched day and night; see (Acts 9:23-25) to which he agreed; and as the apostle here says,

kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison,

or set a guard about it; or as the Arabic version reads it, “he shut up the city”; and placed a watch at the gates of it night and day, or allowed the Jews to do so:

desirous to apprehend me;

in order to deliver him into their hands, who were now his sworn enemies for the Gospel’s sake; willing to do them this favour to ingratiate himself into their affections; or perhaps it might be insinuated to him, that he was a seditious person.

FOOTNOTES:

F18 Pocock. Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 76, 77, 78.

F19 Pocock. ib. p. 58, 70, 79.

F20 Vid. Joseph. Antiqu. l. 13. c. 13. sect. 3.

F21 Antiqu. l. 14. c. 1. sect. 4. de Bello Jud. l. 1. c. 6. sect. 2.

F23 Joseph. Antiqu. l. 16. c. 9. sect. 4. & c. 10. sect. 8, 9.

F24 Ib. Antiqu. l. 18. c. 6. sect. 1.

F25 Onomasticum Sacrum, p. 116, 748.

F26 Nat. Hist. l. 36. c. 8.

F1 Antiqu. l. 13. c. 15. sect. 1, 2.

F2 Geograph. l. 5. c. 15.

F3 Dialog. cum Tryphone Jud. p. 305.

F4 Adv. Marcion. l. 3. c. 13.

2 Corinthians 11:33

And through a window in a basket was I let down

The house in which he was, like Rahab’s, was built upon the wall of the city, and as she let down the spies by a cord through the window, and as David was by Michal; so the apostle was let down by the brethren with cords, as Jeremiah was, (Jeremiah 38:6) where the Septuagint use the same word as here, through a window; “which”, as the Arabic version reads it, “was in the wall”; or he was let down by the wall side, “in a basket or net”; so (σουργανη) , and (אֶרְבֵּית) , the word which the Syriac version here uses, signify and design a basket made of withs, wrought together in the form of network; frequent mention is made in the Jewish writings F5 of (τωνωλξη τωψρο) , “the networks and lattices of windows”; whether these were not taken off the window and put into a form like a basket, and in it the apostle let down by the brethren with the help of cords, may be inquired into: however, he

escaped his hands;

the governor’s, and the Jews too who lay in wait for him. This deliverance he mentions with thankfulness to God, and as an instance of divine Providence in the preservation of him, for much usefulness to the church of Christ;

the Vulgate Latin version reads, and “thus he escaped his hands”.

FOOTNOTES:

F5 Misn. Oholot, c. 8. sect. 4. & Negaim, c. 13. sect. 3. T. Bab. Cholin, fol. 125. 2.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 12

The apostle in this chapter proceeds upon the same subject, in vindicating himself against the false teachers, and giving proof of his apostleship; he takes notice of a very remarkable and unusual vision he was favoured with; makes mention of an uncommon temptation of Satan, how he was delivered from it, and the use it was of to him; excuses his boasting to the Corinthians; lays the blame of it upon them who obliged him to do it, though they had such undeniable proofs of his apostleship among them; signifies he intended to come and see them, and expresses his strong affection for them, and good will towards them; removes the calumnies of covetousness, guile, and craftiness; reproves them for their sins, and threatens them in case of impenitence. Though in some respects glorying was not so convenient, and quite disagreeable to the apostle himself, yet such were his circumstances, that it was become necessary for him to do it, and therefore goes on with it; and to his character, qualifications, labours, sufferings, and deliverances, adds the visions and revelations of the Lord he had been honoured with, 2Co 12:1 and singles out a very particular one, which he describes by the time when, about fourteen years ago; by the person who saw it, himself, whom he speaks of in the third person, that there might be as little appearance of boasting as possible; by the place where it was seen, the third heaven, into which he was caught; by the form or manner of the vision, or the circumstance and condition in which he was when he saw it, of which he could give no account; as whether in or out of the body, 2Co 12:2, which last circumstance is repeated to denote the certainty of it, and his ignorance as to this part of it; for the truth of which he appeals to God, 2Co 12:3, and affirms again, that such an one as he had described was caught up to paradise; by which he explains what he meant by the third heaven, and further declares, that being there he heard words unutterable, 2Co 12:4. Now though this vision was matter of glorying, yet since he was the person that was so highly honoured with it, he would not dwell any longer on it, but rather speak of his infirmities, as he afterwards does, 2Co 12:5, yet if he had shown a design of boasting, it would not have been acting a foolish part; however, he thought it best to forbear, lest it should lead any into too high an opinion of him, 2Co 12:6, and indeed, these high enjoyments were apt to fill himself with pride and vanity, wherefore God, in his infinite wisdom, thought fit to take some methods to humble him; which leads him to give an account of a sore temptation that befell him, which was grievous to him, and in which he was buffeted by Satan; the end of which was to keep down his pride, and hide it from him, 2Co 12:7. The use this was of to him, and how he behaved under it, and the request he made to the Lord to be freed from it, are declared in 2Co 12:8, to which he received an answer, which was full and satisfactory, gave him pleasure, and determined him to glory in his infirmities, 2Co 12:9, which he does in 2Co 12:10, and gives an enumeration of them, and his reason for glorying in them: and whereas he knew he should be chargeable with folly, in glorying in other things as he had done, he blames the Corinthians for it, who had obliged him to it; for had they engaged as they should have done in the vindication and commendation of him, there would have been no need of his own; and they were furnished with matter and arguments enough for such a purpose, since it must have been a plain case to them that he was not inferior to the chief of the apostles, 2Co 12:11, of which they had a full demonstration, partly by the signs, wonders, and mighty deeds which were done in the midst of them by him, 2Co 12:12, and partly by the gifts of grace bestowed on them through his ministry, on account of which they did not come short of any other churches; unless it was in this, that they had the Gospel preached without charge unto them, 2Co 12:13, the apostle goes on to acquaint them that he had a third time intended to come and see them, when he would be no more burdensome and chargeable to them than he had been before; have no regard to theirs but to them, acting the part of a father that lays up for his children, but takes nothing from them, 2Co 12:14, and expresses his strong affection for them, even though they should show but little to him, and his earnest desire to be serviceable to them, and the pleasure he should take therein, 2Co 12:15, and whereas it was suggested by the false teachers, that though he

did not take money of them in person, he had used some underhand crafty methods by the means of others to drain them of it, 2Co 12:16 , he replies and vindicates his innocence, by putting the question to them in general; whether he had made any gain by any persons he had sent to them, 2Co 12:17 , and particularly inasmuch as he had sent Titus and another brother, whether he had made any gain of them, and whether the apostle and he were not of the same spirit; and whether they did not take the same steps, 2Co 12:18 , and then observes, that all the pains that he took in the vindication of himself, was not so much on his own account as theirs, even for their edification, that that might not be hindered, for whom he had the most endeared affection: and for the truth of all this he appeals to God, 2Co 12:19 , and closes this chapter with observing the many evils which were among them, which he feared he should find among them, when he came, unrepented of; and which would be matter of grief and humiliation to him, and oblige him to use that severity among them which would not be agreeable to them, 2Co 12:20 .

2 CORINTHIANS 12

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

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

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

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

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles*, though I be nothing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

committed.

2 Corinthians 12:1

It is not expedient doubtless for me to glory

Though it was lawful for him to glory, and was necessary in the present circumstances of things, in vindication of himself, and to preserve the Corinthians from being carried away with the insinuations of the false apostles; and so for the honour and interest of Christ and the Gospel; yet it was not expedient on some other accounts, or profitable and serviceable to himself; he might find that it tended to stir up pride, vanity, and elation of mind in him, and might be interpreted by others as proud boasting and vain glorying; wherefore he chose to drop it, and pass on to another subject; or rather though it was not expedient to proceed, yet, before he entirely quitted it, he thought it proper to say something of the extraordinary appearances of God unto him. Some copies, and the Vulgate Latin version, read, “if there was need of glorying, it is not indeed expedient”; the Syriac version, “there is need of glorying, but it is not expedient”; and the Arabic version, “neither have I need to glory, nor is it expedient for me: I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord”; such as the Lord had made to him, and not man; and which were not the fruit of his own fancy, or the delusions of Satan; but were from the Lord Jesus Christ, and his glory. The apostle might very well speak of “visions” or heavenly appearances, since he was favoured with many; his conversion was owing to a vision or appearance of Christ to him, whom he saw with his bodily eyes, and heard him speaking to him, and which he calls “the heavenly vision”; at another time when at Troas, a vision appeared to him in the night, and a man of Macedonia stood and prayed him to come over and help them; and when at Corinth the Lord spoke to him by a vision, and bid him not be afraid, but go on preaching the Gospel, because he had much people there to be brought in through his ministry: and as for revelations, besides what are ordinary and common to all believers, he had extraordinary ones; the Gospel and the scheme of it, the knowledge of the several particular doctrines of it, were not attained to by him in the common way, but he had them by the revelation of Jesus Christ; the several mysterious parts of it, particularly that of the calling of the Gentiles, to which might be added, the change that will be upon the living saints at Christ’s second coming, were made known to him by revelation; and sometimes in this extraordinary way he was directed to go to such or such a place, as at a certain time he went up to Jerusalem by “revelation”, where he was to do or suffer many things for the sake of Christ: though he had no revelation of anything that was different from, and much less contrary to the Gospel, and as it was preached by the other apostles; for there was an entire agreement between him and them in their ministry; see (Galatians 2:2 Galatians 2:7-8), and these visions and revelations were for his instruction, direction, and encouragement in the ministration of the Gospel; and being of an extraordinary nature, were suitable to those extraordinary times, and not to be expected in an ordinary way, nor is there any need of them now; besides, these were visions and revelations of the Lord, and not the effects of enthusiasm, and a warm imagination, nor diabolical delusions, or the pretensions and cheats of designing men; and were for the confirmation and establishment of the Gospel, and not to countenance a new scheme, or introduce a new dispensation; wherefore all visions and revelations men pretend to, which are for such a purpose, are to be despised and rejected.

2 Corinthians 12:2

I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago

Which is to be understood of himself, as appears from (2 Corinthians 12:7), where he speaks in the first person; and the reason why he here speaks in the third, is to show his modesty and humility, and how much he declined vain glory and popular applause; and whilst he is speaking of himself, studies as it were to conceal himself from being the person designed, and to draw off the mind of the reader from him to another person; though another cannot be intended, for it would not have been to his purpose, yea, quite beside it, when he proposes to come to visions and revelations he had of the Lord, to have instanced in the rapture of another. Moreover, the full and certain knowledge he had of this man, of the place he was caught up to, and of the things he there heard, best agrees with him; as also his attesting, in such a solemn way, his ignorance of the manner of this rapture, whether

in the body or out of the body, and which he repeats and refers to the knowledge of God, clearly shows he must mean himself; besides, it would otherwise have been no instance of any vision of his, nor would the rapture of another have at all affected his character, commendation, and praise, or given him any occasion of glorying as this did: though he did not choose to take it, as is clear by his saying that if he gloried of it he should not be a fool, yet forbore, lest others should entertain too high an opinion of him; and after all, he was in some danger of being elated with this vision along with others, that the following sore temptation was permitted, to prevent his being exalted with it above measure: and when he calls this person, meaning himself, a “man”, it is not to distinguish him from an angel, whose habitation is in the third heaven, and so no wonderful thing to be found there; or from any other creature; nor perhaps only to express his sex, a man, and not a woman, though the Syriac version uses the word (גברא) , peculiar to the masculine sex; but merely to design a person, and it is all one as if it had been said, I knew a person, or I knew one in Christ: and the phrase “in Christ”, is not to be connected with the word “know”, as if the sense was, that he called Christ to witness the truth of what he was about to say, and that what he should say was not with a view to his own glory, but to the glory and honour of Christ only; but it is to be connected with the word “man”, and denotes his being in Christ, and that either, as Dr. Hammond thinks, in a singular and extraordinary manner; as John is said to be “in the spirit”, (Revelation 1:10) , that is, in an ecstasy; and so here this man was in the Spirit of Christ, and transported by him to see visions, and have revelations; or rather it intends a spiritual being in Christ, union to him, the effect of which is communion with him. The date of

fourteen years ago,

may refer either to the time when the apostle first had the knowledge of his being in Christ, which was at his conversion; he was in Christ from all eternity, being given to him, chosen in him, loved by him; set as a seal upon his heart, as well as engraven on the palms of his hands, and represented by him, and in him, in the everlasting covenant; and so in time, at his crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God; in consequence of all which, when the set time was come, he became a new creature, was converted and believed in Christ, and then he knew himself to be in him; he was in him secretly before, now openly; and this was about fourteen years before the writing of this epistle; the exact time of his conversion might well be known and remembered by him, it being in such an extraordinary manner: or also this date may refer to the time of his rapture, which some have thought was some time within the three days after his conversion, when he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank; some have thought it to be eight years after his conversion; but the most probable opinion is, that it was not at Damascus, but when he was come again to Jerusalem, and was praying in the temple, and was in a trance or ecstasy, (Acts 22:17) , though the difference there is among chronologers, and the uncertainty of their conjectures, both as to the time of the apostle’s conversion, and the writing of this epistle, makes it very difficult to determine this point. They that make this rapture to be at the time of his conversion, seem to be furthest off of the truth of things; for whether his conversion be placed in the 34th year of Christ, as some, or in the 35th, as others, or in the 36th; and this epistle be thought to be written either in the 56th, or 58th, or 60th, the date of fourteen years will agree with neither: they indeed make things to agree together best, who place his conversion in the year 36, make this rapture to be eight years after, in the year 44, and this epistle to be written in the year 58. Dr. Lightfoot puts the conversion of the apostle in the year 34, the rapture of him into the third heaven, in the year 43, at the time of the famine in the reign of Claudius, (Acts 11:28) , when he was in a trance at Jerusalem, (Acts 22:17) , and the writing of this epistle in the year 57. That great chronologer, Bishop Usher, places Paul’s conversion in the year 35, his rapture in the year 46, and the writing of this epistle in the year 60. So that upon the whole it is hard to say when this rapture was; and it may be, it was at neither of the visions recorded in the Scripture, which the apostle had, but at some other time nowhere else made mention of: when, as he here says,

such an one was caught up to the third heaven,

the seat of the divine Majesty, and the residence of the holy angels; where the souls of departed saints go immediately upon their dissolution; and the bodies and souls of those who have been translated, caught up, and raised already, are; and where the glorified body of Christ is and will be, until his second coming. This is called the

“third” heaven, in respect to the airy and starry heavens. The apostle refers to a distinction among the Jews of (שמיא ילאי) (ושמיא מיאי ושמיא תתאי) , “the supreme heaven, the middle heaven, and the lower heaven” F6; and who also make a like division of worlds, and which they call (ולמ ליוו וולמ האמי והולמ השפל) , “the supreme world, and the middle world, and the lower world” F7; and sometimes F8 the world of angels, the world of the orbs, and the world of them below; and accordingly the Cabalistic doctors talk of three worlds; (hatylt amle) , “the third world”, they say F9, is the supreme world, hidden, treasured, and shut up, which none can know; as it is written, “eye hath not seen” and is the same with the apostle’s “third heaven”. The state and condition in which he was during this rapture is expressed by the following words, put into a parenthesis,

whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth:

whether his soul remained in his body, and he was caught up soul and body into heaven, as Elijah was carried thither soul and body in a chariot with horses of fire; or whether his soul was out of his body, and he was disembodied for a time, as Philo the Jew F11 says that Moses was (aswmaton) , “without the body”, during his stay of forty days and as many nights in the mount; or whether this was not all in a visionary way, as John was “in the Spirit” on the Lord’s day, and Ezekiel was taken by a lock of his head, and lifted up by the Spirit between earth and heaven, and brought “in the visions of God to Jerusalem”, cannot be said. The apostle did not know himself, and much less can any other be able to say how it was; it is best with him to refer and leave it to the omniscient God; one of the four persons the Jews say entered into paradise, who are hereafter mentioned in (See Gill on 2 Corinthians 12:4), is said to have his mind snatched away in a divine rapture F12; that is, he was not himself, he knew not where he was, or whether in the body or out, as says the apostle.

FOOTNOTES:

F6 Targum in 2 Chron. vi. 18.

F7 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 1. 4. & 3. 2, 3.

F8 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 83. 2.

F9 Zohar in Numb. fol. 66. 3.

F11 De Somniis, p. 570.

F12 Cosri, p. 3. sect. 65. fol. 190. 1. 2.

2 Corinthians 12:3

And I knew such a man

The same man, namely himself, is here designed, and the same rapture spoken of, and the condition he was in expressed in the same words: which repetition is made for the more strong affirmation of what he delivered, and to signify the marvellousness of this vision, and how surprising and unaccountable it was.

2 Corinthians 12:4

How that he was caught up into paradise

Not the earthly paradise in which our first parents were; this was destroyed by the flood, and the place where it was not now to be known; and to what purpose the apostle should be carried thither cannot be guessed at; though some have thought that this is here meant: but not this, nor any place distinct from the “third” heaven, or place of the blessed, is meant; which is the sense of many of the ancients, who suppose the third heaven and paradise to be two distinct places, and that the apostle had two separate raptures. Clemens Alexandrinus {m}, reads the words thus, “I knew a man in Christ caught up to the third heaven, (κακειψεν ειπ τον παραδεισον) , from thence to paradise”; and so Theophilact upon the place says, “from the third heaven he was immediately called up into paradise”; and so Oecumenius, “he was caught up unto the third heaven, and so again from thence into paradise”; and some modern writers have been inclined to think there were two raptures, and the rather

inasmuch as the apostle is said to be caught “up to” the one, and caught “up into” the other, and makes use of the words “caught up” twice; or otherwise he would be guilty of a tautology, both in that and in repeating his ignorance of the manner of the rapture; to which is added, that he proposed to speak of “visions” and “revelations” in the plural number, (2 Corinthians 12:1) , and afterwards calls this vision an “abundance of revelations”, (2 Corinthians 12:7) , but as it was at the same time that he was caught up to the third heaven, and into paradise, there being one and the same date of fourteen years ago to both; and as, in the account of the one and the other, he was equally ignorant of the manner how he was caught up, whether in the body, or out of the body; and seeing that there is no account of what he saw and heard in the third heaven, but only what he heard in paradise, which is referred to be told in the after account of this vision; and as the third heaven and paradise are one and the same place, it seems most reasonable to conclude, that not two raptures and two visions are here designed, but only one; and without any show of a vain repetition, the apostle having begun the account of this vision, might resume what he had said, in order to give a more plain and clear account of it; and especially as there were some things he had not yet mentioned, and the whole was not easy to be understood and taken in, and the manner of it even unknown to himself; and this he might do to raise the attention the more unto it, as being something wonderful and extraordinary; besides, if his design had been to have given an account of two raptures, he would have distinguished them in a numerical way; and would have told us that he was twice caught up, as well as he afterwards says that he besought the Lord “thrice”, at another time; and this would have been necessary to have prevented a mistake, of taking the one and the other for the same rapture, as is generally done; heaven is called paradise, because as the garden of Eden, which bears that name, was of God’s planting, so is this made and prepared by him; as that was a delightful place, so is this; also because of Christ the tree of life, which is in the midst of it, besides an innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, the pure and undefiled inhabitants of it; and because of the river of divine love, of endless pleasures, the saints there are made to drink of. It was usual with the Jews to call heaven (גַּן־עֵדֶן) , “the garden of Eden”, or paradise; and which they F14 sometimes speak of as upper and lower; the lower they suppose the souls of men are introduced into, immediately upon their dissolution; where they stay a while, and then go up to the upper paradise, the world of souls, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are. The Jews ought not to object to the apostle’s being had into paradise before his death, for they tell us of several that entered there whilst alive;

‘‘nine (they say F15). (נִכְנְוּ בַחַיִּיהֶם בְּגַן־עֵדֶן) , “entered in their life time into the garden of Eden”, or paradise; and these are they, Enoch the son of Jared, and Elijah, and the Messiah, and Eliezer the servant of Abraham, and Hiram king of Tyre, and Ebed Melec the Ethiopian, and Jabez the son of Rabbi Judah the prince, and Bethiah the daughter of Pharaoh, and Sarah the daughter of Asher; and there are some that say also F16 Rabbi Joshua ben Levi”;

and in another place F17,

‘‘four (בְּפֶרֶד) , entered into paradise; and these are they, Ben Azzai, and Ben Zoma, another, and R. Aki-ba;”

upon which is F18 added,

‘‘they entered into paradise as it were by the hands of God, and they did not ascend up above really, but it seemed to them as if they ascended;”

how far this may serve to explain and illustrate the apostle’s case, I leave, with this observation more concerning another use of the word paradise with them; which sometimes signifies a considerable share of knowledge of mysterious things, relating to the nature of God, angels of which Maimonides having spoken, says F19,

‘‘these things the former wise men called (פֶּרֶד) , “paradise”, as they say, “four entered into paradise”: and although they were the greatest men of Israel, and exceeding wise men, yet they had not all of them power

to know and comprehend all these things clearly; and I say, that he is not fit to walk (בפרד) , “in paradise”, but he whose belly is filled with flesh and bread, and it is bread and flesh to know what is forbidden, and what is lawful, and the other precepts of a like nature;”

and again F20,

“a man that is filled with all these virtues (meaning with wisdom, and understanding, and government of the passions and appetites) is perfect in his body, as he that enters into paradise, and inclines himself to these things which are great and afar off:”

once more F21,

“the words of the tradition are comprehended in the written law, and the exposition of them in the oral law; and the things which are called (פרד) , paradise, are contained in the Talmud;”

this they F23 call (פרד החכמה) , “the paradise of wisdom”; whether this sense and use of the word may be applied to the passage before us, and so be expressive of that large share of divine knowledge which was communicated in an extraordinary way to the apostle, may deserve some consideration: however, this is certain, that when he was caught up into paradise, he

heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter;

to instance in particular things, which he then either saw or heard, as some have done, is bold and daring; as that he saw the divine Being with the eyes of his understanding, the several angelic forms, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, and the glory and beauty of the souls of departed saints; and heard the harmonious music of each of these happy creatures; had a view of the book of life, and was shown the order and method of divine predestination; was let into the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles, and the change that will be on living saints, and heard the whole account of the dispensation of things, in the church of Christ to the end of the world: the things were unspeakable, never yet related, and so not to be known: they were such things which the apostle himself, when out of the rapture, might have but very inadequate ideas of, and such as he was not able to put into proper words and language to be understood by others; and which as he heard them not from a mere man, but from the Lord, so no mere man was able to utter them, none but he of whom he had heard them: and besides, whatever conceptions the apostle might have of them himself, and how capable soever he was of expressing them; yet they were not fit and proper to be told in the present state of things, being no part of the counsel of God relating to man’s salvation, the whole of which he faithfully declares; and yet were necessary to be heard by him, in order to establish his faith in the Gospel, to animate him in his ministry, and fortify his mind against all the afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions, he was to meet with for the sake of Christ. The phrase seems to be the same with (אֵי אִפְשֵׁר לֵאמֹר) , “it is impossible to say it” F24; and of such like secret things in paradise, or the world of souls, the Jews say F25 that

“they are hidden, and which (אינן ראויים ללות בכתיבה) , “are not fit to produce in writing;”

and so these were such as were not lawful to speak out, (γλωσσισμῶ) (ανψρωπιναισ) , “with human tongues”, as Justin Martyr says {z}; they were not in such sense “unspeakable”, as not to be expressed by any; for they were expressed either by Christ himself, who was glorified in human nature, whom the apostle might now see and hear, or by some angel or angels, or they could not have been heard by the apostle as they were; but they were such as before never been spoken to any mortal man, and so could never have been spoken by any; and though they had been spoken to a mortal man, yet they could not be spoke by him to others; for though when he heard them, his human soul, for that present time, might conceive and take in much of the nature and meaning of them, yet they were such as he could not express by words, and represent to others by speech after the vision was over, and especially at this distance: not that it was sinful to have done it, if he could have done it; or that the

things themselves were of such a nature, that it would have been criminal to have rehearsed them; but rather that it was impossible to do it, at least fully, since they might greatly regard the glory of the divine Being, and the worship paid him by the heavenly inhabitants: or could it be done in any tolerable manner, it might not be altogether convenient and proper in the present state of things; since the worship of the upper world lying in praise without prayer, might not be so fit to be related, lest it should be imitated by saints on earth: and seeing what the apostle heard was ineffable, and not to be spoken by himself; no credit is to be given to those spurious things called the Revelation and Ascension of Saint Paul, in which the author or authors of them pretend to tell us what these things were.

FOOTNOTES:

F13 Strom. l. 5. p. 586.

F14 Nishma Chayim, par. 1. c. 10. fol. 25. 2. &c.

F15 Derech Eretz, fol. 19. 1. Zohar in Exod, fol. 102. 3.

F16 Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 31. 1, 2.

F17 T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 14. 2.

F18 Tosephot, ib.

F19 Jesode Tora, c. 5, sect. 19, 20.

F20 Jesode Tora, c. 7. sect. 2.

F21 Ib. Talmud Tora, c. 1. sect. 12.

F23 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 96. 4.

F24 T. Bab. Megilla, fol, 21. 1.

F25 Nishmat Chayim, fol. 28. 1.

F26 Expositio fidei, p. 379.

2 Corinthians 12:5

Of such an one will I glory

The apostle in great modesty seems to speak of some other person, and not himself, as caught up into the third heaven, when he yet means himself; and does as it were distinguish himself from himself; himself in paradise from himself on earth; his sense is, that though he might lawfully glory of such a person so highly exalted and favoured, yet since this was his own case, he chose to forbear, and say no more of it:

yet of myself I will not glory;

though he could, and might, and did glory in the Lord, who had done such great things for him; as that he was in Christ, and knew himself to be so, had been rapt up into heaven, and heard things unutterable; yet he would not glory of these things as from himself, as owing to any merit or worthiness of his, but as instances of mere favour, grace, and goodness; if he gloried of anything of himself in his present state and condition, it should be of his weaknesses:

but in mine infirmities;

not his sinful ones, for these he mourned over, and was humbled before God and man under a sense of; but his many pressing difficulties of life, heavy reproaches, very great afflictions, and violent persecutions he endured for Christ's sake; see (2 Corinthians 12:10).

2 Corinthians 12:6

For though I would desire to glory

. Had a mind to it, chose it, and was fond of it, thought fit to proceed in this way concerning this vision, or this with many others:

I shall not be a fool;

in reality; though he might seem and be thought to be so by others; he does indeed before call his glorying “folly”, and “speaking foolishly”; but he means only as it might be interpreted by others, for in fact it was not: the reason is,

for I will say the truth;

he said nothing but what was strictly true, in the account of himself in the preceding chapter, and appeals to God as his witness; nor anything in the relation of this vision, but what was entirely agreeable to truth; and to speak truth, though it be of a man’s self, when he is called to it, cannot be deemed folly;

but now I forbear;

he did not choose to go on, or say any more upon this head at this time; though he had many visions, and an abundance of revelations, yet he did not judge it proper to give a particular account of them:

lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be,

or that he heareth of me;

should take him to be more than human, as before this the Lycaonians at Lystra did; who supposed that he and Barnabas were gods come down in the likeness of men, and brought out their oxen and garlands to do sacrifice to them; and as, after this, the inhabitants of Melita, seeing the viper drop from his hand without any hurt to him, said he was a god; to prevent such extravagant notions of him, he forbore to say any more of his extraordinary visions and revelations; but chose rather that men should form their judgments of him by what they saw in him and heard from him, as a minister of the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 12:7***And lest I should be exalted above measure***

Over much elated in his mind, and swelled with a vain conceit of himself:

through the abundance of the revelations;

for he had not only one or two, or a few, but an abundance of them; and which, as everything does but grace, tended to lift up his mind, to stir up the pride of his heart, and to entertain too high and exalted thoughts of himself. Pride is naturally in every man’s heart; converted persons are not without it; knowledge, gifts, and revelations are apt to puff up with spiritual pride, unless counterbalanced and over poised by the grace of God. This great apostle was not out of danger by them, for he was not already perfect; wherefore to prevent an excess of pride and vanity in him on account of them, he says,

there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me;

many have been the thoughts and conjectures of men about what is here meant by the apostle. This ought to be allowed and taken for granted, that the thorn in the flesh, and the messenger of Satan, design one and the same thing; the former is a figurative expression, the latter a literal one, and explanative of the former. Some have thought that corporeal afflictions are here designed, which may be compared to thorns: see (Hosea 2:6), and which are not joyous, but grievous to the flesh, and come not by chance, but are by divine appointment, and are designed and made use of, to hide pride from men; and sometimes, by divine permission, Satan has an hand in inflicting them, as in the case of Job: whilst such a general sense is kept to, it is not to be despised, without entering into the particular bodily disorder with which the apostle was afflicted, as some do; some saying it was the choleic, others the gout, others a pain in the ear, and others the headache; which latter it is said he was much troubled with; but these are mere conjectures: others think that the corruptions of nature are intended which in regenerate persons are left, as the Canaanites were in the land, to be “thorns” in the eyes and sides of the Israelites, (Joshua 23:13) (Judges 2:3). These, to be sure, were felt by the apostle, and were very grievous and hum-

bling to him, and were no doubt sometimes stirred up by Satan, which made him complain bitterly, and groan earnestly; and it may be observed, to strengthen this sense, that it was usual with the Jews to call concupiscence, or the vitiosity of nature, Satan; for so they F1 often say, (הַשָּׂטָן הוּא יָרָה) , “Satan, he is the evil imagination”, or corruption of nature; and particularly they call the lust of uncleanness by this name; and it is said F2 of a young man of Israel, being tempted by a young woman of Midian, through the counsel of Balaam, that (בִּירַר בֶּן הַשָּׂטָן) , “Satan burned in him”, and he turned aside after her; and that the evil imagination is the old serpent; yea, they call this “the messenger of hell”, a phrase very much like what is here used.

``R. Hona F3, as he was preaching to the children of men to take warning, said unto them, children, beware (מִשְׁלֵיחַאֲשֶׁל גִּיהֵנִמ) , “of the messenger of hell”; but who is this? the evil imagination, or concupiscence, is that which is “the messenger of hell”;

and this sense is agreeable, provided the particular corruption the apostle was harassed with is not pretended to, as is by some, who pitch upon the lust of uncleanness, and spare not to mention the person by name, one Tecla, who, they say, travelled with him, and was a snare to him; but this is to do injury to the character of so holy an apostle, and to represent him as exposing himself to the false apostles, against whom he was guarding: others think that a variety of afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions, for Christ’s sake and the Gospel, are here meant, which were as pricking briars and grieving thorns to him; see (Ezekiel 28:24) , and which were given and ordered by divine appointment for his good; this sense, (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) , lead unto, and seem to confirm: others are of opinion that the temptations of Satan are designed, which, as they are called “fiery darts”, which the archers of Satan, and his principalities and powers, shoot thick and fast at the saints, to their great annoyance; so may be here called, especially some very particular, eminent, and sore temptation, a “thorn in the flesh”, very pungent, and giving a great deal of pain and uneasiness; others suppose that some particular emissary of Satan, either some one of the false apostles and teachers, who greatly opposed him, as Alexander the coppersmith, who did him much harm; or such an one as Hymenaeus or Philetus, that blasphemed and spoke evil of him; or some violent persecutor of him is intended. But, after all, I see not but that the devil himself may be meant; for, as before observed, the phrase “a thorn in the flesh” is metaphorical, and the other, a “messenger of Satan”, is literal, and explains it; and the whole may be read thus, “there was given to me a thorn in the flesh”, namely, (αγγελου) (satan) , “the angel Satan to buffet me”; so that Satan, who was once an angel of light, now of darkness, is the “thorn in the flesh”; and might be suffered to appear visibly to him from time to time, in a very terrible manner, and which was very grievous to be borne; he might by permission have great power over his body, as he had over Job’s, to use it ill, to beat and buffet it; for this also may be taken literally: and he might likewise in other ways greatly distress him by stirring up the corruptions of his heart; by following him with his satanical injections, suggestions, and temptations; by raising violent persecutions, and instigating many of his emissaries against him; and this sense is the rather to be chosen, because it includes all others that have any show of truth. The Jews F4 sometimes make mention of the angel or messenger of Satan mocking at the righteous, and buffeting them; so God is by them said F5 to deliver Nebuchadnezzar (לְמַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׂטָן) , “to a messenger of Satan”. This sore exercise befell the apostle for his good, to keep down the pride of his nature;

lest,

adds he again, I should be exalted above measure;

for such ends and purposes does the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, deal with his people. The F6 Jews have a notion that this was one reason of God’s tempting or trying Abraham with the sacrifice of his Son, to depress that pride that was likely to arise in him because of his greatness.

``This temptation (they say) was necessary at that time, because above, the grandeur of Abraham is declared how great it was before his enemies made peace with him; and Abimelech, king of the Philistines, and Phichol, the chief captain of his host, were obliged to enter into a covenant with him, and asked him to show favour to them, and to the land in which he sojourned; and perhaps hereby (גִּבְהָ לֵב) , “his heart was lifted up”, in the ways of God; (וַרְמוֹ יָיִר) , “and his eyes were lofty”; when he saw himself blessed with riches,

and with children, and with grandeur and glory, as the glory of kings; wherefore God was “willing to try him”: with a wall of iron, (this great difficulty) to see if there was any dross left in him.”

FOOTNOTES:

F1 T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 16. 1. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 6. 2. 3. s. 3. 10. 4. 13. 3. 20. 2. 50. 3. 58. 3. 72. 4. 73. 2. 86. 1. 87. 2. 93. 1. 96. 1. 99. 4. 100. 4. 101. 42. 113. 1. & 133. 2. & 141. 3. & 149. 2. & 152. 3. Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Lev. fol. 7. 2.

F2 Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 20. fol. 229. 1.

F3 Midrash Hannelam in Zohar in Gen. fol. 67. 4.

F4 R. Eliezer Katon de Scientia Animae, l. 10. apud Gaffarell. Cod. Cabal. Misc. pic. Mirandal. Index p. 23. ad calcem Wolf. Heb. Bibliothec.

F5 Shemot Rabba, sect. 20. fol. 105. 4.

F6 Tzeror Hammor, fol. 22. 1.

2 Corinthians 12:8

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice

With respect to the thorn in the flesh, the messenger Satan, who gave him so much continual disturbance. This sent him to the throne of grace, to request of the Lord,

that it,

or rather, “he might”

depart from me:

this request greatly confirms the above sense, for it can hardly be thought the apostle would be so importunate about the removal of a common bodily affliction; and he knew that the corruption of his nature would remain with him as long as he was in the body; and as for afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions for the Gospel’s sake, he was well apprized they would abide him wherever he went; but that so troublesome an adversary might depart, as it must be greatly desirable, so it was a very proper request: and it is made to a very proper person, to the “Lord” Jesus Christ; who in the days of his flesh had such power over the devils, as to dispossess them from the bodies of men by a word speaking, and held them in subjection, and in a panic fear of him; and when upon the cross, he spoiled principalities and powers, and in the latter day will bind Satan with a chain, and shut him up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. This request was made thrice, not with any view to the three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit; nor to the three usual times of prayer in a day, morning, noon, and night; nor is any exact number of times intended; but the sense is, that he frequently besought the Lord on this account.

2 Corinthians 12:9

And he said unto me

Either by what the Jews call קול (בה) , “Bath Kol”, a voice from heaven, an articulate audible one; or by some extraordinary revelation of the Spirit of God; or by a divine impression upon his mind; whereby he was assured of what follows,

my grace is sufficient for thee;

the Lord always hears and answers his people sooner or later, in one form or another, though not always in the way and manner they desire; but yet in such a way as is most for his glory and their good: the apostle had not his request granted, that Satan might immediately depart from him, only he is assured of a sufficiency of grace to support him under the exercise, so long as it should last. There seems to be an allusion to the word (ydv) , “Shaddai”, an appellation of God, (Genesis 17:1) , and signifies, “which is sufficient”: for God is all sufficient, and is a name that belongs to the Messiah. The angel whom God promised to the Israelites, to go before them in

the wilderness, (Exodus 23:23) , the Jews say F7 is “Metatron” (which is a corruption of the word “mediator”), whose name is as the name of his master. “Metatron” by gematry is “Shaddai, one that is sufficient”: however, certain it is, that the grace of Christ is alone sufficient for all his people, to all saving purposes, in all their times of need. It is alone sufficient, not to the exclusion of the grace of the Father or the Spirit; but in opposition and distinction to anything else, that may be rightly or wrongly called grace; what men generally call common or sufficient grace, which, they say, is given to all men, is a mere chimera; no grace is sufficient but what is effectual, and that is only the grace of Christ: the light of nature is insufficient to any saving purpose; the Gospel, which is called grace, and is the means of grace, is insufficient of itself to salvation, without the powerful and efficacious grace of Christ going along with it; and so are gifts, whether ordinary or extraordinary: nothing short of the grace of Christ is sufficient grace; and this is sufficient for all the elect of God, Jews and Gentiles, Old and New Testament saints, the family in heaven and in earth, the people of God that are already called, and are to be called, and for the worst and vilest of sinners; and it is sufficient to all saving purposes, to the acceptance of their persons before God, to their justification in his sight, to their pardon and cleansing, to their regeneration and sanctification, to the supply of all their wants, and to their perseverance in grace unto glory; and it is sufficient in all their times of need, in times of bodily affliction, of violent persecution, soul desertion, Satan’s temptations, and at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. The reason given to support this answer, and to strengthen the apostle’s faith in it, is,

for my strength is made perfect in weakness;

by the “strength” of Christ is meant, not his strength as the mighty God, but that communicative strength which he has, and is in him as Mediator, and which saints look to him for, and receive from him; this is “made perfect in” their “weakness”; not that their weakness can add perfection to his strength, for his strength is perfect in itself, not to say anything of the contradiction such a sense carries in it; but the meaning is, that the strength of Christ is made to appear, is illustrated and shines forth in its perfection and glory, in supplying, supporting, and strengthening his people under all their weakness; and if they were not left to some weaknesses in themselves, his strength would not be so manifest; see (James 2:22) . The answer to the apostle’s request, supported with this reason, was wonderfully satisfactory to him; wherefore he concludes,

most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities;

in the weaknesses which attended either his body or soul, through the buffetings of the angel Satan, rather than in his visions and revelations; or rather than insist upon his departure from him, he is content things should be as they were, since he had such a promise of a sufficiency of grace to bear him up, under and through whatever was the pleasure of God concerning him; and since the strength of Christ was made illustrious through his weakness, so that Satan was not able to make any advantage over him, he is willing to remain in the same posture and condition:

that the power of Christ,

says he,

may rest upon me,

or “tabernacle over me”; he considered himself as a poor weak feeble creature, and the power of Christ as a tabernacle over him, as the power of God is represented as a garrison about the believer, (1 Peter 1:5) , sheltering, preserving, and protecting him from the insults of Satan, in every form and shape; see (Isaiah 4:6) , where Christ is said to be a tabernacle, for a place of refuge, and for a covert.

FOOTNOTES:

F7 Jarchi in Exod. xxiii. 23. Sepher Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Numb. fol. 87. 1.

2 Corinthians 12:10

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities

Not in them simply considered, but as they were made use of to his advantage, for the exercise of his grace, and for his more abundant consolation; and especially as they tended to the glory of Christ, and made his grace, power, and strength the more conspicuous: by infirmities are meant all outward troubles, everything that is mean and abject, distressing and afflicting, whether from Satan or the world; it seems to be a general term, which includes and is explained by the following particulars:

in reproaches;

of Satan, the accuser of the brethren, who sometimes reproachfully insinuates that they are hypocrites, and serve God and Christ with mercenary views and selfish ends; and of the men of the world, who traduce them as deceivers, treat them with opprobrious language, and lead them with revilings and contumelies, endeavour to take away their characters, credit, and reputation; the faithful servants of Christ must go through bad report, and suffer shame for the name of Christ; but these reproaches with Moses are esteemed by them greater riches than the treasures of Egypt:

in necessities;

not of the soul, the better part, there being a sufficiency of grace in Christ to relieve all its wants; but of the body, the apostle was sometimes reduced to very necessitous circumstances, wanting the common necessities of life, being hungry, thirsty, and naked, and yet cheerful:

in persecutions;

from place to place by the enemies of the Gospel, by whom he was severely handled by beating, scourging, and imprisonment; but his stripes were the marks of the Lord Jesus; his chains were his crown, and his prison a palace to him:

in distresses,

or "straits"; both as to body and mind, encompassed with such difficulties that he knew not what way to take, or course to steer: and all

for Christ's sake;

not for any real crime done by him, but for a profession of Christ, preaching his Gospel, and for the glory of his name; and which made all these afflictions so delightful to him, having in the midst of them the love of God to comfort him, the power and strength of Christ to support him, and the grace of the Spirit to assist him, and the presence of all the three Persons with him; this he suggests to be the ground and reason of his delight and pleasure, in such otherwise disagreeable circumstances:

for when I am weak, then am I strong;

when he was attended with all the above mentioned infirmities, when laden with reproaches, surrounded with necessities, followed with persecutions, and brought into the utmost straits and difficulties, and was most sensible of his weakness in himself to bear and go through all these things; then was he upheld by the divine arm, and strengthened by the power of Christ; so that he was not only able to sustain the conflict, but became more than a conqueror, and even to triumph in the midst of these adversities; he could and did readily take the advice in (Joel 3:10) , and express himself in the same language there directed to, and to which he seems to refer, "let the weak say I am strong"; for he that is weak in himself, and sees himself to be so, is strong in Christ, and has a comfortable experience of renewed strength from him, as his day is. The Jews have a saying somewhat like this,

'' the righteous even (כשהם חלשים מתחזקים) , "when they are weak strengthen themselves"; as it is said, (Genesis 48:2) , and the wicked, though in their strength, fall, according to (Esther 7:8) .''

FOOTNOTES:

F8 Baal Hatturim in Gen. xlvi. 2.

that the power of Christ,

says he,

may rest upon me,

or “tabernacle over me”; he considered himself as a poor weak feeble creature, and the power of Christ as a tabernacle over him, as the power of God is represented as a garrison about the believer, (1 Peter 1:5) , sheltering, preserving, and protecting him from the insults of Satan, in every form and shape; see (Isaiah 4:6) , where Christ is said to be a tabernacle, for a place of refuge, and for a covert.

FOOTNOTES:

F7 Jarchi in Exod. xxiii. 23. Sepher Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Numb. fol. 87. 1.

2 Corinthians 12:11

I am become a fool in glorying

This is either to be understood conditionally, if he had acted as a fool in commending himself, or was to be reckoned and called so by others, for glorying of himself, his visions and revelations; or as an ironical concession, allowing himself to be a fool for so doing, as he knew he should be traduced by his enemies; which concession he makes with a view to remove the blame from himself, and cast it upon the Corinthians: ye have compelled me: they were not only the occasion of his glorying, but they had forced him to it by their conduct; for he was obliged either to take this method for the vindication of his character, and preserve his future usefulness, or else to suffer the false apostles to triumph over him, to the great detriment of the Gospel, and of this church at Corinth particularly; whereas both might have been prevented, had they acted the part that became them:

for I ought to have been commended of you;

when the false apostles reproached him, and insinuated things among them to his disadvantage, they ought not only to have turned a deaf ear to them, and to have checked and reprov'd them, and so have put a stop to their calumnies; but they should have spoke in commendation of him, and have declared how faithfully he had preached the Gospel to them; how useful he had been to their souls, for conviction, conversion, edification, and comfort; how laborious and indefatigable he had been in his ministry; what success attended him, and what wonderful things were done by him in proof of his divine mission; all which they were conscious of, and could with the utmost safety have affirmed of him:

for in nothing,

says he,

am I behind the very chiefest apostles;

meaning either the false apostles, who set themselves upon an equality with the true ones, and above him; or rather the real apostles of Christ, and those that were of the greatest note among them, as Peter, James, and John; for though he was behind them in time, yet not in gifts, labour, and usefulness: but lest this should be thought to savour of vain boasting, he adds,

though I be nothing;

which may be considered either as a declaration of his own thoughts of himself, and an humble acknowledgment

of his own nothingness; that he was nothing as a man, as an Hebrew, a Pharisee, with respect to his external privileges and righteousness, not more and better than others; and nothing as an apostle and a Christian of himself, but was wholly and entirely what he was by the grace of God; or as the judgment and opinion of the false apostles concerning him, who spoke of him, and treated him as a worthless man, of no account, and not to be regarded.

2 Corinthians 12:12

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you

Not only the doctrine which he preached, the power that attended it, and the success it met with among them, were clear signs and evident proofs of his being sent by Christ; not only they themselves, who were converted under his ministry, were testimonials and seals of his apostleship, but also the many other wonderful works done by him confirmed the same, and showed him to be an apostle, and that he was not a whit behind, but equal to the chiefest of them: nor does he refer them to signs that were wrought by him, among others, and in other places, which were many; but to those which they themselves were witnesses of, and therefore might and ought to have spoken of them in defence of him; and in order to stop the mouths of the false apostles, a particular enumeration of these signs follows:

in all patience;

it is one sign, and what is here mentioned in the first place of an apostle and minister of Christ, that he patiently bears all injuries and indignities, reproaches, persecutions, and all manner of afflictions, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's; and this the apostle did; and had he not been sent by Christ, it is not reasonable to imagine that he would have exposed himself to so many evils and dangers; or would have bore with so much patience the ill usage of men, and particularly the unkindness and ingratitude he met with at Corinth; but he took all patiently, having their good and the glory of Christ at heart:

in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds;

meaning preternatural and miraculous performances; such as raising the dead, healing the sick, cleansing lepers, casting out devils, speaking with divers tongues, and the like, which were confirming evidences of apostleship; so (לִּינֵי וּגְבוּרֵינִי), "wonders and powers", or "mighty deeds", are mentioned together by the Jews F9, as the same things.

FOOTNOTES:

F9 Zohar in Exod. fol. 96. 2. & 97. 1.

2 Corinthians 12:13

For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches,

&c.] The apostle here suggests, and appeals to themselves for the truth of it, that in nothing they came short of other churches; that as he was not behind the very chiefest of the apostles, and so they had no reason to be ashamed of him and despise him; neither were they inferior in gifts, grace, and knowledge, to other churches, all which were through his ministry; wherefore they ought to have spoken well of him, and not to have taken the part of the false apostles against him; since all the honour and credit they were in as a church were owing to him as an instrument. The Gospel was first preached to them by an apostle; they were converted under the ministry of an apostle; they were planted and settled as a church by the means of an apostle; and in which respects no church could go beyond them, or boast of more; they had the same Gospel preached to them, and with as much power and purity as other churches; they had received the same Spirit, the same graces, and the same gifts of the Spirit, both ordinary and extraordinary; so that they came behind others in no gift whatever; see (1 Corinthians 1:7) , and had the same miraculous works done among them, as were in other places, for the confirmation of the Gospel. There was not one thing the apostle could think of, in which they differed from others, and which he mentions;

except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you?

because he freely preached the Gospel to them, took no wages of them, but chose rather to work with his own hands, and supply his necessities, than to be troublesome to them; in this, indeed, they differed from other churches, who liberally contributed to their ministers, and honourably maintained them:

forgive me this wrong;

not that the apostle seriously desired this, or thought that he had done them any real injury, and so acknowledges it; for if any wrong was done hereby, it was to himself, and not them; but it is an ironical way of speaking, and was a sharp rebuke to them, for their ignorance, ingratitude, and negligence.

2 Corinthians 12:14

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you

Not that he had been twice at Corinth, and was now about to come a third time; for as yet he had been but once there, when he first preached to them, was the means of their conversion, and settled them in a church state; he had promised them to come a second time, but as yet was prevented; see (1 Corinthians 16:5) (2 Corinthians 1:15) , and now a third time he had purposed it in his mind, and had prepared for it, and was just ready to come unto them; when he assures them he had not altered his mind, nor should he change his conduct, but steer the same course he had:

and I will not be burdensome to you;

he signifies he would preach the Gospel freely to them, and take nothing of them; and this he says lest they should think with themselves, that though he took no stipend of them before, yet when he came again he would:

for I seek not yours;

their money and substance, as did the false apostles:

but you;

they themselves, their spiritual good and welfare, the comfort, edification, instruction, and salvation of their immortal souls; like a good and faithful shepherd, who sought not the fleece, but the good of the flock; or rather like a loving tender father, that was affectionately concerned for the good of his children:

for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children;

not but that children ought to take care of, and provide for their aged and indigent parents, and churches ought to maintain their faithful ministers; but the apostle argues from a common fact which nature and affection direct unto, and have formed into a sort of a law, that parents not only care for their children, bring them up, and provide for them food and raiment; but as they are blessed by Providence, lay up treasures for them for tithe to come, and not children for their parents; this is neither usual nor necessary, for however, as the case may be, children may be obliged to maintain their parents when grown old and in want, yet not to lay up substance for them for futurity; and by it the apostle suggests, that he was a spiritual father to these Corinthians, and they were his children; for whose spiritual welfare he had the highest concern, and whatever he did was out of no disrespect to them, but from the strongest affection for them.

2 Corinthians 12:15

And I will gladly spend

Meaning all his time, talents, and strength, which God had bestowed upon him for their spiritual profit and advantage; yea, all that small pittance of worldly goods that he enjoyed: he not only determined to take nothing from them, but was willing to communicate his little substance to them, or spend it in their service; and not only

so, but be spent for them:

and be spent for you,

or “for your souls”: for the good of them; his sense is, either that he was willing to have his whole substance expended, if it would be of any use to them; or his whole strength exhausted, in laborious preaching to them; or even his life to be laid down for them, was it necessary; which sense is favoured by the Syriac and Arabic versions; all which expressed his tender affection as a spiritual father for them: adding,

though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved;

though he loved them more than he did other churches, or than the false apostles loved them, and yet were loved by them less than he was by other churches; or by them, than the false apostles were; or rather the meaning is, that though he increased in his love, and in the expressions of it to them, and they grew colder and more indifferent to him, yet this should not hinder his warmest desires and most earnest endeavours after their spiritual and eternal welfare. This way of speaking strongly expresses his love to them, and tacitly implies the lukewarmness of theirs to him; and yet that it should be no discouragement to him to proceed in doing them all the service he was capable of.

2 Corinthians 12:16

But be it so, I did not burden you

These words are not spoken by the apostle in his own person of himself, but in the person of his adversaries, and contain a concession and an objection of theirs, but be it so; they granted that he had not burdened the Corinthians, that he had took nothing of them himself for preaching the Gospel; they owned that he had preached it freely; this was so clear a point, and so flagrant a case, that they could not deny it; yet they insinuated to the Corinthians, and objected to the apostle, that though he did not receive anything from them with his own hands, yet he craftily and cunningly made use of others to drain their purses, and receive it for him; and which is suggested in the next clause:

nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile;

so say the false apostles of me; for these are not the words of the apostle in his own person; nor to be understood of any spiritual craft, or lawful cunning and prudent artifices used by him, to allure and draw the Corinthians into a good liking and opinion of the Gospel and of his ministry, and so caught them, and was the happy means of their conversion; but they are spoken in the person of the false apostles, charging him with a wicked and criminal craftiness, by making use of other persons in a sly underhanded way, to get this church's money, when he pretended to preach the Gospel freely; to which he answers in the next verse.

2 Corinthians 12:17

Did I make a gain of you

He appeals to the Corinthians against such calumnies and false insinuations, whether ever he had circumvented them in such a manner, or had ever used such artful methods to pillage them; or whether ever he had discovered any covetous disposition towards anything of theirs; or had employed any persons to draw out their substance from them, and get it for himself: he owns he had sent some persons to them on different errands, and asks if he had dealt fraudulently with them,

by any of them whom,

says he,

I have sent to you:

he desires them to name one single person of the many who came to them from him, that had received any

money from them for him; or that they had any reason to believe he had employed for such purposes; and if they could not pitch on a single instance, they ought therefore to look upon this as a downright slander and calumny.

2 Corinthians 12:18

I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother

The apostle proceeds to mention one or two persons that he had sent unto them, and desires to know whether they could charge them with any such practices. He had desired, exhorted, and encouraged Titus to go unto them, and collect money from them; but not for either of themselves, but for the poor saints at Jerusalem; and he sent another brother along with him, who is by some supposed to be Luke, to be a companion of him, and an assistant to him; and who was a witness of what he did, and for what purpose he was sent, and how he behaved:

did Titus make a gain of you?

did he greedily desire your substance? did he show an avaricious temper, or a covetous inclination after your money? did he by any methods extort it from you? say if Titus, or the brother with him, received anything from you, either on their own, or my account?

walked we not in the same Spirit?

in the same Spirit of God, being directed and influenced by him; or in the same disposition of mind, being agreed and determined to preach the Gospel freely, and receive nothing for it:

walked we not in the same steps?

took the same methods, lived the same course of life, working with their own hands to supply their wants, rather than be burdensome to others: the apostle suggests, that where are the same Spirit, temper, disposition, and principles, there will be the same works and actions; and as for covetousness, it is neither agreeable to the Spirit of God, nor to the spirit of a Christian.

2 Corinthians 12:19

Again, think you that we excuse ourselves to you?

&c.] The apostle would not have the Corinthians imagine, that by what he had said once and again in this epistle, he meant to excuse himself from coming to them, for he really and sincerely intended it; or that by this long defence of himself against the false apostles, he designed so much an apology for himself, or that he used any feigned words, or artful methods, to exculpate himself from any charge against him, particularly that of covetousness just mentioned; for he had no view to cover himself by studied apologies, and set orations, and evade anything exhibited against him, and make himself look innocent when guilty; it was not with any such intention he had dwelt so long on this subject:

we speak before God in Christ;

in all sincerity and uprightness of soul, without colour, guile, or deceit, calling God and Christ to witness the truth of what was said; the apostle spoke all he did, as in the presence of the omniscient God; and as one in Christ, and a preacher of his Gospel, that would not deliver an untruth knowingly, for the whole world:

but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edification;

it was not for himself so much, for his own credit, reputation, and glory, he did what he did; had this been the case, he would not have said the half part of what he had; but it was for their sake, out of love to them, that they might be built up and established in the faith of the Gospel, and not be carried away with the error of the wicked.

2 Corinthians 12:20

For I fear lest when I come

This fear arose from his fatherly affection for them, and care of them:

I shall not find you such as I would;

truly penitent for former sins, thoroughly reformed in life and manners, zealous for God, Christ, and the Gospel, and hearty lovers of one another:

and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not;

sharp in his reproofs and admonitions, severe in his corrections and censures, and lawfully using the authority he had from Christ, to punish incorrigible offenders:

lest there be debates;

or “strifes”, or contentions among them, about words to no profit, or about their ministers, as before; one being for Paul, and another for Apollos, and another for Cephas:

envyings;

at each other’s gifts, or “jealousies” of one another, and evil surmisings:

wraths;

breaking out into words and actions, which discover hatred of mind, a malignant spirit, quite contrary to that of the Gospel:

strifes;

law suits before heathen magistrates; contentions in the church who shall be greatest; or about lesser matters of religion, or things indifferent, vain, and trifling, and kept up merely for the sake of victory:

backbitings;

speaking evil of one another, detracting from, hurting, or taking away each other’s character and good name:

whisperings;

secretly sowing discords among friends, and privately suggesting evil things of each other:

swellings;

with pride and conceit of themselves, because of their riches, learning, and eloquence, and looking with disdain upon others:

tumults;

at church meetings, interrupting one another, going into parties, and making rents and schisms.

2 Corinthians 12:21***And lest when I come again***

Another thing which he feared would be the case when he came again to them, that he himself should be afflicted and distressed, seeing them in a disorderly and dissolute course of life, be obliged to punish them, which would be an humiliation and matter of grief to him:

my God will humble me;

instead of rejoicing in the fruit of his labours, that they were not in vain, he signifies that he should have great sorrow of heart; and whereas he had promised himself much pleasure and comfort in visiting them, it would be the reverse; and inasmuch as he had boasted of them to others, he should be ashamed:

and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already,

or “before”; not before conversion, but before the writing of this or the former epistle; for nothing was more grieving, and occasioned more sorrow and humiliation to the apostle, than the unbecoming walk of professors; and nothing more sensibly affects a faithful minister of the Gospel:

and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed.

The city of Corinth was famous, or rather infamous, for unclean practices; as fornication, adultery, lasciviousness in words and deeds, and other unnatural lusts; “Corinthian whores” was a common proverb; nor was it proper for persons to go to Corinth, there were so many snares for lust and uncleanness; there were said to be above a thousand prostitutes in the temple of Venus there F11; hence the very great impurities and wickedness, which many of the members of this church were guilty of, may be accounted for; some of them had repented, others not, which was the great concern of the apostle: and from hence we may learn, that gracious souls may be suffered to fall into great sins; and that when they are truly brought to repentance, they ought to be restored to communion with the church; but impenitent ones are to be cut off, and remain so, till brought to a due sense of their evils.

FOOTNOTES:

F11 Alex. ab Alex. Genial Dier. l. 4. c. 13. & 5. 15. & 6. 26.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS 13

In this chapter the apostle continues his resolution to come to the Corinthians, and to threaten with severity the incorrigible among them, giving the reasons of it; prays to God that they might so behave, that there might be no occasion for the exercise of it; and concludes the epistle with very useful exhortations, and hearty wishes of good things to them. He intimates to them again, that he intended this third time to come unto them, when he would not spare them, as they might expect he would not; partly because they had such repeated warnings, reproofs, and admonitions from him, 2Co 13:1 and partly because many of them had sinned before, and were stubborn and obstinate, and had not repented, 2Co 13:2 as also because they had tempted him, and demanded a proof of his power and authority, and of Christ speaking in him, 2Co 13:3 and whereas this sprung from the outward appearance of the apostle, whose bodily presence was weak, he observes to them the instance of Christ himself in human nature, who was crucified through weakness, and yet lives by the power of God; and so he and his fellow ministers were weak like Christ, and for his sake, and yet lived, and should live by the power of God; so that their outward appearance was no proof of their want of the power of Christ in them, 2Co 13:4 besides, he directs them to themselves for a proof of it; who upon examination would find, that they were in the faith, and Christ was in them; which was owing to the ministry of the apostle, as a means and instrument; and so they had a proof in themselves of Christ’s speaking in the apostle, and being mighty in, and towards them, or else they must be reprobate, injudicious, and disapproved persons, 2Co 13:5 but whether they were such persons or not, he was confident that he would not be found such; but would appear to be in the faith, to have Christ in him, and to have power and authority from him, 2Co 13:6 however, the apostle’s hearty prayer for them was, that they might be kept from evil; and that they might do that which is good, and so be approved of God and men; and there be no occasion to use any severity with them, when he should come among them, 2Co 13:7 otherwise he could do nothing against the truth, could not connive at error and sin, but must use the power and authority he had to crush everything of that kind, and defend truth, 2Co 13:8 and so far was he from glorying in his power, and priding himself with it, that it was a pleasure to him to have no occasion to make use of it, by which it might seem as if he was without it; and it rejoiced him, when they stood fast in the faith, and walked as became the Gospel, and so needed not the rod of reproof and correction; nay, he could even wish, that they were wholly perfect, and free from all blame, and every kind of charge, 2Co 13:9 and the end he had in the writing in the manner he did, being absent from them, was, lest when he should come among them, he should

be obliged to make use of his power he had from Christ for edification, and not destruction; to prevent which, he wrote and admonished them, in order to bring them to repentance, that so he might have no occasion to use severity and sharpness, 2Co 13:10 and then he takes his farewell of them, by giving them some exhortations to harmony, unity, peace, and love among themselves, 2Co 13:11,12 gives the salutations of all the saints unto them, 2Co 13:13 and then his own, with which he concludes the epistle, which is a wish of all the blessings of grace from all the three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, 2Co 13:14 .

2 CORINTHIANS 13

- 1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.
- 2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again*, I will not spare:
- 3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.
- 4 For* though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.
- 5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves*. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates*?
- 6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.
- 7 Now I pray to God that ye do* no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.
- 8 For we can do nothing* against the truth, but for the truth.
- 9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.
- 10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.
- 11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.
- 12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.
- 13 All the saints salute you.
- 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:1

This is the third time I am coming to you

Or “am ready to come to you”, as the Alexandrian copy reads, as in (2 Corinthians 12:14) . Though he had been as yet but once at Corinth, and is to be reckoned and accounted for, either after this manner; he had been “once” with them when he first preached the Gospel to them, and was the means of their conversion, and laid, the foundation of their church state, of which there is some account in (Acts 18:1 Acts 18:17) he came to them a “second” time, by writing his first epistle, when he desired to be considered by them, as though he was present with them, (1 Corinthians 5:3) and now a “third” time by this second epistle, in which he also speaks as if he was among them, see the following verse; or else in this way, he had been actually in person with them one time, and had been about to come in purpose and preparation a “second” time, but was prevented, and now was just ready a “third” time to set forward in his journey to them; see (2 Corinthians 12:14) and so the Syriac version reads it here, “this is the third time that I am ready to come to you”, and which our version also favours. The Alexandrian copy and some others, the Complutensian edition, the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions, read, “behold, this third time” in order to raise and fix their attention to what he was saying, or about to say:

in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established;

referring to (Deuteronomy 19:15) which he applies much in the same manner Christ does in (Matthew 18:16) and which it is probable he had in view; signifying hereby, that he proceeded in a judicial way, according to due form of law, and in such a manner as Christ had directed; and that they were to look upon his several comings in the sense now explained, to be as so many witnesses, whereby the several charges exhibited against them were fully attested and confirmed, so that things were now ripe for judgment, and for a final sentence to pass upon them.

2 Corinthians 13:2

I told you before, and foretell you as if I were present a second time

He means, that he had in his former epistle faithfully told them of their evils, and admonished them for them; and now he sends to them a second time before his coming, and again admonishes them, as if he was upon the spot with them; so that they had, as before, three witnesses, also a first and second admonition; which, should they be without success, he must proceed further:

and being absent now, I write to them which heretofore have sinned;

before he wrote his first epistle, of which he had information, and had faithfully reproved and admonished them; see (2 Corinthians 12:21) .

And to all other;

that might since be drawn into a compliance with sinful practices, through their example; or as the Arabic version renders it, "to the rest of the congregation"; who would be witnesses for him, and against them, that he had admonished them a first, and a second time: and by his present writing declares,

that if I come again;

for, not knowing what might fall out to prevent him, though he was bent upon coming, and ready for it, nor what was the will of God about it, he does not choose to be positive in the matter; and therefore writes conditionally, and with a guard, and no doubt with a submission to the divine will:

I will not spare;

this was the reason why as yet he had not been at Corinth, because he was willing to spare them; see (2 Corinthians 1:23) being loath to come to severities, if gentler methods would take effect; but now having used all proper means, he is at a point, and determined not to spare, but to use his apostolical rod, or that power which the Lord had given him in an extraordinary way, as an extraordinary officer, to punish incorrigible offenders, in such manner as the incestuous person, and Hymenaeus and Philetus had been used by him.

2 Corinthians 13:3

Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me

This is the reason why he was determined, that should he come among them, he would not spare them, because they called in question his apostleship, and demanded a proof of it; which, of all men, they had the least reason to do; for they themselves were the seals of his apostleship, and the signs of an apostle had been done among them; they queried whether he was an ambassador of Christ, and was sent by him, and in his name; whether the message he came with was from him, and whether the Gospel he preached was his voice; and particularly whether he had such a power to punish delinquents, as he threatened them with the exercise of; a strange infatuation of the false apostles this, since Christ, who sent him, was with him, and spoke in him, and by him:

which to you-ward,
says he,

is not weak, but is mighty in you;

the Gospel of Christ, at the first preaching of it to them by him, was the power of God unto salvation to them; and was attended with divers signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost; and besides, they had instances of the power of Christ towards them in an awful way, in punishing sinners; as in the delivery of the incestuous person to Satan, which was done by his Spirit being with them when assembled; and by smiting many of them with sickness, diseases, and infirmities, and with death itself, who had sinned, (1 Corinthians 5:4 1 Corinthians 5:5) (11:30) . Wherefore, seeing after all these instances of the voice and power of Christ in him, they yet questioned his apostolical authority, and sought proof of it; and especially since this was not so much a tempting of him, as a tempting of Christ in him, he was resolved not to spare them.

2 Corinthians 13:4

For though he was crucified through weakness

Of the human nature; for the nature which Christ assumed was in all things like to ours, excepting sin; it was subject to all sinless infirmities; it was mortal, passible, liable to sufferings, and death, and so he came to be crucified; though not against his will, or without his previous assent; as God, he was able to have prevented his crucifixion if he would; he gave an instance of his power over men, at the time of his apprehension, by striking them down to the ground; and told Pilate his judge at his trial, that he could have no power to crucify him, if it was not given him from above; and he showed his superiority over devils when upon the cross, by spoiling principalities and powers; so that his crucifixion was not owing to want of power as God, but he became capable of it through his weakness as man:

but yet he lives by the power of God;

he was raised from the dead by a divine power; by his own power as God, as well as by his Father's, and so was declared to be the Son of God with power; and he lives at the right hand of God as man and Mediator, vested with all power in heaven and in earth; though, in the days of his flesh, he appeared so weak, mean, and despicable: now the apostle mentions this case of our Lord's, to deter the Corinthians from despising him, on account of his outward weakness and meanness; and from hence buoying themselves up, and in which they were encouraged by the false apostles, that he had not, and could not exercise the power he talked of; they had observed what mean figure he made when he was among them; and whatever weight there might be in his letters, yet his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible; wherefore he sets before them the instance of Christ, who though he appeared very weak in his state of humiliation, yet he now lives in power, to assist and strengthen his ministers, in every branch of their work; and suggests, that as it was with Christ, it was, and would be in some measure with him, and his fellow ministers:

for we also are weak in him:

like him, and for his sake, they were subject to infirmities, reproaches, persecutions, and distresses; carried about daily the dying of the Lord Jesus; bore a very great resemblance to him in his state of humiliation; were very much as he was in this world, and bore much for his name's sake; the Alexandrian copy and the Syriac version read, "with him"; being crucified with him, and dead with him:

but we shall live with him by the power of God towards you;

which is not to be understood of being raised by Christ to an immortal life, and of living with him in glory; though this is a certain truth, that such who suffer with Christ, shall live and reign, and be glorified together with him; but of the life, power, and efficacy of the ministers of Christ, and of Christ in and with them, displayed in the lively ministration of the word and ordinances, in the vigorous discharge of all the branches of their office; not only in preaching, but in rebuking, admonishing, laying on of censures, and punishing criminals; and especially regards the powerful exertion and use of the apostolic rod; for this life is not only with Christ, or through Christ being in them, notwithstanding all their outward weakness, and by the power of God, which supports them under all, and enables them to perform their work, but is "towards you"; the Corinthians, to be exercised

towards them, to be seen among them, and felt by them.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith

These words are to be considered in connection with (2 Corinthians 13:3) for seeing they sought and demanded a proof the voice and power of Christ in the apostle, he directs them to self examination, to look within themselves, to try, prove, and recognise their own souls; where if things were right, they would find a proof of Christ's speaking in him, to them: he advises them to examine the state of their own souls, and see whether they were in the faith; either in the doctrine of faith, having a spiritual and experimental knowledge of it, true love and affection for it, an hearty belief of it, having felt the power of it upon their souls, and abode in it; whether, as the Syriac version reads it, (*בהימנותא קיימינ*) , “ye stand in the faith”, firm and stable; or in the grace of faith, either of miracles, or that which is connected with salvation; and which if they were in it, and had it, is attended with good works; operates by love to Christ and to his people; by which souls go out of themselves to Christ, live upon him, receive from him, and give him all the glory of salvation: and if this was their case, he desires to know how they came by their faith; and suggests, that their light in the doctrine of the Gospel, and their faith in Christ Jesus, as well as the miraculous gifts many of them were possessed of, were through his ministry as the means; and this was a full proof of Christ's speaking in him:

prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you;

by which he means, that if they took a survey of things in their own souls, it would appear that Christ was in them; not as he is in all the world, filling heaven and earth with his presence; or as he is in every rational creature, as the Creator and author of the light of nature; but in a special and spiritual manner, by his Spirit and grace; the Father reveals him in his people, as the foundation of their hope of glory; he himself enters and takes possession of their hearts in conversion, communicates his grace, and manifests himself, and is formed there by his Spirit; his graces are implanted, his image is stamped, his Spirit is put within them, and he himself dwells by faith: and this upon inquiry would be found to be the case of the Corinthians,

except,

says the apostle,

ye are reprobates;

meaning not that they were so, as such may stand opposed to the elect of God; for persons may as yet neither be in the faith, nor Christ in them, and yet both be hereafter, and so not be left of God, or consigned to destruction; but that if they were not in the doctrine of, faith, then they were reprobate concerning it, or void of judgment in it; and if they had not the grace of faith, and Christ was not in them, then they were not genuine, but nominal professors, like “reprobate silver”, counterfeit coin; which when detected, would be “disapproved”, not only by God, but man, as this word also signifies, and so stands opposed to them that are “approved”, (2 Corinthians 13:7) or if they did not make such an examination, probation, and recognition of themselves, they would be without probation: or as the Arabic version, without experiment. The apostle hereby brings them into this dilemma, either that if upon examination they were found to be in the faith, and Christ in them, which blessings they enjoyed through his ministry, then they did not want a proof of Christ speaking in him; but if these things did not appear in them, then they were persons of no judgment in spiritual things, were not real Christians, but insignificant and useless persons.

2 Corinthians 13:6

But I trust that ye shall know

Whether they were reprobates or not, the apostle would not pretend to say; that he left to themselves, and of which they were capable of making judgment for themselves: however, he hoped and believed, that he and his

fellow apostles would give such proof of themselves, as that they should know certainly

that we,
says he,

are not reprobates;

men void of judgment in the doctrines of the Gospel, but have light, knowledge, and understanding in them; or useless and unprofitable in the ministry, but were the savour of life unto life to many; were ministers by whom others believed; were successful labourers in the Lord's vineyard, and builders in his house; and were made very useful for the conversion, comfort, and edification of many souls: or that they were not men disapproved either by God, or his people; since as they faithfully served Christ in the ministration of the Gospel, they were acceptable to God, and approved of men: or were not men without a proof of Christ speaking in them; they might assure themselves they would have too soon, for some of them, an evidence of that power and authority which Christ had lodged in them, to punish such as repented not of their evils.

2 Corinthians 13:7

Now I pray to God

A strong mark of the apostle's affection for them. For though they used him so ill, he took every way and method to do them good; he not only wrote to them, sent the brethren to them, but put up his supplications at the throne of grace for them: The Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, and Ethiopic versions, read, "we pray" And one of his petitions for them was,

that ye do no evil;

which, though impracticable and impossible, considering the situation of the people of God in this world, yet is desirable by every good man, both for himself and others; and was desired by the apostle, partly that their consciences might not be wounded, their souls grieved, their peace broke in upon, and their comforts lost; and partly that the name of God, and his cause and truths, might not be blasphemed; and chiefly that he might have no opportunity of exercising his apostolical rod for their correction:

not that we should appear approved.

This was a clear case that he sought their good, and not his own credit, and the exercise of power; if they committed evil, his faithfulness would be seen in reproofing, rebuking, and exhorting them; and if they continued impenitent, his apostolical authority would be manifest in their punishment, so that he would appear approved, or with a proof of the power of Christ in him; but this he did not desire, but most earnestly wished there might be no occasion for any such evidence:

but that they should do that which is honest;

or "good", both in the sight of God and men, that which is according to the will of God, springs from love, is done in faith, and with a view to the glory of God; and the apostle's praying, both that they might be kept from evil, and do that which is good, shows the impotence of man's free will, the necessity of the grace of God to abstain from sin, and perform good works; and this the apostle earnestly desired,

though,
says he,

we be as reprobates;

weak and infirm persons, incapable of giving any proof of the power of Christ, and appear as such, who have no marks of apostolical authority. The apostle chose rather to be looked upon as a poor, mean, and insignificant person, than that they should sin, and require the exercise of his chastising rod, whereby he would be seen to be

what they called in question.

2 Corinthians 13:8

For we can do nothing against the truth

The apostles had no power, nor could they, nor did they desire to exercise any against such who received the truth of the Gospel in the love of it; who continued in it, walked in it, and held it fast; who worshipped God in Spirit and in truth, and who walked uprightly, and as became the truth; for as the law is not made for such persons, but the reverse, so the authority the apostles had received from Christ was not to be exercised upon such:

but for the truth:

for the sake of defending the truth against those that dropped, denied, and opposed it; and for the honour of it, by chastising, correcting, reproofing, censuring, and punishing such, who either contradicted it, or caused it to be blasphemed and spoken evil of.

2 Corinthians 13:9

For we are glad when we are weak

Appear to be so, look like persons disarmed of all power and authority; the apostles rejoiced when they had no occasion of exerting themselves, and of exercising that high office, and extraordinary commission they had received of Christ Jesus:

and ye are strong;

stand fast in the doctrine of faith, and are lively and active in the exercise of the grace of faith; are strong in Christ, and in his grace, and in the power of his might, to withstand every temptation of Satan, every corruption of their own hearts, and to perform every duty aright.

And this also we wish, even your perfection;

or restoration, or jointing in again; a metaphor taken from the setting of bones that are dislocated and out of joint; for the church at Corinth was like a disjointed body, and the apostle's wish was, that their animosities might cease, their divisions be healed, their disorders rectified, and each member be in its proper place, behaving as became the Gospel of Christ; see (1 Corinthians 1:10).

2 Corinthians 13:10

Therefore I write these things being absent

Assuring them of his power and authority, expressing his concern for their welfare, earnestly desiring that they might be kept from evil, and perform good works; and that they might be in a more honourable, orderly, and comfortable situation, whilst he was absent from them, and before he came among them:

lest, being present, I should use sharpness;

meaning severe reproofs and censures, or rather the exercise of the apostolic rod:

according to the power the Lord hath given me, to edification, and not to destruction;

by striking persons dead, as Ananias and Sapphira were by Peter; or by delivering them up to Satan to have corporeal punishment inflicted on them, as were Hymenaeus and Philetus, and the incestuous person by the Apostle Paul; which, though it was for the destruction of the flesh, yet for the salvation of their souls, and for the good, use, and edification of the rest of the society, that they might take warning thereby, and shun the evils which were the occasion of such severity.

2 Corinthians 13:11***Finally, brethren, farewell***

Or “rejoice”, with spiritual joy in Christ, their Saviour and Redeemer; in his person, in whom they were accepted; in his righteousness, by which they were justified; in his blood, by which they were washed and cleansed; and in his fulness, from which they were supplied; and particularly, that they had such a faithful monitor, such an hearty well wisher of their souls’ welfare, and who was so naturally and affectionately concerned for their good:

be perfect;

seek after perfection in knowledge, grace, and holiness, and in the performance of good works: or “be restored”; or jointed and knit together, as before; see (2 Corinthians 13:9) let every difference subside, all breaches be made up, every member take and fill up his place, and all things be done decently and in order:

be of good comfort;

or “exhort” one another to the diligent discharge of duty, to love and good works; or comfort one another in all distresses, inward and outward, both by words and deeds, according to the ability God has given; or take comfort, be of good heart, do not refuse to be comforted either by God or men.

Be of one mind;

in religious sentiments, in the doctrines and principles of grace, and ordinances of the Gospel; for as there is but “one Lord” to be believed in, so there is, and ought to be, but “one” system of “faith” to be received, and “one baptism” to be administered in one and the same way, to one and the same sort of persons; which sameness of judgment, in faith and worship, is very necessary to church communion, and the comfort of it; for how can two, and much less more, walk comfortably together, unless they are agreed in these things?

Live in peace

both with them that are without, and them that are within, with all men, and with the members of the church; which to do, is to the credit of religion, the comfort of church members, and the joy of Christ’s ministers:

and the God of love and peace shall be with you;

he who is love itself, and has loved his people with an everlasting love, and who is the author and donor of spiritual and eternal peace, and who has called his people to peace, and expects and requires it among themselves, and all men, will grant to such his gracious presence; than which nothing can be more grateful and desirable.

2 Corinthians 13:12***Greet one another with an holy kiss.***

] (See Gill on Romans 16:16).

2 Corinthians 13:13***All the saints salute you.***

Being all interested in the same divine favour, redeemed by the same blood, and sanctified by the same grace, they have a common concern for each other’s welfare; (See Gill on Romans 16:16).

2 Corinthians 13:14***The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ***

&c.] Meaning either the love of Christ; see (2 Corinthians 8:9) which is the same with that of his Father’s, is as

early, and of the same nature, being a love of complacency and delight; and which, as it is without beginning, will be without end. This is the ground and foundation of all he has done and underwent for his people; of his becoming their surety; of his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death in their room and stead; an interest in which, though they always have, yet they have not always an abiding sense of it with them, which is what the apostle here prays for: or else by the grace of Christ is meant the fulness of grace that is in him as Mediator; which is desired to be with the saints as the object of their trust and dependence; to be strong in, draw living water with joy out of, receive and derive daily from; not forsake it, and hew out broken cisterns, but continually apply to, and make use of it, as the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon; to be with them as a supply to their wants, to furnish them with every thing they stand in need of, and to enable them to do his will and work: or else the redeeming grace of Christ is particularly designed, and the intent of the petition is, that they might see their interest in it, and in all the branches of it; as that they were redeemed by his blood from sin, law, and wrath, had all their sins expiated and forgiven through his sacrifice, and were justified from all things by his righteousness.

And the love of God;

the Father, as the Arabic version adds very justly, as to the sense, though it is not in the text; meaning the love of God to his people, which is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, free and undeserved, special and peculiar, is dispensed in a sovereign way, is unchangeable, abides for ever, is the source and spring of all the blessings both of grace and glory. Now when this is entreated to be with all the saints, it does not suppose that it is ever from them, or that it can be taken away from them, but whereas they may be without a comfortable sense of it, and a view of interest in it, the apostle prays, that in this respect it might be with them; that they might be directed into it, have it shed abroad in their hearts, and they be rooted and grounded in it, and comprehend for themselves the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of it.

And the communion of the Holy Ghost;

either a larger communication of the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, called “the supply of the Spirit”, (Philippians 1:19) necessary to carry on the good work of grace, and perform it to the end; or else that communion and fellowship which the Spirit of God leads the saints into with the Father, by shedding abroad his love in their hearts, and with the Son, by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to them; and also that nearness which the spirits of believers have with the Spirit of God, when he witnesses to their spirits that they are the children of God, becomes the earnest of the inheritance in their hearts, and seals them up unto the day of redemption: all which is requested by the apostle, to

be,

says he,

with you all;

or “with your company”, or “congregations”, as the Arabic version reads it, with all the saints; for their interest in the love of the Father, in the grace of the Son, and in the favour of the Spirit, is the same, whatever different sense and apprehensions they may have thereof. This passage contains no inconsiderable proof of a trinity of persons in the Godhead, to whom distinct things are here ascribed, and of them asked, equal objects of prayer and worship. “Amen” is by way of assent and confirmation, and as expressive of faith in the petitions, and of earnest desire to have them fulfilled. According to the subscription at the end of this epistle, it was written by the apostle when he was at Philippi, a city of Macedonia, and transcribed by Titus and Lucas, and by them sent or carried to the Corinthians; which seems to be agreeable to what is suggested in the epistle itself, though these subscriptions are not to be depended upon. The Syriac version only mentions Luke; and some copies read, by Titus, Barnabas, and Luke.

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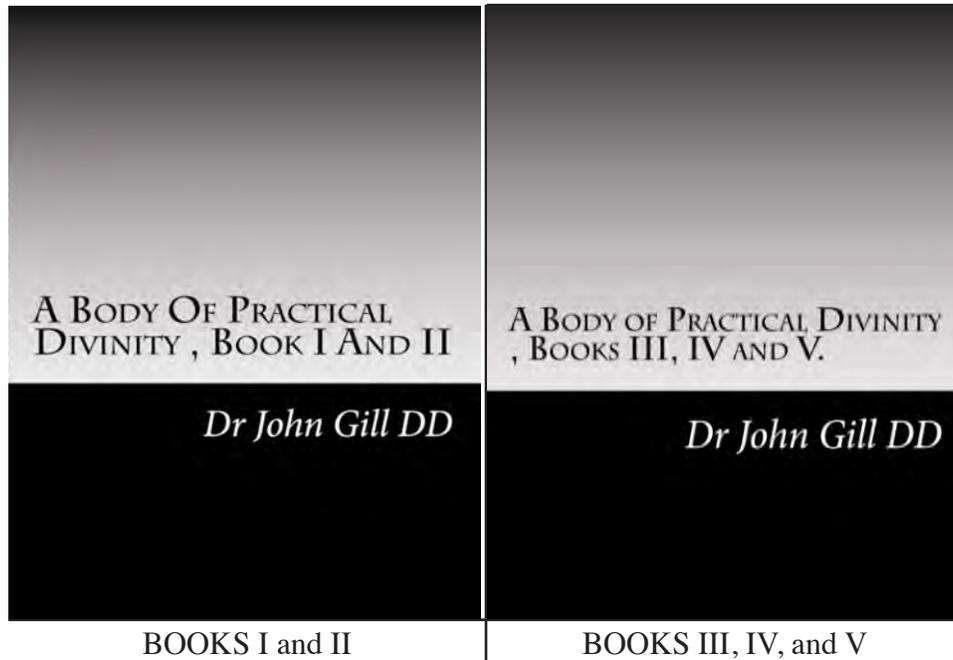
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A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY



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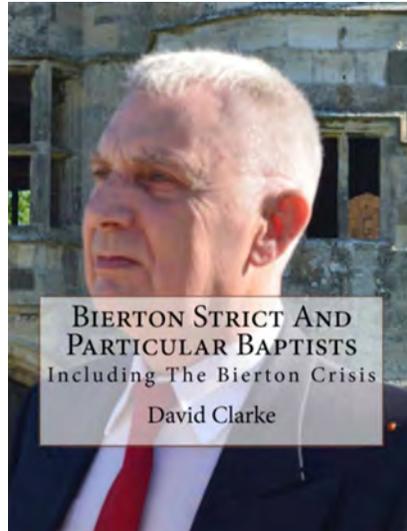
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Including The Bierton Crisis

David Clarke

This book tells the story and life of David Clarke in the form of an autobiography. It is no ordinary book in that David and his brother were both notorious criminals in the 60's, living in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, where they were MODs and were both sent to prison for and malicious wounding and carrying a fire arm without a license . They were however both converted from crime to Christ and turned their lives around. This story tells of David's conversion to Christianity in 1970 and that of Michael's conversion, 1999 some 30 years later. It tells of their time in HMP Canterbury Prison and David's time in HMP Wormwood Scrubs and Dover Borstal. It also tells of David's criminal activity and the crimes he committed before his miraculous conversion from crime to Christ, during a bad experience on LSD, in 1970. It tells how he became a Christian over night and how he learned to read in order to come to a fuller knowledge of the gospel. He learned to read through reading the bible and classical Christian literature. David tells of the events that led to him making a confession to the police about 24 crimes he had committed since leaving Dover Borstal in 1968 and of the court case where he was not sentenced. It tells how David's educated himself and went on to Higher education, and graduated with a Certificate in Education and how he went on to teach Electronics, for over 20 years, in colleges of Higher and Further Education. It tells of his life as a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist church, which was a Gospel Standard cause, and how he was called by the Lord and sent by the church to preach the gospel. David tells of the various difficulties that he faced once he discovered the many doctrinal errors amongst the various Christian groups he met and of the opposition that he experience when he sought to correct them. David recorded his experience and finding in his book "The Bierton Crisis" 1984, written to help others. David's tells how his brother Michael was untouched by his conversion in 1970 and continued his flamboyant lifestyle ending up doing a 16 year prison sentence, in the Philippines, in 1996. David tells how Michael too was converted to Christianity through reading C.S. Lewis's book, "Mere Christianity", and him being convinced that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God. David then tells of his mission to the Philippines, to bring help and assistance to Michael, in 2001 and of their joint venture in helping in the rehabilitation of many former convicted criminals, not only in New Bilibid Prison but other Jails in the Philippines. David tells how he felt compelled to write this story in his book , "Converted On LSD Trip". once he got news of his brothers arrest, in the Philippines, via ITN Television news broadcast, in 1995. This book was published when he got news of his brothers conversion from crime to Christ in 1999, which was after serving 5 years of his 16 year sentence. This story is told in their joint book, "Trojan Warriors", that contains the testimonies of 66 notorious criminals who too had turned there lives around, from crime to Christ, 22 of which testimonies are men on Death Row. David say he believes his story could be of great help to any one seeking to follow the Lord Jesus Christ but sadly Michael died in New Bilibid Prison of tuberculosis, in 2005 before their vision of bringing help to many was realized.

Paperback: 356 pages

2 edition (16 Feb. 2015)

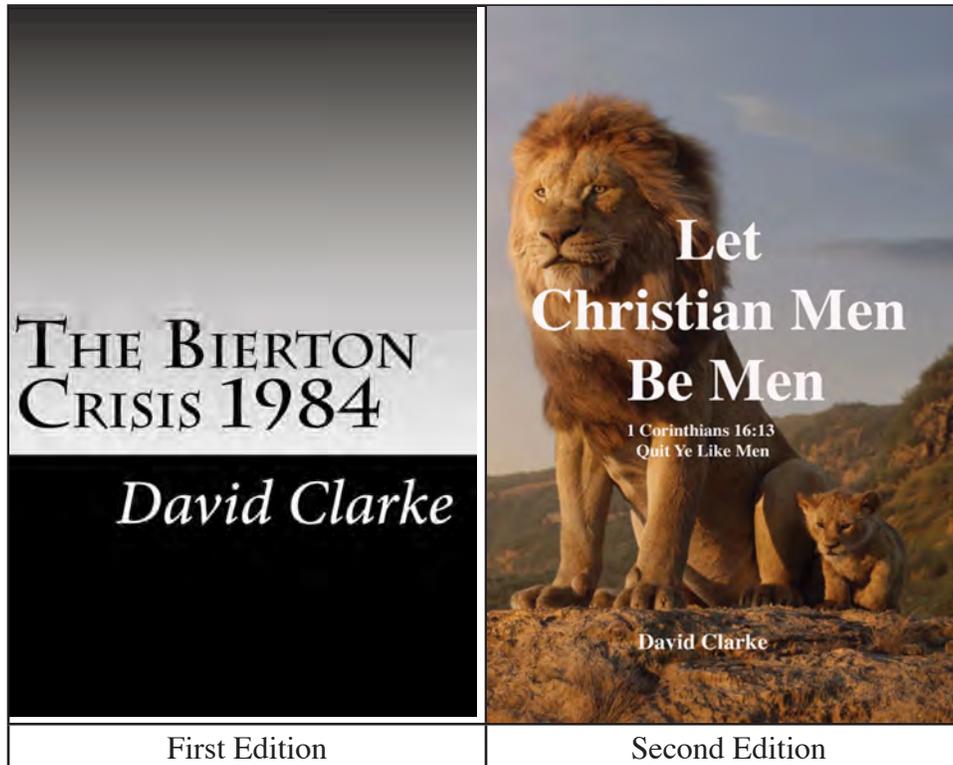
ISBN-10: 1519553285

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Product Dimensions: 13.3 x 2.1 x 20.3 cm

www.Amazon.co.uk

THE BIERTON CRISIS



David Clarke

The Bierton Crisis is the personal story of David Clarke a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist church. He was also the church secretary and minister sent by the church to preach the gospel in 1982.

The Bierton Church was formed in 1832 and was a Gospel Standard cause who's rules of membership are such that only the church can terminate ones membership.

This tells of a crisis that took place in the church in 1984, which led to some members withdrawing support. David, the author, was one of the members who withdrew but the church did not terminate his membership as they wished him return.

This story tells in detail about those errors in doctrine and practices that had crept into the Bierton church and of the lengths taken to put matters right. David maintained and taught Particular Redemption and that the gospel was the rule of life for the believer and not the law of Moses as some church members maintained.

This story tells of the closure of the Bierton chapel when David was on mission work in the Philippines in December 2002 and when the remaining church members died. It tells how David was encouraged by the church overseer to return to Bierton and re-open the chapel.

On David's return to the UK he learned a newly unelected set of trustees had take over the responsibility for the chapel and were seeking to sell it. The story tells how he was refused permission to re open or use the chapel and they sold it as a domestic dwelling, in 2006.

These trustees held doctrinal views that opposed the Bierton church and they denied David's continued membership of the church in order to lay claim too and sell the chapel, using the money from the sale of the chapel for their own purposes.

David hopes that his testimony will promote the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, as set out in the doctrines of grace, especially Particular Redemption and the rule of life for the believer being the gospel of Christ, the royal law of liberty, and not the law of Moses as some reformed Calvinists teach, will be realized by the reader.

His desire is that any who are called to preach the gospel should examine their own standing and ensure that they can derive from scripture the doctrines and practices they teach and advance and that they can derive the truths they teach from scripture alone and not from the traditions of men or their opinions however well they may be thought of.

List Price: \$11.99

5.25" x 8" (13.335 x 20.32 cm)

Black & White on White paper

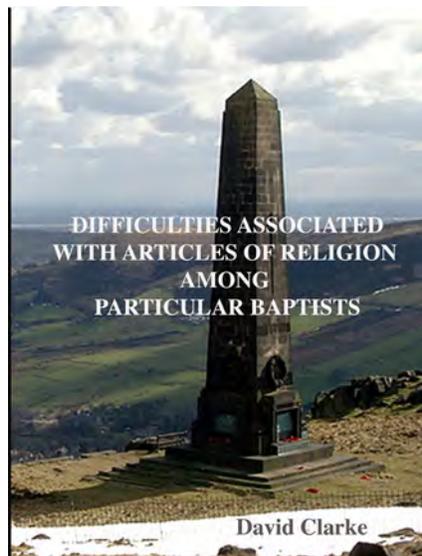
256 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1508465959

ISBN-10: 1508465959

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Apologetics

DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH ARTICLES OF RELIGION **AMONG PARTICULAR BAPTISTS**



David Clarke

Articles of Religion are important when dealing with matters of the Christian Religion, however problems occur when churches fail to recognize there is a growth in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in any believer. When a person first believes in the Lord Jesus Christ they cannot possibly have a comprehensive knowledge of a church's constitution or its articles of religion, before solemnly subscribing to them. The author David Clarke has introduced the Doctrines of Grace to Berton Particular Baptists Pakistan, situated in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan and bearing in mind his own experience with articles of religion he has compiled Berton Particular Baptists Pakistan articles of religion from the first Berton Particular Baptists of 1831, of which he is the sole surviving member, the First London Baptist Confession, 2nd edition 1646, and those of Dr John Gill, in order to avoid some of the difficulties encountered by Particular Baptists during the later part of the 19th century and since. This booklet highlights the problem and suggests the Berton Particular Baptists Pakistan is a step in the right direction.

Isaiah 52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

ISBN-13: 978-1532953446

BISAC: Religion / Christianity / Baptist

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Author's Testimony

Berton Particular Baptist Church

A Difficulty Over Articles Of Religion

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3 Bierton Particular Baptists Articles of Religion,
1831

Difficulties Over Articles of Religion

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4 The Gospel Standard Articles of Religion 1878

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Articles of religion

Letter to Mr Role's of Luton

Added Articles

My comments Article 32

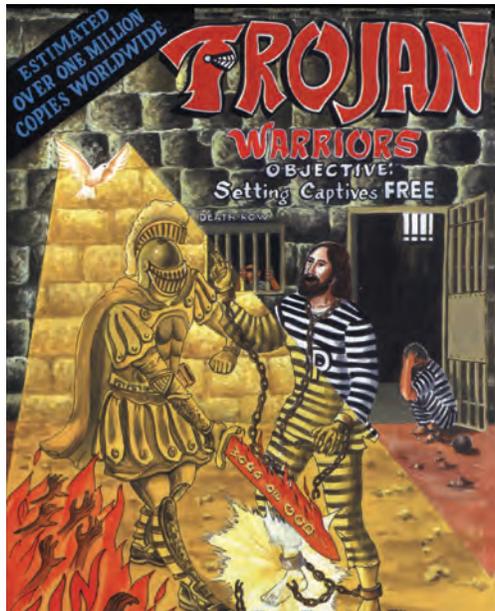
The Difficulties Of these Articles Proved

Serious Doctrinal Errors Held

Recommendation for Serious Minded

5 Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan 2016

6 Appendix 60 Gospel Standard 31 Articles



Setting Captives Free

Authored by Mr David Clarke CertEd, Authored by Mr Michael J Clarke

List Price: \$15.99

5.25" x 8" (13.335 x 20.32 cm)

Black & White on White paper

446 pages

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ISBN-10: 1508574987

BISAC: Religion / Christian Life / General

Trojan Warriors is a true story of two brothers, Michael and David Clarke, who are brought up in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England. They became criminals in the 60's and were sent to prison for malicious wounding and carrying a fire arm without a license, in 1967.

They both turned from their lives of crimes in remarkable ways but some 25 years apart, and then they worked together helping other prison inmates, on their own roads of reformation.

David the younger brother became a Christian, after a bad experience on LSD, in 1970, and then went on to educate himself and then on to Higher Education. He became a baptist minister and taught electronics for over 20 years, in colleges of Higher and Further Education. Michael however remained untouched and continued his flamboyant life style ending up serving a 16 year prison sentence, in the Philippines, in 1996, where he died of tuberculosis in 2005.

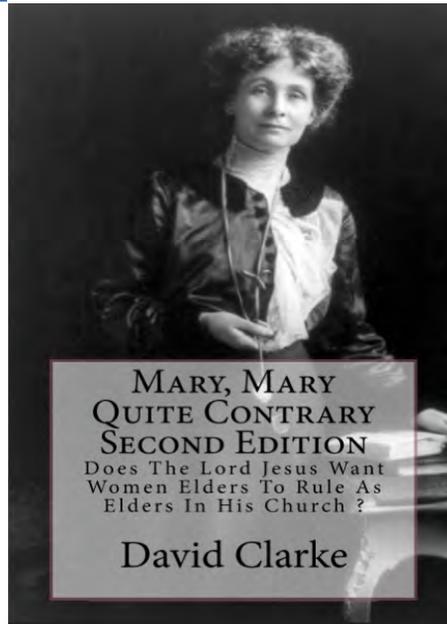
When David heard the news of his brothers arrest on an ITN television news bulletin he felt compelled to wrote their story. And then when he heard of his own brothers conversion from crime to Christ, after serving 5 year of his sentence, he published their story in his book, "Converted on LS Trip", and directed a mission of help to the Philippines to assist his brother. This book tells the story of this mission.

They then worked together with many former notorious criminals, who were inmates in New Bilibid Prison, who too had become Christians and turned their lives around. This help was to train them to become preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ .

This book contains the 66 testimonies of some of these men who convicted former criminals, incarcerated in New Bilibid Prison. They are the, "Trojan Warriors", who had turned their lives around and from crime to Christ. Twenty two of these testimonies are men who are on Death Row scheduled to be executed by lethal injection.

Revelation 12 verse 11: And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto the death.

MARY, MARY QUITE CONTRARY



Second Edition: Does The Lord Jesus Want Women To Rule As Elders In His Church ? ?

Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert E

ISBN-13: 978-1514206812

ISBN-10: 1514206811

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / General

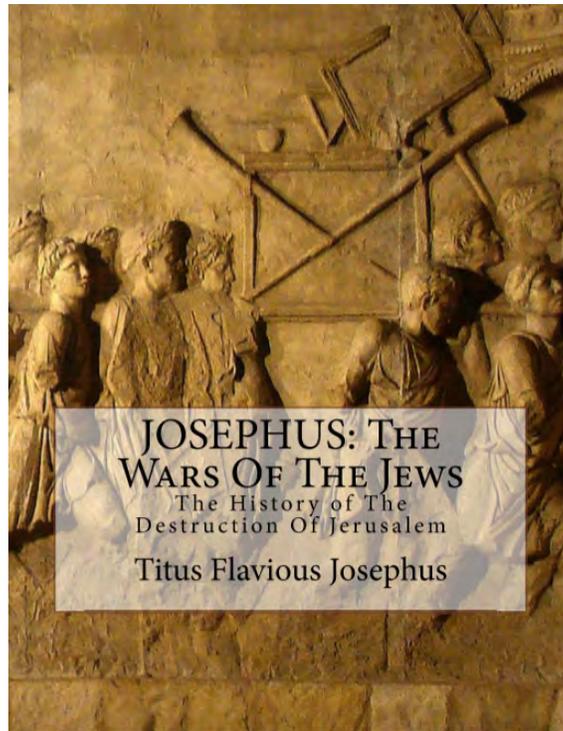
When treating the subject of women elders in the church we are not dealing with the affairs of a secular society and so it has nothing to do with women's rights, equality of sex or race in the world. This matter only relates to men and women in a Christian church. It is about the rules of the house of God, which is the church of the living God and rules for those who are members of the body of Christ and members of an heavenly county.

The Suffragettes

Emmeline Pankhurst 1858 -1928) was a Suffragette and worked very hard to bring equal rights for women to vote as men. In the year of her death all women over 21 gained the right to vote. The Suffragette movement brought about many changes for the better in a secular society but not so for women seeking to follow Christian principles. One of her famous quotes was, "Trust in God She shall provide". Terms which do not reflect Christian beliefs. We know God will provide and He is not a she.

In the USA and the UK, women's political rights were brought into general political consciousness by the suffragettes and since then there have been legal rights granted to the Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups, same sex marriages, along with the development of the feminist movement and the appointment of persons from the LGBT community to responsible positions in the Church of England. All of this has caused conflict in the Christian community due to differences beliefs of right and wrong.

This book seeks to show what the bible has to say about the role of women in the church and family. Since these rules are taught by the Apostles of Christ they are the word of God to us and we should obey. The secular world may differ and turn from the narrow path taught in scripture but we should follow the word of God, this is our wisdom.



The History of The Destruction Of Jerusalem

Authored by Titus Flavius Josephus, Designed by Translated by William Winston

ISBN-13: 978-1985029132 (CreateSpace-Assigned) ISBN-10: 1985029138

BISAC: Religion / Christianity / History / General

Josephus was an eye witness to those events that he records in this book, 'The Wars of The Jews', or 'The History of The Destruction Of Jerusalem'.

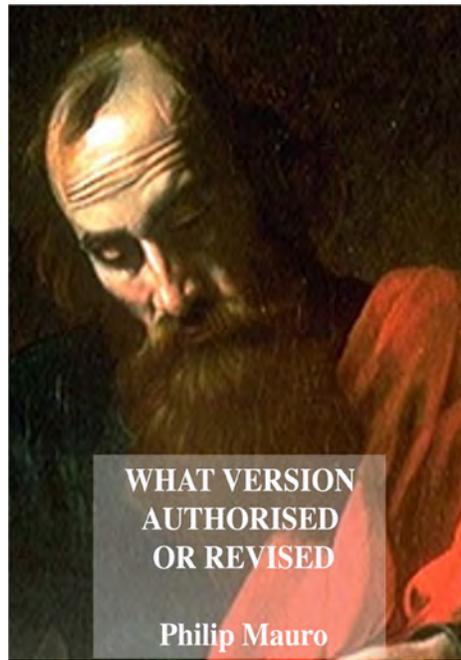
He records historic events that took place during and after the times of the New Testament scriptures.

The book of Revelation was a prophecy, given to Jesus Christ, and published by the Apostle John, about those things that were shortly to come to pass in his day.

From the internal evidence of the book Revelation was written before the Neuronc persecution, of 66 A.D. and before the fall off Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, in 70. A.D. This is because the book records that the temple in Jerusalem was still standing at the time the book was written and not around 95 A.D. as Eusebius mistakenly says. The historic events that Josephus records are remarkable as they give evidence to the fulfillment of Prophecy given by the Lord Jesus in his Olivet prophecy. In fact the book of Revelation was a prophecy of those events that were shortly to come to pass when Jesus spoke to John who wrote the Revelation. Jesus had informed his Apostles about future events and they lived in expectation of there fulfillment in their day. Josephus gives the historic evidence of the fulfillment of those prophecies and that confirms scripture fulfillment. We recommend the James Stuart Russell's book,

'The Parousia' as a very good introduction to this subject and advertised at the back of this book in our Further Publications.

WHAT VERSION AUTHORIZED OR REVISED

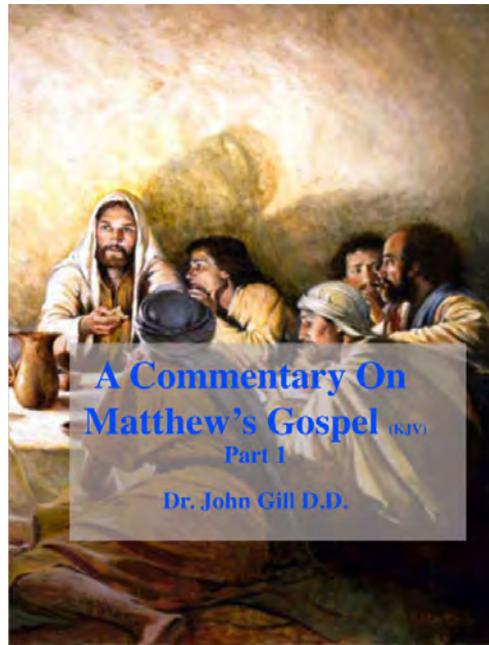


Philip Mauro

The book discusses the issues relating to the reliability of the Authorized Version of the Bible and the failings of the so-called Revised Versions. It reminds the reader the Greek printed text, produced by Erasmus in 1516, was derived from a broad set of 8 extant Greek manuscripts available to him in his day and in constant use by Christians to that day and not Latin bibles. Since 1861 there has arisen those who claim the Authorized Version is not accurate and Wescott and Hort produced a new compiled Greek Printed text manuscript, derived from, and based upon, two 4th C handwritten extant manuscripts. Codex Sinaiticus, written in Greek and Codex Vaticanus, written in Latin. They claimed that since these manuscripts were the oldest extant manuscripts in the world (400 years after the original writing of the new testament scriptures) they were far superior and more reliable than the text underlying the Authorized version of the bible. And since 1945 all Bible translations are based upon the New Greek manuscript text of Wescott and Hort published in 1861.

This is an eclectic text and not the Received Text used by the translator of the Authorized Version of the Bible and known by Christians, throughout the Christian age, as the Word of God. It has been republished by Barton Particular Baptist to educate serious minded people about the subject of Bible translations and support the Authorized version of the Bible. Philip Mauro was a lawyer in America, who practiced before the Supreme Court. He prepared briefs NOTES for the Scopes Trial WHICH was an American legal case in July 1925 THAT had made it unlawful to teach human evolution in any state-funded school.[1] The trial publicized the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, which set Modernists, who said evolution was not inconsistent with religion,[4] against Fundamentalists, who said the word of God as revealed in the Bible took priority over all human knowledge. The case was thus seen as both a theological contest and a trial on whether "modern science" should be taught in schools. Mauro was ALSO passenger on the British ocean liner RMS Carpathia when it rescued the passengers of the Titanic in April 1912. It is hoped that this book will rescue any that are sinking in the sea of the natural Modern man's opinion as to the reliability of the Authorized Version the bible.

A COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



By Dr. John Gill

The Gospel According to Matthew was the first written gospel and published sometime between (AD 31-38). It was written before Mark's (AD 38-44) and Luke's Gospel (AD-61).

Matthew was a Jew and one of the 12 Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ and named Levi. He was a tax collector for the Romans. There are two strong traditions that Matthew made a personal copy of his gospel and gave it to Barnabas, a companion of the Apostle Paul.

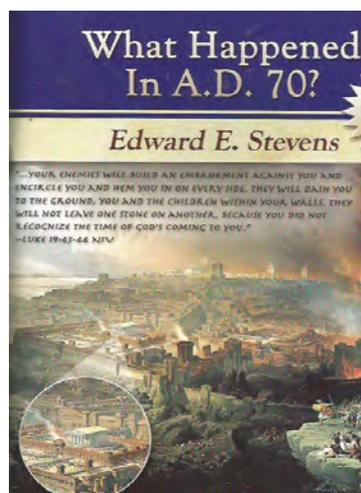
Matthew tells of the birth and lineage of Jesus. The life death, resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the final words of Jesus before his ascension into heaven.

This publication is presented knowing that Matthew penned his gospel that contains all those things the Lord Jesus wanted him to publish.

Matthew records the Olivet prophesy of Jesus concerning those fearful things that were to come to pass within the period of that generation and after his ascension.

It is the intention of the publisher that this will assist in making the gospel known to all people and is published in two parts PART 1 chapter 1 to 16. And PART 2 chapter 17 to 28.

WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70



Ed. Stevens

This book introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have found extremely helpful in their Bible study. It explains the end time riddles which have always bothered students of Bible prophecy. It is a consistent view which makes the book of Revelation much easier to understand. It establishes when the New Testament canon of scripture was completed, demolishes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament, and is more conservative on most other issues than traditional views. And there is no compromise of any essential Biblical doctrine of the Christian faith.

The key to understand any passage of scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written {audience relevance}. Two thousand years from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of “American English” to read our USA newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and elephant, what would they think? How would they go about understanding it? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economics. The same applies to Bible study. If we are really going to understand what all the “donkeys and elephants” (beasts, harlots, dragons, etc.) Symbolize in the book of Revelation, we will have to seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, the truths essential for salvation are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are “hard to understand” (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), and Bible prophecy is one of those things which must be approached with much more focus on the original historical and cultural context (audience relevance)

One of the main purposes of this book is to provide a closer look at the historical framework behind the New Testament. Many have found it helpful to lay aside (at least temporarily) the legion of speculative opinions about the book of Revelation, and look at a more historical alternative, which is that the book of Revelation was written to the first century church and had primary relevance to them. It warned of events that were about to happen in their lifetime, and prepared them for the tribulation and other events associated with the End of the Jewish Age. Atheists, skeptics, Jew, Muslims, and liberal critics of the bible use the supposed failure of those end times events to occur in the First Century to undermine the integrity of Christ and the inspired NT writings.

Non-Christian Jews laugh at this supposed non-occurrence, and use it as evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah. Their forefathers in the flesh rejected Jesus in His first coming because He did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies in the materialistic and nationalistic way that they were expecting, even though Jesus told them that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it would be within them instead. Yet it seems that many futurists today are expecting that same kind of materialistic and nationalistic kingdom to arrive at a future return of Christ. Are they making the same mistake about the Second Coming that the Jews made about His first coming? Jesus repeatedly said His Kingdom is “not of this world” and that it would “not come with observation.” It is a spiritual entity, and it has arrived. We live in it. Both futurist Christians and non-Christian Jews need to realize this.

Christians are finally beginning to seek alternatives to the fatally flawed futurist interpretation. This book introduces the Preterist view.

“Preterist” simply means past in fulfillment. It means that Christ has already fulfilled His promise to return and consummate redemption in Himself and His ongoing spiritual kingdom (the church). We should be like the noble-minded Bereans and “search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are true” You might want to have your Bible open alongside as you read.

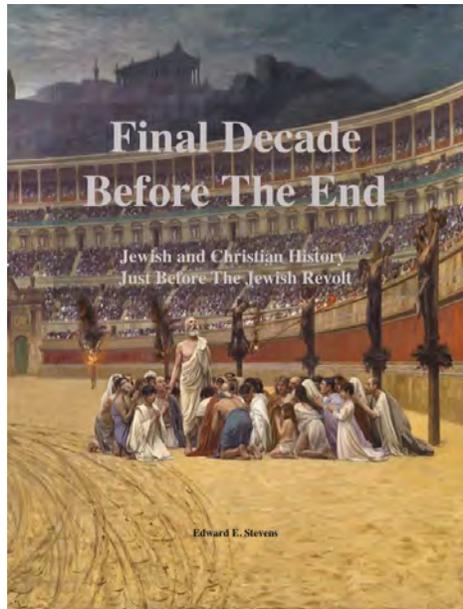
Edward E. Stevens

INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION

<https://www.preterist.org/>

Bradford, Pennsylvania

April 17, 2010



Ed. Stevens

Ever since the booklet, **What Happened In AD 70?** was published in 1980, there have been constant requests for more detailed information about the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish, Roman, and Christian history associated with it. Over the years since then I have studied Josephus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Eusebius, the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish/Christian writings, trying to determine exactly what happened, when it happened, and the effect it had upon the Church.

Then in 2002, after I began to promote J. S. Russell's view of a literal rapture, the demand for historical documentation of the fulfillment of all eschatological events dramatically increased. That forced me to dig much deeper. So in 2007 I put together a 21-page chronology of first century events. Two years later in 2009, we published a more substantial 73-page manuscript entitled, *First Century Events in Chronological Order*. That helped fill the void, but it did not go far enough. It only increased the appetite for a more detailed and documented historical reconstruction of first century events.

The book of Acts does not give a lot of details about the other Roman and Jewish events that were happening while Paul was on his various missionary journeys. For those events, we have to go to the other contemporary Jewish and Roman historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. The closer we get to AD 70, the more important all of those Jewish and Roman events become. They form an important backdrop behind the Christian events, and show how all the predictions made by Jesus were literally fulfilled. Every High Priest and Zealot leader that we encounter from AD 52 onwards are directly connected with the events of the Last Days. Things are heating up, not only for the Christians, but also for the Jews and the Romans.

Paul on his missionary journeys was clearly following a plan which was providentially arranged for him by Christ: (1) to plant new churches among all nations and not just Jews, (2) appoint elders and deacons in every church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17), (3) write inspired epistles to guide them, (4) instruct his fellow workers to "teach these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2), and (5) establish the Gentiles in the Church and make them one united body with the Jews (Eph 4). Everywhere Paul went, he followed this pattern. We see this clearly as we study the historical narrative in Acts and Paul's other epistles that were written during this time. These are essential patterns that the apostles evidently bound upon both Gentile and Jewish Christians, and which were intended to be the pattern for all future generations of the eternal Church (Eph 3:21; 2Tim 2:2).

We begin our study by looking at the most likely dates for Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38- 44), and then proceed to the first three epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians), which were written on his second missionary journey (AD 51-53). Including these five books in our study allows us to date all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and show how the NT canon was formed and completed before the outbreak of the Jewish War

in AD 66. The study of New Testament canonization in itself is a good reason for reading this work, without even looking at the historical fulfillment of all of the endtime prophecies that we document here.

After looking at the dates for those first five books, we then move on into the third missionary journey of Apostle Paul which began in AD 54. It was during this final dozen years (from AD 54 until AD 66) when the birth pangs and signs of the end started increasing in both intensity and frequency, along with a quickening pace of NT books being written. We show how 19 of our 27 NT books (70 percent) were written during those last five years just before the Neronian persecution (AD 60-64). The Great Commission was finished, and the rest of the endtime events predicted in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during that time of “tribulation” upon the church and the “days of vengeance” upon the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:22).

Edward E. Stevens

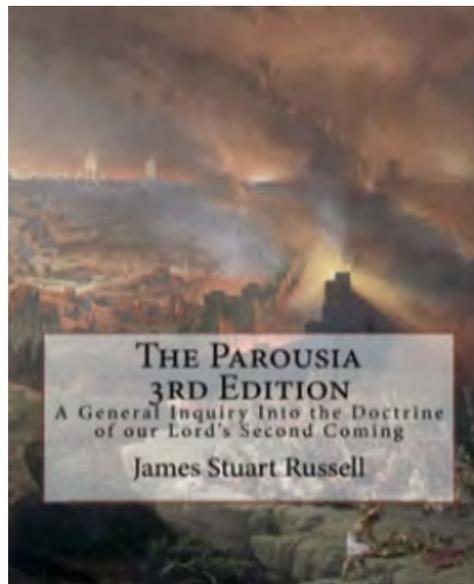
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BISAC: Religion / Theology

A reformation – indeed – a revolution of sorts is taking place in modern evangelical Christianity. And while many who are joining in and helping promote this movement are not even aware of it, the book you hold in your hand has contributed greatly to initiating this new reformation. This “new” movement is sometimes called full preterism, (Also, and preferably by this writer, Covenant Eschatology). It is the belief that all Bible prophecy is fulfilled. The famous evangelist Charles H. Spurgeon was deeply impressed with the scholarly, solid research in the book, although he did not accept the “final” conclusions reached by Russell. In modern times, this work has, and continues to impress those who read it. The reason is simple, the New Testament is emphatic and unambiguous in positing Christ’s coming and the end of the age for the first century generation. To say this has troubled both scholars and laymen alike is an understatement of massive proportions.

This book first appeared in 1878 (anonymously), and again in 1887 with author attribution. The book was well known in scholarly circles primarily and attracted a good bit of attention, both positive and negative. The public, however, seemed almost unaware of the stunning conclusions and the research supporting those conclusions, until or unless they read of Russell's work in the footnotes of the commentaries.

Scholars have recognized and grappled with this imminence element, that is the stated nearness of the day of the Lord, seldom finding satisfactory answers. Scholars such as David Strauss accused Jesus of failure. Later, Bultmann said that every school boy knows that Jesus predicted his coming and the end of the world for his generation, and every school boy knows it did not happen. C.S. Lewis also could not resolve the apparent failed eschatology. Bertrand Russell rejected Christianity due to the failed eschatology - as he perceived it - of Jesus and the Bible writers. As a result of these "skeptical" authors, modern Bible scholarship has followed in their path and Bible commentaries today almost casually assert the failure of the Bible writers - and Jesus - in their eschatological predictions. This is where Russell's work is of such importance. While Russell was not totally consistent with his own arguments and conclusions, nonetheless, his work is of tremendous importance and laid the groundwork for the modern revolution known as the preterist movement.

Russell systematically addressed virtually every New Testament prediction of the eschaton. With incisive clarity and logical acumen, he sweeps aside the almost trite objections to the objective nature of the Biblical language of imminence. With excellent linguistic analysis, solid hermeneutic and powerful exegetical skills, Russell shows that there is no way to deny that Jesus and his followers not only believed in a first century, end of the age parousia, but, they taught it as divine truth claiming the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as their authority.

Russell not only fully established the undeniable reality of the first century imminence of "the end," he powerfully and carefully shares with the reader that "the end" that Jesus and the N.T. writers were anticipating was not the end of the time space continuum (end of the world). It was in fact, the end of the Old Covenant Age of Israel that arrived with the cataclysmic destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. Russell properly shows how the traditional church has so badly missed the incredible significance of the end of that Old Covenant Age.

Russell's work is a stunning rejection - and corrective -- of what the "Orthodox" historical "Creedal" church has and continues to affirm. The reader may well find themselves wondering how the "divines" missed it so badly! Further, the reader will discover that Russell's main arguments are an effective, valid and true assessment of Biblical eschatology. And make no mistake, eschatology matters.