

2 Corinthians Class 2 Transcript

Welcome back to FI Online. This is class number 2 in our series.

We started last week with the background of 2 Corinthians. And, we offer as always the opportunity to turn in questions. We didn't have any questions last week. So, that's just fine. Didn't really expect that much just covering the background material. But remember, at the end of tonight's class, if you would like to turn in a question, you have approximately one hour after the end of the class to turn those in, and we'll try to answer those at the beginning of class number 3.

But, as always, we want to have God's blessing on our classes, so if you would join me, please bow your heads, and we'll ask God to bless our class this evening.

[Prayer]

[1:47]

Last time we spent the entire class period talking about the background for this book. It's important to understand that background in order to be able to grasp what Paul is actually writing to them. But, for this class, we want to begin right at the beginning in **chapter 1 verse 1**. So let's get started right there.

Paul sends his greetings to the brethren there by saying:

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia:

There are probably several things that we ought to draw from this. Now, I realize it's very easy to read over a verse like this and not particularly note any special things there, but there are actually several things that we probably should note.

Of the 13 to 14 epistles of Paul that we have in Scripture, nine of them begin with Paul stating that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, of course, is the Head of the Church, so He is the one who has the authority to "apostle" someone, and Paul certainly was chosen in that way.

Why is he making this statement here? Well, we're going to see—and if you'll remember what we covered last time, it appears that there were some individuals who had come to the Church in Corinth who were causing some difficulties, who were trying to undermine Paul and his authority, and the fact that the message that he brought was truly the message that God wanted them to have. So, part of what Paul may be saying here is: "I am an apostle, chosen by Jesus Christ and by the will of God. I didn't choose this job. I didn't ask for it. No human being put me into it. Jesus Christ put me here." And, again, there's kind of a subtle reminder there, and we'll see as we go a little further.

[3:39]

He goes on and talks about: *Timothy, our brother*. Now, why does he bring up Timothy at this point? Well, there is every indication when you look at **1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 17**—also, **1 Corinthians 16 verses 10 and 11**—that when the problems began to arise in Corinth, Paul had sent Timothy to them. So they knew Timothy very well. They understood him. He probably had been there with Paul in the first place when he had raised up the Church, and Paul sent him back when there was a difficulty there. Timothy was a gentle person who tried very gently to work with the problems and difficulties there, and many people certainly were responsive to that. So I think to include the fact that Paul is saying, "Timothy is right here with me" is kind of like saying, "Okay, Timothy was with you. I know exactly what—he is the source of my information. Anything I'm going to say to you has come to me, verified through Timothy." So they will understand that.

He goes on to say: *To the Church of God which is at Corinth*. Now we've noted that 12 times in the New Testament the Church is called the "Church of God" or the "Churches of God," sometimes with a location like this, in Corinth, but in other cases it may be more of a regional type of thing. But that's the one name that we find consistently through the New Testament for the Church: the Church of God. Why does he say here: *the Church of God which is at Corinth*? There probably is in this a little bit of a reminder to the brethren in Corinth that in fact they're part of something bigger. That it's not just the Church in Corinth, and we're independent, and we can do whatever we want. "You are part of something that's bigger than that." And he'll emphasize that even as we go a little further.

And he also ties in with that the recognition that there are other congregations in the area as well. We don't even know what all of them may have been. Corinth may have been kind of a headquarters congregation. There may have been others that were around the area. We do know that—we're told, even in **1 Corinthians**, Paul talks about the Church that met in the house of Chloe in Cenchreae. Cenchreae was the port area for Corinth, so it's a little bit away from the city itself. Perhaps there were congregations there as well. But all of the saints who are in southern Greece, as we would think of it, the province called Achaia—Paul is writing to express his guidance, his concern, his love for all of them.

He goes on to say, **verse 2**: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*.

We've talked about the term "grace" in the past, so I don't want to spend a lot of time on it. The basic definition I give to the students here at FI is that: Grace essentially is a gift given from the goodness of the giver without regard to the worthiness of the recipient. I think that's a good way to think of it, and it applies in a lot of different ways. Now—and in a lot of the different things that God does for us—calling us, blessing us, forgiving us, giving us His Spirit, and so on—are all by grace. And he does make it clear that the grace and the peace that we can have come from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That emphasis is given.

[7:09]

Now, again, I think sometimes we perhaps overlook the significance of the word "Lord." Basically, the Greek word is *kyrios*, and it means "ruler"; it means "the one in charge." It means "the one who has authority." The opposite of *kyrios* is *doulos*, which Paul uses to describe himself, and, for that matter, uses to describe us as Christians. It means a "bondservant," a slave. So the contrast is between the Lord who is in charge and the servant who responds to that.

So in using the term "Lord" in reference to Jesus Christ, it is not simply a kind of a nice, religious-sounding word like, you know, "Dr. Jesus" or something like that. It's a word that means He's the one who is ultimately in charge. This is the Church **of** God, and Jesus Christ is the living Head, and therefore our submission is to Him as our Ruler. We don't just throw that word around and use it carelessly.

So, he tells us that this grace—which is an enduring need that we all have—it isn't just a onetime thing; it's something we continually need—comes from God our Father. So God gives, even at times when we don't deserve it. He is a generous and kind giver, and it also comes through Jesus Christ. The two have the same mind. Their approach toward giving and helping is exactly the same. So that's embodied in what he says in **verse 2**.

He goes on to say: **3** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,*

Now, Paul is here saying several things. And again, we probably have to read between the lines a little bit in what he is saying. This isn't the normal thing that Paul says. Normally in an epistle there is this initial

greeting: tells us who it's from, who it's to, and good wishes. But normally Paul doesn't then go on into a praise of God. But here, he is.

Some of the commentaries have speculated that this may well be because Paul has been through such a very, very difficult time where he is in Asia. He has left Ephesus, remember, but he is still in the province of Asia. He's been going through a very difficult time, and therefore it appears that the time was so difficult—as we'll see a little later today even—that it was so difficult that they weren't even sure they were going to survive. So, it seems that it's very much on Paul's mind that he's been through a very, very difficult time, and he realizes the only way he's come through it is because God Himself has taken a hand to intervene and help.

[9:57]

He refers to Him as *the Father of mercies*—the One who is characterized by mercy—and the *God of all comfort*, or every kind of comfort—all the comfort that we need.

The word here that's used for *comfort* is an interesting word. It's is rather consistently used and translated that way. It's a variation of the word *parakaleo*. *Para* means “with,” and *kaleo* means “to call.” So in that sense, it means “to call someone to be with you.”

When Jesus Christ spoke of the Holy Spirit in **John 14**, the New Testament translators often translated the word “comforter.” It is *parakletas*, one who is called to your side to help you in a difficult time. The word *comfort* is perfectly legitimate, and that's kind of the basic word that used here. It's a little bit different form, but it's “one who comes and causes another to be comforted or encouraged.” Maybe “encourage” is a little bit more the sense that we might see here. The primary idea of *parakleses* is “to stand beside someone in a time of trouble.” So, this tells us something about the way God often deals with us. We are in a difficult time, and God comes to our side to assist us, to help us, to strengthen us. But you'll notice that we're still going through the trial. We're still there. The trial is still upon us. We're still having to exercise godly character, but we don't have to do it alone.

Remember the famous passage in **Psalms 23**, where David said:

4 *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For **You are with me**; ...*

So that, I think, captures the same sense of this, that when we're going through those difficult times, God may allow us to go through them; He may allow the difficulty to go on. Well, we all know people who've had very serious difficulties for **years**, and yet, they don't go through it alone. God is there. He strengthens, He helps, He comes to our side, and He puts His arm around our shoulder and encourages us to go on. It tells us a great deal about how God helps us in the midst of a trial. I think most of us would really prefer that the trial would just go away, but, we wouldn't really learn much if that were what happened. Instead, God wants us to develop a godly character. So He comes, and He helps us through this power of God's Spirit.

[12:35]

He goes on to say, **verse 4**: *who comforts us*—

Again, this is the God of all forms of comfort, whatever form it may take.

4 *who comforts us in all our tribulation, —*

And then he adds something that I think a lot of times we overlook.

*—that (or “so that.” The Greek is *hina*—so that) we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

In other words, it tells us here: Life is not going to be trouble-free. There are going to be difficulties and trials in life. Those who come along and teach what’s called the “Health, Wealth, Prosperity Gospel” are not teaching what God says. Scripture tells us that the Christian is going to go through times of tribulation, difficulty, trial, test. Those are going to be a part of the Christian life.

Now, before I go forward there, let me just back up, and I want you to consider something else. One of the most, I think, important passages that we find Jesus Christ’s teaching is early on in the book of **Matthew** in the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 5, 6 and 7**. And when you come to the end of **chapter 7**, there is the fascinating metaphor that Jesus Christ used, that all of us have heard and thought about many times. It’s where Jesus Christ says: “The person who hears my words and **does** them, I will liken him to a man who built his house on the rock. And the storms came, the floods, the winds blew, and the house stood. But the person who hears my words and **doesn’t** do them is like a person who built his house on the sand. And the storms and the winds and the floods came, and great was the fall of that house.”

Now, there are many, many lessons to learn from that, and I’m not saying that this is the only lesson. But one of the things that I think it’s important to note there is, whether you do what Jesus Christ says or not, the storms, the trials, the floods, the winds, are still a part of life. The **difference** is how you come through them—what they produce, whether you’re able to survive those spiritually. Now I think in a sense, that’s what we’re talking about here in **2 Corinthians**, where Paul talks about God comforting us in all our tribulation. Yes, there will be tribulation and trials as Christians. Oh, it’s not every day of life. Certainly, being a Christian can be a joyous and happy time as well, but sometimes it’s a struggle. We all know that from our own experience. But the point that I think is so important to note here is: God says one of the reasons for that—now, I already mentioned—it’s an opportunity for us to build godly character.

Very often we will say: “God’s teaching me patience.” And I think sometimes that’s a cop-out. God may be teaching us something very, very different than patience. But, God is teaching us something. We’re learning lessons, and we, over a period of time, do learn very important lessons. But, notice that here, while that’s a part of a trial, he also says there’s another part: *so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of trouble*, whatever it may be, *with the comfort* that we received from God.

[15:54]

So he tells us a part of the reason God allows us to go through difficulties is because He expects us to be able to be encouragers to others who are going through trials and difficulties as well. Now I think it’s interesting: I remember quite a number of years ago—and I don’t remember exactly when it was—but I remember reading an article in one of the Church publications. Probably goes back to the days of the Worldwide Church of God. But I remember reading an article where the premise of the article was that sometimes you get down and you just really need an encourager, a comforter. And, the article then said that what you should do is to pray and ask God to send you a comforter. I read the article and I thought: Okay, but is that really the best thing to do—that I focus on the fact that I needed a comforter, so, “God, send me a comforter”? I think what he’s telling us here is that one of the best things we can do is that we take the lessons we’ve learned and we become comforters. We’re not just sitting there receiving comfort. We’re supposed to be giving encouragement and strength to people who are going through difficult times. And he says that you are able to do this because you’ve been through the difficult times, and you can encourage them the same way that you received encouragement.

Now again, when we've gone through difficult times, the chances are good, God didn't just come along and magically take them away. We had to endure. We had to learn lessons. And probably in many of those trials, we were humbled. And so, it's not a matter of going to someone who's in a difficult time, and in great arrogance and pride saying: "You can do this. I came through. You'll make it." No. It's a matter of saying: "I know this is hard. I know it's really, really difficult. And I know that I don't even fully understand what you're going through, but I do know that God's there to help. He'll get us through this. He'll help us come through. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, no matter how dark that tunnel may seem at times." That's the kind of encouragement that trials enable us to give.

Think about your own life. Probably many of you have had trials in your life that have gone on for quite a period of time, and you struggled with them, and you tried to understand why. And sometimes you just beat yourself up spiritually, saying: "I must be doing something wrong because God's letting this go on." And it may not be that at all. It may simply be a matter of learning the lessons that God wants us to learn over a period of time, to trust Him when it doesn't look like there's any solution possible. Those are the things that teach us and help us to be able to encourage others.

[18:34]

You know, all of us come across individuals who are going through tough times. I think one of the most amazing groups of people that I've ever met—not just in the Church, even outside, but I think especially of those within the Church—are the widows. Do you ever stop and think what it's like to become a widow—how difficult this is? What an enormous change in your life this brings about! How one moment you are a partner to a person and suddenly they're gone. Now I'm saying "widow." Obviously, widowers are in the same kind of situation. That someone you've devoted your life to helping, to serving, to working with—in one instant they're there; in the next instant they're gone. How do you address to that? How do you begin to reshape and refocus your life? It's an **amazing** challenge.

Now, again, you go to someone who's lost a loved one, and, often we don't know what to say. And sometimes people don't say anything because they feel like: "Well, I'll probably say the wrong thing." Probably not. Probably if we just go and express our concern, to go to someone who is going through something like that and say: "You know, I don't know exactly what you're going through. I don't fully understand what you're going through, but I have a little bit of an idea. And I want you to know that I'm here for you, to help in any way that I can." That kind of thing can be very, very important.

So, Paul tells us here, the *God of all comfort* comforts or strengthens or encourages us **in trials** so that we can do that too. In some cases, as well, God helps us through the words and the actions of other people. We can't just assume when we see someone going through a difficult time. Again, we probably pray for them. You see someone who has lost a loved one, of course, you go and pray, and you ask God to comfort and strengthen them. But, you know, sometimes God uses other people to provide **His** comfort. Sometimes the way God provides encouragement is through other of His children who have been through difficult times. So, in other words, what it tells me: When God helps me in a trial, He isn't just helping me. He's also placing upon me the responsibility of being an instrument in His hands for helping others, encouraging them as they go through difficult times.

[21:03]

Paul goes on (**verse 5**), and he says: *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.*

Now what are we talking about here? Quite honestly, the commentaries don't fully know. And I can understand that; it's not all that clear to understand. What it **seems** to be saying—*Expositor's Bible*

Commentary puts it this way—is that:

The sufferings of Christ refers to sufferings the individual Christian endures because he is trying to be a Christian.

Now there are other explanations that have been given by different ones, and some of those explanations have some validity, or at least, [are] possible. But it seems like this is more likely what's being said: That when we are trying to live the Christian life and we go through difficult times as a result of that, that, in a sense, that's the kind of thing that happened to Jesus Christ. And as we go through those—and those things can exist in abundance; they can abound—then our consolation also abounds. In other words, what's he saying there? The word “consolation” is the same basic root word that we use for “comfort” or “encourage” — that “standing beside” to help us. So it's saying that God gives help in proportion to the trial that we're going through. We have a very big trial. God gives extra help. The trial was perhaps a little smaller. He may not intervene quite as strongly because, again, it's teaching us important lessons.

So he says in **verse 6**: *Now if we are afflicted*, —

Okay, and it's not—I think we can understand that it's not really “if” in the sense of: Oh, it might happen. But it's kind of saying: “**When** we are afflicted... **When** we're going through difficult times...”

—*it is for your consolation* (your encouragement, strengthening.) *and salvation*, —

So, there is an ultimate goal to the difficulties we go through, and that ultimate goal is *salvation*. And, along the way, there is the comfort, the encouragement, the strengthening that God gives to us.

(So, when) *we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

So he basically says: “Okay, when we go through a difficult time,” —and again, Paul's applying this to himself and those who were with him—“when we go through that difficult time, it's because God intends us to use our trials to comfort and strengthen you.” On the same hand, he also goes along to show them that: “You know, what you're going through can be a comfort and a strength for us as well.” All of those are intended to lead us where God intends us to be.

[23:57]

You see, in the midst of a trial, there are basically two outcomes that are possible. God uses both of them to strengthen His people. If He allows the trial to continue over a period of time, those who are aware of the trial are encouraged that God hasn't abandoned those who are going through the trial, and it encourages them when they encounter a difficult time too. We see a Christian going through a difficult time, and again, we talk about trying to encourage. Probably many of us have had the experience where you see someone going through a difficult time, you think: “I'm going to go visit with them and just try to encourage them a little bit.” And you walk away being more encouraged **by them** than anything you were able to do for them. That's a common experience that many of us have. It shows again, when we go through that, that God's helping them, God's strengthening them.

The other outcome of the trial may be that God **does** deliver. He ends the trial and brings the person through it. And of course, obviously, when others see that, they're also encouraged. So as he makes this statement here: “If we go through the trial, it's for your encouragement and salvation. And if we're comforted, we're encouraged, it's also for your encouragement and salvation.”

Verse 7, he says: *And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.*

So, since our hope and our confidence is in God, we see how faithful God is, how faithful He is in intervening for His servants. And, in that, we can have confidence that we'll receive the help that we need, even if those that we—the normal comforters—those that we might turn to much of the time aren't able to get to us, God can get to us. He will be there.

Now he goes on to say, **verse 8**—and this again gets into some things that we can speculate about, but we don't really fully understand. And I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it, in that sense.

But he says, **verse 8**: *[For] we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.*

Now, probably this takes place in the province of Asia, which was that western section of Turkey, but probably outside of Ephesus because if it were in Ephesus, he probably would have mentioned it that way. But, he ran into some kinds of difficulties. *Expositor's Bible Commentary* lists five different possibilities, and I don't really think it necessary to go through them. We'll just simply say that whatever the difficulty was, it was very, very serious.

Now in one place it talks about—Paul talked about facing beasts, wild beasts at Ephesus. But there must be some kind of metaphor to that because Paul was a Roman citizen, and it was illegal to have a Roman citizen placed into a place of fighting the wild beasts like they would in a coliseum. So, there must be something else involved. There was a great deal of uproar. There were people who wanted to do away with Paul and his followers. So, we don't know exactly what it was. But whatever it was, it was **so strong** that Paul said: *"We despaired even of life." They were burdened beyond measure, above strength.* "This is more than what we could humanly endure, and we despaired of life." It implies here that they really thought the situation was so great that they would not survive.

[27:43]

He goes on to say that in **verse 9**: *Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,*

It's a very strong and dramatic statement that Paul is making there. The word that's used for *sentence* is "an official decision." It frequently refers to a legal verdict. But we have no indication that Paul was placed on trial or faced such a situation from a Roman court at this point. So, it may well be that it's kind of a metaphoric thing where Paul is looking at it and saying: "You know, it looked to us like God Himself had decided: 'This is the end of the road, and you're not going to survive.'" So, Paul said: "Okay. In that situation, what do we do? What did we do? Well, we learned, first of all, 'I have no way out of this. No matter what I do, there is no solution in my hand. It is out of my control. And, if God decides to let us die, okay, then our trust has to be in the God who raises from the dead.'"

There is this recognition that as Christians, ultimately, all the way up to Christ's return when there will be a change of those who are alive, but everyone who lives up to that point ultimately faces the termination of human life—death. And when we reach that point, we must have our confidence and our hope in the God who raises from the dead. That's a dramatic hope, a tremendous hope. And again, if you study what the pagan world believed, what they believed happened after this life, you would realize it was a frightening and terrible thing and not something anyone would look forward to. We have a much greater hope. We do not have to fear death. What an amazing thing that is!

Hebrews [2:15] talks about those who all their lives were subject to the fear of death. Now I don't think any of us are sitting around saying: "Oh, I'd like to die. Yeah, it will be fine if God decides tomorrow..." No, we don't want that. But if God makes that decision, for your life or mine, then, as Paul said: "Our trust is not in

ourselves, but in the God who raises from the dead.” That’s where we go to the grave, waiting for the next sound that we hear to be a trumpet, and put our confidence in God. So, Paul said: “That’s where we were.”

The sense seems to be that the trial was so great that they **fully** believed that they were going to die and their only hope was the resurrection.

Verse 10 He goes on to say: (This God who raises from the dead) *[who] delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us (continues to); in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,*

He did that. He is in the process of delivering us today, and, we trust that He will continue to do that until He’s done with us, until we have accomplished what He tends to accomplish in our lives. So Paul says: “That’s our confidence.”

Now, I want you to note that he uses a phrase there which is a little difficult to explain, in one sense. He says: ***in whom we trust...*** In whom we put our hope. There is the recognition that we are inside the sphere of influence of God. He is the one who is in charge, and even if we die, we are still under His control. He has the power to raise from the dead. So being “in” God, in this sense of *in whom we trust*, Paul is saying that as long as we’re under the control of God, in God’s sphere of influence, and we don’t take ourselves away from Him and out into this world that’s controlled by Satan, as long as we keep ourselves in the right relationship with God, then even death is not something that we have to be afraid of.

[31:47]

Verse 11 *you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.*

This is really kind of an awkward verse to translate and try to fill in behind the lines of what’s going on. There may be some reference here to the offering that Paul was gathering to take to Jerusalem and those who were in need. I don’t really think that’s what it’s talking about though. In the context of what Paul is talking about is, he’s just—he and those who were with him thought they were going to die, and God delivered them. And they very clearly recognized it wasn’t because of themselves. So Paul is telling the brethren in Corinth: “Your prayers were important in this.”

Now, again, think about how this might work. These individuals in Corinth, with communication as it was at that point, they had no ability to know what Paul was going through when a trial came upon them. It would take at least, probably, several days, if not longer, even in an urgent situation for that message to get through to the brethren in Corinth. And there’s no indication that that took place. So what Paul is probably saying here is: “You’ve been praying for us, even without knowing what the situation is, what we’re going through, what the difficulty is. You’ve been praying for us, and God heard those prayers. Don’t think that just because you don’t know the details, or, you’re not aware of the specific situation, don’t think that God doesn’t hear your prayers **and** intervene. Your prayers are important.”

All of us as members of the body of Christ frequently pray for others, and we don’t really even know the situation they’re in. We think of brethren in some of the Third World countries going through very difficult times. We’ve heard the stories, for example, of some of our brethren in India who are really in danger in many cases because of the religious fervor that’s going on all around them. In India, the Hindus and the Muslims are at each other’s throats. There’s a great deal of turmoil even going on recently in Kashmir on the border with Pakistan because Pakistan is Muslim and India is primarily Hindu. And those in India are very strongly opposed to and oppressing, in many ways, the Muslims. And, in the midst of all of that, there’s this tiny little group of people who are Christians, who are trying to follow Jesus Christ. And very often they’re in a very difficult situation. But you and I may not know for a long time what challenges they

face. So we pray for them all the time. And God hears those prayers. God intervenes for His people. There are all kinds of situations like that. So Paul is saying: “What we were in, your prayers made a difference.”

[34:54]

Verse 12 *For our boasting is this: —*

Now let me come back to this concept of boasting before we read the rest of the verse. There are several places in the New Testament, in Paul’s epistles, where he talks about boasting. And, I don’t think that really captures the sense of what we would mean in English today. It has more to do with a sense of a legitimate sense of pride in what someone is doing or what’s been accomplished. Now, again, even the word “pride” gives us a problem because in English there are a couple of different kinds of pride. There is a pride which really is like arrogance and not a good characteristic to have. But it’s also clear, in Scripture and in life, that you can take a proper sense of pride in accomplishment.

When God came down after the—at the end of the sixth day of creation and looked about, what does it tell us? Well, it really tells us on all those days, but it says that as He looked at all of these things, behold, it was very good. And that implies that God was pleased with what He’d accomplished. That He looked at what He’d made, and it was pleasant to Him. So, there is that sense of pride of accomplishment. It’s not an arrogance. It’s not something that says I’m better than anybody else. It’s just simply feeling like: We did a good job there, accomplished something that was worthwhile. And there are many different ways that that might apply.

So, when Paul talks here, or when it’s translated here about boasting, it’s that sense of “I’m really pleased with and, in a proper sense, proud of those of you who are doing certain things, who are living in a certain way.”

So he says: *For our boasting* (that which enables us to have the sense of pride) *is this: the testimony of our conscience—*

Okay, *our conscience*, Paul tells us, either encourages or condemns us. We’ve all had that experience where we’ve done something, and you look back on it and you say: “Oh, I really shouldn’t have done that.” And that’s where our conscience condemns us. But there are other situations where perhaps we’ve been criticized for something we’ve done; we’ve been accused of having false motives. And yet, our conscience tells us: “No, my motives were pure. I was doing it for the right reason.” So conscience is there and does both of those things.

So Paul says: “We are encouraged. We are proud in the proper sense.”

—the testimony of our conscience— “Our conscience testifies something,” we’re going to see as we go further.

—the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity, — which has a sense of sincerity, genuineness, no ulterior motives.

—not with fleshly wisdom, but with the grace of—oh, excuse me—simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

[37:55]

So Paul says: “Here’s the thing that gives us this sense of accomplishment, this sense of what we’re doing is worth all the effort, because we know that what we brought to you was genuine and sincere. There was no ulterior motive. We weren’t trying to take advantage of anyone. We weren’t trying to get anything from

you. We simply were there to bring God's truth and to help any way we could. We didn't come with fleshly wisdom."

We are so often today bombarded with fleshly wisdom. We need to be careful about it. You know, there're some wonderful resources out there that can be very, very helpful, but we do need to be careful that we don't just accept what is the fleshly wisdom way of handling things. That seems to be the way many people go. We have to understand that godly wisdom takes us in a different direction.

There are a lot of examples of that. For example, the simple statement that's made in the book of **Acts** that Jesus Christ—it's telling us what Jesus Christ taught, even though we don't have a record in the Gospels that He said this—but, it says that it is more blessed to give than to receive. That goes directly against fleshly wisdom. Fleshly wisdom says: "No, that's not the way it works." The fleshly wisdom is: Make sure you get yours, and then, hey, help other people get theirs—that's fine, but get yours first. This isn't godly wisdom. Godly wisdom says: "Giving is better than receiving."

So Paul is saying: "We conducted ourselves with genuineness, *godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but,*" as it says, "*by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.*"

I think what he's saying there is that as he dealt with the Church and the brethren in the Church, he's saying that: "We try to deal in a godly way with all people. We don't just deal godly ways with God's people, and then the rest of the times we deal with the world, then we have a different standard we live by. No, not at all. We try to be godly with all people."

And again, I think many of you experience that when you go into a store to purchase something. You probably try to treat the people there in a nice way. When we go to the Feast and we go out to eat, many times the brethren who go to the Feast—the brethren at the Feast sites—are very, very kind to the people who are serving, whether it's in a meal or it's at a hotel. We've even had people at the hotels tell us: "Oh, we so much enjoy it when your people come to town because you treat us so nicely." A lot of times that doesn't happen to them. But you've done that. That's the way you've lived. I don't have to admonish you to do that. You live that way. And, you see people respond when they're treated in a reasonable and proper way.

So, I think Paul is saying: "We've tried to treat everyone that way, but especially when it comes to those that God's called, those who make up the Church of God. We've really tried, especially there, to make sure that we treat you in a godly way."

[41:02]

He goes on to say, **verse 13**: *For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end*

What's he saying? Well, I think we have to again read between the lines a little bit here. Why would Paul say, when he wrote to them: "What you're reading is exactly what I mean; there's no hidden agenda here. There's no secret message. There's no carefully crafted wording so that it sounds one way and you draw certain impressions, but, ahh, it doesn't exactly mean what it said." Like some of the contracts that we may read. Paul is saying: "No, I was right up-front. What you read is exactly what I meant." And he said: "I trust that you're going to understand that, and that, as we go forward, that's what we're going to continue to do."

He says, in **14**: *([as] also you have understood us in the past [part]), —*

"This is the way—what we said before, what I'm saying now—same standard. There's no hidden message. There's no ulterior motive here. It's all up-front before you."

— *that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

Now, again, here we're dealing with boasting. What do we mean by that? I think, in part, Paul is telling them that "even if you've not fully understood all that we meant, you do understand that we didn't say one thing and mean something else." And he's telling them: "Look, the ministers—" You know, when we as ministers, especially Church pastors, we're working directly with local brethren, when we see local brethren doing the godly thing—which many do—it's a source of a great deal of satisfaction. To see someone grow spiritually, it's just such an encouraging thing. We've had that through the years.

You know, if you deal with a brand-new person, or maybe, as the Church more often is today, some young person who's grown up in the Church, and you've watched them, you've seen them go through the ups and the downs and all of those things. And, they come to the point where they want to be baptized. They want to make that lifelong commitment to God. That's such an encouraging thing for a pastor. It's such a positive thing to see that here is someone that we've worked with, that we've helped through. I can think of situations down through the years where people have made some really, really big mistakes, but they've repented, they've turned it around, and God has continued to use them in very, very positive ways, maybe even greater ways than any of us could even have imagined. And that's such an encouraging thing to see.

So, as God's people—as the ministry looks at those who are a part of the Church, and we see the growth taking place, it's really an encouraging thing. We would hope—and I think that's what Paul is saying here as well—that *we are your boast*. We are the things that make you proud as well. That you'll look at the ministry and the example that they set, and you are justly pleased with those who are your servants, those who are there to serve and to help you be a part of the family and the kingdom of God. That we would see that. And I think again of ministers that I've known who have been such a wonderful example. One particular couple I remember years ago—because I kind of followed them as the pastor into an area—they are to me, to this day—I won't mention names—but they are to me the best example I've ever seen of a servant of Jesus Christ, serving God's people **so faithfully**. It was wonderful to see that example. And, the brethren could look at them and say: "Our pastor is a genuine servant. This is someone we genuinely love because of the service that he and his wife give to us." So I think that's a part of what Paul is saying there.

[45:11]

Verse 15 He says: *And in this confidence (this confidence that you trust us just as we trust you) I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit—*

Now, we're starting to see something here. Why is Paul saying that: "What I'm writing to you is exactly what I mean"? Were there individuals who were saying: "Yeah, yeah, you read what Paul says, but behind it all, there's another meaning there. There's something else." Well, if somebody's looking for that, they're going to find things to be suspicious about. It's always going to be that way. But Paul says: "No, I came to you honestly. I trust you. I trust that you trust me, and therefore I want you to know that I **did** want to come see you."

Now he's going to explain as he goes a little further that he had wanted to come see them. He'd even told them he wanted to come see them. But he didn't come. And there were people who were questioning that: "Yeah, he says one thing, but that isn't what he does." We'll see that as we go further. He says: "I wanted to come to you that you might have a second benefit. I want to bring more to you. I was only able to be there for" (as he was in Corinth) "18 months. I'd love to come back and help even more. I want to add even the things that I've learned since then." He says: "I wanted to give you a second benefit."

16 *to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, —*

“So I wanted to come to you, go to Macedonia, come back to you.”

—*and (to) be helped by you on my way to Judea.*

“I was counting on you to be there to help me out, to gather the offering that needs to go to Judea. I was counting on you and relying on you for that.” But he wasn’t able to do that.

So he says: *Therefore (verse 17), when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? —*

“Was I fickle in this? Did I—it was kind of a capricious kind of thing that I said: ‘Oh, yeah, I’ll come see you,’ but I really didn’t mean to do that?”

— *Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?*

What does he mean by that? Well, he’s saying: “Do you think that I just simply, kind of off the top of my head, I just said” (as he says here: *according to the flesh*) “I said what I thought you wanted to hear, but I really wasn’t thinking it through. And so, I just kind of threw it out there, but I didn’t really mean that I would do it. That I’d say ‘yes’ one day and ‘no’ another.” Kind of “speaking out of both sides of my mouth” is the phrase that we often use.

It probably—and again, there were people who were being critical of this, who were criticizing Paul and saying: “Well, this is the way he is.” It ought to remind us of how easy it is sometimes to be critical of someone else’s decisions when we don’t really even know all the facts. And that’s a part of what Paul is telling them here: “Some of you have been very judgmental because you didn’t know the facts.”

[48:16]

There’s a passage in **Proverbs**, a couple of them actually, but we’ll just refer to one.

Proverbs 18 verse 13 It says:

He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.

Now, I would imagine all of us have done that at some point or another. Or we got all wound up about something, and then when we heard the rest of the story, we realized: “Oh, wait a minute—I should have been a little more patient with that.” **Proverbs** warns us that that’s a danger, and it can happen in the Church too. We can sometimes think: “Well, they said they were going to do this, and they didn’t.” Or: “They said they would never do this, and they did.” Well, wait a minute. What are the situations that are involved? There are many times when we don’t know the whole story. So, don’t answer a matter before you hear it. That will be folly and shame upon **you**, rather than the individual.

But (he says) as God is faithful (Verse 18), our word to you was not Yes and No.

I like another translation of that. This is the *International Standard Version*:

18 *As certainly as God is faithful, we haven’t talked to you with mixed messages like that.*

I think that captures the sense of **verse 18**. That’s not exactly what it says, but that’s kind of the sense of what’s there. “Just like God is faithful, we haven’t told you things that weren’t true. We haven’t approached it that way. As messengers of a faithful God, our words are to reflect that character of God as well.”

Perhaps some were implying that Paul had said one thing about his travel plans and then ended up doing something else, so they really couldn’t rely upon Paul. “And if you can’t rely upon him for something as simple as travel plans, well, how do you know you can rely upon some of the other things that he says?”

This is one of those things we have to be careful about. If we say something that turns out not to be true, then everything else we say becomes suspect.

We probably ought to note that nowadays, especially with so much activity on social media, where people will post things that are totally untrue. I've seen a number of those that have come up where people post about "this has happened," and ah, no, actually, that wasn't it. But if you post something like that in social media and it turns out not to be true, why should I believe the next thing you post, even if it is? So, it's very important that we don't say one thing and something else at another time. That we're not "yes and no." He says that.

Verse 19 *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes.*

Jesus Christ did not preach a "perhaps," a "maybe" message based upon speculation and some kind of an empty hope. When He spoke of God's promises, He spoke authoritatively, and He always verified them as true and reliable.

[51:27]

He goes on to say, **verse 20**: *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, —*

In other words, when God makes a promise, it's a promise, and it **will** be carried out.

—and in Him Amen, —

Or, that's an old phrase that means "so be it." That means "it's going to be that way."

—to the glory of God through us.

Now, part of that tells us that God is glorified by the fact that He faithfully fulfills exactly what He says He will in our lives as well. It brings God glory as we see His absolute, unshakable faithfulness. One of the greatest things about God is His unshakable, unchanging character. You and I base our lives upon the fact that when God says it, **it is true** and unshakable. The idea seems to be that regardless of which promises we may be considering, **all** of God's promises are confirmed through Jesus Christ as trustworthy. We have to be careful that we don't ever equate our best wishes and intentions, as human beings, with promises that God made.

I can't help but think of a situation many years ago when I was a Church pastor, where a man had a very, very serious heart attack. And we were in the waiting room with his wife, and she had a couple of friends there. And I remember one of the friends who meant well, who **really** meant well, said: "I know God's not going to let your husband die because He knows how much you need him." I'm sorry—God didn't make that promise. That isn't what God said, and frankly, in that case, the gentleman died. We need to be careful that we don't attribute our wishes to God. God's promises are **sure**, and we can rely upon them. But our wishes are something different. So, be careful.

[53:28]

Verse 21 *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,*

The term that's used here for *establishes* means it's a legal term, a technical term. It was a term that denoted "a seller's guarantee of the validity of a purchase," that it was exactly as presented. So, God is the one who guarantees us, in that sense. And it's interesting that the verb there that's used, "establish" or "guarantee" —"to cause something to be known as certain" —is an ongoing; it's a present tense. It means it's continually doing this. God is continually in our lives, guaranteeing and verifying us.

But as we move forward, we look here about God *has anointed* (in the next **verse**) **22** ... *sealed ... given us* (His) *Spirit*...

Those are all in what's called the Greek Aorist Tense, which, in this case, basically refers to something that's happened in the past, but continues to have an effect in the present today. So, when it talks about God *has anointed us*, or *given us His Spirit*, in that sense, that's something that already took place, and it continues. He *has sealed us*. We remain sealed. God's seal of ownership and possession is placed upon us. He doesn't put it there, take it away, put it there, take it away. We're designated as belonging to Him. And, He has given us that Spirit on a continuing basis. It wasn't simply: He gave us His Spirit when hands were laid upon us after baptism. He continues to give that Spirit to us, and **all** of that serves as a guarantee. All of that reminds us that God, as He continues to work with us, is going to complete exactly what He said He would do.

The term *guarantee* there is an interesting term. *Arrabóna* is the Greek word. It means: the first or initial payment of money or assets as a guarantee for the completion of the transaction, the first installment. Or we might call it "earnest money." If you've ever purchased a home and you put down earnest money, you remember that the earnest money is a small portion of the down payment, but it **guarantees** you're going to go through with the rest of it. And in a sense, that's what's used here. It's a fascinating word, and it was used in many of the Greek business documents that still remain to this day.

[55:57]

Verse 23 *Moreover (he says) I call God as witness (You know, God knows what my heart is.) against my soul, —*

Now again, it's not against some immortal soul or something like that. "I'm calling God to look at my life. I'm saying: 'God is the witness of the way I live.'" That's the concept of "soul." It is that living essence that's within us. It's not a separate being or a separate consciousness or something like that. It's the life principle in us. "I call on God to look at my life, to be a witness about my life."

—that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.

"There was a problem. I knew it needed to be addressed, and I wanted to wait." We don't know exactly what the accusation against Paul was, but someone had attributed false motives to him, as far as why he didn't return to Corinth immediately. Paul tells them: "No, my motive was pure, and God knows it." There's always the danger, when we're faced with a difficult situation, of acting too slowly. But what Paul shows us here is, sometimes you can act too quickly too. And when you push a situation too quickly, you can cause people to react in a negative way. Whereas, if you give them a little bit of time, then they may be able to deal with it a little bit better.

Some of you as parents probably have experienced that with your children. That sometimes, when a child needs to be corrected and they've done something wrong, yes, the correction needs to come, but maybe they need a little bit of cooling-down time before you really address the issue with them. And that seems to be what Paul is saying.

Verse 24 He goes on to say: *Not that we have dominion over your faith, —*

That's not our job. We don't control what you believe or how you live, in that way, in your relationship to God.

—but (he says) we are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

"It is our job, our responsibility, our desire to work right along with you. We're not better than you; we're not

above you; we're not below you, but to be coworkers right there with you, helping to produce the joy that God wants a Christian to have in his or her life. So, my coming to you was delayed because I wanted to be able to help and give you a chance to kind of think things through and weigh this out."

And we're going to find as we go further in future classes, that as a matter of fact, that was a very wise thing to do, and many of the brethren in Corinth responded in very positive ways. And Paul was able to be a great encourager to them, and as we'll see a little further on, a great encourager to us as we understand their response.

That takes up our time for this particular class. Thank you for joining us. Remember you have about an hour after the class if you have any questions you'd like to send in, and we'll try to answer those before the beginning of class number 3.

Thank you again for joining us.

[58:56]