

Studies in 2 Corinthians

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Introduction to 2 Corinthians

In order to understand the teachings of the second epistle we must acquaint ourselves with the reasons for the writing of the first letter. There evidently were many errors in this church. Among them were:

1. Divisions, Chapter I, Contentions, I am of Paul etc.
2. There was a display of human wisdom. Ch. I

This wisdom was divisive and made the cross of Christ of no effect. In Ch. 2, Paul despises excellency of speech and enticing words of man's wisdom when he preached the Gospel. He also ascertains strongly that the natural man cannot receive nor understand spiritual things. Spiritual truths are only revealed to the spiritual through the Spirit.

3. Despite the fact that this church lacked no spiritual gift, it was one of the most carnal churches described in the New Testament. Paul describes three classes of people: Ch.3: the natural man—the spiritual man—the carnal or fleshly man. Paul equates the carnal beliefs with a babe in Christ. This condition is brought about by lack of spiritual growth, and is evidenced in envying, strife, and divisions.

4. Ch. 5. In this church, immortality was being practiced and there was one instance at least which was so gross that even the Gentiles would not permit it in their base society. To compound the evil, the local church and the elders were indifferent to sin's awful presence in their midst.

5. Ch. 6 Brethren were taking brethren to court before ungodly judges.

6. After these discourses, Paul reminds them of this heavenly character. You are members of Christ—you are joined unto the Lord—and your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Ch. 6

These things had been reported to Paul by the household of Chloe.

Then this church had written to Paul for advice on certain subjects.

1. Chapter 7: The subject of marriage—divorce—remarriage.

2. Chapter 8: What foods to eat and not to eat—Christian liberty.

3. Chapter 11: Conduct at the Lord's Supper—hair coverings for sisters.

4. Chapter 12-14: The use and abuse of Spiritual gifts—women's place in the church.

5. There were problems by some regarding the resurrection. Chapter 15 is one of the greatest discourses on the resurrection. This chapter is called the resurrection chapter.

Over and above all these doctrinal weaknesses, a wave of distrust in Paul swept through the church, no doubt stirred by the false teachers. They doubted his sincerity—they questioned his apostolic authority.

The second letter written some months after the first letter defends his authority and apostleship, giving overwhelming evidence as to his call and commission from God (Chapters 1-7).

Chapters 8 and 9 concern the collection for the impoverished saints in Jerusalem. He also teaches the act of spiritual giving.

In Chapters 10 thru 13, Paul further defends his apostleship and in his boasting under duress, mentions an experience he had fourteen years previously.

Dr. Scofield points out some interesting data found in the epistle. He suggests that this letter is the most revealing of Paul's heart. He also gathers an unusual collection of words which express excruciating anguish of mind, heart, and body. Here are a few examples: afflictions—anguish—distress—beatings—fastings—labors—perils—persecutions—sorrows—strips—sufferings—tears.

Interestingly enough, another set of words seem to arise. Comfort and comforted are used more frequently in this letter than in any other of Paul's letters. Then throughout the epistle Paul mentions frequently three other words. Joy—rejoicing—triumph.

These are remarkable words in view of the distress and suffering Paul endured for Christ and the Gospel.

In reading chapters 10 thru 12 I am convinced that no other Christian could have endured such sufferings—rejoicing in them—and triumphing over them. In other words, being more than a conqueror.

The church in Corinth was born in adversity. The apostolic salvation of verse 2 were no idle or repetitious words. To continue for God in the midst of trial and persecution, they required the grace and peace of God.

V. 3-“Blessed be God.” This phrase when mentioned in the N.T. is always applied to the Godhead. It is an acclamation of praise, adoration, and worship.

1. He blesses “God” who “is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. He is also, “The Father of mercies.”

3. And finally, He is called, “The God of all comfort.”

Two things of which God has the monopoly: “Grace and comfort.”

It is interesting to note that the word comfort or comforter is applied to each person of the Godhead. In this portion, God is the God of all comfort. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as the Comforter in 14, 15, and 16. The Lord Jesus is spoken of as our Advocate—this is the same word.

How wonderfully we are taken care of. The entire Godhead is engaged in comforting, consoling, and sustaining us.

Paul was speaking from experience. V 8-9: These verses describe the pressure and danger in which Paul lived. He was pressed beyond the limits of human endurance, even disposing of his life.

As he endured these afflictions he felt that he was under the sentence of death. This condition was allowed by God to keep him from trusting in himself and to depend rather on God Who raises from the dead.

V. 10: It is He Who delivered us from imminent death, and Who continues to deliver, and we are confident that He will continue to deliver us.

V. 11: Paul ascertains in this verse that comfort and deliverance will come from God through their prayers. Prayer fellowship.

2 Corinthians 2

This section running through verse 11 of chapter 2 really begins at verse 23 of chapter 1. It was written in defense of certain actions and decisions which Paul had made relating to his proposed visits to the assembly.

Because of the postponement, through unavoidable circumstances, there were those who said openly that he was not to be trusted, that he was not sincere, and some even questioned his apostolic authority.

The verses in this paragraph are the beginning of his defense of his apostolic authority and also the sincerity of his motives and actions.

V. 23-He appeals to the highest authority. "I call God as my soul's witness."

Thus he gives the reason for the postponement of his visit, "It was to avoid hurting them further."

In not visiting them, Paul was showing His love for them and also giving them time to repent.

V. 26-Paul is careful to remind the church that he in no way seeks to hold ecclesiastical tyranny over their faith, but as a fellow laborer or helper, to promote this joy.

2:1-Because of the sincere convictions—God is my judge—I made up my mind to not grieve and distress you by another painful visit. His first visit to them had been very distressing.

V. 2-Paul gets no sadistic pleasure out of the pain he causes his converts. His sadness and joy are contingent on this spiritual state.

V. 3-In this verse Paul indicates his writing of the 1st Epistle. He hoped that it would be the desired effect, that there would be repentance and godly sorrow and that they themselves would rectify the many evils by following his exhortations.

V. 4-This verse is a revelation of the heart of Paul. It reveals the strain and distress under which he wrote.

1. "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart." Mental torture and anxiety. This would show us the depth of his emotional involvement.

2. "With many tears" would show the visible expression of this.

3. "That you should not be grieved" - the negative purpose of writing,

4. "That you may know the love which I have for you more abundantly" - reveals his positive purpose.

Verses 5-11: He asks the church to forgive the persistent offender.

It is generally accepted that the man in question is the man of chapter 5 (1 Corinthians). Paul says that he is the one who has caused them, and to a lesser degree himself, much grief and pain.

Paul evidently had learned of this man's repentance and reckoned that the discipline that had been administered by the majority was sufficient punishment. (Verse 6)

V. 7- He urges them to forgive and encourage him, lest he should be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow and despair and never recover.

V. 8-He urges the church to bring him back into the fellowship.

V. 9-In this verse, Paul gives one of the reasons why he wrote the 1st Epistle. "To see if they would be obedient in all things." The other reasons were: to prepare him for his visit (verse 3), and to manifest his love for them (verse 4).

V. 10-Paul puts himself into the actions of the church. Whom and what you forgive...I forgive also. Then he adds, "If I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes, with the approval of Christ."

V. 11-This I did also to keep Satan from getting the advantage over us.

V. 12-13-These verses tell us of Paul's sorrow. He came to Troas...he felt that a door had been opened to him to preach the Gospel...he was sure that this was of the Lord. He also expected to meet Titus there. Titus evidently was coming from Corinth. Paul was anxious to here from him the effects of his letter upon the church.

When Titus failed to appear, Paul was so distraught that he left Troas and went to Macedonia. Such a decision must have been a painful one, but at this time news from Corinth was of more importance to him than preaching the Gospel in Troas.

God was gracious...on his return journey he stopped at Troas for seven days.

Consider Paul's hour of darkness. Think of his disappointment ... apprehensiveness and the physical sickness which afflicted him. This seems to have been a critical period in Paul's life. Corinth appeared to be in full revolt against him. Galatia was falling to another gospel. He had just escaped from Ephesus. He wrote of

this period, "Our flesh had no rest, we were troubled on every side. Without was fighting, within was fear" (7:5).

Quote Vs. 8-9 of Chapter 1.

These expressions help us to see the mental distress and the physical weakness as Paul lay sick, not knowing whether the messenger of death or Titus would reach him first.

Titus did reach Paul first (Chapter 7:6). He was greatly comforted.

V. 14-"But thanks be unto God."

In all this Paul could give God thanks. (Romans 8:28)
Despite the seeming setbacks, he declares that he was being led in triumph by the triumphant Christ.

Describe the "triumph" in which military captives were led by victorious generals.

Note the words "always" ... "make manifest" ... "in every place" ... "Victory."

V. 15-Paul says here that because of his spiritual victory that he is the fragrance of Christ to God, and also to those who are being saved, and to those who perish.

V. 16-The life which he lived and the Gospel which he preached was life-giving to those who were being saved. To those who refused the message it brought death. Who is qualified for such a task?

V. 17-The inference here is "I am" or "We are." We are not like some false teachers who adulterate the message. We are sincere, as men sent from God, and living in His presence so we speak his message.

2 Corinthians 6

Unequally Yoked

The Context

The effects of Paul's first letter were being felt in the assembly, although things were being rectified. Paul, as God's coworker, urges the believers to use the grace of God to continue the cleansing process. The appropriate time for this is now, for it is the day of deliverance from sin and evil. Paul claims he is doing his part by living a blameless life, at great inconvenience to himself, so that his service will not be discredited.

Questions Regarding Apostleship

Due to the influence of false teachers, there were still some in the fellowship who were reluctant to receive Paul and his apostolic ministry. Paul, therefore, commends Timothy and himself as true servants of God by recounting a list of experiences that should validate this claim beyond all doubt. See 2 Corinthians 6:4-10. And for any who would still have reservations, Paul appeals to them by writing, "Our mouth is open to you; we are hiding nothing and keeping nothing back. And our heart is open wide to you. There is no lack of room in our hearts for you, but you lack room in your hearts for us. By way of return, do this for me; as my children, open wide your hearts to us." See 2 Corinthians 6:11-13.

Do Not Be Unequally Yoked

Paul writes that because Christians are new creatures, they must not be united with dead unbelievers:

- What fellowship? Suggests a sharing or participation.

- What communion? Suggests a close relationship such as a marriage or a relationship with God.
- What concordance? Suggests a lack of harmony between the holiness and purity of Christ and wickedness and impurity of Satan.
- What part or portion? Suggests a deep sharing of things in common? What can a person who accepts the faith have in common with one who rejects it?
- What agreement? Suggests a common ground. What common ground can there be between the temple of God and a heathen temple?

He then reminds the Corinthians that they are God's temples. This concept would have been familiar to them from his previous letter:

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy and you are that temple. - 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Finally, Paul urges the believers to take certain action: Come out. Be Separate. Touch no unclean thing. The result then will be that those who follow will be welcomed and received by the Father and will have fellowship with him. Therefore, since believers have these divine promises of blessing, we should cleanse ourselves from everything and everyone who contaminates the body and the spirit.

2 Corinthians 7

Paul loved the Corinthian church. He spent 18 months there. They were his children. He appreciated this love and confidence in the part and felt keenly this rejection of him.

V. 2-“Receive us” or “make room for us,” he writes. “There is no reason for rejecting me for I have not wronged, cheated, or harmed any of you at any time.” Paul’s life.

He urges them to get rid of their petty peevishness.

V. 3-In saying this, I am not finding fault with you, because you are in my heart and nothing in death or life can separate us.

V. 4-I have confidence in you that you will receive me wholeheartedly, and I tell everyone about it. This encourages me in my trouble and my heart overflows with joy.

These verses are really a revelation of Paul’s heart.

Read verses 5-7.

2:12-13—He came to Troas...he felt a door had been opened. He also arranged to meet Titus there. He was anxious to hear firsthand the effects of his first letter on the church. When Titus failed to appear, Paul was so distraught that he left Troas and went to Macedonia. This must have been a painful decision, but news from Corinth was of more importance to him at this time than preaching the Gospel in Troas.

Consider Paul’s hour of darkness. Think of his disappointment, apprehensiveness, the physical sickness

which afflicted him at this time. It was a critical period in Paul's life. Corinth was in revolt against him. Galatia was following another Gospel. He had just escaped with his life from Ephesus.

V. 5-Consider this period of his life. Quote.

These expressions help us to see the mental distress, the physical weakness of Paul, as he waited, not knowing whether death or Titus would reach him first.

V. 6-Praise God, Titus did and he was greatly comforted.

V. 7-He also rejoiced in the report which Titus brought regarding the effects of his first letter upon the church.

V. 8-9-Paul says that he did not regret sending the letter which caused them much sorrow, because they repented, and began to set their house in order.

V. 10-Godly sorrow brings salvation—deliverance from evil.

V. 11-It brought earnestness...eagerness to cleanse themselves from guilt...it made them angry and apprehensive of the sin...it gave them a desire for Paul's presence among them...it gave them zeal to discipline when necessary. You have cleansed yourselves from every stain of sin in this matter.

V. 12-Paul is saying here that he did not write the letter on account of the offender nor for the sake of the injured party, but rather to show them in the sight of God how much they really cared for him.

V. 13-Because of all this Paul was comforted and was overjoyed. In addition to this he also rejoiced in the joy that Titus had, because his spirit had been refreshed by them.

V. 14-16-Paul evidently had talked very highly of the Corinthian church to Titus. Titus was not disappointed in what he saw and experienced in Corinth. He was thrilled by their submissiveness and by the welcome given to him.

This made Paul happy...gave him courage...and renewed his confidence in them.

2 Corinthians 9

Chapters 8 and 9 form a small but important section within this epistle. The subject is giving. The main lesson in the passage is that “you cannot out-give God.” Our offerings are very important to the Lord. They bring much joy to His heart, they take care of His servants, they promote His work, they take care of poor brethren. (Acts 5)

In Chapter 8, Titus and another brother are sent to receive the offering which they had taken for the Jerusalem saints. This is the offering referred to in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. Paul had boasted to the Macedonian churches (Phil-Thess, etc.) that Corinth had been ready with this offering for a year. In his first letter, Paul had given them some definite teaching regarding giving. Although they were a gifted church, they were deficient in their giving. Evidently, they had responded and gave liberally, and Paul had boasted to the Macedonian churches, who in turn were inspired by this example. Note the characteristics of the man who was sent to collect the offering (Ch.8:23).

Titus, my partners and fellow workers, the other brethren, messengers of the Church, a credit and glory to Christ. Only those with an impeccable character and testimony should handle the money of the assembly.

V. 6-How far should we go in our giving? Paul uses a natural example to illustrate this. Explain this...the farmer. The truth of this is, anyone who gives to the Lord unreservedly, “sowing bountifully”...will in return receive abundant blessings, bountifully. But be not

deceived, etc. See Luke 6:38. The widow, the alabaster box of the anointed, "Wherever the Gospel is prompted."

V. 7-This offering was a free-will offering.

1. They offered themselves. Ch. 8-5 The Macedonians

2. Then with a cheerful heart they put their material possessions at the Lord's disposal. See marginal notes Ch. 8:3-5.; Ch. 9:7

V. 8-God is no man's debtor. God is able, etc. He cannot be out-given. He will reward eternally and also spiritually. Sufficiency in all things.

V. 9-Paul explains this principal from the Old Testament. The good man gives his gifts to the Lord cheerfully. This in turn is fulfilled to the hard work, servants, poor. This man's benevolence will be remembered for use.

V. 10-Those who have a heart to give will be supplied with the means to give. Though impoverished materially, God has promised food, and growth of the soul.

V. 11-Enriched in everything...V.12-Thanksgiving by recipients.

V.13-Those ministered to will glorify God as they see the fruits of faith in Christ in this liberality towards them.

V. 14-It would also promote prayer for these in the hearts of the recipients.

V. 15-The climax to the subject. Paul draws our attention to the example of the hand (Ch. 8-9). Now, thinking of the grace giving in context, his vocabulary becomes inadequate and he simply but profoundly says, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." Indescribable gift...inexpressible gift.

“Blessed be the God our God,” etc.

If we give all to Him, can we ever out-give Him? The subject of giving closes with the divine example, which is aimed at inspiring us to give ourselves to Him and to make our material resources available to Him.

2 Corinthians 10

Paul's defense of his apostolic authority.

This is a very practical portion we can learn much from the unpleasant experiences of Paul, and his attitude regarding them. There were those who were challenging his apostolic authority.

Paul lived in Corinth for 18 months.

He worked, prayed and labored with his own hands to support himself. When free from work he preached publicly and from house to house. His passion for souls was inexhaustible, it was also his desire to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. The assembly had grown numerically and spiritually under his ministry. Men of ability were raised up among them, others who could build them up visited them frequently. As a true missionary he then left them to carry the Gospel to the regions beyond.

In his absence certain opponents to the doctrine of the race of God, came to Corinth and denounced Paul and his teaching.

Consequently Paul had to come to the defense of his apostleship and his teaching. No doubt they presented him as nothing more than a lowly tentmaker, with grimy hands and dirty work cloths. One with no divine authority. Maybe they compared him to the other apostles, who did not act like this. Then they would throw out the challenge "Is he really an apostle?"

Notice how Paul responds to this serious charge. "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

In effect Paul was saying, "What do you think of Christ?" He was a carpenter - he used the tools of his trade - He took a lowly place on earth - this did not keep Him from being God the Son and did not hinder Him from being the Savior of the world.

Paul's spiritual opponents also accused him of writing strong and stern letters to Corinth, but was afraid to face them personally with the issue.

His letters were strong because there were serious errors in the Church. There were divisions - I am of Paul - Apollos - Cephas - Christ. There were also brethren going to law with brethren. Then there was also gross immorality. In trying to correct these errors his letters were sharp and strong.

Paul wrote so firmly and pointedly hoping that they would correct the errors so that when he came to them he would not have to exhort them with strong words.

V. 3-"For though we live in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." Paul refuses to fight his earnest opponents with fleshly weapons. In this he respects the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

V. 4-"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; fleshly; but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Paul is saying here that he does not oppose flesh with fleshly means. His weapons of warfare are those given him by the Holy Spirit.

They are mighty through God They pull down the strongholds of the flesh and Satan. They defeat fleshly reasonings and arguments. They bring to naught those who oppose the truth of God. They bring every thought into subjection and obedience to Christ. Every true

servant of God should be both conversant and equipped with these spiritual weapons.

V. 6-“And having in a readiness to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” In other words: If you are not ready to obey the Word of God as I have written it to you, then remember that when I do come I must punish your disobedience.

Next he warns them against looking on the outward appearance. Paul’s physical appearance was not that of a great statesman or leader. The Greeks particularly admired splendid physique. Whereas Paul was probably a small man “Paul means small.” His outward appearance was weak and his speech contemptible.

Paul’s appearance was a little grotesque and his speech possibly was affected after being stoned at Lystra. This gave ground for his enemies to despise him. But though little of stature and physically weak, praise God, he was filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and through their power had done wonderful things for Christ.

V. 7-“If my opponents think they alone have authority from Christ, they should think again, for we are Christ’s servants also.” He has used me despite my physical defects. He has invested in me apostolic authority.

V. 8-“I should boast more of this authority.” Authority which is not for your punishment, but for your blessing.

V. 9-To those who say that I terrify you with my letters, and that I would be afraid to personally communicate these stern truths to you.

V. 11-Let those persons think so, but wait until I get there in person.

V. 12-It is a very foolish thing for any servant of God to compare or contrast himself with other servants of God.

To every man his work. Every servant of God has some special gift. Whitfield said, "Other men may preach the Gospel better than I can, but no man can preach a better Gospel."

V. 13-16-Paul is saying here that he is not interested in building on other new foundations or works. As a missionary, he has not too interested so much with churches already established, but to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond, where Christ's name has not been mentioned or preached.

It is not wrong to build on other men's foundations. But as a missionary it was his objective to break new ground and labor where no other man had preached.

Paul was a foundation layer. He went from country to country, from city to city, from village to village, carrying the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He sought to lead souls to Christ, then gather them together by the Spirit's power into little groups.

They in turn became "indigenous churches". Paul's life and method of expanding the Christian church is the pattern for our day and age.

V. 17-We have not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hands. "He that glorieth, let in glory in the Lord."

Whether we are building on another man's work or laying the foundation in virgin soul, it is all the same. "He that glorieth, let in glory in the Lord."

V. 18-It is not he who commends himself that is approved. The man who is approved is commended by the Lord.

Here then is the ideal servant of God displaying the proper attitude. He sought at all times to follow his master. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

2 Corinthians 13

The errors in Corinth: Divisions. Display of human wisdom. Divine things are revealed through the Spirit. The flesh was strong at Corinth. Carnal. Lack of spiritual growth. Immorality was unjudged.

Brethren were taking other brethren to law before ungodly judges. The body as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Some of these things had been reported to Paul by the household of Chloe. They had also written for advice on certain subjects.

The question of marriage and divorce. Food to eat and not to eat. Conduct at the Lord's table...hair covering for sisters. The abuse of spiritual gifts. Women's place in the church. The greatest love hymn in the world (Ch.13). The great resurrection in Chapter 15.

A wave of distrust in Paul also swept through the church, no doubt stirred up by false teachers. They doubted his sincerity. They questioned his apostolic authority. The second epistle written 1 year after the first letter defends his authority, giving overwhelming evidence.

This second letter is the most revealing of the heart of Paul. Some of the words express suffering of mind, heart, and body. Afflictions...anguish...distresses...fightings... sorrow...stripes...sufferings...tears...tumults.

Interestingly, another set of words seem to arise. Comfort and comforted. Used more frequently in this letter than in any other Pauline letter.

Then Paul also mentions these other words frequently.
Joy...rejoicing...triumph.

In defense of his apostleship, he is forced into a line of reasoning which he abhors.

In Chapter 11, he describes his trials. In Chapter 12, he reveals an experience he had 14 years before. He talks of his thorn in the flesh.

Finally, in Chapter 13 he threatens to use his apostolic authority when he comes to them for the third time, but we would prefer them to put things right themselves.

He urges them, which the first letter mentioned, to put away the sin and for anyone else who had sinned to get right with God.

“Examine yourself,” he says to all, “and see if you are really saved.” Some of this conduct left doubt in the apostle’s mind.

Then he urged them to rejoice = farewell. Be perfect. Get right with God and each other.

Be comforted = encouraged. Be of one mind = be agreeable. Live in peace with one another. If they did this they could be assured of God’s presence.

The benediction.

The mystery of suffering.

Maintaining Your Spiritual Health While Tending to Sick Sheep

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

How can an elder maintain his spiritual balance, while shepherding the flock of God.

The primary essential of any local church is the presence of the Lord. To attain this happy state with its attendant blessings, there must be two important ingredients: perfect holiness and perfect unity, the unity of the Holy Spirit.

To maintain such ideal conditions in the responsibility, duty, and privilege of spiritually qualified elders.

Happy is the assembly, today, which has godly men at the helm. The identity of elders does not rule the assembly. Idealistically, it is ruled and controlled by the Holy Spirit, and he does this through the elders.

Contrary to what some think, overseership is not a spiritual gift. I Timothy 3:1, "If any man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." If any man desires overseership, if any man stretch himself to overseership.

This implies deep spiritual exercise over a prolonged period of time, during which the Holy Spirit matures and fashions a brother. The Spirit molds him spiritually, morally, socially, intellectually, and experientially, so as to become an elder.

Let us now consider the work of an elder.

It is the performing of this work that brings an elder into situations which are unbendable, so distressing, that he is driven to the point of distraction. Your troubles have just begun.

There are at least five areas in which a true elder is actively engaged.

1. He is under a shepherd or pastor to feed the flock.
2. He is a sentinel to protect the flock.
3. He is a pillar to support the flock.
4. He is a ruler to guide the flock.
5. He is an example to encourage the flock.

Beloved, in the execution of the sacred duties, a true elder can be wounded and scorned. He can be drained physically, emotionally, and mentally. The gun incident.

Due to unmitigated pressure, one can almost, and some do, reach breaking point. Harassed by the care of the church, being distressed by the onslaught of Satan brings physical and mental exhaustion and the accompanying spiritual barrenness.

In some cases, this has led to a total breakdown.

What is the elder's protection against all of this? Before answering this question outright, let us see how Paul survived in his day. As a pastor and a teacher, Paul was ceaselessly engaged in edifying the Church. Despite the hazards and dangers, he returned to every city where he had preached the Gospel, to teach the saints.

He taught publicly and privately from house to house. He taught in Ephesus night and day for three years, with tears.

During his care for the flock, he received stripes above measure, imprisonments, and he faced death many times.

Five times he received 39 stripes, three times beaten with rods, once he was stoned, three times shipwrecked, “I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

These hardships and brutal beatings altered Paul’s appearance. His enemies said that his outward appearance was weak. His speech was contemptible—he probably had an impediment.

In all likelihood, his appearance was grotesque. Could Paul ever recover his spirituality after such brutal treatment? Then there were those who questioned his apostleship.

During this period, Paul used words which described his suffering: afflictions, anguish, distress, fighting, sorrow, stripes, sufferings, tears and tumults.

Interestingly, another set of words appeared in his writings: comfort and comforted. These words are more frequently used in 2 Corinthians than in any other Pauline letter.

Three other words come into focus also. Joy, rejoicing, and triumph.

How did Paul remain unscathed spiritually, while undergoing such persecution for Christ and for His people? See 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4; 2 Timothy 16:17.

He was filled with the Spirit of God. Acts 9:17, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” He was filled with the grace of God. God’s strength has been made perfect in weakness. This more than compensated for his

grotesque appearance, and also helped him to live above the unscrupulous criticism of his enemies.

Therefore, the Victor cries, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproached, in persecutions, in necessities, in distress, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12-10.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil. 4-13.

Mark 6:30-32

At this point, the disciples had just returned to Jesus after their first preaching tour. They were exuberant about their success. "Rejoice rather that your names are His." They healed diseases and delivered many from demon powers.

No doubt they were somewhat overwrought because of the stress they had been under. John the Baptist had just been murdered. "So the Lord asked them to come aside unto a desert place and rest awhile."

It would be beneficial for many of God's people if they heeded the advice of the Lord, coming apart and resting awhile.

Many who are working beyond these capabilities should take note. If we all took time to rest at the feet of Jesus, there would be fewer nervous breakdowns, ulcers, heart attacks, and spiritual casualties. "Hide thyself," and "Show thyself." David said, "He maketh me lie down." Some of the sheep do not seem to have much sense. They need to come apart and rest awhile. He maketh me lie down, He leadeth me beside still waters, He restoreth my soul.

Psalm 46: "God is my refuge and my strength, a very present help in times of trouble." "Be still and know that I am God."

Alcoholics, sitting at the doorstep, the gun incident.