

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

INTRODUCTION

Lesson 1 of 34

One of the greatest liabilities extant within the professed church is spiritual simplicity – not the “simplicity that is in Christ” (1 Cor 1:12; 11:3), but the “simplicity” that competes with godly wisdom (Prov 1:22). This is the characteristic that leaves the things of God hidden to the individual, who thus settles for surface views. Jesus spoke of this kind of simplicity when He lamented over Jerusalem, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes” (Luke 19:42). They were too simple!

As I am now using the word, “simplicity” is described by Solomon as being “void of understanding” (Prov 7:7). Paul referred to this condition as “without understanding” (Rom 1:31). Solemnly those in Christ are admonished to avoid this condition. “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17). Knowing the liability of this condition, Paul prayed that those in Christ would be given “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge” of God (Eph 1:17). This kind of understanding must be had in abundance, or, as it is stated in Scripture, men are to be “filled with the knowledge of His will, IN all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9).

When it comes to identity with the Living God, “ignorance” produces alienation from God. As it is written, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God THROUGH THE IGNORANCE that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph 4:18). Those in Christ are told to avoid falling into the pit of ignorance again: “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance” (1 Pet 1:14).

A MODERN TRAGEDY

One of the great tragedies of our day is the remarkable level of ignorance that exists within the professed church. Jesus has been upstaged by self-acclaimed scholars and specialists. Men come to the people of God presenting their academic credentials as though they had achieved some remarkable level of kingdom expertise through them. Yet, to a significant degree, they have left the church wallowing in the mud of spiritual ignorance. Myriad believers do not know who they are in Christ Jesus, the nature of spiritual life, or the abundance that is theirs within the New Covenant. Even though they have been taught by seeming wise men, they have actually concluded that their personal problems are the most significant ones, and their worldly benefit and comfort is the fundamental benefit. Their concepts and words are often formed by these misgivings.

What is more, the religious experts have become adept at catering to these misplaced affections. They offer a panorama of workshops, self-help literature, and counseling services to assist the people in solving their problems, and realizing their self-conceived goals. There are times when they seem to emulate dazzling successes, and they are swift to point them out to us. Yet, the people themselves, for the most part, remain in the degenerating state of spiritual ignorance.

In this text, Paul is dealing with just such a circumstance. The Corinthians had a plethora of spiritual gifts, coming behind in none of them (1 Cor 1:7). Yet, with all of those gifts, some among them actually affirmed there was no resurrection (1 Cor 15:12). There was even a

tolerance of a baser sort of immortality among them (1 Cor 5:1-5). Some were so spiritually obtuse that they could not receive Paul as an genuine Apostle – even though he was the premier Apostle, laboring “more abundantly” than others (1 Cor 15:10). Still others could make no correlation between the table of the Lord and the Lord Himself (1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:29-30).

The Corinthians had been exposed to the preaching of Paul, Peter, and Apollos (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22) – all faithful proclaimers and expounders of the Gospel. How is it that such miserable conditions existed among them? Was it really enough to say they were “only human” – particularly since that emphatically was not the case? The answer is found in their woefully deficient understanding. They had been living in a childish manner, gleeful in all of their endowments, yet, as the blind man of Bethsaida, only seeing men “as trees walking” (Mk 8:24).

Now that they had made some progress in Christ, as reported by Titus (2 Cor 7:6,13; 8:16), Paul can declare critical aspects of the kingdom that, heretofore, they were not able to receive due to their carnality (1 Cor 3:1-2). They have now come within the sacred circumference of hearing, where the word of the kingdom can enter into the heart.
– Given O. Blakely

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Lesson 2 of 34

DICHOTOMOUS

The word “dichotomous” refers to something divided into two parts – in this case, two contradicting parts. Both of these parts are housed within our bodies, which, together with the mind, are arenas of fierce competition and warfare.

When this facet of spiritual life is not known, all manner of confusion breaks forth upon both heart and mind. The individual who is in Christ finds unwanted competing thoughts coming into his mind – thoughts with which he is forced to contend. He did not ask for them, and they actually contradict his heart’s desire. Yet, they are there, and often in a very powerful and distracting way. These are the “fiery darts,” or “flaming arrows” that are hurled at the believer by the devil (Eph 6:16). They are thoughts, originated by Satan. However, he tempts us to believe they came from ourselves. As stated in Ephesians 6:16, only the “shield of faith” can quench or neutralize these unwanted thoughts. We also have been provided with spiritual weaponry designed to cast down “imagination, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:4).

This inner warfare is insightfully expounded in Romans 7:14-25. In order to better prepare for the text before us, I will briefly review this marvelous explanatory text.

ROMANS 7:14-25

In the Romans passage Paul provides a personal testimony, confirming the nature of spiritual life – in much the same way as he does in the text we are reviewing. He delineates a circumstance over which he has no power – the intrusion of evil thoughts. The sphere in which the intrusion occurs is the mind, where “lusts,” or illicit desires, first invade our persons. Thus James writes, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15). Note, the sin does not occur until the lust is entertained and translated into some form of willing action.

In Roman seven, Paul confirms that there was an aspect of evil that he could not control. This did not have to do with expression in words or deeds, but with intruding thoughts. He thus concludes, “I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin” (7:14, NASB). That is, as long as he was in the body, sin found a place where it could enter and attempt to draw him into iniquity.

Paul’s explanation of the condition makes clear that his essential person did not want to experience these thoughts. This was not an area with borders of logic or reasonableness. The contradiction he was experiencing defied ordinary reasoning. “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (Rom 7:15). The word “do” does not equate to “practice,” as the New American Standard reads. Paul is speaking of an intruding and unwanted thought, not something that he “practiced.” By faith he kept from practicing the thought, casting it down. He did not desire to have such thoughts, and thus he expresses discontent with having to deal with them at all.

The Apostle wisely concludes from this that he actually agrees with the law of God, not “the law of sin” which is in his members. “But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good” (Rom 7:16, NASB). The fact that this situation caused him grief confirmed it was not an expression of his fundamental nature. Therefore, he concludes, “So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me” (Rom 7:17). Keep in mind, the apostle is not speaking of committing sin, but of being tempted to sin. The body is the vehicle which allows for the entrance of temptation to sin. That is why it is referred to as a “vile body” (Phil 3:21), and a weak “earthen vessel” (2 Cor 4:7).

Paul identifies the source of the trouble as his “flesh” – the “earthen vessel” of our text. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom 7:18). That is, he could not perfectly and consistently carry out the desires of his heart without confronting these competing and unwanted thoughts. “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me” (Rom 7:21). There as “another law,” or principle, at work in his “members,” or fleshly body – ““But I see ANOTHER LAW in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom 7:23). That deviate “law” was forcing him to deal with things he actually hated. Yet, he could not successfully bar the intrusion of those competing thoughts. They were to him what the Midianites were to Israel.

This is something of what is involved in having the “treasure” of the knowledge of the glory of God in an earthen vessel. The whole situation emphasizes our inherent weakness as well as the Savior’s supernal strength. This is all by design, in order that we might learn more fully and consistently that our salvation is wholly of the Lord.

Now Paul will show some other liabilities that are introduced by remaining “in the body” – or having “this treasure” in an “earthen vessel.” This “vessel” condition has put a part of us within the reach of our enemies. It has, in a sense, made us vulnerable. From a still higher point of view, it has made us dependent upon our blessed Lord. However far we may think we have advanced in the faith, we are not yet beyond reach of trouble, perplexity, persecution, and being knocked down!

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Lesson 3 of 34

WE ARE TROUBLED ON EVERY SIDE

“We are troubled on every side . . . ”

It is essential that all pretense be eliminated from our lives. This will be seen in this text. Paul makes no effort to pretend as though he was sailing on a smooth and untroubled sea – living in a state of apparent constant triumph. When he says, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor 2:14), he does not mean he is never troubled, perplexed, persecuted, or cast down. For those living by faith, “triumph” is the ultimate outcome of every trial – a blessed mountain of victory. However, there are valleys between, battles to be fought – blood, sweat, and tears. If Jesus “suffered being tempted” (Heb 2:18), and “learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb 5:8), what folly it is to imagine we are exempt from such things. In fact, we have been CALLED TO SUFFER. As it is written, “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. FOR EVEN HEREUNTO WERE YE CALLED: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Pet 2:21).

No child of God should be dismayed or disconcerted when severe difficulties are encountered. We do have a treasure from God, but it is contained in “earthen vessels.” That condition is confirmed by the circumstances to which Paul now refers.

Technically speaking, the words that follow are not an explanation of trouble itself. Therefore, it will not satisfy the philosopher or the worldly-wise. It will make no sense to the person who is not living by faith – the one who is not living their life unto the Lord. This is, however, a most excellent explanation of true spiritual life, and of the experiential effects it causes in this world. Every hardship that will be mentioned is brought on BECAUSE we have this treasure in an earthen vessel. It will be powerfully affirmed that this has no effect upon the treasure itself.

The “treasure,” by inspired definition, is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). The person making this confession has left every competing influence in order to know Christ–i.e. “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil 3:10-11).

WE ARE

“We are . . .” Other versions read, “I am” (WILLIAMS/MONTGOMERY).

The word “we” does not appear in the original text, but it is required by the context in which this statement is made. This is the extension of a thought initiated in verse six: “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” (2 Cor 4:6). The “we” of verse seven (“But WE have this treasure in earthen vessels”) is the “OUR” of verse six, and the “WE” of verse eight. The individuals into whose hearts God has shined are the ones who have the treasure in earthen vessels. Now, the ones who have the treasure in “earthen vessels” are the subjects in consideration. What follows is THEIR experience. It belongs to no one else!

All of those into whose hearts God has commanded the light to shine, participate in these things to some degree – depending on the extent to which they are laboring with the Lord, and the measure of the light that has shined into their hearts. None are excluded. This is not the description of Paul alone, but one in which he shared, together with the rest of the family of God. Those who share in this experience do NOT do so in the same measure. Their measure is determined by their spiritual capacity, their role in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:18), and their personal faith (Matt 9:29; Rom 12:3,6). Because he had received such extensive revelation, and “labored more abundantly than they all” (1 Cor 15:10), he also excelled in his experience of these things.

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made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 4 of 34

TROUBLED ON EVERY SIDE

“ We are troubled on every side . . . ”

Other versions read, “hard pressed” (NKJV), “afflicted” (NASB), “have troubles” (BBE), “suffer tribulation” (DOUAY), “subjected to . . . hardship” (NJB), “pressed . . . by troubles” (NLT), “being in tribulation” (YLT), “we are being squeezed” (IE), “hedged in (pressed)” (AMPLIFIED), and “handicapped” (PHILLIPS).

There is a “trouble” into which we are born into the world – difficulties that are shared by all men, justified or not. Eliphaz the Temanite spoke of this kind of trouble to Job: “Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). This is involved in the result of the judgment leveled against Adam and his progeny because of his act of disobedience: “cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen 3:17). Solomon also alluded to this common trouble: “For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity” (Eccl 2:23). Challenges, difficulties, sorrows – they are the portion of all men.

But this is NOT the kind of trouble to which Paul now refers. This is “trouble” that is the direct result of a heavenly treasure being in an earthly vessel. The word from which “troubled” is translated means “press (as grapes), press hard upon, a compressed way, narrow, straitened . . . to trouble, afflict, distress” (THAYER). Other lexical definitions are, “afflict, oppress, cause trouble to, experience hardship” (FRIBERG), “to press against, to crowd against” (USB), and “to press, squeeze, pinch, straiten, a narrow way, to oppress, afflict, distress” (LIDDELL-SCOTT).

The picture presented by the phrase “troubled on every side,” is not that of a ship in a storm, or a traveler in the heat of the desert. Rather, it is that of being in a winepress, where the grapes are being trodden. It is being in a narrow passage that chaffs the skin, or a way that is hedged up with thorns. It is being surrounded by adversaries that appear to be having the upper hand.

This is the kind of “way” Jesus described as leading to life. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt 7:13-14). A “strait” gate is a difficult one, extremely narrow, and difficult to get through.

There are two ways in which this strait gate and narrow way are experienced.

1. First, in the obtaining of eternal life itself, there are restrictions and oppositions that will eliminate those who are not determined to enter the way. In order to get on the highway of holiness (Isa 35:8), opposition, hardship, and pressure will be experienced. There are things that must be abandoned. There are also things that must be faced and overcome.

2. Second, in fulfilling the role within Christ’s body into which you have been placed (1 Cor 12:18), straitness, affliction, and hardship will be experienced. That is the nature of laboring together with God (1 Cor 3:9). This is the particular aspect of “trouble” that is addressed in this passage – “trouble” that is experienced while engaged in kingdom labors.

There are at least three things involved in working with the Lord. First, there must be kingdom aptitude. Second, there must be an open door – a door that is opened by the Lord Himself. Third, there will be adversaries who are dispatched by the devil to hinder the work. Paul testifies to these realities. He himself had been made an “able minister of the New Covenant” (2 Cor 3:6). Of his labor he said, “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor 16:9).

There was “trouble” that came to Paul when he was in Asia (2 Cor 1:8). Frequently he “suffered trouble as an evil doer” – as though he was doing something wrong (2 Tim 2:9). Such “trouble”

was substantial enough to require significant faith and hope to endure.

Every child of God participates in these things. Blessed is that person who can see and accept it, and will not allow the “trouble” to impede their progress to glory.

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Lesson 5 of 34

TROUBLED ON EVERY SIDE

“ . . . on every side . . . ” Other versions read, “in every way” (NASB), “round us on every side” (BBE), “in all things” (DOUAY), “every kind” (NJB), “on every side (troubled and oppressed in every way)” (AMPLIFIED), and “on all sides” (PHILLIPS).

The “trouble” of which Paul speaks is not some occasional disturbance – although such things do occur. Here is a condition from which there is no external escape. It is as though the individual was hemmed in by trouble – “round about us on every side” (BBE). The trouble came no matter where they were or what they were doing – “IN all things” (DOUAY). It came in a variety of forms – “every kind” (NJB). No matter where they turned, “trouble” raised its head – “on all sides” (PHILLIPS).

The life of faith is attended by trouble, difficulty, disturbance, agitation, and seeming danger. God has not called us to a life of casualness, relaxation, and comfortable repose! We are living in a cursed world, among people living with the cloud of Divine wrath upon them (John 3:36). To date, in any generation, those who are living by faith have been in the vast minority – and they are pressured by the ungodly majority. There has never been a child of God who did not have to endure trouble – and that even includes the Son of God Himself during His earthly sojourn (John 12:27; 13:21).

Elsewhere Paul testifies, “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” (2 Cor 1:8). And again, “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” (2 Cor 7:5). All of that was endured WHILE Paul was engaged in doing the will of God!

From one perspective, this was BECAUSE Paul was engaged in the work of the Lord, which involves separating people from this present evil world. From another view – which is the viewpoint of our text – it is because he had a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel, and was therefore subjected to the climate for which the flesh is suited, and to which it is subject.

Paul testified to the diversity of the “trouble” he experienced, and with which he was often surrounded. It included at least three shipwrecks. There were also perils in waters, among robbers, in the city, and on the sea. He also was troubled by weariness, painfulness, hunger, thirst, going without food, and being cold and naked (2 Cor 11:25-27). There were also five beatings consisting of thirty-nine vicious stripes, three beatings with rods, and being stoned once. He even mentioned fighting with beasts in Ephesus “after the manner of men.” He testified, “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 ” (2 Cor 7:5). Again he wrote, “Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound” (2 Tim 2:9). This is how the world treats a person whose godly perspective and manner of life contradicts its own.

What could possibly be worth enduring such staggering things? This was the result of fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9). It was the result of being justified, and re-created (Rom 5:1; Eph 2:10). It was what ensued when he worked with God (1 Cor 3:9)! This is what happens to a citizen of heaven (Phil 3:20-21) while he is in this “present evil world.” That very trouble testifies to the legitimacy of your conversion!

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Lesson 6 of 34

NOT DISTRESSED

“ . . . yet not distressed”

How will Paul respond to this “trouble” – to “trouble on EVERY side?” What will be the effect of facing thorns on both sides of an already narrow passage? Will he continue the work of the Lord, or will he quit?

It is one's response to trouble that testifies to the measure of grace they have received. Those who cannot stand up under trouble will soon be eliminated from the heavenly workforce. If one cannot bear the heat of the day, the work of the Lord will lose all of its appeal, and the crown of life will appear unworthy of extensive effort.

YET

“ . . . yet . . . ” Other versions read, “but” (NASB).

The word “yet” comes from a word that is a conjunction: that is, it joins two things that are occurring at the same time. In this instance, while these two things occur at the same time, they contradict each other. They are joined in time, but possess different natures. While being “troubled on every side” was the experience of the “earthen vessel,” what now follows is the expression of the “treasure” within that vessel.

NOT DISTRESSED

“ . . . not distressed . . . ” Other versions read, “nor crushed” (NKJV), “not straitened” (ASV), “not shut in” (BBE), “not constrained” (NAB), “not crushed or broken” (NLT), “we can still move” (IE), “never in absolute distress” (WEYMOUTH), “never hemmed in” (WILLIAMS), “not cramped or crushed” (AMPLIFIED), and “never frustrated” (PHILLIPS).

Paul makes no attempt to gloss “trouble,” and neither should we. However, it is the reason for his straightforwardness that brings blessing to our souls. Although the trouble was significant, consistent, and on all sides, yet it did not have any ultimately harmful effect upon Paul. His reaction – “NOT DISTRESSED.” Our adversary the devil, who is at work in “trouble,” certainly did not intend for the trouble to yield this result. However, praise God, there is a “greater” factor at work in the saints. As it is written, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4).

The pressure was great, but the believer was not “crushed” (NKJV). The doors of escape all seemed closed, but he was not “shut in” (BBE). Although the stone of opposition was hurled against a clay pot, it was “not broken” (NLT). Although straight-jacketed by circumstances, he could “still move” (IE). Even though being surrounded by “trouble” tends to exasperate the one being troubled, yet Paul was “never frustrated” (PHILLIPS).

The word “distressed” comes from a word meaning “to be in a strait place... to compress, cramp, reduce to straits” (THAYER). Other lexical meanings are, “confine, squeeze into a narrow tight place, restrict...to be severely limited, be completely overwhelmed with difficulty” (FRIBERG), and “to be straitened for room, to be crowded together” (LIDDELL-SCOTT). The word means nearly the same thing as “troubled,” yet here it is contrasted with being “troubled on every side.”

This is more of an inward view – how the heart has responded. Although, as a man, the circumstances seemed confining, yet within – in “the inward man” – he was not held within or imprisoned by them. As the mighty eagle, he could rise up and soar over the difficulties in his spirit, renewing his strength while the “earthen vessel” was being drained of all of its resources. Faith causes us to not be thoroughly discouraged, completely disheartened, or finally overcome. It always gives us, so to speak, room to move.

The idea is that the trials did not so confine him that he could not turn, or move about. He was not suffocated by the pressure. He could still believe, hope, trust, and even “glory in tribulations” (Rom 5:3). He could still keep “looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:2), seek the things that are above (3:1-2), and “run with patience the race set before him” (Heb 12:2). All of the movement, however, was upward, Godward, and toward the “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15).

No matter how grievous and sustained the “trouble,” yet those into whose hearts God has shined the light, have access to the throne of grace, to “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need” (Heb 4:15). There is no trouble, no pressure, no affliction, that can shut the entrance to the holy of holies. The sanctified way is still open to those with faith. There is no such thing as a troublous time or circumstance that bars one from the presence of the Lord, or excludes them from His grace! May God be praised for the absolute greatness of His salvation (Heb 2:3).
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Lesson 7 of 34

WE ARE PERPLEXED

“ 8c . . . we are perplexed . . . ”

WE ARE

“ . . . we are . . . ” It is important to once again underscore that “we” refers to those into whose hearts God has shined the light of the knowledge of Himself in the face of Jesus Christ. We are addressing experiences that are common in substance within the body of Christ, though differing in measure. Paul is speaking of experiences associated with being engaged in “the ministry.” The degree of one’s involvement in “the ministry” (Acts 6:4; 20:24; 1 Cor 6:15; Eph 4:12; Col 4:17; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 4:11) determines the extent to which these things are experienced.

PERPLEXED

“ . . . perplexed . . . ” Other versions read, “things are hard for us” (BBE), “seeing no apparent issue” (DARBY), “straightened” (DOUAY), “in doubt” (GENEVA), “we see no way out” (NJB), “frustrated” (ISV), “we suffer embarrassments and are perplexed and unable to find a way out” (AMPLIFIED), and “puzzled” (PHILLIPS).

The word “perplexed” comes from a Greek word meaning, “to be without resources, to be left wanting, not to know which way to turn . . . to be at loss with oneself, be in doubt; not to know how to decide or what to do, to be perplexed absolutely” (THAYER), “be uncertain, be inwardly

disturbed” (FRIBERG), and “to be puzzled” (LIDDELL-SCOTT).

This word describes a condition no child of God desires – yet it is a very real experience to those who are living by faith, walking in the Spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. It does not speak of a lapse of faith, but of the limitations associated with having this treasure in an earthen vessel. Here is an expression of perplexity: “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: But we had THE SENTENCE OF DEATH in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Cor 1:8-9). And why did this happen?? “THAT WE SHOULD NOT TRUST IN OURSELVES, BUT IN GOD WHICH RAISETH THE DEAD.”

This word confirms there is a remarkable tendency in those remaining in this world to trust in self – to imagine it is not possible to be lacking in PERCEIVED resources. Since we have allowed psychiatry into the church, it has taught people to try and lie their way out of this condition rather than trusting in God – something that no facet of psychiatry encourages men to do.

To be “perplexed” is to be reduced to a state where there are no obvious answers – where all natural resources are depleted, and the path is simply not clear before us. It is like being in a strange country where the roads are not marked, all resources are removed, and we have no apparent access to someone who does know the way. Here, Paul means that he often came into situations that were embarrassing to the flesh – times when he did not know what to do, or what course to take. It was by no means pleasant, but it was a Divinely purposed experience.

In this situation, the means of escape is not readily seen. How God will deliver us is not known. It is the kind of situation in which our fundamental asset is our faith, not our knowledge or our wisdom. That is why Paul referred to this kind of situation as being “out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life” (2 Cor 1:8). There simply were no answers in the flesh, or within the natural realm. The world could not supply any resources that met the need. There were not any other people who could clearly mark out the path, or provide a lucid answer.

Those who interpret “triumph” and “victory” as always riding on the crest of the wave, have not spoken the truth. They are simply acknowledging that their fellowship with Christ and labors in His kingdom do not extend deep enough to trouble the waters of life. They are living on the surface of life, and thus all of their observations concerning spiritual life are cursory and shallow. Therefore, they are not qualified to speak on these things, and ought not be given a platform to do so among the saints. The road to glory passes through enough deserts and valleys as it is. We do not need the additional handicap of pretension.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 8 of 34

NOT IN DESPAIR

“ . . . we are perplexed, but not in despair . . . ”

Here again, the Apostle moves into another realm. He has said something about the “earthen vessels,” now he will confirm the superiority of the heavenly treasure that is resident in them. What is impossible for men is possible with God. What human wisdom and strength cannot obtain is easily appropriated by faith.

BUT

“ . . . but . . . ” Faith moves us beyond the perimeter of human limitations. When things are totally perplexing and no answer or way out is perceptible through natural faculties, faith takes over. The “treasure” that is housed within the “earthen vessel” is not a partaker of its weaknesses.

NOT IN DESPAIR

“ . . . not in despair.” Other versions read, “not despairing” (NASB), “not driven to despair” (NRSV), “we see a way out of them” (BBE), “our way not entirely shut up” (DARBY), “not destitute” (DOUAY), “we don’t give up and quit” (NLT), “we don’t doubt the truth” (IE), “never utterly baffled” (WEYMOUTH), and “never to the point of despair” (WILLIAMS).

The word “despair” comes from the Greek word that means “to be utterly at a loss, be utterly destitute of measures of resources, to renounce all hope, be in despair” (THAYER). It appears to mean nearly the same thing as “perplexed.” Tyndale translated this verse, “We are in poverty, but not utterly without somewhat.” The idea is that those with the “treasure” are not left without any resources at all – it only appears that way! According to the flesh there may be no resources, but not according to the Spirit.

When a widow and her son reach the end of their meal and oil, they have been reduced to perplexity. Thus, when confronting the prophet Elijah who asked her to make him a little cake, she said, “I have . . . but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die” (1 Kgs 17:12). She was “perplexed” – without any further resources – and there was a grievous famine in the land. But she was not utterly without resources! Elijah responded, “Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days” (1 Kgs 17:14-15).

“Not in despair” means the individual still has access to the One who supplies all of the resources. The fact that they may have apparently run out does not mean none can be obtained. Israel obtained bread in a wilderness, and was given water to drink in a place where there “was no water” (Deut 8:15). When the children of God are “not in despair” they realize God is “a very present help in the time of trouble” (Psa 46:1), and they do not give up. They hold on to hope!

Paul expressed this even more precisely in the first chapter of this Epistle. “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: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2 Cor 1:8-10).

When, in the above reference, Paul says “we despaired,” he is not contradicting the statement of this verse: “not in despair.” The “despair” of 1:8 was from the viewpoint of the “earthen vessel.” From his own (or any human) point of view, there simply was no escape – no way out! However, God made a way of escape where there was none. That is what the Lord does. Thus, faith moves us to “not” despair!

One of the purposes of godly assemblies is to encourage people to live in the zone of faith, not being overcome by the difficulties with which flesh cannot contend. When this is not accomplished, it is not long until men come to realize how very little strength and resources they have within themselves.

Spiritual life is a two-sided coin. The “treasure” is one side, and “the earthen vessel” is the other – and in a sense they contradict each other. Just as you could not use a one-sided coin to purchase earthly commodities, so you cannot use a one-sided coin for spiritual resources and

commerce. There must be participation in both areas in order to validate life as genuine before God. The individual who maintains only an “earthen vessel” view will soon give up. On the other hand, the one who imagines there is only a “treasure” side to life will tend to be puffed up and arrogant. Their fall will be much harder.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 9 of 34

WE ARE PERSECUTED

“ . . . Persecuted . . . ” Other versions read, “pursued” (ASV), “hunted down” (NLT), “we are being chased” (IE), and “We are pursued (persecuted and hard driven)” [AMPLIFIED].

The word “persecuted” means “to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away; to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, to run after . . . harass, trouble, molest; to be mistreated” (STRONG'S); “hostile pursuit persecute; drive out, expel” (THAYER).

For those who boast that the Old Covenant promises apply to us – i.e. Deuteronomy 28:2-14 – exactly how does Paul's testimony blend with these words: “The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways” (Deut 28:7), “and they shall be afraid of you” (Deut 28:10), “And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them” (Deut 28:13). Why did Jesus fail to remind His disciples of those promises? I will tell you why, because “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:40). The New Covenant has eternity in mind (Eph 2:1), reigning with Jesus (2 Tim 2:21), a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), and glory, honor, and immortality (Rom 2:7).

This is one of the great paradoxes of spiritual life. Although He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4), yet those who have this treasure in earthen vessels are persecuted. Although Jesus has “destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14), yet those who are in Him must sometimes flee. Even though adversarial “principalities and powers” have been plundered by Jesus (Col 2:15), yet we must contend with them (Eph 6:12).

Those who boast of being able to bind Satan, or thrust him from their presence with a word, must account for the presence of persecution – for ultimately, it is the devil who “persecutes” the people of God (Rev 12:15-17). Jesus alerted His followers to the reality of persecution – grievous persecution: “If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you (John 15:20). “But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake” (Luke 21:12). The Apostles also made clear that persecution was part and parcel of living godly: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). And again, “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now” (Gal 4:29).

Persecution involves aggressive pursuit – pursuit that appears as though the persecutor is not at all restrained. Thus Saul of Tarsus “made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3). Later, when Saul was converted, he was driven from the city of Damascus by Jews who sought to kill him. He escaped by being “let down by the wall in a basket” (Acts 9:23-25). Herod killed James, the brother of John (Acts 12:2). Persecuting Jews in Antioch “expelled” Paul “out of their coasts” (Acts 13:50). Paul

testifies that persecutions and afflictions came to him in “Antioch, at Iconium,” and “at Lystra” (2 Tim 3:11).

Once Jews from Thessalonica heard Paul was preaching in Berea. Upon hearing it, they pursued him, finally forcing him to leave the area (Acts 17:13-15). For two whole years, Felix kept Paul bound in prison, doing so to please the Jews (Acts 24:27). In general, Paul says of the Jews, “Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men” (1 Thess 2:15).

Those who imagine that believers walk in obvious and unquestioned triumph must account for the persecutions of Paul. Here is a premier Apostle, noted for his “more abundant” labors (1 Cor 15:10), and “visions and revelations” that were unparalleled (1 Cor 12:1). There was no question about his commitment to the Lord, for he had abandoned every competing interest in a fervent quest to “win Christ” (Phil 3:8-13). How is it, then, that his enemies appeared on the surface to have so much success. They drove him from regions, beat him repeatedly, and were the seeming cause for frequent incarceration.

Paul was “persecuted” – hunted down like a wild animal. He confessed, “we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” (1 Cor 4:13). The situation was so significant he once wrote, “For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Cor 4:9).

Now Paul is accounting for the presence of persecution – whether in himself, or among other members of the body of Christ. This is because “persecution” is common among members of the household of faith. It is because, in a sense, we become vulnerable in Jesus. It is not a fatal vulnerability, but is only according to appearance. We have this treasure in an “earthen vessel.” If this was not the case, our enemies would not be able to touch us. What is even more, this is all by Divine design. This whole arrangement is in order that “the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (4:7). Any deliverance that we experience has obviously come from God Himself.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 10 of 34

VARIOUS FORMS OF PERSECUTION

“ . . . Persecuted, but not forsaken . . . ”

Persecution takes a variety of forms, and they are all intended to have a calculated adverse effect upon the child of God, and to bring satisfaction to the ones doing the persecuting.

1. For some, the persecution takes the form of those who said of Jeremiah, “Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet” (Jer 18:18a). That is, Jeremiah said they were going to be overthrown by Chaldeans. God would void the power of Israel’s weapons, and fight against them Himself through the Chaldean hordes, who would be led by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 21:4-7). These people said this would never be. Their prophets boldly contradicted Jeremiah’s words saying, “Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon” – of which saying Jeremiah said, “they prophesy a lie unto you” (Jer 27:9,14). They certainly spoke with a lot of seeming authority, and with official tones, even persuading the people they had a word from God.

2. Other persecutors simply ignore what the people of God say, giving no heed to their words –

as they also did to Jeremiah. “Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words” (Jer 18:18b).

3. Some are aggressive, even to the taking of the life of the people of God, like the murderer Cain (Gen 4:8), wicked Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:4), subtle Jehoiakim (Jer 26:23), crafty Herod (Acts 12:1-2), the aggressive Jewish council (Acts 7:58-50), or certain hating Jews from Iconium, and Lystra (Acts 14:19).

4. Still others persecute the saints by simply, and sometimes with seeming dignity, separating them from their company, and casting reproach upon them as though they were doers of evil (Luke 6:22).

5. Others, thinking that they understand the hardships of the godly, mock the righteous when they are oppressed, doing so in the name of spiritual understanding, and causing them great sorrow (Job 12:4).

6. Some mock the work of God like Tobiah the Ammonite when Nehemiah was rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem: “Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall” (Neh 4:3).

7. Some “talk to the grief” of those who are being chastened of the Lord (Psa 69:26).

8. Some hunt down the righteous, pursuing them aggressively to make life more difficult for them (Matt 23:34; Acts 14:19; 17:13).

Whether persecution consists of haughty words, chiding, contradicting arguments, or bodily harm and death, it is always an expression of the rejection of the saints, the Word of Christ, and the Lord Jesus Himself. It always evidences a wicked and hard heart. It confirms that very real hostility exists between the flesh and the Spirit. It confirms the reality of the new birth – the new creation in which the individual is made different than the world, and unable to harmonize with it (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10).

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 11 of 34

NOT FORSAKEN

“ . . . but not forsaken . . . ” Other versions read, “not abandoned” (NIV), “never cut off” (NJB), “never left unsuccored” (WEYMOUTH), “but not deserted” (WILLIAMS), “but not deserted [to stand alone]” (AMPLIFIED), and “but we never have to stand alone” (PHILLIPS).

On the surface, the presence of persecution suggests that we have been forsaken. The flesh would reason thusly: “My foes can only have access to me if God does not protect me. If I am being persecuted by those who hate God, as well as myself, it must be because I have been forsaken.” All manner of professing believers reason in this way. They equate protection with the absence of trouble – and persecution in particular. However, this is a wholly erroneous conclusion.

There has been only one Person walking in Divine favor that was ever forsaken – and that is the Lord Jesus. When it occurred, the Savior cried out in agony, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me” (Matt 27:46). However, even then, God could say, “For a small moment have I forsaken Thee” (Isa 54:7). It was at that time that Jesus was taking away the sins of the world,

being made sin for us, and enduring the curse of God (John 1:29; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13).

God has gone on record, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). He promised this before the Law: “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” (Gen 28:15). He promised that under the Law: “And the LORD, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed” (Deut 31:6). Jesus promised it in this day of salvation: “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Mat 28:20).

These consistent affirmations of the Lord’s presence reveal this is an aspect of the Divine nature. It is part of the Lord’s character to not abandon His people when their enemies appear to have the upper hand.

1. His presence may be revealed in the open overthrow of the enemies of His people, as in the destruction of Sennacherib’s army (2 Kgs 19:35).
2. It may be seen in the deliverance of His children from the determinations of the enemy, as when Peter was delivered from prison and an impending death by the hands of Herod (Acts 12:7-10).
3. It may also be by upholding the persecuted one during great affliction, as He did Joseph in prison (Psa 105:17-19; Gen 39:20; Gen 40:15).
4. The Lord’s faithful attendance to His persecuted people may be revealed by dispatching an angel to strengthen the fatigued prophet Elijah, when in flight from an aggressive Jezebel (1 Kgs 19:5-8).

But you may rest assured, the saints of God will not be overcome by persecution. Even though subjected to repeated assaults, and seeming defeat, they will still have full access to the “throne of grace” (Heb 4:16). They will still enjoy the “communion of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 13:14). The holy angels are still appointed to be their ministers (Heb 1:13-15). The enthroned Savior still “ever lives to make intercession” for them (Heb 7:25). All of the promises are still available to them, through which they are made “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). Their names are still “written in heaven” (Heb 12:23). They are still being “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5).

Persecution, regardless of its immensity or duration, cannot touch any of these things, or cause them to terminate. Behind the visible, in the realm of the invisible, those who are being persecuted for righteousness’ sake are being upheld, strengthened, and made to stand. They are “not forsaken,” abandoned, or left to stand alone. Persecution cannot put them where Divine succor cannot be realized. The Lord is faithful who will lead them to the place He has prepared, where they will be nourished “from the face of the serpent” (Rev 12:14). Their change “from glory to glory” cannot be thwarted by persecution (2 Cor 3:18). Mark it well, the ultimate intentions of their persecutors will not be realized – even though it may appear to the flesh that they have been successful.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 12 of 34

WE ARE CAST DOWN

“We are . . . cast down . . .” Other versions read, “struck down” (NKJV), “smitten down” (ASV), “we are made low,” BBE “knocked down,” NJB “We get knocked down,” NLT “struck to the ground” (WEYMOUTH), “always getting a knockdown” (WILLIAMS), “we are struck down to the ground” (AMPLIFIED), and “we may be knocked down” (PHILLIPS).

Let us not be naive about living by faith, being “more than conquerors,” or being caused “to triumph” (Heb 10:38; Rom 8:37; 2 Cor 2:14). This does not mean the people of God never suffer setbacks, or are never, so to speak, struck down to the ground. Do not doubt that the devil can deliver a grievous thorn – and do it within the framework of the will of God (2 Cor 12:7-8). Yes, you can be “cast down,” as it were “struck down to the ground” – but you do not have to stay there!

Even before Christ Jesus, David confessed, “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand” (Psa 37:24). He even reasoned with himself when he was in a cast down state: “Why art thou CAST DOWN, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.” (Psa 42:5-6).

When the Scriptures speak of victory and triumph, it is always the ultimate view, even though there are momentary triumphs also. There have, however, been men who enjoyed great victories, only to be overthrown in the end – like king Asa (2 Chron 16:12). Better to end in victory than in ignominy and defeat!

The expression “cast down” is a strong one. It comes from a single Greek word, that means, “to cast down, throw down to the ground: passive (2 Cor 4:9, where the metaphor is taken from an athlete or combatant)” (THAYER), “throw down, cast down, strike down” (FRIBERG), “knock down” (UBS), “to hit or strike with sufficient impact so as to knock an object down – ‘to knock down’” (LOUW-NIDA), and “to throw down, overthrow, bring down to nothing” (LIDDELL-SCOTT).

Is it possible that those in Christ can be thrown down by their enemies – pummeled until they fall to the ground? Can it be that their foes can momentarily get the best of them, so that it looks as though all of the advantages belong to the enemy? Indeed, there is a strain of contemporary teaching that would leave people thinking this is not possible. Such see life as one continual string of triumphs., sailing through life on the crest of the wave, with the Lord rushing to our aid at all times. However, this is not a true representation, as the saints throughout the ages can testify – men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the holy prophets. Abraham can testify of an intimidating king. Isaac can tell of losing some wells. Jacob can bear witness to having been lied to and taken advantage of. Joseph can tell of being shackled in prison. Jeremiah can tell of being cast into a pit. They were knocked down, thrown down to the ground – but they did not stay there.

However, in Paul we have a prince among men affirming that he had, in fact, been “knocked down” (NJB). He speaks for all who are godly, for “all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). He is speaking of reality.

Here we are seeing the fierceness of the struggle in which we are engaged. It is no wonder believers are admonished to “put on the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:10). This is no religious game in which we are engaged. Those who approach life in a casual manner will inevitably experience severe setbacks. Spiritual life, or fellowship with Jesus in “this present evil world,” is not calculated to eliminate all earthly conflicts. We still have to fight (1 Tim 6:12), resist (James 4:7), pull down (2 Cor 10:4-5), and wrestle (Eph 6:12).

The Lord Jesus accented this when He said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household” (Mat 10:34-36). How strikingly this was confirmed in the life of Paul, who was vigorously opposed, hounded, and harmed, even by his own countrymen. If a man of this caliber can be “cast down,” we should not be surprised when we experience such a thing, as though “some strange thing” happened to us (1 Pet 4:12).

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

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

Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 13 of 34

BUT NOT DESTROYED

“. . . but not destroyed." Other versions read, "we are not without help" (BBE), "we perish not" (DOUAY), "but still have some life in us" (NJB), "but we get up again and keep going" (NLT), "but never knocked out" (IE), "yet never slain" (WEYMOUTH), and "but never struck out and destroyed" (AMPLIFIED).

Once again, the "treasure" side of the equation enables the sufferer to rise higher than nature can reach. Although, from one point of view, the believer is "knocked down" (PHILLIPS), he is not "knocked out" (IE). By the grace and power of God, he is able to rise again after being pummeled to the ground. Moses came out of the desert to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage (Isa 63:12). He was struck down, but rose up again. Joseph came forth from prison, and was elevated to the throne of Egypt (Gen 41:12-46). He was "not destroyed," or "knocked out." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were shackled and thrown into a fiery furnace – but they came out with no bonds, and the "smell of fire" not on their clothes (Dan 8:27). They were struck down, but not destroyed. Daniel was thrown into a den of hungry lions, but came out of it unharmed (Dan 6:16-24). He was struck down, but not destroyed.

Once Paul was stoned at Lystra, then dragged out of the city, "supposing he had been dead." He was "cast down," and "knocked down." Yet, "as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city" (Acts 14:19-20). He was "not destroyed," but got "up again and kept going" (NLT). Many times this apostle had initiatives launched against him that were designed to keep him down. Consider his inspired testimony: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 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; 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; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor 11:23-27). He was knocked down, but not knocked out!

The Psalmist once said, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand" (Psa 37:23-24). That was before the Lamb of God had taken away the sin of the world (John 1:29), putting away sin through the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26). It was before the world had been reconciled to God, and Jesus had "made peace through the blood of His cross" (2 Cor 5:18-20; 1:20). How much more is this true now, in this great "day of salvation!" We may be cast down, but not utterly, praise the Lord! You can believe that!

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 14 of 34

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

"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.” (2 Cor 4:10)

The expression “the life also of Jesus” refers to His resurrection life – the life with which we were merged when we were “raised” in baptism to “walk in the newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

One of the things for which Paul abandoned all competing interests was “the power of His resurrection” (Phil 3:10) – i.e. the power of His resurrection life. That involves the supernatural ability to come back from grievous and debilitating experiences. Just as Jesus “descended first into the lower parts of the earth,” only to “ascend up far above all heavens” (Eph 4:9-10), so those who are joined to Him by faith return from bitter experiences, stronger than ever. Initially, they are brought back from the dead – death in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). That is how our new life began – being “alive unto God” (Rom 6:11) – sensitive of His presence, and desirous to please Him in the doing of His will. That was the experience of Christ’s resurrection life.

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels” in order that this might take place to the glory of God. Such circumstances provide the context for the working of “the excellency of His power.”

PILGRIM’S PROGRESS

The experience of being “cast down, but not destroyed,” is wonderfully described in the fifth stage of John Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress.” “Christian” is sharing with “Faith” about his encounter with the wicked one, “Apollyon.”

“‘Twas well for you. I am sure it fared far otherwise with me; I had for a long season, as soon almost as I entered into that valley, a dreadful combat with that foul fiend Apollyon; yea, I thought verily he would have killed me, especially when he got me down and crushed me under him, as if he would have crushed me to pieces; for as he threw me, my sword flew out of my hand; nay, he told me he was sure of me: but I cried to God, and He heard me, and delivered me out of all my troubles. Then I entered into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and had no light for almost half the way through it. I thought I should have been killed there, over and over; but at last day broke, and the sun rose, and I went through that which was behind with far more ease and quiet.” Pilgrim’s Progress, John Bunyan

That is a depiction of not being destroyed, even though it looked as though that would surely be the conclusion of the conflict. It was an earthen vessel being experienced, but the treasure proved to be greater than the vessel, having access to the King of kings, who Himself, has no trouble with the devil. When our lives are hid with Him in God (Col 3:3), there is a sense in which we come back from every setback. Satan would pull us under the stormy waters and suffocate us to death. But, by the grace of God, we rise to the surface of trouble, inhaling the freshness of grace and Divine empowerment. Resurrection life is “coming back” life.

Let us have done with erroneous views of the life of faith. They damage the soul, confuse the mind, and hang a veil over the heart. Truth in religion is imperative, for it is KNOWING the truth that makes us free (John 8:32). It is also the lie that blinds and binds, riveting us to the world, where there is no possibility of triumph.

The area of warfare and struggle has been especially confused by the sophists. You cannot satisfactorily explain trouble and hardship with a lexicon in one hand and rules of logic in the other. In this matter, as well as all others pertaining to life and godliness, faith and hope must superintend all thought.

– Given O. Blakely

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

BEARING ABOUT IN THE BODY

“ . . . Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.”

Paul was a walking testimonial of the true nature of the New Covenant and the newness of life. Unfortunately, it is man’s tendency to merely philosophize about religious life without really displaying it. Thus, unholy men are often heard to speak about holy things, of which they have not the faintest perception. Men who are not themselves interested in the things of God feel as though they can speak about them from, what they perceive to be, a logical or intellectual point of view. There is so much of this kind of religious chatter that it is possible to get used to it. If one does not feel comfortable in the presence of such pretentious theologians, their books are readily available at the religious bookstores. It is all a matter of modern religious life.

This, however, is not how Paul lived – and he was a true theologian and a prodigious inspired writer as well. With him, religion (the outward display of what is embraced) and “Bible study” was not a hobby, or even a habit. He “lived by every Word of God” (Lk 4:4), and therefore his manner of life was not of this world. He really did not live unto himself, but “unto Him that died” for him and “rose again” (2 Cor 5:5).

Paul will now provide some further details of this life. These details will reflect the ordinary manner of real spiritual life. With Paul, his extensive insights and labors erupted in extensive indications of spiritual life as well. Yet, the principle that is here enunciated is, to some measurable degree, common among ALL who are actually in Christ Jesus.

ALWAYS

“Always . . .” Other versions read, “there is ever” (BBE), “everywhere we are” (GENEVA), “constantly” (NLT), “at all times” (YLT), “always, wherever we go” (WEYMOUTH), “wherever I go” (MONTGOMERY), and “Everyday we experience” (PHILLIPS).

A religion that is not “always” is neither real nor acceptable. It is pretentious, and false to the core. Seasonal religion with occasional considerations of the things of God is, at its very best, after the order of the Old Covenant. It has nothing whatsoever to do with life in Christ Jesus, which is not sporadic, seasonal, or discontinuous.

“Always” speaks of consistency and continuance. The word comes from a Greek word meaning “at all times, always, and ever” (THAYER). It speaks of a condition to which David referred when he said, “Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are EVER with me” (Psa 119:98). There are number expressions in Scripture that confirm the “always” posture is the standard one.

1. **ABOUNDING IN THE LORD’S WORK.** “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, ALWAYS abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58)
2. **CONFIDENCE.** “Therefore we are ALWAYS confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord” (2 Cor 5:6).
3. **ZEAL.** “But it is good to be zealously affected ALWAYS in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you” (Gal 4:18).
4. **THANKSGIVING.** “Giving thanks ALWAYS for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 5:20).
5. **PRAYER.** “Praying ALWAYS with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph 6:18).
6. **OBEDIENCE.** “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have ALWAYS obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12).
7. **REJOICING.** “Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil 4:4).
8. **SPEAKING.** “Let your speech be ALWAYS with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (4:6).

9. GIVING AN ANSWER. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready ALWAYS to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet 3:15).

I have given these few examples to confirm that what Paul now declares blends in with the very nature of spiritual life. This is not to be considered the kind of quality that characterizes a few unusual souls. I know of nothing in all of Scripture that suggests spiritual mediocrity in any form is acceptable to God. God’s people must aggressively rid themselves of this dreadful trait. It is, in fact, what Jesus referred to as being “lukewarm” – being “neither cold nor hot.” His response to that condition should strike fear into every soul that is so characterized: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:15-17).

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 16 of 34

BEARING ABOUT

“ . . . bearing about . . . ” Other versions read, “carrying about” (NKJV), “carrying around” (NIV), “carry with us” (NJB), “constantly facing” (LIVING), “being exposed” (WILLIAMS), “the liability and exposure” (AMPLIFIED), and “every day we experience” (PHILLIPS).

Here is something from which Paul cannot cut loose – something that he carries with him wherever he goes. He is constantly confronted with this circumstance, whether on the mountain of joy, or in the valley of despair. Every day he confronts this situation, whether in Jerusalem or in Athens, in the synagogue or on Mars Hill. He is carrying a condition with him from which he cannot escape.

This is something that is not external to him. He does not behold it as separate from himself – like looking at a scene on some far-off mountain. This is something he himself is carrying, and doing so perceptibly.

IN THE BODY

“ . . . in the body . . . ” Other versions read, “in our body” (NIV), “in our bodies” (BBE), and “these bodies of ours” (NLT).

The condition Paul now describes is as close to him as his own body, which was an integral part of his person (1 Thess 5:23). What he will say about this condition is not apparent to the eye. It is something invisible that is contained in something visible. That means it requires understanding – spiritual understanding – to comprehend it.

THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS

“ . . . the dying of the Lord Jesus . . . ” Other versions read, “the dying of Jesus” (NASB), “the death of Jesus” (NIV), “the mortification of Jesus” (DOUAY), “facing death just as Jesus did” (LIVING), “the deadness of Jesus” (IE), “the putting to death of Jesus” (WEYMOUTH), “exposed to death as Jesus was” (WILLIAMS), “to the same putting to death that the Lord Jesus suffered” (AMPLIFIED), and “we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus” (PHILLIPS).

Here the Spirit confirms that the death of Christ, into which we were baptized (Rom 6:3-4), is not something fully experienced in a single moment. This is a prolonged death – one that is experienced by those who are in Christ as long as they are “in the body.”

The word translated “dying” is a noun, not a verb. The phrase “the dying of the Lord Jesus” refers to the whole process of Christ’s death, beginning with His crucifixion (John 19:18-19), until the time Jesus yielded up His spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46). It was a time attended by restriction, certain sorrow, and subjection to all manner of abuse and reviling.

From the standpoint of experience, “the dying of the Lord Jesus” is called “the sufferings of Christ” (2 Cor 1:5; 1 Pet 1:11; 5:1). These are the “sufferings” in which we personally participate – “the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil 3:10). Technically, these are not the sufferings our Lord experienced in Gethsemane, when, in a bloody sweat, He prayed concerning the cup He was given to drink. Those sufferings were unique to Jesus, and related to Him offering a sacrifice that would be suitable for the removal of sin and the reconciliation of the world. That “death” is something beyond our capabilities.

However, there is a very real death that we experience while we are in these bodies. Here it is referred to as “the dying of the Lord Jesus.” There is a certain diminishment taking place in those who are in Christ Jesus – a severance from “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). There is an increasing separation from affinity with the world, the enjoyment of its pleasures, and sense of being a citizen of it. That is what Paul will now develop.

More on this tomorrow.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 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.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 17 of 34

THE DEATH INTO WHICH WE ARE BAPTIZED

Decades ago, I came to realize how very little I knew about baptism, even though I was raised in an environment where it was frequently mentioned. Aside from my godly father, and a few leaders I came to know through Him, I was not exposed to much teaching about “baptism” into Christ (Gal 3:27). We are plainly told that we “were baptized INTO HIS DEATH” (Rom 6:3). The context of this teaching confirms that this reality is not easily apprehended: “Know ye not . . . ?”

It is the knowledge of our baptism into Christ’s death that makes sin totally unreasonable, and “newness of life” the only valid environment in which to walk. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism INTO DEATH: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE” (Rom 6:4). The text with which we are dealing says the same thing.

A TECHNICAL POINT

It is in this sense that our old man “IS crucified with Him” (Rom 6:6). Here, some of the translations throw some confusion on the text, even though, from the standpoint of language, they are technically correct. While the word translated “crucified with” is in the past tense, the point of time at which the crucifixion took place is NOT the emphasis of the text, nor of the reasoning that follows through the seventh chapter of Romans. Here the Spirit is emphasizing that the crucifixion is STILL GOING ON, in order that “the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” That is, “the body of sin” is still on the cross, like Jesus remained there until He dismissed His spirit.

We know this is the case because of Paul's own testimony: "I AM crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20). Again, other versions read, "I have been crucified with Christ" – yet, the initialization of the crucifixion is not the point. Rather, it is that Paul considers his flesh to still be upon the cross. This ongoing crucifixion – or keeping the flesh upon the cross – is also the point of Galatians 5:24: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24).

Let me be clear about this. When once you come into Christ, being "baptized" into Him, you are not finished with this matter of dying. Your experience of being crucified with Christ is not a single event, occurring during a moment in time. The cross is the place where we continue to "mortify" the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13; 3:5). As the flesh remains upon the cross, sin is refused dominance in our lives. This is why Paul reasons with us about the consequence of being baptized into Christ's death, and being crucified with Christ.

1. "Knowing this, that our old man IS crucified with Him, THAT the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom 6:6).
2. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves TO BE dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11).
3. "LET NOT sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom 6:12).
4. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom 6:13).
5. "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom 6:19).

All of this would have no meaning whatsoever if we have already experienced death with Jesus to the fullest extent. It would be pointless to so instruct the saints if they were now finished with crucifixion. Speaking of what we were before, the Spirit declares, "For ye ARE DEAD, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Again we read, "If ye BE DEAD WITH Christ" (Rom 6:8). And again, "Wherefore IF YE BE DEAD WITH CHRIST from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances" (Col 2:20). And again, "It is a faithful saying: For if we BE DEAD with Him, we shall also live with him" (2 Tim 2:11). In his teaching concerning baptism Paul wrote, "It is a faithful saying: For if we BE DEAD with him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Tim 2:11).

Professing Christians continue in sin because they are not dead to it. They do so because they are not "dead to sin," and consequently are not walking in newness of life (Rom 6:4). They do not need counselors, but the experience of which our text speaks: "Always bearing about in the body THE DYING OF THE LORD JESUS, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." The Amplified Bible reads, "Always carrying about in the body the liability and exposure to the same putting to death that the Lord Jesus suffered, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be shown forth by and in our bodies."

In other words, it is only to the degree that we have died to sin that the life of Jesus can be exhibited in our bodies.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." (2 Cor 4:8-12)

AN ERRONEOUS VIEW OF “THE FLESH”

“ . . . Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus . . . ” (2 Cor 4:10)

There are those who teach that the old nature – “the flesh” – has actually been obliterated, and that we have nothing more to do with it. This is based upon a flawed view of Romans 6:6: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” The phrase “might be destroyed” is viewed as something that takes place instantly, so that “the flesh” no longer exists.

This is like saying once Jesus was placed on the cross, He was done with death. It is pure folly to imagine such a thing. The death of Jesus took some time – it was not accomplished in an instant – and neither is your death with Him!

Only to the degree that “the dying of the Lord Jesus” is experienced by us are we actually participating in His life. Right here we confront the reason for carnality within the professed church, and all manner of spiritual retrogression. Paul was immediately addressing Corinth, but he was dealing a condition that continues to this very hour – a lack of spirituality within the church itself. The church in Corinth was an exception at the time of Paul’s writing, but today, the state in which they were found has become common. It has even increased!

We are certainly in no position to judge the sincerity of people when they were first baptized into Christ, or to question the validity of their baptism. Those who dare to consider such things are on unlawful ground. This is an arena in which we are not licensed to operate. However, we do know that if “the old man” is not kept on the cross (Rom 6:6), and if, through the Spirit, the deeds of the body are not continually mortified (Rom 8:13), the old nature will gain the dominance again, sin will erupt, and a chasm will again be formed between the individual and God. When men seek to neutralize this fact by their stilted theology, affirming that Jesus keeps us safe in spite of what we do, they have only revealed their ignorance.

In this great salvation, Jesus works within the parameters of two experiences: death and life. We die with Jesus in order that we might live with Him. Furthermore the measure of life that is experienced directly corresponds to the measure of death that is realized. No person who has not died with Jesus can possibly live with Him – either in this world, or the world to come.

This reality is what causes such great concern in some of us when we see so much “flesh” in the church. The prominence of “flesh” confirms the absence of “the dying of Jesus.” It really makes no difference what claims are made by the people. “Flesh” can only assert itself when it is NOT on the cross, “crucified” with Christ! Just as surely as the impenitent thief could not steal when he was on the cross, so the flesh cannot freely express itself when it is on the cross. That thief could shout aspersions at Jesus. He could express his desire to live, and even enter into some form of reasoning with the other thief, and even with Jesus. But he could not DO anything. The cross kept him from doing so.

So “the flesh” may hurl thoughts into your mind, and harass you with imaginations, but it is powerless to carry out its corrupt desires while it is crucified. Further, to clarify the issue so we are not confused by the actions of men, it is written, “And they that are Christ's HAVE CRUCIFIED the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). All believers are admonished, “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14). They are reminded, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13). And again, “So then they that are in the flesh CANNOT please God” (Rom 8:8).

If there is a person who does not understand what it means to “live after the flesh,” or to have “crucified the flesh,” they are to make it their business to understand those expressions, take them seriously, and translate them into living. These days, within the church, there is not much talk about “the flesh” – an expression that is used NINETY TIMES from Matthew thru Revelation. Until this saying is comprehended, and the teaching concerning it is apprehended, no

progress will be made in the faith.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 19 of 34

PAUL'S CONFESSION

Paul confesses that he is carrying around in his body “the death of Jesus” – the whole process of dying: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” This is a most intriguing statement. There is a sense in which he is referring to his continual subjection to danger and death in the world. But there is more to this text than that. Paul is not just saying he continually faced danger. Rather, he is expounding WHY he faced those dangers. Traced to the ultimate reason, it was because he was carrying about “the dying of Jesus” in his body.

This means that the death of Christ had become evident through his body – his outward life. It became apparent that “the world” had come to an end for him, and the world's interest in him had also come to a grinding halt: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal 6:14). The reason the world – whether Jews or Gentiles – opposed and persecuted him is because they saw he was not one of them, and that he had deliberately chosen a relationship that excluded them. “The dying of the Lord Jesus” was being lived out before their eyes, and they had no appetite for it.

The world does not like to be rejected. It insists on sitting on the throne of every individual's life. But when the dying of the Lord Jesus is being carried about in one's body, it moves the individual to refuse to bow to the world, submit to it, or seek its friendship. Such a person rejects the world's values, and considers that if the devil is its “god” (2 Cor 4:4), the world will not be loved (1 John 2:15).

The reason the world opposes believers is because they are obviously not of its order. Their thoughts, words, deeds, and manner of life are in conflict with the ways of this world, just as they were in the Person of Christ. As Jesus said, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because YE ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore THE WORLD HATETH YOU” (John 15:19). Whether a person feels comfortable with this conclusion or not, it is the truth: if the world loves you, Jesus has not chosen you, for He chooses people “out of the world.”

When worldly ways of thinking and speaking, together with the manners of the world, come into the church, it is only because the people who have brought them in are “of the world.” As such, they are set in opposition to Jesus who plainly declared, “I am NOT of this world” (John 8:23). They are also in war with Christ's kingdom, which He also said is “not of this world” (John 18:36). There is no place in the church for such people! God has not made a place in the body of Christ for worldly people. His people have been delivered from this world by Jesus, and according to His will: “our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal 1:4). Like it or not, the nominal church has been wedded to the world, and “the world” is her wedded name.

Life and death cannot be merged. They are antithetical to one another. Because of this, where they exist together they are at war with one another. The flesh and the Spirit are at war (Gal 5:17). Death is at work in our body, and life is at work in our spirit. To put it another way, “but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16).

Keep in mind, this is the appointed result of having a heavenly treasure in an earthly vessel. The purpose for this arrangement is “that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be from God and not from ourselves” (2 Cor 4:7 [AMPLIFIED]). In other words, we have been made dependent upon the Lord. We cannot extricate ourselves from trouble because God has so arranged things that, as long as we are in this world, it is impossible. He will deliver us (2 Cor 1:10). He will give us the victory (1 Cor 15:57). He will keep us from falling (Jude 1:20). But we will have trouble!

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 20 of 34

CROSS-LESS RELIGION

“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.” (Verse 10, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

A view of life in Christ is being promoted in our time that includes no death – no cross. It is a religion of prosperity and well being. Conveniently the words of Jesus are being ignored: “Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If ANY MAN will come after Me, let him deny himself, and TAKE UP HIS CROSS, and follow Me” (Mat 16:24). With even more pungency Luke represents Jesus as saying, “And whosoever doth not BEAR HIS CROSS, and come after Me, CANNOT be My disciple” (Luke 14:27).

Apostolic doctrine expands this teaching, using the undeniable language of the cross.

1. “Knowing this, that our old man IS CRUCIFIED with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom 6:6).
2. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do MORTIFY the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13).
3. “I am CRUCIFIED with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20).
4. “And they that are Christ's HAVE CRUCIFIED the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24).
5. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world IS CRUCIFIED unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal 6:14).
6. “MORTIFY therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

The trend of adapting the message and purpose of the church to the unregenerate is a most dangerous one. Also, the practice of adopting worldly ways in the church betrays a total misapprehension of the nature of life in Christ Jesus. When the world's concept of music, organization, growth, education, motivation, and counseling are found within the church, the cross of Christ has been abandoned. From another perspective, such wisdom and ways have been “made of none effect” (1 Cor 1:17-18).

With the abandonment of the cross, there is a corresponding loss of everything that comes through the cross of Christ and His vicarious death. Among other things, this includes justification (Rom 5:9), forgiveness (Eph 1:7), being made nigh to God (Eph 2:13), the removal of enmity (Eph 2:16), reconciliation to God (Col 1:20), being presented to Christ unblameable (Col 1:22), deliverance (Heb 2:14-15), the purging of the conscience (Heb 9:14), the “everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20), and being cleansed from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Let there be no question about this, where there is no personal identity with the cross of Christ, the benefits that flow from it cannot be realized.

It is not possible to refuse to embrace the cross of Christ, and still enjoy the benefits coming from it. Should one choose to spurn this cross, not allowing “the dying of the Lord Jesus” to take place within, every single one of these blessings are at once beyond reach, and can in no way be

experienced. If men do not really die with Jesus, they cannot live with Him! If they are not crucified with Him, they cannot be raised with Him. That is simply the way it is.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 21 of 34

THAT THE LIFE MIGHT BE MANIFEST

“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.” (Verse 10, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

Paul now expounds WHY “the dying of the Lord Jesus” continues to work within those who have been baptized into Him (Gal 3:27). If what follows is not happening, it is only because the people have quenched and grieved the Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). For some reason, they have been brought into a state of spiritual ignorance, from which they were initially delivered in Jesus. As it is written, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; THAT YE SHOULD SHOW FORTH the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

THAT

“ . . . that . . . ” Other versions read, “so that” (NIV), and “in order that” (MONTGOMERY).

This is the reason WHY “the dying of the Lord Jesus” is continually carried about “in the body.” It is to be understood that this reality is the result of living by faith (Rom 1:17) and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16,25). Where such a walk is not taking place, neither the dying nor the life of Jesus is taking place in the individual. This does have some rather alarming implications. Nevertheless, it is time for the church to come to grips with these things. It has allowed the psychiatrists of the land to deal with inconsistencies with the Christian community. Rather than resolving the situation, they have only compounded it, carving out a fine career for themselves in the process. If that appears rather strong, I consider it actually to be a very weak statement of the case. There are enemies in the house, and religious leaders have invited them in, and made a convenient place for them.

THE LIFE ALSO OF JESUS

“ . . . the life also of Jesus . . . ” Other versions read, “the life of Jesus also” (NKJV), “the living Christ” (LIVING), “Jesus’ life” (IE), “that Jesus lives” (WEYMOUTH), “the [resurrection] life of Jesus” (AMPLIFIED), and “the power of the life of Jesus” (PHILLIPS).

In this world, death always follows life. First life, then death. The beginning is associated with life, and the “last” is connected with death. That is the way it is in this world. But that is NOT the way it is in Christ Jesus.

In salvation, death PRECEDES life, and is always IN ORDER TO LIFE. As it is written, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we SHALL BE ALSO in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom 6:5). And again, “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that WE SHALL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM” (Rom 6:8). And yet again, “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we SHALL ALSO live with Him” (2 Tim 2:11).

You cannot live with Jesus if you have not died with Him! If the life of Jesus is not being manifested in a professed believer, it is because they have not died with Him. The death and life of Jesus must both be experienced. They do not travel alone. If the life of Jesus is not being manifested in a professing Christian, living is not what must take place, but dying – for living with Jesus always follows dying with Him.

Spiritual life always follows a corresponding death to sin and this world. Where that death is not found, being “alive to God” (Rom 6:11) becomes impossible. This explains the extreme difficulty some people have developing a sensitivity to and awareness of eternal realities. It is

because that are fundamentally of this world, and have consequently been shut out of the Kingdom. They are dead IN sin, and Jesus is calling them to be dead TO sin. They need to die, being crucified to the world, and the world to them (Gal 6:14). This, of course, is what happens in regeneration. It is what continues in sanctification.

There will be no connection with the life of Christ until the umbilical chord to the world is severed! That is why Paul says the “dying of the Lord Jesus” is continually carried about in his body that “the power of the life of Jesus” (PHILLIPS) might be experienced and made known.

All manner of religious programs can never put “the life also of Jesus” within the reach of the individual. The only thing that will cause such marvelous life to be realized is a very real and effectual experience of “the dying of the Lord Jesus.” That “dying” causes the world and its allurements to lose their attractiveness, and consequently their power. When the power of the world and its lusts is found in people, it is because they have not died with Jesus. There really is no polite or nice way to say it, because it is a reprehensible condition.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“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” (Verse 10, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 22 of 34

MIGHT BE MANIFEST

“ . . . might be made manifest . . . ” Other versions read, “may be manifested” (NKJV), “may also be revealed” (NIV), “may also be made visible” (NRSV), “may be seen” (BBE), “so that it is clear” (LIVING), “may also be clearly seen” (WEYMOUTH), “also may be shown forth” (AMPLIFIED), and “that we may also know” (PHILLIPS).

It is the desire and purpose of God that the “life also of Jesus” be manifested, or made visible in His people – just as surely as men were exposed to the Divine nature when Jesus went about “doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38). This cannot be accomplished by a mere picture, whether in art or in literature. In order for “life” – the life of Christ – to be made known, it must be lived out – expressed in the visible manners and details of the lives of believers. If there is no difference between a professed believer and the world, it is because they are not really “alive unto God” (Rom 6:11).

Jesus, who affirmed men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel, does not enable us to share in His life in order that it be hidden from view – privatized, so to speak. Fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), and participation in the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), was never intended to be a mere personal experience. Rather, it is intended to be a manifestation, reflection, testimony, and expression of Divine life in this world. God intends for the world to SEE what His grace does in a person.

IN OUR BODY

“ . . . in our body.” Other versions read, “in our bodies” (NRSV), “in this body of mine” (MONTGOMERY), “by and in our bodies” (AMPLIFIED), and “in these bodies of ours” (PHILLIPS). Our bodies are the vehicles through which the work of God is visualized.

Here we read of the remarkable manifestation of Divine life in a fleshly body – “this treasure in earthen vessels.” What is being evidenced is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” – the “light” that God Himself has shined into our hearts (2 Cor 4:6). There is, therefore, a twofold reason for this light being beamed into our hearts. First, it provides us with a personal acquaintance with God. Second, the magnificence of this light is made known through the vessel in which it was commanded to shine.

This manifestation may be recognized for what it truly is, or may be the basis for unbelief and opposition. These are the contradicting circumstances described by Paul earlier: “For we are unto

God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor 2:15-16). What is called "the savor of Christ" in the second chapter, is here referred to as the manifestation of "the life of Christ." It is when Christ, of whom we have been "made partakers" (Heb 3:14), makes Himself known through the expressions of those who have been "joined to" Him (1 Cor 6:17). Just as Christ's death was the door leading to eternal life, so our participation in His death becomes nothing less than an occasion in which Christ's life comes into view.

That life is made known through "earthen vessels" in which it is found. This is referring to the glorified life of Christ – the revelation of the exalted and enthroned Christ. It involves men being exposed to the spiritually practical side of Christ's life. That is, He is living to separate us from this world and bring us to God (Acts 15:14; Heb 2:10; 1 Pet 3:18). This becomes evident through a people who consider themselves "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11) – people who "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15-17).

Those who "walk in the light as He is in the light" (1 John 1:7) are ones who themselves "shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15). Their words, deeds, and manners project Divine life. It is seen in what they prefer, where they go, and how they respond to the things of this world. Their preference and love for the Word of God and His people "manifest" the life of Christ.

For those who have understanding, all of this confirms that it is the Lord who works in believers, "both to will and to do" (Phil 2:13). Just as surely as God working in Christ was seen, so it is with those in whom, through His grace, He is at work today – and it is "seen" in the lives of His people. God does not put His light under bushels!

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 23 of 34

THE LIVING DELIVERED TO DEATH

"For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (Verse 11, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

Paul continues to elaborate on the effects of having "this treasure in earthen vessels." This circumstance (of having a treasure in an earthen vessel) alters the lives of those choosing to "live by faith" (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). That alteration is one of the evidences of being changed from glory to glory.

WE WHICH LIVE

"For we which live . . ." Other versions read, "For we who are alive" (NIV), "For while we live" (NRSV), "For, while living" (BBE), "Indeed, while we are still alive" (NJB), "For we, alive though we are" (WEYMOUTH), and "For all the time I continue to live" (WILLIAMS). This is being "alive unto God" (Rom 6:11) – living in a state of reciprocity to Him.

Who are "we which live?" Some feel it is the Apostles who were alive at the time. Others feel it is all believers who are alive in the body. However, in my judgment, these are all shallow and impractical views. They do not fit well into the context of this teaching.

The subject being expounded is life in the New Covenant, not mere personal or isolated life. It is "the Spirit" who gives "life," while "the letter," or the ministration of the Law, kills (2 Cor 3:6). It is "the Spirit of the living God" that has written upon the "fleshy tables" of the heart, constituting believers the "epistles of Christ" (2 Cor 3:3). It is "the life also of Jesus" that is being "manifest in our mortal body" (v 10).

"We which live," therefore are those who, in fact, HAVE "this treasure in earthen vessels," and ARE living in concert with that treasure. They are the ones who ARE "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" – those who, by virtue of their identity with Christ, are the ones in

whom “the world is crucified unto” them, and they “unto the world” (Gal 6:14). They have “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24), and are abstaining “from fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11). Their posture toward the world has left them totally and consciously reliant upon the Lord, and He is dwelling in their hearts by faith (Eph 3:17).

This is life that cannot be ministered by a religious institution, a set of man-made rules, or religious tradition.

These are the people described as “we which live.” The text cannot simply refer to those who are alive in the body, for what follows is not common to such people. This is the result of having “this treasure in earthen vessels.” These are the real people of God!

ALWAY DELIVERED UNTO DEATH

“ . . . are always delivered unto death . . . ” Other versions read, “are constantly being delivered over to death” (NASB), “are always being given over to death” (NIV), “are always being given up to death” (NRSV), “are continually being handed over to death” (NJB), “live under constant danger of death” (NLT), “are continually surrendering ourselves to death” (WEYMOUTH), and “are always being exposed to death” (PHILLIPS).

This is the world’s reaction to the treasure contained in our earthen vessel. Although the unregenerate cannot see the treasure, yet they are able to detect its effects, and it is condemning to them. Thus, while the stewards of this treasure journey through this world, they face constant threats. There is a twofold sense in which these are to be considered. First, they are Satan’s snares, designed to move us from the way that leads to life. Second, it is the Lord’s way of testing our commitment to this race to glory.

Here is a most remarkable paradox: those who “live” are “continually being handed over to death” (NJB). Their life itself is a testimony to the keeping power of God, for if the devil and the world had their choice, those who possess the treasure of heaven within would have succumbed long ago. There is only one way to account for the continuance of their life: the eye of the Lord is upon them to “keep them alive” (Psa 33:19).

The saints are “always being given over to death” TO THE DEGREE that the dying and living of Jesus is found in them. For good and profitable reasons, they are handed over to the devil like Job – but with certain and effective restrictions. In order to confirm to angelic hosts that God is wise, and that eternal life cannot be subverted by adversarial powers, death is given leave to harass those in whom Jesus is living. They are delivered over to death like Joseph was delivered to prison; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to the fiery furnace; and Daniel to the lion’s den. Perhaps “death” will attempt to terminate the faithful in a shipwreck, or maybe even three shipwrecks as it did with Paul (2 Cor 11:25). Maybe it will use a poisonous viper, striking and fastening on the hand of Paul from a fire (Acts 28:3).

For most of us, who have not attained to the spiritual stature of Paul, death may be limited to working unspeakable inconveniences, the death of our loved ones, grievous disease, or the rejection of our peers. From an earthly viewpoint, this can be a miserable experience. Yet, is not the life we have in Jesus worth going through such straits? This is, according to Jesus, the way that “leads to life” (Matt 7:14) – a way that is straitening and restricting to the flesh. It is, after all, “the flesh” that is really handed over to death every day.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 24 of 34

FOR JESUS’ SAKE

“For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (Verse 11, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

“. . . for Jesus' sake . . .” Other versions read, “because of Jesus” (BBE), “on account of Jesus” (DARBY), “for the sake of Jesus” (NAB), and “because we serve Jesus” (NLT).

This is the second time Paul has used this expression in this chapter, the other being in verse five: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants FOR JESUS’ SAKE” (2 Cor 4:5). This confirms that “we which live” does merely refer to those who have not yet died – those who are alive in the body. Rather, these are the individuals who have died to self and the world, and are now living unto Him who “died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15).

How are these people defined in Scripture? These the ones who have “crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). They have rejected “ungodliness and worldly lusts” (Tit 2:11-12). They are perfecting “holiness in the fear of the Lord” (2 Cor 7:1). They are resisting the devil (James 4:7), living by faith (Heb 10:38), and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16,26). Their lives are truly “hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). As “strangers and pilgrims” in the earth, they are abstaining from “fleshly lusts that war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11). These are the people who “live godly,” and therefore “suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). They are living their lives “for Jesus’ sake.” They willingly take the path that is at variance with “this present evil world,” doing it “for Jesus’ sake.” For them, “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21).

Because Jesus is at the heart of God’s purpose, He is also at the heart of the lives of those who have been reconciled to Him. Christ in them is “the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). Because Christ dwells in their hearts by faith, they are among the people who, being strengthened with might by God’s Spirit in the inner man, are “rooted and grounded in love,” and “able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:16-19). They are, according to Divine determination, being “conformed to the image of God’s Son” (Rom 8:29-30).

There is no valid or acceptable life that is lived without a primary regard for the Lord Jesus – none at all! The nominal church has made room for people who really have little or no interest in living with Divine approval. In fact, many have even tailored their message and ministry to ensure that such people are welcomed among them. Whatever commendable may be said about such congregations, they are not engaged in a work that has this objective: to have a godly jealousy to espouse the people “to one husband,” that they may be presented “as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor 11:2).

THE STANDARD REVEALED

The standard of life in Christ Jesus was revealed in both the life and doctrine of Paul. He stated his reason for living, and did so in remarkable detail. This is an elaboration of “for Jesus’ sake.” Read it, and join him in this sanctified objective,

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil 3:7-11).

Paul then added, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” (Phil 3:14-15). Other versions read, “have this mind” (NKJV), “have this attitude” (NASB), “take such a view of things” (NIV), “think this way” (CSB), “embrace this point of view” (NET), “agree on these things” (NLT), and “have this mind and hold these convictions” (AMPLIFIED).

The mandate is clear!

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 25 of 34

PAUL'S DETERMINATIONS

Paul is a Kingdom standard: “Be ye FOLLOWERS of me” (1 Cor 4:16). “Be ye FOLLOWERS of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). “Brethren, be FOLLOWERS together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phil 3:17). “And ye became FOLLOWERS of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thess 1:6).

Here is a sampling of the things that Paul did – key determinations he made and carried out.

1. Considered the things that were gain to him, to be a “loss for Christ” (Phil 3:7).
2. He counted “all things” a loss, and unworthy of a consistent quest (Phil 3:8a).
3. He suffered the loss of all things as something done “for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:8b).
4. He considered the things he abandoned to be “dung” (Phil 3:8c).
5. Gladly he was spending and being spent for the body of Christ (2 Cor 12:15).

PAUL'S OBJECTIVES

Here are the reasons why he abandoned competing interests. These are the objectives that drove his life.

1. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord (Phil 3:8).
2. To “win Christ” (Phil 3:8).
3. To be “found” in Christ not possessing his own righteousness, but the righteousness that is from God by faith (Phil 3:9).
4. To know Christ (Phil 3:10).
5. To know the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10b).
6. To know the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil 3:10c).
7. To be made conformable to His death (Phil 3:10d).
8. To attain to the resurrection of the dead (Phil 3:11).
9. To apprehend that for which Jesus had apprehended him (Phil 3:12).
10. To press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14).

SOME OBSERVATIONS

It at once becomes obvious that this differs significantly from the objectives of the average “Christian.” In fact, you would have to look long and hard to find someone who was driven by such noble motives. This deplorable condition, however, only exists because the professing church has departed from the faith, and a great falling away has therefore taken place. This grievous condition has existed so long that people have come to view it as common and acceptable. However, this is a gross misrepresentation of the case.

THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION

Paul continues by speaking to those who are mature – who have grown up, as believers are intended to do (Eph 4:11-16; 2 Pet 3:18). After all, the norm of the kingdom is that we are being changed “from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our God” (2 Cor 3:18). This is according to God's predetermined purpose – namely, that we be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29). There is absolutely no assurance that a person who is not experiencing this change

is, in fact, saved at all – for this process IS salvation. It is for this reason that professing believers are urged, “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?” (2 Cor 13:5). The Amplified Bible reads, “Examine and test and evaluate your own selves to see whether you are holding to your faith and showing the proper fruits of it. Test and prove yourselves [not Christ]. Do you not yourselves realize and know [thoroughly by an ever-increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you are [counterfeits] disapproved on trial and rejected?”

Addressing those who are spiritually mature, Paul adds, “All of us who are mature should take such a view of things” (Phil 3:15a, NIV). And, what is “such a view?” It is the perspective Paul has provided in verses seven through eleven of Philippians three. For those with spiritual understanding, this is the only acceptable way to live – “for Jesus’ sake.” And what if a person cannot see or comprehend this? They are to live up to what they do know, and God will make these things known to such a one. Therefore Paul adds, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” (Phil 3:15-16). The Amplified Bible reads, “So let those [of us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and hold these convictions; and if in any respect you have a different attitude of mind, God will make that clear to you also. Only let us hold true to what we have already attained and walk and order our lives by that. Brethren, together follow my example and observe those who live after the pattern we have set” (Phil 3:15-17).

God’s people need to hear these things!

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 26 of 34

WHAT OF THOSE WHO CANNOT SEE IT?

“We are troubled on every side, yet NOT DISTRESSED; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but NOT FORSAKEN; cast down, but NOT DESTROYED; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

What of those poor souls who cannot see the things affirmed in this text? Is everything all right with them? Are they to consider these things out of their reach – things to be attained only by a select few? Indeed not! Hear what the Apostle says to such people.

First, “and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, GOD SHALL REVEAL EVEN THIS UNTO YOU” (Phil 3:15b). If the person’s mindset is different, or if he has a “different attitude,” God will straighten out his thinking, or make the truth of these things known to him. In other words, thinking “otherwise” (NKJV) is really wrong, and is not acceptable at all. It will require Divine intervention to correct this faulty thinking: “that too God will make clear to you” (Phil 3:15 NIV). Even before the era of the New Covenant, David “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.” (Psa 25:8-9). Solomon wrote of wisdom, “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov 2:5). James wrote, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

Child of God, there is a certainty in these matters that cannot be negated. Jesus, who was Truth incarnate said, “For EVERYONE who keeps on asking receives; and he who keeps on seeking finds; and to him who keeps on knocking, [the door] will be opened” (Matt 7:8, AMPLIFIED). He even reasons with us on this matter: “Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in

heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matt 7:9-11). If you find this difficult to believe, step next to a man who came to Jesus to heal his demon-possessed son. Jesus told him (and tells you as well), "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). The man "cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Jesus responded favorably to that man, and He will to you as well. Cry out, child of God! Cry out!

And how is it that the understanding of these things will come to pass. Will the person simply wake up one day with everything being clarified? In a manner of speaking this is true – but it is too simplistic, and tends to lull the soul to sleep. There is a certain frame of spirit that provides an arena in which the Lord works, clarifying key matters to the heart. Here is how Paul put it: "however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained" (Phil 3:16, NASB). That is to say, what can be comprehended by us is to be maintained by incorporating it into our lives. Simply put, we are to live up to what we do know. As this is done, the heart is sensitized to the Lord, which is the context in which He will clarify the necessity of living as Paul did, and testifying as he did. That is the kingdom standard, or norm.

Everyone must get to the point where they live "for Jesus' sake." When they do, both the dying and the living of Jesus will take place within them. Do not doubt for a moment that this is the truth!

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 27

WHAT ABOUT "THIS WORLD?"

Every professing believer must get to the point where they live "for Jesus' sake." When they do, both the dying and the living of Jesus will take place within them. Do not doubt for a moment that this is the truth! The dying has to do with severance with "this world," and the living has to do with a vibrant connection with "the world to come" (Matt 12:32; Heb 2:5; 6:5). Furthermore, neither "the dying of the Lord Jesus," nor "the life of Jesus" can be obtained through a routine, a series of steps, or a methodological system of discipline.

This view is perfectly harmonious with our text. Willingly submitting to being handed over to death every day would not be possible without having a higher reason for living. Those who are absorbed with self will run away from the "dying" of reference, not marching boldly into its domain. In this world, "living" is equated with realizing one's carnal ambitions, and doing so in relative comfort. The person outside of Christ does not even think of a part of his person "dying," or being purposefully neglected.

The world will shout at us, saying we are "weird," or that we are not practical. This is only their imagination, and they do not know what they are talking about. Those who are actually living for Christ must not listen to what the world says about them. It is the truth – "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, YET HE HIMSELF IS JUDGED OF NO MAN" (1 Cor 2:15). Jesus is "not of THIS WORLD" (John 8:23). His Kingdom is "not of THIS WORLD" (John 18:36). We ourselves are "not of THIS WORLD" (John 15:19; 17:14,16). The saints are holding primary citizenship "in heaven" (Phil 3:20). Jesus has chosen us "out of THE WORLD" (John 15:18). God gave us to Jesus "out of THE WORLD" (John 17:6). The "care of THIS WORLD" chokes the Word of God, causing it to be unfruitful in us (Matt 13:22). In order for us to obtain eternal life, we must hate our "life in THIS WORLD," considering it strictly secondary (John 12:25).

Satan is "the prince of THIS WORLD" (John 12:31), and "the god of THIS WORLD" (2 Cor 4:4), and has already been "judged" (John 16:11). Solemnly we are admonished, "be not

conformed to THIS WORLD” (Rom 12:2). God has “made foolish the wisdom of THIS WORLD” (1 Cor 1:20). The “fashion of THIS WORLD passeth away” (1 Cor 7:31). The “god of THIS WORLD” blinds men’s minds (2 Cor 4:4). The “course of THIS WORLD,” or the direction in which it is headed, is “according to the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2).

What possible reason can be adduced for being worldly, adopting the world’s values, and letting it define our objectives? How can anyone wearing the name of Jesus justify an appetite for the world, its riches, its careers, its fashions, or even its music and its entertainment? These are all things to which we are to die. By being delivered continually to death – handed over to it – the Lord is removing our appetite for things that are passing away. Be clear about this – “the world,” in the sense of our text, is not to be found in the church. Programs that are designed to open a way for worldly people to join with the saints are authored by the devil, and implemented by fools.

Experiencing the dying and living of Jesus is contrasted with living as though “THIS WORLD” was where it is all at. Let this be clear in your mind: when people exhibit a fundamental disinterest in the life of Jesus, His words, and His promises, they have revealed their preference for THIS WORLD. No other proof of their condition is required. Such a posture produces death toward God – the development of a basic insensitivity to eternal things, and eternal life. It also negates any profession of faith, for faith separates us from THIS WORLD.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 28 of 34

THAT THE LIFE OF JESUS MIGHT BE MANIFEST

“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. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” (Verses 10-11, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

When Paul states that those who are living are “alway delivered unto death for Jesus sake,” he is not just painting a gloomy picture. Neither, indeed, is he telling us to get accustomed to this misery, reasoning that this is just the way it is. **THERE IS A REASON FOR THIS SITUATION.** There are Kingdom benefits that can only be realized by dying – or, more precisely, by the “dying of Jesus” being experienced by us while we are in the body.

God has revealed that everything He does is driven by a “cause” – “and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD.” (Ezek 14:23). There is purpose and objective in all that He does, particularly in His “great salvation.” Of course, “purpose” requires Divine involvement, for no purpose of God is fulfilled automatically, or without His participation. There is not a single facet of life in Christ Jesus that can be realized independently of God and His Son. We have an excellent example of this in our text.

THAT THE LIFE ALSO OF JESUS

“ . . . that . . . ” “Another version reads, “so that” (NIV).

“THAT”

This is the language of purpose: “that,” or “in order that,” or “so that.” The Greek word from which “that” is translated, is a conjunction subordinate. That is, it is “used to introduce clauses that show a purpose or a goal: that, in order that, so that” (THAYER). Another lexical meaning is, “markers of purpose for events or states” (UBS).

This particular word (“that”) is used six hundred and seventy times from Matthew through Revelation. Its use underscores that Divine workings are woven throughout the Scriptures with the threads of purpose and objective. This is the word that is used in the expression, “THAT it might be fulfilled” – a favorite expression of Matthew (Matt 1:22; 2:15,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17;

13:35; 21:4; 27:35). That is, one thing happened in order that something else might take place.

All manner of spiritual reason employs this little word: “that.” A few examples will suffice to buttress this point.

1. The Law was given THAT every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God (Rom 3:19).
2. Salvation is by faith in order THAT it might be by grace (Rom 4:16).
3. We are buried with Christ by baptism into death THAT we might be raised up from the dead, as Jesus was RAISED FROM THE DEAD. . .” (Rom 6:4).
4. We suffer with Christ in order THAT we may be glorified together with Him (Rom 8:17).
5. We have been raised up together with Christ, and made to sit in the heavenly places in order THAT in the “ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6-7).
6. Jesus ascended up far above all things THAT He might fill all things (Eph 4:10).
7. We are to take to ourselves the whole armor of God THAT we may be able to withstand in the evil day (Eph 6:13).
8. Jesus died for us THAT whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him (1 Thess 5:10).

There are hundreds of statements just like these within the Epistles – points of spiritual reason that declare the manner of the kingdom. There are things that simply will not happen until they are preceded by other appointed things. No one will be saved by grace who does not have faith. No one is raised with Christ until they are buried into His death. No one reigns with Christ who does not suffer with Him. No one withstands in the evil day who does not appropriate and put on the whole armor of God.

These are all self evident, as well as specifically affirmed.

Now, let us see how this bears upon our text. Paul says “we which live are delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake.” We are put into a circumstance that appears to give death the upper hand. Disadvantage seems to be the ruler, and we ourselves are shown to be weak in the extreme. In Paul’s case, he could not stop three ships on which he found himself from being wrecked. He could not stop the Jews from beating him five different times with forty stripes save one. He was powerless to avoid being beaten three times with rods. He could not stop the people from stoning him at Lystra. He could not avoid perils in waters, among robbers, among his own countrymen, among the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren. There were some times when he could not find food or water, and was cold, yet could not find adequate clothing (2 Cor 11:23-27). He was handed over to death, and could not do a thing about it! His human resources ran out. His natural understanding dried up like Elijah’s brook (1 Kgs 17:7). His friends all forsook him (2 Tim 4:16).

YOU also have had times when you were handed over to death, and things were taken from you. It might have been a member or members of your family. It might have been your marriage. It could have been your financial resources, or your home, or some of your possessions. Your good name might have been smeared, or you were cast out of your church. Your health may have been taken from you. Whatever it was, all of your aptitudes and cunning wit dried up. All of the doors closed, and you seemed to be tossed from pillar to post, like a ship breaking up in a storm.

For what purpose did all of this occur? Or was there even a purpose at all? Could it be that you were abandoned by the Lord, even though you were trusting Him. I will tell you that there are times when it does appear that this is the case. It may be Joseph being thrown into a well, and then sold as a slave boy by his own brothers (Gen 37:24), and then being confined as a criminal in prison for well over ten years (Gen 39:21-40:3). It may be the prophet Jeremiah tossed into a pit, sinking into the mire, with no help in sight (Jer 38:6). It may be David, running for his life and hiding in a miserable cave (1 Sam 21:10-15). Or, it may be Elijah running for his life, and finally sitting fatigued under a juniper tree and asking God to just let him die (1 Kgs 19:4).

All such experiences, whether in the Word of God, or in your personal life, are on the left side of the “THAT!” There is purpose in these experiences. There is an objective that is being realized

through them. Here that Divinely appointed objective is declared – “that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” (2 Cor 4:10).

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 30 of 34

MIGHT BE MADE MANIFEST

“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. (Verse 10, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

“ . . . might be made manifest . . .” Other versions read, “may be revealed” (NIV), “may be made visible” (NRSV), “may be seen” (BBE), “will be obvious” (NLT), “to show forth” (LIVING), “be clearly shown” (WEYMOUTH), “may shine forth” (MONTGOMERY), “may be evidenced” (AMPLIFIED), and “may be plainly seen” (PHILLIPS).

It is not enough to merely talk about this life, for “the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk” (1 Cor 4:20, NIV). The life of which we are speaking must be “made manifest,” or “revealed.” That is, it must become evident. Those who are beholding this manifestation may not be fellow men. They may be an inquiring angelic host, who desires to “look into these things” (1 Pet 1:12). It may be a great “cloud of witnesses” who surround us (Heb 12:1), the “spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23). It may be brothers and sisters in Christ who take courage at the revelation of “the life also of Jesus” in you (Acts 28:15). It may even be those who have oppressed you, who, upon beholding the life of Jesus in you, will become ashamed that they have falsely accused you (1 Pet 3:16).

Be sure of this: when death seems to have the upper hand, it is only that “the life also of Jesus” might be manifested in you.

IN OUR MORTAL FLESH

“ . . . in our mortal flesh.” Other versions read, “our mortal body” (NIV), “in our flesh” (BBE), “our dying bodies” (NLT), “our dying flesh” (YLT), “in this mortal nature of ours” (WEYMOUTH), “my mortal lower nature” (WILLIAMS), “through our flesh which is liable to death” (AMPLIFIED), and “our mortal lives” (PHILLIPS).

This is a most marvelous thing. God has placed the treasure of the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” in earthen vessels – our bodies. There it is hidden from the world, and sometimes from ourselves, when periods of obtuseness come upon us. But trouble, bless God, will push this treasure to the top, causing it to be seen “in our mortal flesh.” Eventually, this life has to come out, else it will be lost.

It should not surprise us that our “mortal flesh” becomes a vehicle for the display of “the life also of Jesus.” The Lord has revealed, “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Cor 6:13). Again it is affirmed, “your bodies are the members of Christ” (1 Cor 6:15). We are solemnly exhorted to glorify God “in your body” (1 Cor 6:20). Our bodies have not been left out of our religion! Salvation does not exclude the body, so we could conduct ourselves as if God has no interest in our mortal frame. If “the life also of Jesus” is going to be “made manifest,” it is going to be in your “mortal flesh” – your body. That is the part of you that is actually visible to men.

The life of Jesus will be made known **IN YOUR WORDS**, and how you talk – in your “mortal flesh.” Jesus’ life will be manifested in **WHERE YOU GO** – in your “mortal flesh.” That life will be manifested in **WHAT YOU LISTEN TO** – in your “mortal flesh.” It will be detected in **WHAT YOU WATCH**, and what captivates your eyes – in your “mortal flesh.” The **FRIENDS YOU CHOOSE**, and the **PEOPLE YOU AVOID**, will reveal whether or not “the life also of Jesus” is really in you – in your “mortal flesh.”

And, how will all of this work? Is it accomplished within the framework of a merely disciplined life? Is the “bodily exercise” of religious regimentation the thing that pushes “the life also of Jesus” to the surface of our “mortal flesh?” It might appear as though this is the case, but it emphatically is NOT the case.

The crucible in which “the life also of Jesus” is manifested in our “mortal flesh” is trouble – when we are delivered unto death! It is when Joseph is in Egypt that his real association with the Lord was made known! It was when Moses was in Egypt, that his faith surfaced. When Lot was in Sodom, his righteous soul was vexed, and the life came out. When Daniel was in Babylon, his association with the living God came out. When Paul was in prison the devil found out the life that was in him could not be subdued. For all of those saints, what they had from God was made known when they were in the vexing room of trial, in the refiner’s fire (Mal 3:2), and on the potter’s wheel (Jer 18:2-4) – when they had been “delivered unto death.”

The vast wilderness that caused over six hundred thousand Israelites to fall, was the place where the faith of Joshua and Caleb rose to the surface. This is the way the Lord works. He puts the treasure in an earthen vessel, then hands the vessel over to death to do, (as it appears), whatever he wills. But in the whole process. The “life also of Jesus” proves to be superior, and is made “manifest in our mortal flesh.” It is revealed in our prayers, in our assessments, and in our continuation in doing righteousness. Trouble cannot blow out the candle ignited by Christ’s life.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 31 of 34

DEATH IN US, AND LIFE IN YOU

“So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (Verse 12, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

Here we have a most unique, and rather abrupt, conclusion to Paul’s remarkable and sanctified reasoning. The manner in which he has written confirms the truth of his statement: “I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful” (1 Cor 7:25). God had called him as one who was “faithful” (1 Tim 1:12).

Some have considered this text to be one of Apostolic irony, with Paul chiding the Corinthians for their pretentious manners. If this was the case, this passage would parallel what was said in First Corinthians: “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised” (1 Cor 4:10). It seems to me, however, that the sobriety of this passage forbids such a view. There us a higher perspective.

I shall view this verse as confirming that “the life also of Jesus” was, indeed, manifested in Paul’s “mortal flesh” – and that the Corinthians profited from that manifestation.

SO THEN

“So then . . .” Other versions read, “So” (NASB), “so that” (DARBY), “In us, then” (NJB), “Because of our preaching” (LIVING), “Thus” (WEYMOUTH), and “And so” (ISV).

These two words are translated from a single Greek word. This is a “consecutive conjunction, expressing a consequence or result” (THAYER). This is the language of reasoning – spiritual reasoning. What Paul has done in declaring the nature of spiritual life is lay the groundwork for a brief explanation of the spiritual advantages that were being realized by the Corinthians. He will confirm that just as surely as eternal life was necessarily preceded by the death of Jesus, so spiritual advantages are passed to the saints by those who themselves have suffered “for Jesus’ sake.” This is the manner of the kingdom – a manner that cannot be pushed to the side. Whether it was Moses, the Prophets, John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Himself, or the Apostles, benefits passed along to others have always followed sufferings in the one through whom they were passed. This is because truth can only be expressed and obtained in a state where variance with the world is being experienced – for truth is at a fundamental variance with this world.

DEATH WORKETH IN US

“ . . . death worketh in us . . . ” Other versions read, “death is working in us” (NKJV), “death is at work in us” (NIV), “we face death” (LIVING), “death is active in us” (IE), “we are constantly dying” (WEYMOUTH), “we live in the face of death” (NLT), “while death is working in my body” (MONTGOMERY), “death is actively at work in us” (AMPLIFIED), and “we are always facing death” (PHILLIPS).

This seems like a contradiction – death working – but it is not. Remember, “death,” as used in this passage, is a process – “the DYING of the Lord Jesus” (4:10). We are not only baptized into Christ’s death, that death goes to work in us, effectively separating us from “this present evil world.”

There is an apparent comfort that is derived from this view of things. Paul takes all of the persecutions and difficulties he had experienced, and wraps them in the phrase, “death worketh in us.” He does not speak out of bitterness because these were unjust, being motivated by hatred for his enemies. He rather associated his sufferings with “the dying of the Lord Jesus,” who also suffered at the hands of cruel men. From another perspective, this was nothing less than the “fellowship of “Christ’s sufferings” – something for which Paul counted everything that was of personal “gain” to him, nothing more than “dung” (Phil 3:8).

How is it that Paul could reason in such a manner? It was because he knew the outcome of such sufferings! For Jesus, His sufferings were connected with “the glory that should follow” (1 Pet 1:11). For Paul, he knew very well that “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim 2:12). He also knew that we are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 8:17). This is the manner of the Kingdom. It is what makes the gate to life “strait,” and the way “narrow” (Matt 7:13-14). The way to glory is by means of the cross! The way to life is by means of death!

Therefore, when Paul says “death worketh in us,” he is NOT complaining. He is NOT seeking sympathy, or having second thoughts about his labors for the Lord. He is rather justifying his Apostleship, confirming that **THE RESULTS OF HIS LABORS TESTIFY TO THE REALITY OF HIS CALLING**. He has participated with Jesus in suffering, and in being delivered over to death. It is Christ’s own death that is at work in him.

It is said of Christ’s death, “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God” (Rom 6:10). His death was the means through which He exited the arena of conflict, and obtained an entrance into glory. Notice what is said about this.

1. He dies no more.
2. Death has no more dominion over Him.
3. He died unto sin once.
4. He now lives unto God.

This whole process is lived out in us when Jesus takes up residence within. We begin to experience a certain dying to sin. Sin becomes more repulsive, more distasteful, more unreasonable. We only die to sin once, but it takes a lifetime for it to be accomplished, which parallels hours Jesus experienced on the cross. Once dead, sin has no more dominion – none at all. Even now, while “the dying of the Lord Jesus” is being fulfilled in us, sin is losing its power. To the precise degree of that death, we even now are “living unto God,” looking forward to the time when death will be “swallowed up of life” (2 Cor 5:4). Blessed contemplation!

This is the death that was at work in Paul – “the dying of the Lord Jesus.” From the higher and more edifying point of view, this accounted for all of the shipwrecks, beatings, peril, and sufferings that he endured (2 Cor 11:23-28). In this way he was coming closer to the Lord with a corresponding distance forming between him and the world.

However, this was more than a personal experience. The life of Jesus was being “manifested” in his mortal flesh! The fellowship of Christ’s sufferings had not merely taken him through the

valley of the shadow of death! It had brought the benefits of life – spiritual life – to the Corinthians. Paul will now underscore this most wonderful point.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

Lesson 32 of 34

BUT LIFE IN YOU

“So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (Verse 12, 2 Cor 4:8-12)

“ . . . but life in you.” Other versions read, “but life is at work in you” (NIV), “and life in you” (GENEVA), “in you, life” (NJB), “but it has resulted in eternal life for you” (NLT), “the life in you” (YLT), “but life is active in you” (IE), “while you are in full enjoyment of life” (WEYMOUTH), “it is life that works in you” (WILLIAMS), “life is working in you” (MONTGOMERY), “but [it is in order that our] life [may be actively at work in you]” (AMPLIFIED), and “but this means that you know more and more of life” (PHILLIPS).

Death was working in Paul, and life was working in the Corinthians. Just as surely as “the dying of the Lord Jesus” is active in our bodies, so is “the life also of Jesus” active within us. However, for that life to be active, “the dying of the Lord Jesus” must also take place, being found in the one who is preaching, and the one who is hearing. In the world, life is first, and then comes dying. But in the Spirit, dying takes place first, and then living! This dying is imperative in everyone, but especially in those who are preaching and teaching. What they give the people must contribute to spiritual life, or reciprocity with God – and it will not do so unless the one who declares the truth is very really experiencing both “the dying of the Lord Jesus, and “the life of Jesus.

Spiritual growth is actually the life of Jesus at work in us. This is involved in the expression, “but Christ liveth in me” (Gal 2:20). Jesus referred to this life when He said, “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23). Making Their abode in us equates to “the life of Jesus” being made manifest in the individual. Jesus also alluded to this living when He said, “I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21). Jesus does not hide His light under a bushel! Let us be clear about this. The Lord Jesus Christ will not work for good in the person who does not participate in His death. Speaking from a practical point of view, there must be an increasing separation from the world, and a growing rejection of ungodliness and worldly lusts (Tit 2:11-13). The presence of worldliness in the professed church is owing to the absence of “the life of Jesus.”

This “life” is also the result of God calling us into the “fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9). It is the point of reference in the statement, “Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory” (1:27), and Christ DWELLING IN “your hearts by faith” (Eph 3:17).

This life must not be quenched by slovenliness and inordinate associations with this world! Once the Son takes up residency in the believer, His life begins in the individual. There can, however, be stoppages that prohibit the expression of that life. There are professed believers of whom, it is said, “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:29). These are those of whom it is said, “they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb 6:6).

All of this postulates a life that is working within. An inactive Son of God cannot be “trodden under foot.” Where Jesus is found, as He said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). The real church is not measured by its outreach, but by its suitability to be the place where both God and Jesus dwell (John 14:23; 1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 1:22). Where They dwell, there is a very real experience of both the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 33 of 34

THE POINT OF THE TEXT

The point of the text for this series of lessons is that an INVESTMENT OF LIFE and its associated sufferings were required for the Corinthians to experience life working in them. While both Christ's death and life work in all of us, death especially works in those who are devoted to laboring in the Word and in the doctrine. It is ever true that in order to minister the truth of Christ to others, there must be a corresponding death at work in us – Jesus' death!

Let us have done with the erroneous notion of a professionally trained clergy who knows little of either dying or living. Those who are effective in the field of the Lord feel the pain of death as well as the joy of life. They are familiar with rejection as well as acceptance, and heartache as well as comfort.

This is the manner of the kingdom. A person cannot get a tight grip on the truth until he maintains a loose grip upon the world. It is not possible to be close to the Lord unless one is far from the world. The “life also of Jesus” can neither be experienced nor ministered until “the dying of the Lord Jesus” is also taking place within.

In my judgment, these things are not being clarified by the modern church. There is not enough distance between it and the world, which means that “the dying of the Lord Jesus” is not being experienced. That circumstance shuts the door of heaven, making the person an outlaw in the field of the Lord. If that seems a bit strong, remember that Jesus gave Himself to “deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal 12:4). What kind of reasoning would lead a person to imagine an alliance can be maintained between the saved and the domain from which they were delivered? It simply cannot be done. It is not that men ought not cater to the world WHILE they walk with Jesus, it is that it is impossible to do so. It is not that there is just a law against such conduct, it is that Jesus will not live within a person who remains wedded to the world. "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Luke 16:13).

What remarkable changes would be required for such a person to be saved – a person who remained worldly! God would have to change His own nature. The purpose for Jesus' death would be dashed to the ground. Many texts of Scripture would have to be cut out with Jehudi's pen knife (Jer 36:23). All of the descriptions of the new birth would have to be removed. The New Covenant would have to be rewritten. The texts on the “flesh” and being “carnally minded” would be obviated. There would be no need for the new birth, faith, or obedience. If God could take people into His presence in whom the dying and living of Jesus were never present, then Christ's death was pointless, and there is no purpose to His resurrection and intercession.

However if the things issuing from the death and life of Christ are really necessary, then separation from this world is imperative, for that is when they are realized. Jesus must take up residence in the individual, and both his dying and His living must be experienced.

From the standpoint of our text, what Paul got from preaching was trouble, affliction, persecutions, sorrow, and skirmishes with death. What Corinth got from his preaching was spiritual gain and eternal life. All of this, our text argues, was on purpose. This is the way of salvation – a way that has “the life also of Jesus” preceded by the experience of “the dying of Jesus.” O that I had “the tongue of the learned” (Isa 50:4) so I could say these things with greater clarity!

A DICHOTOMOUS EXPERIENCE

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.” (2 Cor 4:8-12)

Lesson 34 of 34

CONCLUSION TO SERIES

Salvation has appropriately been described as having a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel – something strong in something weak! There is, in fact, a “new man” that is becoming more and more alive, and an “old man” who is on a death march (Eph 4:22-24). There is an “outward man” that is dying every day, and an “inner man” that is being renewed every day (2 Cor 4:16). There is the “flesh” that is condemned, and the Spirit, who is life (John 6:63). We have within us “the law of sin and death” and “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2). There is “the law of my mind” that traffics in heavenly realms, and “another law” that pulls toward sin and this world (Rom 7:22-25). The “dying of the Lord” Jesus is at work in us, as well as “the life also of Jesus” (2 Cor 4:10). Within us, the Holy Spirit “lusts,” and the flesh does also (Gal 5:17).

This text has taught us that this is a Divine arrangement – it is all on purpose, and we are not to be confused by it. The necessity for this arrangement is found in the fact that we are in a condemned world, and occupy a condemned body. Neither of them will survive the revelation of the glory of the Lord, and yet we must deal with them both while we remain in the body.

On the other hand, we have been called to obtain an “ETERNAL inheritance” (Heb 9:15), have “ETERNAL life” (1 John 5:13), and are experiencing an “ETERNAL salvation” (Heb 5:9). We are headed for an “ETERNAL judgment” (Heb 6:2), have been called to “ETERNAL glory” (2 Tim 2:10), and are participants in an “ETERNAL purpose” (Eph 3:11). We have been brought into an “EVERLASTING covenant” (Heb 13:20), have been given “EVERLASTING consolation” (2 Thess 2:16), and are looking for an abundant entrance “into the EVERLASTING stinging kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:11).

How are we to react to such a contradictory experience – such a dichotomy? We must die and live at the same time. There is a part of us that must diminish, and part that must increase. There are interests that must wane, and interests that must wax stronger. The world must become less prominent, and heaven more outstanding. Jesus must increase, and we must decrease. We must submit to God and resist the devil. There are things to be “put off,” and things to be “put on.” There are things to be “mortified” and things to be cultured. There are things to seek and things to deny or refuse.

How are these responsibilities to be fulfilled? It ought to be apparent that a set of rules or commandments will not be sufficient – even if “the law is holy” and the commandment is “holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12). Our text provides the answer to the situation. “The dying of the Lord Jesus” and “the life also of Jesus” must both be accomplished within us. When this is taking place, we will know more fully what this means: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor 4:8-9). God is to be praised for such a great salvation!

– Given O. Blakely